

THE OUTPOST

Written by

Elias Lederer

EXT. WELSH COUNTRYSIDE - COTTAGE - MOMENTS BEFORE DAWN

The cottage only just stands apart from its surroundings in the faint light of dawn. Very quiet.

Super: "Somewhere in Wales, 1948"

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - DAWN

Light creeps into the dark room, just barely illuminating:

JOHN MENDEL (late 50s, more tired than his years would tell) lies next to his sleeping wife, ELIZABETH (early 50s).

John tosses and turns a little. Eyes open, he looks at the ceiling... he puts on his glasses and checks his watch, which lies on the bedside table.

Careful not to wake Elizabeth, John creaks out of bed and gets dressed quietly.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY/SECOND BEDROOM - THAT MOMENT

John appears from the bedroom, fully dressed; he gently closes the door behind him and moves along the hallway.

John reaches another door. Already ajar, he opens it further and looks in.

The room is dark but we can see the shape of a sleeping body in the bed... strained breathing reverberates across the room.

John pulls the door to and continues downstairs.

CUT TO:

INT. ENTRANCE LOBBY - THAT MOMENT

John puts on his overcoat, hat and scarf, and leaves the house.

CUT TO:

EXT. FRONT DOOR - THAT MOMENT

John closes the front door behind him - a little loudly - and looks (CAMERA PANS) up to the bedroom window where Elizabeth still sleeps. John waits to see if the light flicks on... it doesn't. He starts away from the house.

CUT TO:

EXT. WELSH COUNTRYSIDE - A LITTLE LATER

WIDE: more daylight now. John walks along a single road, which cuts and curves through Welsh moorlands. His brown trench coat flaps in the breeze.

CUT TO:

EXT. WELSH COUNTRYSIDE - PHONE BOX

John approaches an old phone box and glances at his watch.

He stands outside the phone box, looks around at the morning and the landscape, and waits for the call. There's nothing around for miles. HOLD here. John checks his watch again.

CUT TO:

EXT. WELSH COUNTRYSIDE - PHONE BOX - LATER

John sits/lies, waiting, in the long grass next to the phone box...

John removes his glasses. He rubs the bridge of his nose, squints a little and gazes around.

POV(s): the surrounding landscape, out of focus. John's less-than-perfect eyesight sees vague shapes and textures, and bodies of colour merge into the each other around their edges.

The phone rings.

ANGLE: the phone box. John enters, answers the call, and waits for the voice.

AGENT (O.S.)

Mendel?

JOHN

You're late.

AGENT (O.S.)
Joseph was arrested -- I couldn't
get here any sooner, I'm sorry.

BEAT.

JOHN
What happens now?

AGENT (O.S.)
An assist will meet you -- same
time but the location's changed.
Ready?

JOHN
Yeah.

AGENT (O.S.)
You'll be taken to 39 Weymouth
Street. The house is on a corner
that leads into a mews; there's a
side door to the basement. Key's in
the lamppost. That's all I know.

JOHN
Ok.

AGENT (O.S.)
You have everything you need?

JOHN
Yes.

BEAT.

AGENT (O.S.)
How's your father?

JOHN
...

AGENT (O.S.)
Maybe we'll meet one day -- after
all this.

JOHN
Maybe.

A small pause and then CLICK - the phone hangs up.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - JOHN'S HOUSE - DAY

MEDIUM: Elizabeth prepares breakfast/washes up at the sink.

We hear the front door open/close and John (off screen) takes off his coat, hat, and scarf in the lobby.

JOHN (O.S.)
 (calling through the
 house)
 Morning.

After a moment, John crosses frame - enters the kitchen.

JOHN (CONT'D)
 (to Elizabeth)
 Have you eaten?

ELIZABETH
 Not yet.

MEDIUM: an old and sick man sits for breakfast at the head of the table. This is John's father, GRAHAM MENDEL (80s).

Graham wears a blanket over his shoulders and a nasal cannula, which carries oxygen from a small tank that is stored in the undercarriage of his wheelchair. He coughs between feeble bites.

Passing Graham, John lovingly touches his shoulder and picks up a newspaper from a box of supplies.

JOHN
 Morning, dad.

Graham says nothing - seems unable either to register or respond.

John sits at the table with his newspaper and Elizabeth puts some breakfast in front of him. She stands and watches on by the kitchen counter.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY/GRAHAM'S BEDROOM - DAY

ANGLE: through the doorway, into Graham's bedroom. Graham is on the bed, John and Elizabeth stand by its side and change him.

It's a taxing process; gently lifting and rolling Graham's occasionally grunting body in different directions to take off/put on new clothes.

This is obviously routine, by now, for John and Elizabeth - and it's clearly a two-person job.

CUT TO:

EXT. COTTAGE/WORKSHOP - DAY

John appears from the house, walks across the yard and into the shed/workshop...

CUT TO:

INT. WORKSHOP - THAT MOMENT

John enters, turns on the light, and approaches a stack of chopped firewood.

John removes logs from the pile; he places them to the side, one by one, and the outline of a metal box begins to appear. It is dark green, about three foot long, and one foot wide.

John removes more logs and lifts the box from it's hiding place.

He carries the box towards the door, turns off the light, and leaves.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST/WOODED AREA - DAY

John walks - box in hand - through the small forest.

He finds a suitable spot and kneels down besides the box; opens it, and produces some small, square sheets of card - though we can't see clearly what's printed on them.

John takes the cards and walks on a little further. He balances/props them in the joints of various trees - we can see now what they are: small shooting targets.

John returns to the box, produces some parts and assembles the gun.

Gun assembled, John walks a few paces in the direction he came from - further from the targets - finds his position, and takes aim...

ANGLE on John. In very quick succession, he shoots in three directions; one shot for each of the cards.

His bodily movements are totally precise - almost shockingly so, considering his age and general, tired physicality.

John collects the targets/resets them.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Elizabeth watches - through the window - as John emerges from the workshop and approaches the house. A radio plays faintly in the background.

The kettle starts to squeal; CAMERA PANS Elizabeth as she turns from the window and pours the tea...

CAMERA PANS further; beyond Elizabeth's tea-making, across the kitchen, until we're looking through some open doors into the living room, where Graham sits in his chair and listens to the radio...

Elizabeth enters our new frame with a tray of tea. She places it on the kitchen table (foreground) and takes one of the cups through to Graham (background).

We hear John open/close the front door (off screen).

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - THAT MOMENT

MED: on Graham. He sits, despondently, by the radio. Elizabeth places his tea down, rubs his shoulder and leaves frame again.

ANGLE, through the open doors, into the kitchen.

John enters, picks up one of the teas... glances over the newspaper again.

Elizabeth re-enters the kitchen and closes the living room doors behind her.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - THAT MOMENT

...

ELIZABETH
How was it?

John looks at his wife for a second.

JOHN
(almost to himself)
This morning?
(then)
It was fine.

BEAT.

ELIZABETH
You were gone a long time.

JOHN
There was a mixup.

ELIZABETH
What happened?

JOHN
Nothing -- it was just a normal
mixup.

ELIZABETH
So when do you leave?

JOHN
Tomorrow.

ELIZABETH
Were you going to tell me?

JOHN
Yes... I'm telling you now.

BEAT.

ELIZABETH
I'm not trying to change your
mind...

John watches Elizabeth quietly - lets her speak.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
...I know it wouldn't be worth
trying.
(BEAT)
But this isn't what I want to be
left with, John -- it's not what I
want.

He receives this... looks down for a moment and then through the closed doors to Graham - who's still sitting in the next room.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

John, Elizabeth and Graham sit and eat together in silence.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

John helps Elizabeth to clear the table. A glance/half-smile between the two of them.

John finishes helping and then leaves the kitchen - walks into the living room.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Graham sits in his chair and gazes ahead, catatonically.

CAMERA TRACKS John as he walks through the room, towards Graham.

John arrives and sits in front of Graham - thereby entering his father's unintentional gaze.

Their positioning - their apparent eye-contact - mimics and replicates a standard interaction between people. We can't tell if Graham actually sees his son, or whether he looks right through him. HOLD here.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - DAWN

Elizabeth lies alone in bed. We hear the front door opening/closing downstairs.

An engine is running outside.

CUT TO:

INT. WORKSHOP - MOMENTS LATER

The wood pile. John removes logs to once again dislodge the green box from it's hiding place.

As John continues, we CUT TO another angle... Something stands in the darkness of another corner in the workshop. The light flickers and reflects against something metallic.

We see that it's Graham's wheelchair - empty apart from his oxygen tank, which rests idly on the seat...

CUT TO:

MOMENTS LATER

John stands at the door - green box and a suitcase in hand - and looks back at the room for a moment.

He turns off the light, and leaves.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - THAT MOMENT

POV, out of the window: John walks away from the workshop, towards a car (engine still running).

MED: Elizabeth sits in bed - looks out the window.

POV: a man appears from the passenger seat of the car. He makes his way to the trunk and opens it for John, who puts his luggage and the green box inside.

The man shakes John's hand, gestures him into the front passenger seat, where he had been sitting, and gets in the back of the car.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - THAT MOMENT

ANGLE: passenger seat. John lowers into the front seat of the car and looks back, over his shoulder, at the bedroom window - although he can't see Elizabeth in the darkness of the room.

The car pulls away... CAMERA PANS, through to the rear window, and we watch the house as it shrinks into the distance...

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - THAT MOMENT

Elizabeth sits in bed - watches the car as it drives away.

CUT TO BLACK.

END.