FADE IN:

EXT. THE SOMME - NO MAN'S LAND - DAY

SUPER: "CHRISTMAS DAY 1914"

IT IS FREEZING COLD.
The battlefield is covered in heavy snow.
German and English troops are separated by a mere hundred yards in their trenches.
The pale sun rises slowly over the silent battlefield.

EXT. ENGLISH TRENCHES

A SOLDIER walks down the full length of a trench with a kettle in hand.
Activity abounds as dozens of soldiers tend to their monotonous daily duties.
SPIERS shivers uncontrollably as he approaches a group of soldiers huddled around a miniature Christmas tree.

SPIERS
Happy Christmas, lads.

SOLDIER
Happy Christmas, Spiers.

SPIERS
The tea is ready.

SOLDIER
Well give us a cup, then.

SPIERS
Right.

He leans over, collecting some small tin cups from a bench.
Spiers pours out several cups of tea for the men. He hands a cup to his friend, TULL, and an IRISH SOLDIER seated next to Tull.
TULL
Cheers, laddie.

IRISH SOLDIER
That's grand, Spiers. Thanks a million.

Spiers smiles as he pours himself a small cup as well.

SPIERS
Where'd you find the tree, Corporal?

TULL
(pointing)
Just over there, near the Jerries' lines.

SPIERS
It does the trick, then. Lifts up the spirits of the men.

IRISH SOLDIER
That it does, lad, if only for the day.

SPIERS
Right. Has anyone seen me football around?

TULL
I saw Bell and some of the boys from the Yorkshire Regiment having a kickabout over by the Mess.

Spiers sets the kettle down and walks in the direction of the Mess.

EXT. GERMAN TRENCH - DAY

A group of German soldiers sit around a small fire where CORPORAL VOLLLER is making a pot of hot wine. He adds a tiny cinnamon stick into the small pot.

MAYER and GLAUBERG are two men in his unit.

The men speak in German with SUBTITLES:

VOLLER
That's much better. This wine was spoiled anyway.
GLAUBERG
What do you think the English are having for Christmas Day?

Voller shrugs his shoulders. He hasn’t an idea.

VOLLER
Tea, I'm sure. It is the only beverage they know.

MAYER
They drink beer as well, albeit, warm beer.

VOLLER
See what I mean, they also eat pudding made of pig's blood. And the history books try to convince us that we are of the same lineage as them.

MAYER
They aren't known as Anglo-Saxons for nothing.

VOLLER
Here, it is ready.

He takes the pot off the fire, inhaling the vapors. Voller is pleased with the result.

Glauberg holds a cup out as Voller pours him out some wine. He then pours some out for himself and Mayer.

MAYER
Tasty, Corporal.

GLAUBERG
Yes, this hits the spot.

VOLLER
I want for nothing now but a comfortable bed and some football.

GLAUBERG
Then you wish for everything.

MAYER
At least we have a ball.

Mayer, Voller and Glauberg all pause from drinking their wine, exchanging the same look with one another. Mulled wine hits the spot on a cold winter's day.
EXT. ENGLISH TRENCH

Spiers approaches three soldiers kicking an extremely weathered brown leather football around a small opening in the trenches.

SPIERS
How are things, lads? Can I join you?

SCOTTISH SOLDIER
(in a thick accent)
As you like, aye.

The SCOTTISH SOLDIER passes the ball to Spiers who juggles it a few beats.

SCOTTISH SOLDIER (CONT’D)
No bad.

SPIERS
Average, is more like it.

He passes the ball back to SERGEANT BELL.

BELL
You've just given me a novel idea.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD – ENGLISH SIDE

Tull, Spiers and Bell stand on the edge of their trench looking towards the Germans' side.

BELL
Right, here's the idea. A pack of fags and a pint of me own stash of porter for the first man who boots the ball into the Jerries' trenches.

Spiers and Tull exchange glances. Bell grins, relishing the thought of what might happen.

TULL
Anything to cure the boredom, ay, Sergeant?

BELL
A mutual cease-fire is in effect.
SPIERS
So how do we know the Jerries will honor that?

BELL
Only one way to find out.

He flicks the football up to his hands then throws it over to Spiers.

Spiers juggles it for a moment, popping the ball off his knees into his hands.

EXT. GERMAN LINES - TRENCH

Voller chews on a piece of crusty bread. He holds a cup of hot wine in his right hand.

Spiers's football drops into the trench, hitting his arm and knocking the cup to the ground.

The men speak in German with SUBTITLES:

VOLLER
What the hell?

EXT. ENGLISH LINES

TULL
Good kick, man!

BELL
Way to hoof it, Spiers!

SPIERS
Cheers. I was about to sign for the first team before I enlisted. Queens Park Rangers.

BELL
Blimey. After this damn fool war ends perhaps you can resume your promising career old chap.

He raises his cup of tea to his mouth when the football Spiers launched into the German trench drops down on his hand, spilling his tea.

BELL (CONT’D)
Bloody hell!
TULL
Oi! It's the ball you launched into the trench, Spiers.

BELL
How peculiar. It's got a message written on it.

TULL
What's it say, Sarge?

BELL
How the bloody hell should I know, Tull? I'm not proficient in kraut.

Spiers picks up the ball, examining the message.

SPIERS
Spiel, spiel... that's the word for match, Sergeant.

BELL
So it is, lad. What of it?

SPIERS
Well, I believe they're challenging us to a game of footie.

TULL
A spot of footy! Are you certain, man?

SPIERS
What else could it be?

BELL
A drinking match, I suppose.

SPIERS
No, no. Mannschaft, spielfeld. Right. They definitely fancy a match with us, Sarge.

BELL
Well, I don't know. It's against regulations, I believe.

TULL
Come on then, Sarge. It's Christmas Day. They don't want to fight any more than we do.
SPIERS
Tull's right, sir, if only for today.

Bell strokes his big bushy moustache.

BELL
Right, then, I'll go and have a chat with the Captain.

EXT. GERMAN TRENCH

Voller stares through a spyglass across the battlefield. Mayer and Glauberg are anxious for his reaction. The men speak in German with SUBTITLES:

GLAUBERG
Well, Corporal, what do you see?

VOLLER
Nothing so far. Everything still.

MAYER
Maybe they are preparing to attack.

GLAUBERG
Don't be silly. Did you ever stop to think they can't read German?

MAYER
It was the only way, Glauberg. None of us speak English.

VOLLER
Be quiet! Both of you!

Something catches his attention. Voller lowers the spyglass.

MAYER
What is it, Corporal?

VOLLER
A white flag, sir.

EXT. ENGLISH TRENCH

Spiers waves a makeshift white flag at the edge of the trench.
Tull and Bell await a response from the Germans.

SPIERS
(looking down)
Should I continue on, sir?

BELL
Keep at it, Spiers. They're the ones who offered us a match, remember?

SPIERS
Aye, Sarge.

Up steps CAPTAIN LOVELL, the commanding officer, from the trench.

Bell nervously salutes him.

Tull hides the football behind his back.

LOVELL
What seems to be all the fuss here, chaps?

BELL
Nothing, sir, well, something rather...

LOVELL
Good God, man, spit it out! What exactly are you lads getting up to?

TULL
Permission to speak, Captain.

LOVELL
Granted.

TULL
Sir, The Germans have challenged us to a football match.

LOVELL
The Jerries have what?!

BELL
He's quite right, sir. They fancy a game.
LOVELL
Bloody hell, man, why didn't you say so! We'll most definitely accept their offer!

BELL
Splendid.

LOVELL
Have you chosen your side yet? I'm quite the centre-half, you know.

BELL
I had a feeling as such, sir.
(pointing)
But Spiers there played center-half for a living before the war.

SPIERS
QPR, sir.

LOVELL
I see.

BELL
But we desperately need the services of a proper man between the sticks.

Lovell shoots a grin at Bell that covers his face.

LOVELL
No bother. I'm just the man for the job.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD

LOVELL
The German team lines up against the English side. Both sides shiver from the cold.

Lovell walks forward and greets Voller with a handshake.

Spiers clears away a patch of snow with his feet, placing the ball down on the clearing.

LOVELL (CONT’D)
Right, lads, game on!

He rushes back to the makeshift goal of backpacks and gun netting.
The German goal consists of propped-up rifles and a large outstretched tarp in between them.

Spiers kicks the ball to Bell and the match begins.

A lengthy game of football is played.

The match ends in a draw, 0-0. The Germans and English shake hands.

Voller comes forward and presents Lovell with an ornate beer stein as a souvenir.

Lovell graciously accepts the gift, handing over the match ball to Voller.

As the sun begins sets, both teams part ways, returning to their respective trenches.

EXT. ENGLISH LINES

LOVELL
(clapping)
Good show, lads, jolly good show.
Fairplay, all of you.

BELL
Perhaps one day there'll be a proper world championship where we can beat the Jerries officially.

LOVELL
Aye, Sergeant. Perhaps all wars will be settled on the pitch in future generations.

EXT. GERMAN LINES

Mayer and Voller walk slowly back to the trench, satisfied with the result and the camaraderie.

They speak in German with SUBTITLES:

MAYER
They played decent, Corporal, but perhaps in the foreseeable future there will be a proper world championship game, between national sides.
VOLLER
Germany against England, yes? It would however be unfair to defeat them, not only in war, but in football as well.

FADE OUT:

THE END