

# TRIPLE ECHO

Screen adaptation by Michael Joseph,  
based on the novella "The Triple Echo" by H.E. Bates

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## LOGLINE

During WW2, a lonely woman welcomes a young deserter into her life and bed, and to conceal him on her farm dresses him as a woman, awakening hidden desires, but their idyll is shattered by the interest of a boorish Military Policeman.

## TREATMENT

Shot in desaturated, almost monochromatic, tones: we open on an isolated, derelict farmhouse in a desolate valley, the ground covered here and there with the remnants of the winter's melting snow. The wind howls. Crows screech. The farm has clearly been abandoned for a very long time. We hear a shotgun fired in the distance. It echoes three times.

SUPER'D OVER

**If you want to keep a secret,  
you must first hide it from yourself.**

A torn curtain flaps through a broken window. A door slams open and closed in the wind. We track into the dark interior of an outbuilding and hear the clanging of metal on metal.

DISSOLVE TO:

Shot in naturalistic polychromatic tones: we are in a dark forge, illuminated by the setting sun creeping through the slatted wood walls. Two "heavy horses" - large workhorses with "feathers" (hairy hooves) - are standing calmly together in a stall, with a large dog sitting quietly nearby, licking himself. In the corner of the forge, a charcoal-burning brazier is being stoked by a figure dressed in a heavy leather apron and barely visible in the dark smoky gloom.

MAIN TITLES SUPER'D OVER:

We follow in detail the process of making a horseshoe and then shoeing a horse. It is heavy and dirty work, that requires considerable experience, skill and strength.

The horse now shod; the figure leads it back to the stall to join the other horse. We still can't see who it is but the massive heavy-horse dwarfs the figure, who then goes to the doorway to stretch and get some fresh air, and only then do we see it is a woman, ALICE - face and hands grimy from sweat and smoke, and dishevelled long brown hair tied up in a knot under a head-scarf. Alice is in her late 30's but looks older than her years - she has striking, attractive features and warm brown eyes, wears no make-up and her sun-darkened skin is rough from constant exposure to the elements.

Followed by her dog, Alice walks over to the water-trough in the farmyard and pumps water up from the well. In the background, we see the farmyard, surrounded by a dry-stone wall and littered with a few old farm implements. There is a small barn, a stable, a shed with a half-collapsed roof, the forge and a red-brick farmhouse with a corrugated iron roof – the one we saw at the opening scene, but no longer derelict. Beyond, we see a paddock and fields in a valley surrounded by low hills, with clumps of woodland here and there.

Alice takes off her shirt - an old army, khaki undershirt - splashes herself with the cooling water and washes the grime and sweat from her face, neck, arms, armpits and breasts, and then uses the shirt to dry herself in the warm evening air and, closing her eyes, looks up at the sky, bathing-in the glow of the setting sun. A squadron of bombers flies overhead. The noise is deafening but Alice pays them scant attention – she is used to it. We are in England, 1943 - the country has been at war for 4 years and, every night, bombers fly overhead.

It is now night and we are inside the farmhouse. The room, which serves as kitchen, dining room and parlour, is sparsely furnished but tidy, spotlessly clean and homely. We see a few mismatched pieces of furniture on the plain wood floor and small, framed, prints on the walls. Against one wall is a pine dresser with a few decorative plates on display. At one end of the room we see the cooking range - a black, wood-burning, stove with a large kettle on one of the hobs, iron pots and pans hanging up around the chimney. A scrubbed pine table in the middle of the room has four chairs but is only set for one, with the remains of Alice's half-eaten supper illuminated by the oil-lamp on the table. At the other end of the room is a fireplace with 2 worn armchairs where Alice, exhausted, is dozing quietly. The dog is asleep by her feet, snoring quietly, as is she. On the mantelpiece, we see an old shotgun, a photo of a soldier, a battery-operated Philco radio and a bakelite mantle clock, tick-tocking away.

We suddenly hear loud screeching from outside. Alice wakes - instantly alert - as does the dog which rushes to the door, barking and trying to get out. She jumps up and grabs the shotgun, takes a torch from a drawer, then hurriedly puts on her rubber gumboots and rushes out into the farmyard. The dog runs ahead, barking loudly. Alice sees a fox has got into the chicken coop and is causing mayhem. She tries to shoot the fox but the shotgun's hammers don't work and the fox gets away, with a chicken in its mouth, leaving devastation in the coop.

The next day, Alice carefully cleans and checks the shotgun – a fine but old-fashioned double-barrelled hammer-gun that's seen better days. She goes into the barn and clears away some farm implements, a scythe, a rake, a couple of pitchforks etc., in order to reach some strange and rusting metal contraptions that are lying in a pile in the corner of the barn. She lifts one of them and we see they are gin-traps – vicious appliances with spring-loaded, toothed jaws.

We see Alice walking over the hillside with her dog, hoping to shoot hare or pigeons and looking for the fox's set. She wears rough corduroy trousers tucked into rubber gumboots and a thick sweater that is obviously too large for her and nipped in at the waist with an army belt. Finding the set, surrounded by bones and feathers, she sets the gin-traps around it. Walking down the hillside, she shoots a pigeon and then a hare, the shots each echoing three times.

We see the farm, below in the valley. A few small fields with hedgerows separating them are dotted around the farmyard. An unmade road, more of a track, leads off into the distance. A

cow lies down in the paddock chewing the cud and, further off, there is a small herd of sheep grazing. The valley is tranquil, picturesque even, in the glow of the early evening sunlight.

Alice, assuming there is no-one around, lays the gun on the ground, pulls down her trousers and knickers and squats to pee when, in the distance up on the hill, she sees a shadowy figure - a soldier. Surprised to see anyone else, she hurriedly pulls up her trousers, picks up the gun and, squinting her eyes, watches the soldier suspiciously as he disappears into the trees. As the dog comes up to Alice, she kneels to pat him, while keeping an eye out for the soldier.

As Alice starts to climb the hill, she sees the soldier again. She runs after him, calling to the dog, "come on - there's that two-legged fox." She shouts to the soldier, "Hey, you there!" The soldier, BARTON, stops. We see he is more of a boy really - he's just 18 years old, slight of build and with delicate, almost feminine, features. He has short fair hair, cut in army "short-back-and -sides", with a mop of hair on his crown, and almost furtive, bright-blue, eyes.

Alice, out of breath, catches up with him and, raising the gun, cocks both hammers to show she means business and asks what he's doing on her land. He nervously explains he's based at the barracks just beyond the hills and that he's just out walking, and that he didn't mean any harm. She eyes him up and down and then, satisfied he's no threat, lowers the gun.

They talk about how beautiful an evening it is - "listen to that nightingale," he says. "Reminds me of home." Barton asks Alice if it was her shooting earlier, as there were several echoes. She replies, saying it was her, shooting hare and pigeon to eke out the rations and that they get a triple echo bouncing off the surrounding hills. Barton is very superstitious and he tells Alice that hares are evil and bring bad luck - "bad cess". Alice is amused by that thought.

Alice feels bad about having spoken to Barton so aggressively and says he can carry on and walk across her land until he reaches the road, "It's the shortest route. But just this once, mind." They chat as they walk down the hill towards the farm and we learn he's a farm boy and only just been called up. On impulse, Alice invites him to her farm for some supper.

Before they go in for their supper, much to Barton's distaste, Alice guts and hangs the hares in the barn. She says doesn't particularly like hare and although she occasionally eats it when there's nothing else, to eat, she mainly sells them to the village butcher. Alice cooks eggs and toast and they sit and eat together. Alice and Barton are both lonely and pleased to be in each other's company. They don't talk much but a bond between them has developed. Alice asks if he'd like to come for supper the next day and she's excited when he says he'll come.

The next evening, Barton comes back to the farm and while they sit together having eggs on toast and tea, they tell each other more about themselves. Alice says her husband is a POW of the Japs after the fall of Singapore a year ago, and she's had to manage the farm on her own, since he first joined up at the start of the war, over three years ago. She doesn't know if he'll ever return as "you hear such terrible things about those camps." Barton tells Alice he's never been away from home before and misses his family, especially his older brother, who he is close to and who was called-up before him. He hates the army, and has no friends. He mentions the barracks is getting bigger by the day, readying for the forthcoming Allied invasion of France, which is by now common knowledge, and that he'll probably soon be off

to France with the rest of them. Alice says he shouldn't talk about it as "careless talk costs lives." He tells her that all he does is guard duty and square-bashing. We learn that Barton and his brother were abandoned by their mother who left their Dad when they were very young and ran off with a salesman, after which, his aunt came to stay and looked after them all but then, a few years later, she too left and now lives in the town, married to a butcher.

As Barton reluctantly leaves the farm to return to barracks, their hands inadvertently touch while opening the farmyard gate and they are both aware of the intimacy of the moment.

We see Alice carrying on with her daily tasks - mucking out the stables, feeding the horses, the chickens and the sheep. Alice lays two places for their supper and she stands staring vacantly out the window, hoping he will appear on the hill, but he doesn't come to the farm.

The next day, Alice sees Barton as he arrives at the farm but she is peeved he didn't come the day before and gets on with her work, pretending she hasn't seen him. Barton knocks on the farmhouse door and she opens it, barely smiling half-heartedly. He senses the change in her demeanour and hesitates but she beckons him in. Alice asks why he didn't come the day before and he explains that he couldn't because he was assigned guard duty. Now that Alice knows the reason he didn't turn up, she is more relaxed and they have their supper together.

Barton comes to the farm the next afternoon and helps Alice with the chores - he cuts the clover with a scythe and stacks it in the yard, and mucks out the stables. He's done it all before at his home and knows what he's doing, and Alice enjoys watching him at work with her.

After the day's work, they sit and have their supper together. Alice has managed to get a tin of US army ham, presumably black-market, and it makes a nice change from eggs. Alice's dog seems to like Barton and comes to sit next to him. After supper, they sit and listen to the radio, like husband and wife. As Alice watches him leave, they hear bombers flying overhead.

Barton has returned to the farm and while Alice cleans his mud-splattered uniform, she gives him some of her husband's clothes to wear, which are far too big for him. He goes to shoot pigeons but the shotgun is not cocking properly and returns empty-handed. He goes into the house where Alice is ironing his uniform. The dog goes to Barton and licks his hand. Barton strokes him. Alice smiles and remarks "He was always Tom's dog. But he likes you though."

Barton is due to go on leave the next day and tells Alice he is looking forward to seeing his father again but he'll come and see her for tea before leaving. She says she is happy for him but it's obvious she's saddened by the thought of not seeing him for so long. The next morning, she cycles into the village and exchanges a basket of eggs for four bottles of beer, and her entire month's meat allowance, together with the hares, for a small piece of beef.

That evening, Alice is sitting at the threshold, scraping potatoes, when she sees a stranger in a dark blue suit walking up the lane. She's not used to visitors, especially not anyone togged-up in a suit and she's worried it's the packman coming to get paid what she owes him. However, it is Barton, now looking very different in his civvies. She rushes forward to greet him excitedly and puts her hands on his shoulders, affectionately, saying she almost didn't recognise him, looking so different as he does. She suddenly becomes self-conscious about

the way she looks - dirty trousers and gumboots - and subconsciously raises her hand to her hair as if to tidy it. They walk back to the farmhouse. Alice snuggles up to him as they walk, loops her arm in to his, then rests her head on his shoulder, looking up at him with pleasure.

Alice goes up to her bedroom – a small, simply furnished room that has a few feminine touches. She undresses, washes her face and hands from an enamel basin and is about to get changed into a skirt and blouse when she hesitates, then sits down on the chair and washes her armpits and then between her legs. She dries herself, chooses a blouse, changes her mind and puts on another, and then puts on the last remnants of her almost dried-out lipstick.

Looking at herself in the mirror, Alice feels attractive. She's excited, and nervous about what the evening will bring. As she is about to go downstairs, she takes off her wedding ring and puts it and the framed photo of her and her husband on their wedding day, away in a drawer.

Alice goes downstairs and takes a bottle of beer to the front door where Barton is sitting, dozing in the evening sun, with the dog by his side. He looks at her, almost incredulous at the change in her appearance. When he compliments her on how pretty she looks, she smiles coyly and tells him she is cooking roast beef, parsley sauce, broad beans, spuds, Yorkshire pudding and apple tart. Rain clouds are gathering and she says it looks like a storm is coming.

Unusually, the table has been set with a tablecloth and the best crockery and a small vase with wildflowers. Alice tells him that she enjoyed cooking the food and it made her feel like normal again. They eat, staring at each other and barely saying anything. He is touched that she's gone to such an effort "it's been a long time since I last ate like that - you wouldn't know there's a war on." She replies, wistfully, "I wish the war was not there. We could pretend."

It is getting darker and it starts to rain, the heavy raindrops resonating loudly on the corrugated iron roof. He asks her to listen to the sound of the rain and jokes that he'll have to swim back to the barracks. She stares at him warmly and asks him to move closer but he doesn't hear, so she moves towards him instead. Barton is nervous and repeatedly thanks Alice for the food. Alice puts her hand on his shoulder as if to silence him and then leans forward and impetuously kisses him lightly on the mouth. He responds by saying he's wanted to do that for a long time but wasn't sure. ".....you know, what with your husband, and all."

They kiss again, properly, and then Alice says, saucily, "something tells me you're going to miss your train." She then takes Barton by the hand and as she leads him up to the bedroom, we hear the distant drone of heavy Lancaster bombers flying overhead on yet another raid.

Barton is awkward and unsure of what to do. Alice takes the lead and removes first her clothes and stands before him naked, and then his. They lay down facing each other. He hesitates. Alice takes his hand and places it on her breast and then, after a few moments, she puts it between her legs, kisses him and simultaneously fondles him. He is in a rush to be on top of her, but she makes him wait. She pushes him onto his back and sits astride him. She is in control but it's still over very quickly. It's his first time and he's embarrassed. As she lies with him, she tells him not to worry "I just want you here with me. Next time it will be better."

The following morning, Alice wakes and looks at the empty pillow next to her. She is disappointed, thinking Barton has left, but in fact he is in the farmyard doing the morning chores, once again dressed in his army trousers and collarless shirt with the sleeves rolled up.

Alice goes downstairs and is pleased to find the plates and glasses from the night before have been cleared and washed and there is a teapot and two cups laid out, instead. Barton comes in with a bucket of fresh milk and they have their morning tea in the kitchen, together. They don't mention what happened the night before and instead nervously talk about train times.

Alice and Barton do the weekly wash together - an arduous task but they enjoy the domesticity of doing it together and playfully hang it to dry in the sun. Time passes and to Alice's delight, Barton misses all the trains that day, and the next, but she is concerned about him being seen staying at the farm - she is, after all, married and doesn't want people to gossip, so she tries to get Barton to wear a headscarf, to look like a woman, but he refuses.

Alice and Barton discuss other jobs that must be done over the next few days: cutting the clover, fixing the shed roof etc. and Barton spends all his leave with her. As the end of his leave approaches, Barton has a nightmare about being tormented and bullied at the barracks

On the last evening of Barton's leave, they ride the heavy horses up to the woods above the farm for a picnic. Alice points out the overgrown entrance to an old cave-larder where food used to be stored when old Grange was still occupied. Barton mentions his dread of returning to barracks - he is fed up with square-bashing and being shouted at all the time, and especially because he is bullied and teased for being a "nancy-boy" - and he then suggests that perhaps he might not go back. Alice knows he'll be in serious trouble if he's late back from his leave but she doesn't deter him and says it probably wouldn't be too bad if he was just a few days late. In the distance, they see tanks on exercise, noisily trundling down a hillside, scarring the land. They are very disturbed by this intrusion into the tranquillity of their own little world.

Barton burns his expired leave-pass. He is now officially a deserter - gone AWOL - and they both realise the implications as desertion is a very serious offence especially in wartime. Alice warns him that they must be very careful and that he must never go outside if she's not there.

Barton's hair has grown and now curls at his neck and covers his ears, and he starts to look like a very pretty young girl. Alice shows Barton how to hitch-up the two heavy-horses to the plough and they take turns at ploughing. Whereas Alice is expert at steering the plough, Barton's furrows are very irregular on account of him not being used to ploughing with horses and says it's easier with a tractor. Alice comments that horses don't drink petrol. Later, Alice and Barton herd and then shear the sheep. Barton is used to doing it and Alice is pleased to watch him at work and they tenderly tell each other how happy they both are to be together.

Alice sees a jeep with two soldiers driving down the hill towards the farm. She closes the gate and tells Barton to make himself scarce in the barn. THE SERGEANT and a young OFFICER, a subaltern, get out and walk up to the farmyard gate. Alice approaches the soldiers who apparently want to know about a road that is meant to run through the farm. She tells them about the Grange further down the road, which was burnt down before the war and how they

bought some land and livestock when the land was being sold off. The officer asks where Alice's husband is and she tells him that he is a POW and that she lives there with her sister.

The officer wants to look around to check on the road that is marked on the map and walks off around the outside of the farmyard wall, towards the barn and speaks to Barton about something. The Sergeant spots Barton talking to the Officer and then eyes Alice up and down in an overtly lascivious manner and asks "The two of you here all alone, eh? Must be lonely." The dog runs over to them – he clearly doesn't like the Sergeant, and barks and snarls at him. The Sergeant doesn't like dogs and is unnerved by him. He continues to speak to Alice, suggesting she should keep pigs and how he could send up some swill from the barracks. The Sergeant mentions his mate, a Corporal, and that the four of them could go dancing - "Barracks is having a Christmas Eve dance." Alice responds that they are always too tired to go out and just want to go to bed. The Sergeant suggestively jokes that he's got nothing against going to bed. The Sergeant says he wants to ask her sister and Alice replies that her sister is unwell and weak. "Don't like 'em strong. Weak but willing," he says, grinning. She tells him to leave her sister alone. The officer returns and then he and the Sergeant drive off.

Over their evening tea, Alice wonders if the soldiers were in fact after Barton. Barton says they were from a different mob and only looking around the hillside because it is a good tank-training country; with the invasion coming, there were bound to be more such incursions. Barton is amused about the Sergeant's dancing invitation but Alice doesn't see the funny side.

Alice is now paranoid about discovery. To perfect the subterfuge, she makes Barton wear a stuffed bra to form a bust. She then decides to get some makeup for him and goes to the village shop where she tells the woman shopkeeper she wants some lipstick and light-coloured face powder for her sister Rose, who has come stay on the farm. With war shortages, the little shop doesn't have much but Alice takes what there is. Alice quietly asks the shopkeeper if she has another black-market army battery for her radio as hers is running down. The shopkeeper says that they are now hard to get, but she'll try and get one for her. Alice hasn't got enough money to pay for everything and offers the shopkeeper some hares as part payment but the shopkeeper says that although she likes hare, her husband won't have them in house as he thinks they bring bad luck and Alice must clear her account soon.

Alice, now obsessive about maintaining Barton's disguise, paints his fingernails. Barton rails against this but Alice insists, and she also suggests he shave off what little facial hair he has.

Barton has started to absorb and enjoy his female persona. He paints his nails and, while Alice is outside doing chores, often looks at himself in the mirror, wearing Alice's clothes.

One night, after making love, Barton asks Alice if she's worried about getting pregnant. Alice tells him that she can't get pregnant. When Barton presses about why that is, she explains that when she was young, before she married, she was raped and fell pregnant. Her family couldn't bear the shame, so threw her out. She went to live with her grandmother in the town, who arranged for her to see a local woman who knew how to "help" girls who had got into trouble, but something went wrong with the abortion and now she can't have children. She then came to work at the old Grange, where she met her husband and he never knew.

Alice finds herself stirred by Barton's newly acquired femininity - his long hair which she strokes as they make love and his manicured fingernails, so different to hers which are dirty and broken. She half-imagines he is another woman - a desire of which she had not previously been aware, caressing his slender body tenderly, almost surprised to find he has no breasts.

Alice starts to be irritated by Barton always tending to his hair and nails "You're even starting to behave like a ruddy woman!" she shouts. He wants to make love but she pushes him away.

Alice is very worried about money and much to Barton's distaste, Alice makes and sets snares to catch hares, to sell to the butcher. Barton often has nightmares, reflecting his anxieties, and particularly about him being at the barracks where he is teased about his effeminate demeanour. Alice stays up late, worrying about the situation and especially about her many unpaid bills and she decides she must go into her marriage allowance. Barton tells her he does not want to live on another man's wage. In anger, she lashes out that she is already keeping him and that a day will come when she won't. He protests, saying that he knows she wouldn't ever let him down and she challenges him, "just watch me!" Then she sees his soft, vulnerable, eyes almost weeping and she starts to cry, too. They are two people trapped.

A convoy of tanks on an exercise trundles noisily down the hillside and onto the lane next to the farm, churning up the ground and crushing fences and hedgerows. Alice and Barton are shocked by this intrusion, and stand silently holding hands long after the tanks have gone.

We see the hillside and the farm below with its field of golden wheat swaying gently in the breeze, bathed in the warm light of the high-summer setting sun. Barton and Alice cut the wheat with scythes, gathering and stacking it into small sheaves, ready to be collected-up.

The wheat is now cut and in one corner of the field stand the two heavy horses, hitched to a four-wheeled wagon being loaded with wheat by Alice and Barton. He is on the ground, using a wooden pitchfork to lift the sheaves up to Alice, who stands on the already high mound and takes them from him. Periodically, Barton leads the horses, with Alice perched precariously on top of the now seemingly overloaded wagon, a bit further along, so as to be closer to the next group of wheat-sheaves. After all the sheaves are taken away, they burn the stubble.

The hillside is bathed in the warm light of the summer setting sun and we DISSOLVE to the same vista, blanketed in pristine snow, and bathed in the clear light of the winter setting sun.

Barton is out walking with the dog in the snow and shoots a hare, which he buries under snow. The dog suddenly howls and we see that he's got his leg caught in one of the gin-traps that Alice had set for the fox and his leg is broken. Barton carries the wounded dog down to the house. Alice can see the wound is too serious for them to deal with so she says they must put him down. Barton is desperately upset and Alice tells him to carry him out to the field where he gently lays the dog down and strokes its head trying to comfort him. Alice calmly tells Barton to move away and to his obvious distress, prepares to shoot the dog. He turns away, unable to watch. She fiddles with the hammers which are again stuck but at the second attempt shoots the dog, a triple echo reverberating over the valley. Barton is distraught and Alice desperately tries to console him. The next day Barton buries the dog up on the hill.

Alice is startled by the sight of a jeep with two soldiers, approaching the farm, both wearing the red-topped caps, armbands and the white webbing and gaiters of the Military Police – the REDCAPS. She rushes to the farmhouse, slams the door behind her and tells Barton, who is seated at the table, to disappear “fast!” and he runs up the stairs. She hears a knock on the door and opens it and sees the Sergeant standing there, beaming in a Redcap uniform with the other Redcap, a CORPORAL, behind him. He points proudly to his MP arm-band “Didn’t recognise me, eh? My transfer to Military Police came through, just in time for Christmas.”

Alice holds the gun half-raised, as if ready to shoot the Sergeant. The Sergeant accuses her of being unwelcoming and asks if Alice and her sister are coming to the barracks Christmas dance. Alice says they don’t want to go dancing; that her sister has a bad throat. The Sergeant takes the shotgun from Alice and passes it to the Corporal, who fiddles with it and says it’s a nice gun but the hammers don’t work properly and it’s not safe and could shoot her ear off.

The two soldiers eventually leave and Alice goes upstairs where she sees Barton lying on the bed with his hair loose on the pillow, looking like a girl. Barton laughs that the two soldiers were still going on about the dancing. They go downstairs and in silence have their supper.

Suddenly there’s a knock on the door and the Sergeant and the Corporal come in, the Sergeant saying the Corporal is very worried about the gun and he’ll take it away to be repaired by the armourer. The Sergeant sees Barton and says “you’re like Greta Garbo, “look nice but don’t say much.” Then, to Alice’s relief, they leave, taking the shotgun with them.

Alice is now paranoid and listens out for sounds of anything approaching the farm. Barton has now stopped helping Alice around the farm and spends most of the day, lying in bed, bored, combing his hair and staring vacantly at the ceiling, doing his nails or trying on Alice’s clothes.

Barton is seated at Alice’s dressing table, looking at himself in the mirror and brushing his hair languorously. Alice comes up into the bedroom and watches him silently for a few moments and then, standing behind him, cuts her own hair, short. The difference between their hair is evident now. Alice puts her hands on Barton’s shoulders and stares blankly at their reflection. They don’t speak. Barton continues to brush his hair as he stares at Alice in the mirror.

Alice goes to the village shop and buys a pot of gold paint and a tin of pilchards. She is excited about Christmas and on the way home stops and collects holly branches and acorns to decorate the farmhouse. She arrives back at the farmhouse and is shocked to see a jeep parked in the lane. She goes into the farmhouse find Barton and the Sergeant at the table having tea. Barton has told the Sergeant his name is Cath. Alice sees her gun and a brace of pheasants slung against the chair. The Sergeant remarks that Alice has changed her hair “very modern”. She drops the shopping bag in the scullery sink. Much to Alice’s consternation and annoyance the Sergeant offers her tea, telling her “That gun shoots something lovely now”.

Alice is troubled by the relaxed intimacy between Barton and the Sergeant. She is at loss as to what to do next, so she goes upstairs and sits on the bed in a cold and complete paralysis.

Concerned about leaving them together, Alice composes herself and comes back downstairs. She wanders between the kitchen and scullery not registering anything, and goes into the

kitchen, puts the gold paint and acorns on the table and paints a pinecone gold . The Sergeant takes the brush from her hand and picks up an acorn, shells it from the cup, paints it gold and then flirtingly places it against Barton's ears saying. "You'll look right lovely with these on".

Alice is now very angry, but to avoid confrontation pours herself a cup of tea. The Sergeant asks if she is coming to the dance too and she then explodes in anger. She seizes the shotgun by the barrels as if to swing it and hit him and tells him to get out. The Sergeant retreats to the door, laughing mockingly, and as he leaves Alice throws the pheasants at the door.

Alice and Barton have a huge row about why he told the Sergeant his name was Cath, when she had told him to say his name was Rose, as she had told the shopkeeper. We learn that Barton hates the name Rose, as that was his mother's name. Alice sits with her face buried in her hands wondering where all this is going and Barton says that he won't go to the dance.

Heavy snow falls and Alice is happier and more relaxed as they are now cut-off and isolated from the world. She regrets the things they had said to each other. That night they make love and then Alice bathes Barton in the scullery tin bathtub, and they feel closer and more intimate than they have ever been. Alice tells Barton that she loves him and Barton responds that until he met Alice, he wasn't sure if he would ever love a woman, but he does love her.

The next morning, Alice sees a large fox outside the farmhouse and goes after it with her shotgun, but just as she is about to shoot it, she decides not to and lets it run off. She finds a couple of hares in the snares, which she brings to the house. Barton brings a pile of logs to the hearth, sees the dead hares and, shocked, immediately tells Alice to take them out the house. "I told you - hares are evil! They bring bad luck!" Alice says he should think instead about their good luck as it's now snowing and while it lasts, no one will come looking for him.

Overnight it starts to rain heavily and the following morning, Alice wakes up to find the snow has almost all melted. The sun is shining and it's like spring. Alice is now very worried about the Sergeant coming back. She tells Barton that if trouble comes he should go and hide in the old cave larder on the hill. They both get a bit pickled on gin and Alice becomes amorous.

Alice goes to the village shops on Christmas Eve to get some last minute items for Christmas and returns to find Barton getting ready for the barracks dance that evening. She despairs. Barton tells Alice that no one will suspect he is not a woman and tries to get her to also go to the dance. She is furious and simply can't understand why Barton doesn't realise that he is running such a risk. He says "Come on. It'll be fun. Better than being stuck here all the time." Alice, oblivious to what he is saying, silently continues to decorate the hearth for Christmas.

We see Barton getting ready. He shaves his upper lip and cuts himself and we see blood drip down his chin. He then shaves his legs, gets dressed in Alice's clothes and puts on makeup. Alice, downstairs, hears a knock on the door and finds the Sergeant standing there. He asks Alice if she is coming to the dance. She is cold towards him and he tells her to "warm up".

Barton comes downstairs, and Alice and the Sergeant are both astonished at how pretty he looks. The Sergeant has a whiskey flask which he offers to Alice. Barton gets glasses and pours whiskey for all three. Alice realises that there is nothing she can do to stop Barton going to

the dance. As Barton and the Sergeant leave, the Sergeant winks at Alice and tells her not to wait up. Alice is paralysed with fear and sits by the fire staring vacantly into the flames.

We see Barton and the Sergeant driving to the dance. It's started to snow. The Sergeant touches Barton's knee as he changes gear. Barton is starting to realise the danger of his situation, and is nervous. They arrive at the barracks and go to the dancehall, where the Sergeant hangs his coat and they watch the other couples dancing. The Sergeant goes to the bar to get drinks and returns to find that Barton has left and is outside, and about to run off.

The Sergeant makes Barton drink some more whiskey and suggests they go to his quarters where they won't be disturbed. He takes Barton behind a building and kisses him whilst putting his hand on his breast. Barton initially resists but then caught up in the moment, succumbs and kisses him back, passionately. The Sergeant is thrilled at Barton's responsiveness but, after a few moments, Barton changes his mind: he pushes the Sergeant away, and scratches his face, deeply. The Sergeant, enraged, violently throws Barton on to a pile of coal and gets on top of him, trying to kiss him while putting his hand up his skirt. Barton resists as best he can but the Sergeant is too strong and, still believing Barton is a woman, he is about to rape him but then feels the bulge in Barton's underwear and, as he hesitates and pulls back in surprise and shock, Barton grabs a lump of coal and smashes the Sergeant on the forehead. The Sergeant staggers back, stunned and bleeding from the blow. Seizing the opportunity, Barton runs away, stumbling and tripping as he runs back home across country.

It is much later that night and Barton is now back at the farmhouse. He is seated, naked, in the kitchen as Alice washes him and dresses his badly scratched and bleeding arms and legs. They don't talk – Alice realising what must have taken place at the barracks dance.

The next day - Christmas - at dawn, it is snowing heavily and a platoon of armed Redcaps is gathered at the barracks. The Sergeant appears from an office, his head is bandaged beneath his cap and wearing his heavy greatcoat with white webbing and a holster, complete with revolver. He hands some documents to the Corporal and says "he's been on the trot since April 15<sup>th</sup> last." The Corporal calls the men to attention and after The Sergeant gives them a cursory inspection they board the personnel carrier and drive off to find and arrest Barton.

Barton is seated at the dressing table staring at his reflection, and is about to cut his hair when Alice appears and takes the scissors from him, as if to cut his hair, but she hesitates.

Alice and Barton are downstairs, standing by the fireplace. Barton's hair is still long. Alice tells Barton that the army will come looking for him soon and that he should go and hide in the old cave-larder, until she comes for him. Then, gently and in a motherly way, she ties a scarf around his neck saying, "mustn't catch cold." She says it may be some time till she can come for him so she has made him some sandwiches. Barton blames the hares for everything that has gone wrong but Alice says "it's the war. The whole bloody war." As he turns to leave, she kisses him gently and, looking lovingly into his eyes, promises "won't ever let you down."

Barton walks up the hill through the snow. As he gets to the top, he sees the Redcaps arrive at the farm and he hides in the dark and damp cave-larder and ponders his situation for a few minutes. He then goes out and starts to walk down the hill towards the oncoming Redcaps.

Alice is sitting at the kitchen table having a cup of tea, as if all was well, when there is a loud knocking at the door. The door opens and the Sergeant enters with the Corporal. The Sergeant stands at attention and in a very formal, officious manner tells Alice that they are looking for "Barton William. No 3517556. Private. Royal Artillery. Absent without leave since April 15<sup>th</sup> last and who we have reason to believe is being harboured by you, on this farm." Alice says there's no one at the farm by that name, only her sister and mockingly asks The Sergeant if he enjoyed the dance. The Sergeant doesn't respond but she has touched a very raw nerve.

A Redcap comes into the house and tells the Sergeant that Barton has been spotted on the hill. The Sergeant smiles menacingly and tells the Redcap to guard Alice and to not take his eyes off. As the Sergeant leaves he picks up the photo of Alice's husband, turns to her and disapprovingly says "...and what with your husband being a POW". Hearing voices shouting outside, the Redcap detailed to guard Alice goes to the doorway to see what's going on outside. The Sergeant, standing at the farmyard gate with the Corporal, sees Barton being frog-marched towards the farmyard by two Redcaps. He grins in malignant anticipation and shouts "Bring him over here. To me!" He produces a truncheon from inside his greatcoat.

Alice hearing this, and unseen by the guard, quietly gets up from the table, picks up the shotgun and some cartridges and goes upstairs. From the bedroom window, she sees the Redcaps throw Barton to the ground. He is kneeling in the mud, as the Sergeant approaches him, menacingly tapping the truncheon in his palm, and tells the Redcaps to hold him up.

Alice calmly cocks the shotgun and takes aim at the Sergeant, ready to fire, then pauses. She sees Barton stretching his arm up to her and their eyes meet. Alice then changes her aim to Barton, smiles at him tenderly and mouths "never let you down", then fires, killing him.

The Sergeant looks up in surprise and panic. She fires again. The Sergeant falls, dead. The other Redcaps dart for cover, leaving the Sergeant and Barton lying together in a heap in the mud and the snow, their blood spreading out, crimson, till it reaches the Sergeant's red cap.

Alice calmly lowers the shotgun and closes the window. The shotgun is broken open, smoke exits the breech as two cartridges are ejected, a single cartridge inserted, and then closed.

We hear a muffled shot from inside the bedroom as the shots echo around the valley, blanketed in pristine snow and bathed in the glow of the winter sun. A nightingale sings.

FIN

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