

"THE BOOK AND THE ROSE"

A Short Screenplay

by Jeff Bemiss

Based on a Short Story

by Max Lucado

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WGAw Registered
40

"The Book and the Rose"

FADE IN:

1. INT. PHILADELPHIA TRAIN STATION, 1942 - DAY

GREAT HALL -

The larger-than-life center statue, a gilt lady with arms outstretched, presides over the waiting area. SOUNDS of the STATION ECHO. The VOICE of JOHN BARNES speaks to us as we MOVE toward the statue. His VOICE is gentle and contemplative.

JOHN (VO)

"Tell me who you love," someone once wrote, "And I will tell you who you are."

WIDER - a view of the crowded station from above, the people crisscrossing through it.

A SERIES OF SHOTS:

An ELDERLY WOMAN waits alone on a bench, staring off.

A MIDDLE-AGED MAN stands bobbing his head around, searching the crowd for someone.

A YOUNG WOMAN runs into the arms of an arriving SOLDIER.

JOHN (VO - CONTINUING)

I never believed in soul-mates. The idea of a single spirit, torn in half...The pieces flung far and wide in the world as some kind of test. (pause) God would have to be pretty bored.

2. PLATFORM -

A train pulls in. JOHN BARNES, a handsome 35-year old man, steps off the train and straightens his Army uniform, a little nervously. He studies the crowd of people shuffling off the platform and into the station.

John makes his way through the crowds on the platform. A large duffel bag is slung over his shoulder, and in his hand he carries a blue book.

3. GREAT HALL -

John stops at the statue in the center of the station. He scans the busy area.

A beautiful WOMAN IN A GREEN DRESS emerges from the crowd. She is heading toward John, a small handbag over her shoulder. Her figure is long and slim, her blonde hair lies

back in curls from her ears. In her pale green suit, she is springtime come alive.

John is captivated. As she approaches, she makes eye contact with him and smiles. She seems about to speak to him, but doesn't. She walks past. John is dumb-struck.

JOHN
(turning)
Sarah...

The Woman in the Green Dress stops.

WOMAN IN GREEN DRESS
Excuse me?

John starts to speak, but catches himself. He simply looks at her. Pause.

JOHN (VO)
What do you say to your other self,
when you see it for the first time?

John stares at the Woman for a long moment. Finally, she shrugs.

WOMAN IN GREEN DRESS
(a little laugh)
Catch you later, Lieutenant.

The Woman turns and continues on.

John watches her go. The SOUNDS of the STATION FADE.

JOHN (VO)
It took me sixteen months to make a
day's train ride. Sixteen months,
and a trunk full of letters.

John turns his gaze from the Woman. He looks around the station, then directly into the CAMERA. HOLD.

4. EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - DAY

John walks down a tree-lined street, past neighborhood houses. A hazy summer day.

SUPERIMPOSE: "Huntington, West Virginia. Sixteen Months Earlier."

5. OMMITTED

6. INT. USED BOOKSHOP - DAY

Crammed bookshelves stretch floor to ceiling. The owner, CHARLIE, a droll, bearded erudite talks with a CUSTOMER.

DOORBELLS JANGLE. Charlie turns and sees John entering.

CHARLIE
Look who's here.

CUSTOMER
(checking his watch)
I gotta be getting back. See you
around, Charlie.

CHARLIE
Okay, Del.

The Customer nods to John on his way out.

John steps around piles of books to reach the counter. He points to a fresh stack of newspapers.

JOHN
He get one yesterday?

CHARLIE
As a matter of fact...No.

JOHN
You're kidding.

CHARLIE
(beaming)
He got three.

Charlie grabs one of the newspapers, tosses it on the counter.

CLOSE ON NEWSPAPER - below the war news, a headline reads, "STREAK CONTINUES: NUMBER FIFTY-FIVE FOR JOLTIN' JOE."

CHARLIE (CONTINUING)
Thank God he's on our side. (beat)
Hey--I got a bunch of stuff in this
morning. A lot of nineteenth
century. I haven't had time to go
through it yet. Wanna' look?

7. INT. BACK ROOM

A dusty, darkened room with shafts of light shining through a few tiny windows. Books and broken shelves everywhere.

John and Charlie enter. Charlie flips a light switch, with no effect.

CHARLIE
(grimacing at the light)
Great..One more thing to fix around
here.

Charlie pushes some stuff out of the way to reach a pile of sealed boxes.

CHARLIE (CONTINUING)

A guy dropped them off in a truck.
 Didn't seem to care much about them.
 Sold them to me by the pound. From
 the looks of it, I got a deal.
 (beat) How's a buck and a half a
 book sound, potluck?

JOHN

Fair enough.

DOORBELLS JANGLE in the front room

Charlie exits.

8. INT. BACK ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

CLOSE ON BOX - a pocket knife cuts through heavy tape.

John pops the box open. It's packed with books of all sizes,
 some in sets. John begins to go through them. Beat.

We slowly PAN over to one particular box, near the window,
 apart from the rest. We MOVE closer to it, until it fills the
 FRAME. HOLD.

9. INT. USED BOOKSHOP - LATER

John emerges from the back room carrying a small stack of
 volumes. Charlie is at the counter, marking prices on books.

CHARLIE

How's the treasure hunting?

JOHN

(holding up the books)
 Whoever he was, I like his taste.

John lays the books on the counter. Charlie looks at his
 selections. He picks up a handsome blue hard cover, admiring
 it.

CHARLIE

Anna Karenina. Tolstoy's best, I
 don't care what they say.
 (opening the cover)
 Look at this...First edition. Hand-
 painted vellum, French bindings. I
 didn't see this one. (beat) Ever
 read it?

JOHN

No. I've always wanted to.

CHARLIE

The first part is work. But it's
 worth it.

10. INT. JOHN'S APARTMENT - DUSK

CLOSE ON PHONOGRAPH - a TUNE PLAYS QUIETLY.

We PAN around the apartment. A small place, half furnished. Boxes and pictures rest on the floor.

John sits in a comfortable chair by an open window, reading Anna Karenina. Outside we HEAR faint THUNDER.

John turns a page and notices something in the book.

CLOSE ON PAGE - there is a handwritten note in the margin. It reads, "Train accident. Evil omen. Anna's future?"

BACK TO SCENE - John considers this for a moment, then continues reading. Pause. He flips the page, curious.

CLOSE ON PAGE - more handwritten notes in the margin. He turns several pages, revealing more and more notes, eventually filling the margins. Pause.

JOHN
 (under his breath;
 sarcastically)
 Great...

BACK TO SCENE - John scowls, goes back to his page.

JOHN (VO)
 At first, I was annoyed. A first
 edition, wasted with scribbles.

11. INT. JOHN'S APARTMENT - AN HOUR LATER - NIGHT

John reclines sideways over his chair, reading under a dim lamp. We HEAR light RAIN through the half-open window.

JOHN (VO)
 Then, something I didn't expect...

John tilts the book at an angle.

JOHN (VO - CONTINUING)
 ...I started to read them.

We PAN over several of the notes, DISSOLVING between them. They are READ in a MONTAGE of genderless WHISPERS: "Brother's household--fascinated by Anna;" "Anna's humanity--noble but leaves her defenseless;" "Frantic ring of races is arena of love here--endless, unsatiating," and so on.

BACK TO SCENE - John looks up from the book. He's intrigued.

He sips a mug of coffee, then dives back into the book, engaged.

12. INT. JOHN'S APARTMENT - LATER

John, sprawled out in the chair, holding the book above him.

We HEAR more notes, READ in a succession of DIFFERENT WOMEN'S VOICES: "Anna's world is ruled by chance;" "no place in this society for a woman who demands all out of life;" "Tolstoy is saying the phenomenal world is separate--it never enters our lives or passes judgement on our actions," etc.

We DISSOLVE through a SERIES OF SHOTS: John reading the notes, turning the book; contemplating a particular note, smiling to himself; going back a page; nodding, engrossed.

JOHN (VO)
 Gradually, a voice began to shape
 itself in my mind...A woman's voice.

We begin to HEAR a single WOMAN'S VOICE, under the others, reciting the text of Anna Karenina as John reads it.

CLOSE ON PAGE - one of the margin notes bleeds slightly as a speck of spray from the open window hits it.

John goes to the window and closes it. HOLD ON THE WINDOW.

JOHN (VO)
 ...Anna's voice.

ON THE WINDOW - rain pounding in the darkness. The other VOICES fade away, overtaken by the SINGLE VOICE, as we

DISSOLVE TO:

13. INT. JOHN'S APARTMENT - THE SAME WINDOW - MORNING.

A steady rain continues. We PAN back from the window to find John still sitting in his chair, reading. We HEAR the text in a single WOMAN'S VOICE.

WOMAN'S VOICE (VO)
 (reading Anna Karenina)
 "...Levin had heard that women often loved plain, simple men, but he didn't believe it, since he judged by himself and he himself could only love beautiful, mysterious, and exceptional women..."

John looks up from the book, ponders a moment. Something appears to resonate in him. Beat. He glances at the book.

CLOSE ON PAGE - next to the passage, a single note reads, "Tell me who you love and I will tell you who you are."

Pause.

John snaps the book closed, amazed. He stares off into nothing. After a moment, he opens the back cover.

CLOSE ON BOOK - stamped inside the cover is a bookplate with the words, "From the Library of Sarah H. Parker" printed under a red rose.

14. INT. JOHN'S APARTMENT - MORNING

CLOSE ON PHONEBOOK - as it is opened to the "P"s. A hand traces down a column of names, stopping on "Parker, S.H." We follow the listing over to an address, "4529 Bright Ln."

15. EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSE WITH PORCH - DAY

CLOSE ON MAILBOX IN POURING RAIN - "4529 Bright Lane," hand-lettered on its side.

In the b.g., John stands on an old porch-front, the blue book in his hand. He is talking to a WOMAN. The Woman gives him a slip of paper. John thanks her, steps off the porch and hurries down the street with no umbrella, smiling.

16. INT. JOHN'S APARTMENT - DAY

John sits at a small desk, writing a letter.

JOHN (VO)
(dryly; as one reads a
letter)
Dear Mrs. Parker...My name is John
Barnes. I live in Huntington, West
Virginia. We have never met.

17. INT. JOHN'S APARTMENT - ENTRY - DAY

A small cat stares directly into the CAMERA, CHITTERING.

CAT'S POV - a stack of mail is inched through the mail slot. It drops to the floor.

The cat walks over and lies on it.

John enters, pulls the mail out from under the cat. He sorts through it, stopping on a small envelope.

CLOSE ON ENVELOPE - the name "Sarah Parker" is written on the return in a familiar hand.

18. INT. JOHN'S APARTMENT - DAY

John finds a letter opener in his desk, opens the letter.

JOHN

(murmuring aloud)

Dear Mr. Barnes...I was very surprised to receive your kind letter the other day. To answer your question, yes, I did own a blue vellum-covered copy of Anna Karenina. It left my possession nearly a year ago, and by the rose bookplate, is surely the one you describe. In truth, it was sold by mistake--a result of my hasty departure from Huntington.

John turns over the paper--there is a full page of writing on the back, and several pages behind it.

19. EXT. REAR BALCONY - DUSK

John ambles out of his apartment, the letter in his hands. The letter continues in the same WOMAN'S VOICE.

WOMAN'S VOICE (VO)

I must confess some embarrassment. Reading my private thoughts, quoted back to me in a stranger's hand, I felt as if I'd dropped a love letter in the street. But that's what reading a book is to me--lingering over the parts I like, recording my thoughts and feelings. As long as I can remember, books have been my diary. Which brings me to wonder what kind of man would call such vandalism "inspiring." You've made me as curious about you as you claim to be about me. So if I answer all your questions, and tell you about myself as you ask, you must do likewise in return.

ON JOHN - smiling, turning the page of the letter.

A series of DISSOLVES as John reads the letter. In each DISSOLVE, daylight fades slightly, until it is gone.

JOHN (VO)

(over the WOMAN'S VOICE,
reading softly in the
BACKGROUND)

As it turns out, just as I'd arrived in Huntington, Sara Parker had left. She was living in Philadelphia with her brother. She'd been to college. Studied art. (pause) She even mention she'd been engaged once.

END DISSOLVES.

Night has fallen. John sits on his balcony, reading.

WOMAN'S VOICE (VO)
 (concluding the letter)
 ...I look forward to your
 reply...Cordially Yours, Sarah H.
 Parker.

John looks up from the letter. He takes a deep, satisfied breath. He sits for a moment, listening to the nighttime SOUNDS.

20. EXT. HIGH SCHOOL COURTYARD - DAY

John sits at a break table eating an apple, while SETH, an energetic history teacher, lights a cigarette and paces around the courtyard. A SCHOOL BELL RINGS in the b.g

SETH
 (looking off)
 Ready for this weekend?

JOHN
 This weekend?

SETH
 (turning to John)
 The picnic. Rogers Hill Park.

John thinks a moment, winces.

SETH (CONTINUED)
 No, no, no...You're not getting out
 of it this time--

JOHN
 I'm sorry, I just forgot...

SETH
 Too bad. Betty's dying to meet you.

JOHN
 Betty?

SETH
 It's always something with you. You
 got a problem with names?

JOHN
 I'm just...I've got a lot of work to
 do this weekend--

Pause. Seth looks at him, thinks.

SETH

This doesn't have anything to do
with that little Charlotte Bronte of
yours, does it?

Beat.

JOHN

Who?

SETH

(sitting down)

Charlotte Bronte...What's her name.
The letter-writer in Philly.

JOHN

Oh.

(he grins)

Sarah.

SETH

Sarah, yeah. You guys still writing
each other?

Beat. John smiles.

SETH (CONTINUED)

That's been going on for a while.

John gives a reserved nod.

SETH

How old is she?

JOHN

(uneasy)

I don't know exactly how old she
is...

SETH

You've been writing each other all
summer, and you never asked her age?

JOHN

(slightly defensive)

I asked...

SETH

And...

JOHN

She didn't want to tell me.

SETH

(lighting up)

Whoa...She wouldn't tell you? Oh
boy, I hope you like older women.

JOHN

(shakes his head)
No, no...That's not what this is--

SETH
How do you know?

JOHN
I just know.

SETH
How?

JOHN
I can tell.

SETH
Uh-huh. What about her hair? What color's that? How tall is she? How much does she weigh? You don't have any idea, do you.

JOHN
I have an idea...

SETH
Betty's a beautiful brunette. And she's stacked like a brick shithouse. What about this woman?

JOHN
(sarcastic)
I don't know, she hasn't sent me her measurements--

SETH
(patronizing)
Oh, I see. You guys are on a higher plane.

JOHN
Yeah.

SETH
(still skeptical)
What's wrong with asking for a picture?

JOHN
(thinks a moment)
I don't want her to think I'm like that.

SETH
Like what?

JOHN
You know, focused on that stuff.

SETH
(laughs)
Waiting for her to ask first, huh?

JOHN
That would be nice...

SETH
Good idea. Make her think you're respectable.

JOHN
(a sly smile)
I am respectable.

TWO SCHOOL KIDS run past LAUGHING. Seth turns to them O.S.

SETH
Walk!

Beat. The School Kids are silent.

SCHOOL KIDS (O.S.)
Yes, Mr. Davis.

Seth watches them for a moment. He turns back to John.

JOHN
(after a beat)
She did say something about her age.

SETH
What?

JOHN
"I'm as old as everything I've ever done, and as young as everything I still want to do."

SETH
What the hell does that mean? It doesn't tell you anything.

JOHN
(emphatic)
It tells me everything.

The SCHOOL BELL RINGS. Seth and John rise to go.

SETH
It tells me she's a pensioner.
(they get up to go)
I'm picking you up at noon on Saturday. And you better be there, because there'll be an extra girl in the car with your name written all over her.

Seth throws the rest of his cigarette in the bushes and exits. John stands alone, thinking.

CUT-TO:

21. EXT. ROGERS HILL PARK - DAY

CLOSE ON - an old Nikon camera, hanging level by its strap from a low tree branch. A gentle WHIRRING SOUND is HEARD.

WOMAN'S VOICE (VO)

John...After all my prodding, I'm
glad to hear you finally made it up
to Roger's Hill...

WIDER - John and two YOUNG WOMEN sit next to a late model Buick, parked in the grass. Seth stands by the dangling camera, steadying it.

TWO WOMEN

(hearing the WHIRRING;
calling to Seth)

Hurry up!

Seth scrambles to the car, throws his arm around one of the women, MALISSA. The other, BETTY, looks at John, who puts his arm round her. All face the camera, smiling.

WOMAN'S VOICE (VO - CONTINUED)

...But tell your friend the History
teacher that a blind date wasn't
exactly what I had in mind.

We HEAR a little CLICK, and the group abandons their pose.

EXT. ROGERS HILL PARK - LATER

A picnic is laid out. John and Betty lean back on the Buick. Seth is sprawled in the grass, a beer in his hand.

They are all laughing at something Seth has said.

BETTY

(to John)

What subject do you teach?

JOHN

Mathematics.

BETTY

(laughing)

Oh, I absolutely hated math!

John smiles politely.

SETH

You wouldn't if you'd had Mr.
Barnes.

JOHN
 (to Betty)
 Well, they say there are three kinds
 of people in this world--those that
 can count, and those that can't.

Pause. She stares at John blankly for a moment. Suddenly, her eyes light up. She slaps her forehead.

BETTY
 Boy, isn't that the truth!

Betty laughs boisterously. John glances over at Seth, who lifts his beer to John with a subtle wink.

WOMAN'S VOICE (VO)
 You did redeem yourself however,
 when you told me that all that
 afternoon...

JOHN (VO)
 ...All that afternoon...What I
 really wanted was to be in a tiny
 corner, writing you.

EXT. ROGERS HILL PARK - LATER

Betty is in the middle of telling a story. John watches her closely. We slowly MOVE in on him as he watches, almost studying her.

JOHN (VO - CONTINUED)
 If that sounds like a declaration,
 it is. Every time I write you, every
 time I read you, I feel a bit of my
 life happening. I want to propose
 something.

22. EXT. JOHN'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

A MAILMAN is greeted by a dog on John's walkway. John is out mowing the grass, his LANDLADY watching from her front stoop.

WOMAN'S VOICE (VO)
 Dear John...Your sweet letter came
 this morning. I think our meeting is
 a wonderful idea.

Wanting John to see her dog's latest feat, the Landlady directs the Mailman to let it bring John's mail to him.

WOMAN'S VOICE (VO - CONTINUING)
 I must admit...I'm nervous. Will you
 come to Philadelphia, and be my
 guest? You could take the train, and
 I could meet you at the Station
 downtown, under the big statue. You
 can't miss it--a giant golden

maiden, in the center of the Midway, holding two lanterns. She's supposed to represent the East meeting the West.

The dog takes the mail, starts toward the John and the Landlady, then lays down and begins chewing it up. John sprints over to grab it.

23. INT. JOHN'S APARTMENT - DAY

John enters, reading Sarah's letter. He goes to a table, sets the rest of his mail down.

WOMAN'S VOICE (VO - CONTINUING)

I'll be celebrating Thanksgiving that week with my brother. Now that he knows about you, he's asked me a hundred questions. It's made me realize something--I don't know one thing about you that would satisfy anyone else. Write me soon...Yours, Sarah. (beat) P.S. - I'll wear a read rose so you can find me...(she laughs) The same way you did before.

John puts the letter down, smiling. Pause. He glances at the pile of mail on the table. Something catches his eye.

CLOSE ON LETTER - "UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT" is stamped on the return.

John takes the letter and opens it. As he stares at it, a concerned look crosses his face.

WE PAN OVER THE LETTER, which begins "DEAR MR BARNES," and ends with a reproduced signature of Franklin D. Roosevelt.

John holds it in his hand, squinting at it, realizing it is a letter of military induction.

24. EXT. RESIDENTIAL DRIVEWAY - DAY

A red 1940 pickup sits in the driveway of a tiny house. John emerges from the house with a suitcase. He throws it in the back of the truck.

After a moment, Seth and a BUDDY emerge, each with suitcases.

SETH

(to Buddy)

I hope they send me to Europe.

BUDDY

Why?

Seth piles his suitcase in the truck bed, flashes a big grin.

SETH
French women.

In the b.g., Seth's young cousin, JAKE, comes out of the house sporting a fresh buzz cut and fiddling with a gun.

SETH (CONTINUING)
(picturing it)
...The way they talk, all those French sounds pushing their lips out...It's like they're kissing you with every word. (beat) Right John?

JOHN
(smirking)
That's what I hear--

In the b.g., Jake's gun GOES OFF LOUDLY. Everyone DUCKS.

Beat.

The group slowly turns and notices Jake, who is embarrassed.

SETH
(to Jake)
What in the hell are you doing!

JAKE
I'm sorry, it just went off...

SETH
What did you bring that out here for?

JAKE
(self-consciously)
We're going to war...

Pause.

SETH
You don't bring your own gun. They give you a gun!

John and the Buddy stifle a laugh. Seth looks at them, incredulous. Beat.

SETH (CONTINUING)
(to Jake)
Give me the gun.

JAKE
But...

SETH
Walk over here and give me that
thing!

Jake does so. Seth snaps it from his hands.

SETH (CONTINUING)
Where's your bag?

Jake motions toward the house.

SETH (CONTINUED)
Go in the house and get it so I can
put it in the truck. Go!

Jake lumbers off, dejected. Seth turns to the group.

SETH (CONTINUED)
Can you believe I'm related to that?

They all get in the truck, John in the passenger seat. As Seth gets in and starts the engine, John looks off down the quiet street, thinking. Slowly, his smile fades. HOLD.

SCENE 41 INSERTED - EXT. RURAL HIGHWAY

The red pickup zooms away, into the empty fields which stretch as far as the eye can see.

JOHN (VO)
Sarah... Just as I received your
letter, inviting me to Philadelphia,
I received another, ordering me to
Tennessee. I wish it'd been the
other way around...

CUT-TO:

25. EXT. CAMP DICKSON - TRAINING FIELD - DAY

A stern-faced SERGEANT SCREAMS instructions at a company of uniformed RECRUITS. In the middle of the formation, we see John and Seth, at attention, their heads freshly cropped.

BEGIN MONTAGE OF CORRESPONDENCE:

JOHN (VO)
Dear Sarah....I'm at a true loss to
convey the relentless pace of things
at Camp Dickson. Seven days a week
we march from class to class where
the non-comms try to teach us
everything from first aid, to
rifles, to how, when, and what to
salute.

26. INT. MILITARY CLASSROOM - DAY

An INSTRUCTOR shows a room full of recruits, including John and Seth, how to disassemble a .50 caliber machine gun.

JOHN (VO - CONTINUING)
I'm sure it's no picnic for them either. The sound of their efforts is the sound of being in the Army, and it echoes off the buildings from Reveille until Taps.

27. EXT. BARRACKS BUILDINGS - DAY

John, Seth and a group of RECRUITS return from field maneuvers to find a SOLDIER posting a sign that reads "NO MAIL TODAY."

JOHN (VO - CONTINUING)
I think if you asked anyone, they'd tell you the most important thing that happens on this base is mail call. But it seems to be an annual event. Letters arrive by the truckload or not at all...And not always in the order they were sent.

One of the Recruits furiously jumps the Soldier, and the rest of the group try to pull him off.

JOHN (VO - CONTINUING)
It's not uncommon to see soldiers shuffling envelopes like decks of cards, sorting them by postmark. You have to read the oldest letters first, or else it's like...Turning ahead in a book.

28. INT. BARRACKS - NIGHT

MOVING PAST rows and rows of bunk beds, we come to a bunk where John lies under a tiny lamp, writing a letter to Sarah.

JOHN (VO - CONTINUING)
I know we decided not to do this, but I've been thinking I'd like to have a picture of you. I've never been a great follower of tradition, but I would cherish having your face to carry around with me.

John takes out the black and white photo from the picnic, looks at it. He encloses it in Sarah's letter and seals it.

JOHN (VO - CONTINUING)

With all of this between us now, I guess I'm in the mood to face things. If we are only good on paper, maybe we should find that out now.

Suddenly a VOICE YELLS "LIGHTS OUT!" John scrambles into bed, throws the letter under his pillow. The lights go out.

Pause. John grabs the letter from under his head, carefully opens it again. He removes the picture and re-seals it.

29. OMMITTED.

30. EXT. TRAINING GROUNDS - DAY

A JUNIOR OFFICER calls out names and throws mail to soldiers from the back of a truck. John is reading a letter from Sarah, walking away from the crowd.

WOMAN'S VOICE

Dear John... You're right, I don't approve, and you'll find no picture of me in this letter. Nor do I want one of you. I've come to believe our letters are the only way I can avoid the disappointments of my past...Disappointments I know we have in common.

We HEAR a sudden "YEEE-HAA!" John turns to see a SOLDIER in the b.g., waving a photo of his sweetheart in the air.

WOMAN'S VOICE (VO - CONTINUED)

I ask no promises, John. We've come this far, let's not spoil it now.

31. INT. MILITARY CLASSROOM - DAY

An Instructor glances at a stop-watch as John, blindfolded, assembles a machine gun quickly.

JOHN (VO)

Sarah...I don't want to spoil anything. I can't help feeling that I'm only getting further and further from the day I'll be able to look at you. And I am ready to do that. If for some reason that terrifies you, then maybe I have more faith in you than you do in me.

END MONTAGE.

32. INT. BARRACKS - DAY

John, Seth and the Men are shining shoes at their bunks. A JUNIOR OFFICER enters, posts a piece of paper on the wall.

JUNIOR OFFICER
Orders are in!

The Junior Officer exits. Everyone drops what they are doing and rushes over to the wall.

CLOSE ON PAPER - a list of transfer orders.

We see John's name on the list with "WESTBURY COMMAND, WESTBURY, ENGLAND" printed next to it. Just under that is Seth's name, followed by "ALLIED HQ VERIGEATE, ITALY."

BACK TO SCENE.

John and Seth look at each other. Pause. Suddenly, we HEAR the DOOR SWING OPEN. The Sergeant enters.

SERGEANT
At ease!

The Men turn their attention toward the Sergeant.

SERGEANT (CONTINUING)
Those headed for the Mediterranean theatre of operations will ONLY RECEIVE A THREE DAY LEAVE. See the first Sergeant for time, date and place of embarkation. If any of you miss that date, I will come looking for you, and put you on a boat myself. (beat) As you were!

The Sergeant exits. John and Seth stare at each other, speechless.

33. INT. SMOKY BAR - NIGHT

VARIOUS SHOTS OF THE BAR - packed with soldiers and officers.

JOHN (VO)
I have news, Sarah. Real news this time. They're splitting my company up. By the time this reaches you, I'll be gone. I'd tell you where, but the censor would just snip it out.

Several SOLDIERS are crowded around a small table. They are all listening to John.

JOHN (VO - CONTINUING)

Tonight I sat with my company-mates for the last time. We talked about wives, fiancées, sweethearts. When it came my turn, I told them about you. I think each man made you up in his mind to suit him, as I have. (pause) I still hope when this is all over, I can come to Philadelphia and meet you. Until then, I won't be writing any more. And I don't think you should either.

34. INT. BARRACKS - DAY

John is at his bunk, writing to Sarah. Seth enters, excited.

SETH

(snatching the pencil from John's hands)

She can wait. (beat) We had a problem, but I fixed it. We don't have to ship out on the troop train with the other guys.

(pulling tickets from his pocket - a big grin)

I got us four tickets to New York City. They got Carriers leave twice a day. We can embark from there. Not bad, huh? (beat) I gotta tell the other guys.

Before John can say anything, Seth is running out the door. John watches him go, amused. Beat. He returns to his letter.

35. INT. BARRACKS - DAY

In his dress uniform, John is packing a large barracks bag.

He pulls the blue book from his shelf, stares at it for a long moment. Beat. He packs it.

36. EXT. RURAL TRAIN PLATFORM - DAY

Seth and a group of Soldiers walk energetically toward the train. John walks a step behind, preoccupied. After a moment, he stops in his tracks.

SETH

(to John)

What are you doing?

John stares at Seth, a vacant expression on his face.

JOHN

I...Left my hat in the station.

Beat.

SETH
Well, go get it.

John turns mechanically and heads back to the station.

37. EXT. PHONE CLOSET

John rushes into the closet, suddenly animated. He lifts the receiver, waits a moment.

 JOHN
 (on phone)
Yes, operator. I need to reach a
Sarah Parker in Philadelphia.

 OPERATOR (VO)
Do you have an address?

 JOHN
Ten sixty-four East 126th Street.

There is a long pause while the phone rings at the other end.
John looks out toward the train nervously.

A MAN'S VOICE comes on the phone. A poor connection.

 MAN ON PHONE(VO)
Hello?

 JOHN
 (on phone)
Is Sarah there?

 MAN ON PHONE(VO)
Who is this?

 JOHN
 (on phone)
This is John Barnes. I'm a friend of
hers.

 MAN ON PHONE(VO)
 (suddenly excited)
This is John Barnes?

 JOHN
 (on phone)
Yes. Is Sarah there?

 MAN ON PHONE(VO)
She's not here now.

CUT-TO:

38. THE PLATFORM -

Seth stands in the vestibule, looking impatiently for John. A conductor walks by, BLOWS HIS WHISTLE and SHOUTS, "ONE MINUTE!"

CUT-TO:

THE PHONE CLOSET -

John looks off toward the train nervously.

JOHN (CONTINUING)
 (on phone, loudly over
 terrible STATIC)
 ...Listen, I don't have much time.
 I'm coming to Philadelphia. I'm
 taking the 9:15 from Nashville. Tell
 Sarah if she wants to meet me, I'll
 be waiting under the big statue.
 (pause) They're sending me to
 Europe...

MAN ON PHONE(VO)
 (writing it down)
 Okay, okay. Just a minute...

JOHN
 (on phone)
 ...Tell her to wear a rose.

MAN ON PHONE(VO)
 A rose?

JOHN
 (on phone)
 She'll understand. (pause) I'll have
 the book. (long silence) Did you get
 that? Hello?

John realizes the connection is gone. Suddenly, the train gives THREE SHORT BLASTS O.S.

39. EXT. RURAL TRAIN PLATFORM - DAY

John approaches the train. Seth stands in the vestibule.

SETH
 Did you find it?

Pause. John takes a deep breath.

JOHN
 I'm not going.

SETH
 What?

JOHN
I'm going to Philadelphia. I can
embark from there.

Seth looks at John, realizing what he is saying.

SETH
(exasperated)
Not Charlotte Bronte again.

JOHN
I need to know.

SETH
Right now? We ship out in three
days--

They are interrupted by a LONG BLAST from the TRAIN WHISTLE.
John and Seth stare at each other until it subsides. Pause.

Seth suddenly seems to soften. He holds out a ticket to John.

SETH
Here. This will get you to New York.
(beat) Just in case she's not
everything you want her to be.

We HEAR the TRAIN START. John looks at Seth. He takes the
ticket. The train starts to pull away slowly.

DISSOLVE-TO:

40. INT. PHILADELPHIA STATION - DAY

HIGH ANGLE - the station, buzzing with activity.

41. PLATFORM -

John steps off the train, as at the beginning. He straightens
his uniform, watches the crowds of people.

42. GREAT HALL -

John reaches the big statue in the center of the station. He
surveys the area, the blue book in his hands.

The beautiful Woman in the Green Dress emerges from the
crowd, heading straight for John. He is captivated. As she
walks past, John is dumb-struck.

JOHN
(turning)
Sarah...

The Woman in the Green Dress stops, turns. An awkward pause.

WOMAN IN GREEN DRESS
Excuse me?

As John is about to speak to her, he notices there is no rose on her lapel. He stops himself. Pause.

WOMAN IN GREEN DRESS

(a laugh)

Catch you next time, lieutenant.

The Woman in the Green Dress turns and continues on her way. As John watches her go, he sees something in the background, just beyond her.

43. JOHN'S POV - SARAH PARKER stands several yards away.

She is well past 40 and plump, with graying hair tucked under a worn hat. Pinned to the lapel of her thick coat is a red rose. She is looking away and does not see John.

BACK TO SCENE.

John looks at Sarah, motionless. He lowers his head. He is devastated. Beat.

He glances toward the station entrance.

JOHN'S POV - the Woman in the Green Dress is walking away. Under the great windows, she passes through a golden light.

BACK TO SCENE.

John watches her with a longing in his eyes. He opens his bag and tentatively places the blue book inside it. Pause.

A sadness comes over him. He looks back at Sarah.

JOHN'S POV - Sarah is looking around, glancing at her watch. Her pale, round face is gentle and sensible, her eyes are warm and kind.

BACK TO SCENE.

As John watches her, something melts away. He is ashamed. He opens his bag and removes the blue book. He looks at it.

CLOSE ON BOOK - a beautiful but faded vellum cover with "Anna Karenina" in hand-painted gold letters.

CUT-TO:

JOHN - walking resolutely through the crowd toward Sarah.

As he reaches her, she turns and he is behind her.

JOHN

Sarah...

Pause.

Sarah turns around and smiles. Without saying a word, she looks John up and down. John squares his shoulders and holds out the book.

JOHN
I'm John...It's so good to finally
meet you.

Sarah's face broadens into a tolerant smile. John stops.

JOHN
(suddenly nervous)
Are you...Disappointed?

SARAH
(amused)
No.

An awkward silence.

JOHN
Well. Would you...May I...Take you
to dinner then?

She hesitates a moment. She starts LAUGHING.

SARAH
Sir...I have no idea what this is
all about.

John is bewildered.

SARAH (CONTINUING)
A young lady just came by here and
begged me to put this rose on my
coat. She said if a man presented
himself to me, that I should say
she's waiting in the big restaurant
across the street. (pause) Does that
make any sense to you?

John is lost in thought.

WOMAN (CONTINUING)
Sir? Did you hear what I said?

John stares at the WOMAN in disbelief. Slowly, a smile starts on his face. He looks at the Woman.

JOHN
Yes.

The Woman looks at John curiously, as John looks up to see...

THE STATUE - suspended above him, bathed in late golden
light.

DISSOLVE-TO:

44. EXT. RESTAURANT ACROSS THE STREET - DUSK

The street is reflected in the restaurant's front window. Beyond the reflection, Sarah, in her green dress, sits alone at a table, her hand playing over a cup and saucer.

JOHN (VO)

A month doesn't pass, that I don't think about it. How close I came.
(beat) I was looking for a beautiful woman, and almost missed the love of my life.

IN THE WINDOW'S REFLECTION - a man in an Army uniform hurries across the street, his image growing larger in the glass as he approaches. Sarah sees him and smiles.

HIGH ANGLE - a vista of the street. Pulling his hat from his head, John Barnes enters the restaurant. In the window, Sarah stands up.

JOHN (VO - CONTINUING)

"Tell me who you love...

Pause.

SARAH PARKER (VO)

"...And I will tell you who you are."

Above the buildings, the sun is going down. In the window, John and Sarah embrace.

FADE OUT.

THE END.