

# UNTITLED SCREENPLAY

by

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INT. GEORGIAN TOWN HOUSE. LONDON. NIGHT

CAPTION: LONDON 1885

SEANCE. Candlelight. The sound of a clock ticking. Five people seated around a table, including artist JAMES TISSOT (50). Their hands facing down and overlapping. This is the home of the spiritualist WILLIAM EGLINTON (28). In the centre of the table is a CRYSTAL BALL on an enamel saucer. In the corner of the room is a thick velvet curtain - drawn.

EGLINTON

Be silent. They are coming.

Bright light starts to fill the room. Phosphorus glow. TWO FIGURES robed in white cloth and holding spirit lights appear from the direction of the curtain and approach the table. A MAN and a WOMAN. The GUESTS gasp. TISSOT watches on in rapture as the ROBED WOMAN (looking like his former Muse KATHLEEN NEWTON) approaches him.

WOMAN IN ROBE

Peace, let it be. I love him still  
and shall love him forever. The  
dead are not dead. We live on.

The WOMAN bends down and kisses TISSOT softly on the cheek. He stretches a palm to touch her face.

INT. LILIAN HERVEY'S HOUSE. LONDON. DAY

CAPTION: LONDON 1946

Cosy sitting room. LILIAN HERVEY (70) is talking to magazine journalist MARITA ROSS (45). They are both seated in armchairs facing each other.

LILIAN

Where do I start?

MARITA

The beginning is always a good  
place.

LILIAN

There is only the beginning. I have  
memories. But I am not sure if  
they are mine or his.

MARITA

Do you remember how they first met?

INT. TISSOT'S HOUSE. LONDON. DAY

TISSOT (aged 40), dressed and dapper, looks out from his bedroom window in St John's Wood onto a dusty street. He notices an attractive WOMAN (KATHLEEN) approaching a Post Box and posting a letter.

LILIAN (V/O)

At the local Post Box. That's the story I was told.

EXT. OUTSIDE TISSOT'S HOUSE. DAY

Different day. The same WOMAN with a FEMALE COMPANION, CHILD and NANNY pushing a Pram, posts a letter. TISSOT looks down from the same window. He checks his watch.

EXT. TISSOT'S GARDEN & OUTSIDE TISSOT'S HOUSE. DAY

Another day. TISSOT is in his garden, peering through a gap in a gate out onto the street. He examines his watch. He's holding a letter. The moment comes and he opens the gate, crosses the road, raises his hat and greets the woman, KATHLEEN NEWTON (aged 22), as she approaches the Post Box.

LILIAN (V/O)

My Aunt was beautiful. It was easy for a man to fall for her. Beautiful people cast a spell.

TITLE SEQUENCE: TISSOT'S PICTURES OF KATHLEEN NEWTON - MAVOURNEEN (PORTRAIT OF KATHLEEN NEWTON), SPRING, SUMMER, OCTOBER, A TYPE OF BEAUTY, A WINTER'S WALK.

INT. POLLY'S HOUSE, LONDON. DAY

Inside the comfortable Georgian home of Kathleen's sister POLLY (24) in St John's Wood. KATHLEEN enters the sitting room holding a note. POLLY is seated.

KATHLEEN

You remember the man we met at the Post Box - the painter.

POLLY looks up

KATHLEEN (CONT'D)

He wants me to sit for him!

POLLY

I am sure he does.

KATHLEEN

He sees something in me.

POLLY

And what might that be?

KATHLEEN

That I am still attractive?

POLLY

An opportunity perhaps?

KATHLEEN

I am a mother of two Polly.

POLLY

And you don't want to be a mother  
of three.

INT: TISSOT'S CONSERVATORY. DAY

TISSOT and KATHLEEN walk into the impressive Conservatory.  
It's full of Chrysanthemums in bloom.

KATHLEEN

It's so beautiful in here. So  
exotic.

KATHLEEN bends down towards the Chrysanthemums

TISSOT

You'll need to be amongst them.  
Caring for them. As if I've  
disturbed you for a moment from  
your work.

KATHLEEN poses next to a flower.

KATHLEEN

Like this?

TISSOT supports KATHLEEN from behind as she crouches. He  
stretches out her left hand to hold a stem between her  
fingers.

TISSOT

Like this. But looking at me.

TISSOT continues to hold KATHLEEN. A little longer than he  
should. They are close. Intimate. KATHLEEN turns and looks  
straight at him. A knockout look.

KATHLEEN

What type of look?

INT. LILIAN HERVEY'S HOUSE. DAY

MARITA takes out a pen and notebook from her handbag.

MARITA

Do you mind if I take notes? This  
is very exciting. We finally know  
her identity.

LILIAN

I read your article Marita. It is  
Marita isn't it?

MARITA

Yes, Marita Ross.

LILIAN

You called her the mystery woman.

MARITA

That's what she's been all this time. For over 60 years. They've called her his Muse or La Mysterieuse. But no one has known her name. I remember passing a Gallery in London. This was before the War. And there she was on a large canvass in the window - looking directly at me. Inside there must have been a dozen paintings and each had the same oval face, large eyes. Not a hint of a smile. "The lady is a mystery" I was told.

LILIAN

She wasn't to me, so I suppose I presumed...Besides it would have hurt too many people still living. There were her two children, my sister, my brother. We all appeared in the pictures.

MARITA

You especially.

LILIAN

I was something of a favourite. The others wouldn't have wanted a fuss - interviews and photographs. But now they are dead I think I should make it clear. Tell her story. (Pause, LILIAN'S reflecting). You know there were three men in my Aunt's life. Tissot of course. But before that there was her passion and then her marriage. Shall I start at the beginning again. Her beginning, not mine.

INT. LONDON SCHOOL. DAY

Gumbley House Convent School, London. KATHLEEN (aged 16) walks confidently along a corridor. At one stage she looks directly into the camera.

LILIAN (V/O)

Her name was Kathleen Kelly.

KATHLEEN knocks on the HEADMISTRESS'S door and enters. The HEADMISTRESS is examining a note - sternly. KATHLEEN is standing before her.

HEADMISTRESS

You have a lively temperament Miss Kelly. One that regretfully we haven't been able to keep in check.

(MORE)

HEADMISTRESS (cont'd)

You would do well to dwell on devotion and service and less on the distracting froth and frivolity to which you appear to be drawn.

KATHLEEN

Yes ma'am.

HEADMISTRESS

I have received this letter from your father. He says you are to be sent to India.

KATHLEEN looks blank

HEADMISTRESS (CON'T)

You know nothing of this?

KATHLEEN shaking her head - no

HEADMISTRESS

Your father has had the responsibility. And now it is time to pass that burden onto someone with younger and broader shoulders. I am sure with help and guidance you will learn to love this man and obey him. You still have time to turn around your life and follow the right path. Whoever he is, I hope you don't disappoint him as you have disappointed me.

INT. LILIAN HERVEY'S HOUSE. LONDON. DAY

MARITA

Was that the marriage?

LILIAN

Yes.

MARITA

But she was so young.

LILIAN

She was sixteen. Old enough.

MARITA

So who did she marry?

LILIAN

A doctor. Isaac Newton.

MARITA

She was sent out to India to marry a man she'd never met?

LILIAN

That wasn't so unusual. There were plenty of men out there in need of a wife.

MARITA

You mentioned her passion?

LILIAN

He was Captain Palliser. That's all we knew.

MARITA

Nothing else?

LILIAN

Whoever he was, he turned her head while she was preparing for marriage. And that had unfortunate consequences.

EXT. ON BOARD A PASSENGER SHIP. DAY

HENRY PALLISER (31) steps out into the sunshine and on to the deck of a passenger ship heading for India. Immaculately dressed. Rather too many rings on his fingers.

EXT. ON BOARD A PASSENGER SHIP. DAY

KATHLEEN is walking on deck and pauses, looking over the side. Behind her, relaxing in a deck chair, is PALLISER. She hasn't noticed him. He's noticed her.

PALLISER

A mighty fine view wouldn't you say! Mighty fine from where I am sitting.

KATHLEEN looks round, then understands the meaning.

PALLISER (CONT'D)

A perfect picture.

KATHLEEN

You need to broaden your horizons sir.

PALLISER gets up to join her. KATHLEEN is purposefully looking out to sea. PALLISER now by her side on the ship's rail, looking out also.

PALLISER

I prefer nature's curves and contours.

KATHLEEN is silent.

PALLISER (CONT'D)

This must be your first voyage.

Kathleen is still looking out to sea.

KATHLEEN

And what makes you so sure of that?

PALLISER

Oh your age. Your manner. (Pause).  
The Purser wouldn't tell me much  
about you Miss Kelly. You know what  
we call young unmarried women going  
to India for the first time. The  
Fishing Fleet. The Fishing Fleet in  
search of a prize catch!

KATHLEEN still silent but turns towards PALLISER

PALLISER (CONT'D)

And when they fail to make that  
match and head home alone. They are  
the returned empties!

KATHLEEN'S older brother CHARLES(30)and his pregnant wife  
KATE(22) approach.

PALLISER

Good afternoon. We were just  
admiring the view.

CHARLES

And you are sir?

PALLISER

Commander Palliser, Royal Navy.

CHARLES

Well pleased to make your  
acquaintance. Come Kathleen, we  
must get ready for dinner.

PALLISER

A pleasure to meet you (doffs his  
hat).

They walk away, leaving PALLISER at the ships's rail.  
KATHLEEN glances back - tellingly.

EXT. PARIS STREET. DAY

Paris is under siege. It's the Franco-Prussian war. Wreckage  
and rubble from the shelling.

MARITA (V/O)

What year would this be?



LILIAN (V/O)  
About 1870. Before I was born.

MARITA (V/O)  
Before Tissot met Kathleen.

LILIAN (V/O)  
Yes. Before he came to London.

EXT. MALMAISON, PARIS. DAY

TISSOT is in a line of men behind a row of vines. The Prussian army some distance away on the brow of a hill. There's an exchange of fire. Some of Tissot's compatriots are lying dead and wounded. A SERGEANT approaches.

In French with English subtitles.

SERGEANT  
Get the men ready. We've got orders  
to withdraw.

The SERGEANT moves off down the line.

TISSOT  
How's Leroux?

SERGEANT  
Shot in the leg. He'll survive. Be  
quick.

EXT. MALMAISON. PARIS. DAY

The sound of artillery and gunfire continues. The French soldiers, looking exhausted and bedraggled, are retreating towards Paris. They pass a French BODY amongst the ruins. They march on, but TISSOT halts. It's too good an opportunity. He returns to the BODY, takes out a small notebook and pencil from his coat and starts to draw the dead soldier. (See: "The First man I Saw Killed". Tissot).

EXT. ON BOARD PASSENGER SHIP. DAY

It's Sunday service on the deck. The CAPTAIN is acting as Chaplain. The CONGREGATION sings "All People Who On Earth Do Dwell". KATHLEEN AND PALLISER are amongst them. They exchange glances.

EXT. ON BOARD PASSENGER SHIP. DAY

Passengers are promenading. KATHLEEN walks with PALLISER.

KATHLEEN  
You said I was a first time visitor  
to India, Captain.

PALLISER

Commander Henry Saint Leger Bury  
Palliser. Henry will do.

KATHLEEN

Commander. Henry. You were wrong. I  
lived in Agra until I was  
fourteen. You could say I am  
going home.

PALLISER

Home? As soon as I arrive I am  
ready to leave.

KATHLEEN

My memories are all good. Playing  
in the Peach groves and the ruins.  
Being spoilt by my Ayah and the  
servants. And when we went to the  
Hills - the mountain gorges covered  
in strange creepers and the bamboo  
and rhododendrons. The summits were  
coated with snow. So pure and  
magical.

PALLISER

So why are you going?

KATHLEEN

My older brother Charles is a  
Police Superintendent in Ludhiana  
in the Punjab. He has a friend. A  
Doctor.

PALLISER

You are getting married?

KATHLEEN

Perhaps.

PALLISER

It's a long journey to hang on the  
word perhaps.

KATHLEEN

It's a big decision.

PALLISER

Forgive me, but it's obvious it's  
one that your brother has already  
made.

KATHLEEN

And what about you? How long have  
you been at Sea?

PALLISER

Since I was thirteen. Joined as a Midshipman and worked my way to become a Lieutenant with HMS Racer in the Mediterranean - eleven guns, 868 tonnes. And you know my Commander's name? Commander Brine.

KATHLEEN

No!

PALLISER

Commander Brine! The old salt. And second in charge - Lieutenant Spry! He had a limp.

They laugh

PALLISER

Brine and Spry!

EXT. ON BOARD PASSENGER SHIP. DAY

CHARLES and his wife KATE are looking down from above at PALLISER AND KATHLEEN.

CHARLES

Have a word with her.

KATE

What sort of word?

CHARLES

A strong one. Why can't she see she's playing a dangerous game. She needs to grow up fast, do her duty and marry Isaac. In India you don't need to get on. You just have to get on with it.

KATE gives CHARLES the look of a woman who wishes she hadn't married him.

KATE

You're her brother. Can't you tell her?

CHARLES

I'll deal with him. You talk to her. Woman to woman.

