

**“The Walkover (Act Four)”**

An epic in Thirteen Acts, as Dionysus bridges the river Styx.

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(abridged by editor James K Beach)

**PART I – DIGRESSION (continued)****Characters in Act Four**

**Fehmin Ashton**  
**Leon Blackwell**  
**Gareth Rothschild**  
**Cambridge Football Team (“The Blues”)**  
**A Doctor**  
**Mr. Ashton**  
**A Nurse**  
**Mr. Blackwell**  
**Mrs. Blackwell**  
**Belmont**  
**Hasselbach**  
**Man**  
**Woman**  
**Voice(s)**

**ACT FOUR – The Other Players**

(Motif: December; the two of cups, two of swords, two of pentacles)

*On the two suspended cinema screens drifts this poem, like snow, over a wintry landscape:*

“When Cold December”- by Dame Edith Louisa Sitwell

When cold December  
 Froze to grisamber  
 The jangling bells on the sweet rose-trees—  
 Then fading slow  
 And furred is the snow  
 As the almond’s sweet husk—  
 And smelling like musk...  
 The snow amygdaline

Under the eglantine  
 Where the bristling stars shine  
 Like a gilt porcupine—  
 The snow confesses  
 The little Princesses  
 On their small chioppines  
 Dance under the orpines  
 See the casuistries  
 Of their slant fluttering eyes—  
 Gilt as the zodiac  
 (Dancing Herodiac)—  
 Only the snow slides  
 Like gilded myrrh—  
 From the rose bushes— hides  
 Rose roots that stir

“When Cold December” - by Dame Edith Louisa Sitwell

#### **ACT FOUR - Scene 1**

*Curtains rise.*

*Grad café on Mill Lane. PATRONS come and go. FEHMIN sits with empty plates and unopened books while she plays on her tablet.*

*They troop inside, commanding attention: LEON, GARETH and the FOOTBALL BLUES.*

*Fehmin rises, and makes a hasty exit. Leon and Gareth occupy the table she has just vacated, joined by the others. In loud voices they order their lunch, almost everyone nearby looking up to see: they believe all publicity is good publicity. But then, one must make allowances for a gruelling practice before a match.*

*Leon sitting almost at the place she had occupied, though not quite, becomes aware of a fallen book— a book dropped in haste, now lying on the floor, facedown, and open to some page. He picks it up and a highlighted text catches his attention:*

*“The only design of the utopian in war is to obtain that by force, which if it had been granted them in time would have prevented the war”. The text plays across the cinema screens, followed by “Utopia, by Thomas More”.*

*Leon he turns to the first page inside the cover where it is scribbled: “F. Ashton- CL-008-00072”. (This also plays across the cinema screens.) He shrugs and pockets the book and joins in the conversation with the team.*

*The scene morphs to:*

*A hospital corridor, spotless and gleaming, a door to a private room has been thrown ajar for a patient about to be discharged: a DOCTOR troops out, in close conversation with Fehmin. Her father, MR. ASHTON, is wheeled out after them by a NURSE. Although the doctor and Fehmin have stopped to talk, the nurse wheels the man down the corridor.*

*Their conversation now finished, and so perhaps his evening round, the doctor pats Fehmin reassuringly on the shoulder and marches down the opposite end of the corridor. Fehmin follows her father's progress through the corridor until a frenzied door is thrown open right in front of her. She looks up just as he rushes out of the room and runs to the counter, harried and in dire urgency. She watches him, as he rushes past her; he disappears in the next blink.*

*She blinks now.*

*Fehmin pushes the door from where he emerged and enters. The room is dimly lit by a small bulb. She spots a patient's file and picks it up; turning to the first page where the identification essentials are filled: "Patient's Name: Adam Blackwell; age: sixty seven years; Family member in-charge: Leon Blackwell; Relationship to the patient: Son". These words drift across the cinema screens.*

*MR BLACKWELL, lying on the bed, is very much awake as Fehmin approaches. He calls: "Leon?"*

*Fehmin leans into Adam to whisper and pantomime; she holds the man's hand and closes her eyes. Since she closed her eyes she would never know that the moment she clasped her hands around his, he died.*

*The ring of the failing vitals on the monitor alerts her and in the next few seconds. And she is left still holding his hand, though his grip slackened. She slides her hand out of his grip and places his hands on his chest, in semblance of dead king effigies. Then she quietly exits.*

*The scene morphs again:*

*A private graveside ceremony: Leon with an arm around his weeping mother, MRS BLACKWELL, who stands irresolutely, holding a long stemmed white primrose. Gareth approaches and whispers something in Leon's ear: they make their way towards the cemetery gate.*

*Mrs Blackwell begins to shaking with grief— the primrose drops and so does her meagre confidence. Her resolve broken, she picks her way between the graves to exit.*

*Leon turns back, retraces his steps. He spies the primrose and picks it up with something of a reverence. He hesitates to put the flower on his father's grave.*

*Curtains fall.*

**ACT FOUR - Scene 2**

*Curtains open.*

*A private bed and breakfast accommodation at Cambridge; a private room: a man standing by and looking out of the window, dressed in a shirt that proclaims "University College London" on the front and "Belmont- 10" on the back.*

*A knock at his door forces him to tear his eyes off the view outside the window; dark and indecipherable in the early hours of the morning. He takes a swig from his coffee mug before striding to the door. A slight hardening of the jaw shows his feelings towards this guest.*

*It is another man of that same average age: young man; Apparently, the declaration of their academic affiliations is an unsaid rule that must be upheld.*

*HASSELBACH enters wearing a shirt that reads: "Oxford". His face is drawn, troubled, tired. But he does keep a margin for genuine humour.*

**Hasselbach:**

"So they live up to their expectations by giving you better lodgings than us. I have heard talks that they keep Leeds like one would keep royalty".

*Belmont clicks the lock in place. He has zero margins kept for genuine humour.*

**Belmont:**

"Why are you here, Hasselbach"?

**Hasselbach:**

"We need to talk".

*Belmont's eyes narrow.*

**Belmont:**

"Okay. What about"?

*Hasselbach looks at Belmont in disbelief.*

**Hasselbach:**

"Gareth Rothschild is dead".

*Belmont's turn now to mirror the incredulous, though kept in a more levelled balance than its predecessor.*

**Belmont:**

“Since I am sitting in his University playing a tournament against his team and he was the captain of that team, I think I know that already, Hasselbach”.

*The pronunciation of his surname is deliberate and typical of his fashion.*

*Hasselbach takes it in his stride. Still a portrait of disbelief as Belmont pours water in an electric kettle to make him coffee.*

“I must congratulate you, though. After Cambridge defeated Sheffield five goals to none I thought that couldn’t be bettered in this tournament, at least. But no– the quiet but steady Oxford took the field by storm: eight goals to one against Lancaster”.

*He liberally laughs, measuring coffee and then sugar with the same spoon.*

*Hasselbach does not share his joke and only allows a very cautious smile to briefly spill through as Belmont raises the cup as if in a toast.*

“To the winning captain”!

*Hasselbach is unamused, and raises, of course, no cup.*

**Hasselbach:**

“To you, Belmont. And best of luck for your match tomorrow against Bristol. I am surprised you are not practicing ‘into the late hours of the morning”.

*Belmont fills and hands him a steaming cup.*

**Belmont:**

“I am not worried about Bristol. They are not a very strong team”.

*Hasselbach is stopped short of his first sip as he catches Belmont’s eye over the rim. He looks away.*

**Hasselbach:**

“So– from Group A we have Cambridge and Sheffield qualifying for the quarter finals”–

**Belmont:**

–“No. Cambridge and Warwick. Warwick defeated Sheffield, remember”?

**Hasselbach:**

“Yes. That’s right. Manchester and Southampton from Group B. Us, Oxford and Imperial from Group C and Group D– tomorrow’s match will decide”.

**Belmont:**

“You think so? It would be us and King’s, of course. We are comfortably at the top of the group table. Bristol has already lost to King’s and King’s has lost to us. Well, I am in no way conceding that there is any reason why we should not win tomorrow”.

*Hasselbach warms up to this over-confidence.*

**Hasselbach:**

“I wonder what your pre-match talks are like, with this attitude”.

**Belmont:**

“Enemy captain this is information not to be divulged”.

*He takes a sip.*

“So why are you here”?

**Hasselbach:**

“I felt like talking to you. Enemy captains though we might be but friends also we certainly are”.

*It is more than a statement; almost near a code word? Belmont studies Hasselbach over the rim of his cup. They both take it in turns to copy each other's moves.*

**Belmont:**

“And now you will get up to leave”.

*Hasselbach looks up to Belmont's scrutinizing stare.*

**Hasselbach:**

“You know me too well, Isaac. I was thinking about leaving this very moment. I will probably be there to watch. I don't know”.

*Hasselbach makes a move to leave with Belmont still studying him.*

**Belmont:**

“Geoff”?

*Hasselbach turns.*

“When was the last time you saw Gareth”?

**Hasselbach:**

“When Cambridge played Sheffield. We were both in the crowd, I think. He looked... Two days later he died”.

**Belmont:**

“Yes”.

*Hasselbach, taking this to be a dismissal turns to leave and then stops on an afterthought.*

**Hasselbach:**

“You did not go to his funeral, right”?

**Belmont:**

“No”.

**Hasselbach:**

“Oxford had a match against Lancaster that day. My excuse... But, why didn’t you go”?

*There is a moment of pause.*

“Now you will tell me that I have overstayed my welcome behind the enemy lines”.

**Belmont:**

“You know me too well, Hasselbach. I was thinking these words over at this very moment. Again, congratulations on that brilliant victory against Lancaster. They will be talking about that one for a long time”.

*Hasselbach exits.*

*Curtains fall.*

### **ACT FOUR – Scene 3**

*Curtains open.*

*Dark, dark; everything dark must be most literally: the dark. Only whispers and voices now; disembodied? A liturgy in hallows. One voice is a rasp, and harsh like the scrape of claws on granite with a pronounced scintilla of metal– a MAN’s? The other is the whooshing wind of the wilderness, hardly there: a WOMAN’s? Logic should so dictate. And all logic is order. And no order prevails when chaos reigns. There is no knowing and no confirming the fact. If it cannot be known and neither can be confirmed– the fact– then it is a dream, in fact. For fact is the mirrored truth of dream.*

*There might be more figures in this place, part of the dark, making up the dark: hallowed liturgy. There is no knowing and no confirming the fact– Someone speaks; the one with the rasp, and harsh like the scrape of claws on granite... very long talons of a witch– a man’s...*

**Man:**

“Let the dealer be the best of them”.

*The other voice follows: the hard whoosh of wind between the snow-capped peaks of the wilderness; hardly there, must be a woman’s...*

**Woman:**

“Or the reaper, would you agree”?

*The rasp-voice has an added glint of amusement at this, like the blade slightly unleashed.*

**Man:**

“You forever remain faithful to your name. I should for the life of me dare refute a yonder notion”.

**Woman:**

“Perhaps that is why there is the ancient ritual of denoting names. For... without the ability to single out we are lost”.

*A small pause, a transition; a transaction...*

“Ah... the grim reaper”.

**Man:** *(a trace of a small laugh)*

“What is that rhyme, almost the adage: The queen of hearts made some tarts all on a fine summer’s day<sup>1</sup>”...

**Woman:**

“And the knave of hearts stole those tarts and took them far away”...

*Another pause by this voice, timed to the nearest second.*

“Alas, why, thou saucy knave”?

**Man:** *(still amused)*

“Without the ability to single out we are lost, you said” –

*There is silence now between the two: and there it is heard then as it prevails: a dull incessant whispering in the background. Some voices asking questions and some replying profound... it is so obscure and monotonous that it is the sound of silence itself in this place.*

**Woman:**

“Gareth left some bequeath”.

**Man:**

“I have read it. The family assets are contained”.

**Woman:**

“A trivial rout when they were never his to give”.

**Man:**

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<sup>1</sup> “The Queen of Hearts” by anonymous author, popular English nursery rhyme based on characters of the playing cards. The full rendition is as follows: The Queen of Hearts

She made some tarts,

All on a summer's day;

The Knave of Hearts

He stole those tarts,

And took them clean away.

The King of Hearts

Called for the tarts,

And beat the knave full sore;

The Knave of Hearts

Brought back the tarts,

And vowed he'd steal no more.

“Were they not”?

**Woman:**

“So... it cannot be prevented”?

**Man:**

“There is a niche in the law that sticks out on the parapet. He used it to haul himself over the battlements, as you can imagine”.

**Woman:**

“And now someone would throw the doors open to the wolves at night and the months of siege would be lost”.

**Man:**

“Even if the gates are thrown open at night, there are no hungry Greeks waiting outside to raze Troy to the ground, or Byzantines, if the tale were Antioch bound”.

**Woman:**

“I once heard a story...

There was once a tree outside the garden wall of a rich man’s house. It was fruitless and barren compared with the lush green ones that peeked from over the high walls. The man’s house had never been robbed, for all around; the walls were skewered in poison oak.

One day there was a terrible storm that uprooted the dried old tree. No one was sorry but the next day the man’s house was robbed”.

*Although each syllable has been effectively pronounced and paused, this is the greatest pause of them all.*

“You see... the tree stood on a passageway that led inside the house”.

*The sound of silence itself now diffuses in the place.*

**Man:**

“I doubt the man could have prevented the tree’s fall”.

*Some lingering moments...*

“Ah, I am finished”.

**Woman:**

“Why are we playing against one another”?

*Another similar long stretch of silence: the sound of silence slightly frantic and harried. The man’s rasp fills the void, switching languages in a strange manner: switching tongues for pleasure, very much at home with it: a flowing accent. The whooshing wind of the woman has no ado following suite at all. The eerie atmosphere of the place is not the dark.*

**Man:**

“Que dire de son kamerad, Léon Blackwell<sup>2</sup>”?

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<sup>2</sup> Compound French (Que dire de son) and German (kamerad). Loosely translates to, “What about his friend”?

**Woman:**

“Léon Blackwell? Ó adta à son ami un enterrement chrétien... ennyi év után<sup>3</sup>”?

**Man:**

“Gareth kannte ihn jobban, mint bármelyik férfi ... és Gareth értékes neki túl minden más<sup>4</sup>” ...

**Woman:**

“C'est vrai. Aber es ist seine Frau wäre ich mehr Sorgen um<sup>5</sup>“.

**Man:**

“Femme? Leon Blackwell”?

**Woman:**

“Blackwell femme.

Emma Rothschild réincarné de sévir dans la famille<sup>6</sup>”.

**Man:**

“Wenn sie wirklich ist Emma, wie du sagst ... dann wird sie nicht die Nacht dauern<sup>7</sup>”.

**Woman:**

“I understand”.

**Man:**

“It is a pity he had to fall. I saw resourcefulness and character in him the first time his father brought him to my house. And Ezra... said the birth was most favourable according to the stars”.

**Woman:**

“The stars never lie”.

**Man:**

“And neither would Ezra”.

**Woman:**

“Couldn't he”?

<sup>3</sup> Compound Hungarian (Ó adta à son ami), French (adta à son ami un enterrement chrétien), and Hungarian (ennyi év után). Loose translations: Hungarian- Hungarian: He gave what... after so many years/ French: (He) admitted to his friend a Christian burial.

In composite form: “He gave his friend a Christian burial... after all these years?”

<sup>4</sup> Compound German (Gareth kannte ihn) and Hungarian (jobban, mint bármelyik férfi ... és Gareth értékes neki túl minden más). Loose translation: Gareth knew him better than any other man... And Gareth (judgement) is worth(y) it all too

<sup>5</sup> Compound French (C'est vrai.) and German (Aber es ist seine Frau wäre ich mehr Sorgen um). Loose translation: “That is true. But it is his woman that I am more worried about”. Although the German word ‘frau’ literally translates to ‘wife’, it is used to denote ‘woman’ or ‘female partner’.

<sup>6</sup> French. Contextually translates to, “Blackwell’s woman. Emma Rothschild’s reincarnation to plague the family”

<sup>7</sup> German. Contextually translates to, “If she really is Emma, as you say. Then she will not (like her) last the night”.

*The dark churns, embodied, though must be disembodied. A VOICE calls out, disembodied, and though should be embodied.*

**Voice:**

“Hark. Hasten. Hold your peace”.

**Woman:**

“Is it time”?

**Voice:**

“Aye. And harken”...

*The voice speaks in strange tongues and the silence responds in even stranger replies: translations of the disembodied words; strange replies. Like the hissing of serpents and reptilian creatures, hisses the voice: the speech of silence. The other, the voice, is hardly there. It is a liturgy– the modern medley.*

“Surveriet mas beruqah...

*(On the cinema screens: They say the road was laid by one horse and one rider)*

Mas beruqah bient cumpilir...

*(On cinema screens: They say an army marched one after the other and never returned)*

Des vierien bien deber...

*(On cinema screens: They say something stirs along the road again, its scent caught on the wind)*

Biner bivah aliacaha vierien...

*(On cinema screens: They say the road prepares to welcome its new bearer...)*”

*The voice stops– the accompanying chant the incessant whispering does not: it prevails. The rasp resurrects; finds its own voice.*

**Man:**

“It is time. Now we pray”.

*Some shuffle as they stand up, surely. Some more shuffle of the dress: thick cassock: uniform for both the man and the woman of the original argument robes? Some more shuffle now: proper arrangement.*

*They begin, so many VOICES overlapping, so many crescendos-decrescendos. A liturgy; now most literally so. So many crescendos...*

Chaíre Nýmfe, cháire vákche<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Compound of the "Orphic Hymn to Dionysos" from 2 century C.E. drawn from ancient texts such as the Orphic and Homeric hymns, along with the poems of Sappho. This particular arrangement is taken from Daemonia Nymphé's sung version: "The Orphic Hymn to Dionysos (Χαίρε Νύμφη)", with English translation merged from separate translations by Andonis Theodoros (credited in <https://anton-dion.blogspot.com/2014/06/the-orphic-hymn-to-dionysos-by-daemonia.html>) and Adam P. Forrest (credited <http://www.hermeticfellowship.org/Dionysion/InvocHymns.html>).

The Romanized text for Greek lyrics has been obtained using Google translated

Chaíre Nýmfe, chaíre Vákche  
 Kiklísko Diónyson erívromon,  
*I call upon loud-roaring and revelling Dionysos,*  
 evastíra, protógonon, difyí, trígonon,  
*Primeval, two-natured, thrice-born,*  
 Vakcheíon ánakta,  
*Bacchic lord,*  
*savage, ineffable, secretive, two-horned and two-shaped.*  
 Ágrion, árriton, krýfion, ernesípeplon, Evvouléf,  
*Ivy-covered, bull-faced, warlike, howling, pure,*  
*you take raw flesh,*  
 polývoule,  
*you have triennial feasts, wrapt in foliage, decked*  
*with grape clusters.*  
 Diós kaí Persefoneíis, arrítois léktroisi teknotheís, ámvrote daímon  
 Evvouléf, polývoule, dikérota, dímorfon,  
*Resourceful Eubouleus, immortal god*  
 kissóvryon, évion omádion, tavropón,  
*sired by Zeus*  
*when he mated with Persephone in unspeakable union.*  
*Hearken to my voice, O blessed one, and with your fair-girdled nurses*  
 Diós kaí  
*breathe on me in a spirit of perfect kindness.*  
 Persefoneíis arrítois léktroisi teknotheís, ámvrote daímon  
 klýthi, mákar, fonís, idýs d' epípnefsón amem[f]ís  
 evmenés ítor échon, sýn evzónoisi tithínais.  
  
*Curtains fall noisily.*

#### **ACT FOUR - Scene 4**

*Curtains are closed.*

*On the cinema screens: August 22nd @ 8:00 pm. Cambridge vs. Sheffield, 9th match of "The Trophy of the Golden Triangle"...*

*Camera footage:*

*A football field and a match once again going in rewind, this time a fast blur: a football sails out of the goal and connects with Jehovah's boot... Gareth stands up on his feet from the ground where he was lying on his back... the football sails out of the opposing goal keeper's arms several times to lie at Gareth's feet... Gareth takes a few steps backward... the ball reels back to Leon and back further to Rookwood...*

*The whole Cambridge team takes some steps backward, now in a file marching backwards, back into the tunnel as the crowd's banners wave.*

*Full furore in the crowd as the crowd's banners unfurl: amidst ecstatic cheering and hooting they flash like tiny squirts of blue, self-proclaiming, 'Cambridge Blues'; 'the other place in hospitality' and 'Not just defending champions this year the Cambridge blues'. The camera rolls in to round up the stadium stands in flashes as a running commentary fills the background in a supporting narrative:*

*"Good evening, all you ladies and gentlemen at Cambridge too lazy to hoist yourselves out of your couches for another match that promises to be a sensation delivered by the home team"...*

*A girl with red and pink striped hair cheers in her seat sporting a huge poster of Gareth in his Cambridge jersey with the caption: "the trophy is our homecoming queen".*

*"And my condolences for all those who (lazy but not too lazy) weren't able to grab the last of the tickets being sold in our very own black market"...*

*Several guys with glasses of beer boisterously sing the "three lions," repeating the refrain over and over again in festive celebration: "it's coming home, it's coming home; it's coming... home"...*

*The crowd around them slowly take it up: "it's coming home, it's coming home; it's coming— FOOTBALL'S COMING HOME"—*

*"Well, it most certainly is coming home at Cambridge or so the performance so far suggests. Which brings us to our very own invincible home team at last (a fact, which as per neutrality I had been advised to delay until absolutely necessary) – Oh, and here they arrive"...*

*The camera now taking the teams lined up inside the tunnel: the Cambridge in their very familiar Cambridge blue "home colours" talking and joking and subtly jogging for a warm-up on their standing spots, blowing into their fists and rubbing them together, slapping each other's backs and laughing at the newest of Leon Blackwell's creative imagination 'in-jokes'.*

*"I am sure no one needs the line up to be pronounced since we know them by heart—and here I am not even referring to just the Cambridge crowd, but I would be enumerating them anyway, George Bloomsdale; the goalkeeper. Harry Carter, Alistair Handel, William Blue and Neville Titan as our inebriated defence— for further reference attend one of the drinking club meetings. And now follows our libertine (and understandably aggressive) midfield— for further proof, again, the same place: Romerick Warrington, Alastair Brown, Leon Blackwell, Sean Moody, and Cato Rookewood. And to cap it all, our striker, our sober and most dignified and ever loved captain: GARETH ROTHSCHILD" –*

*The team files out as the tunnel gates open to spill them out like vomitus: the Roman vomitorium... A deafening din of the crowd welcomes them in as Leon, standing between Gareth and Brown abandons his childish mischievousness to wave at the crowd: they love him and they cheer back with even more unparalleled furore. Gareth who was staring at his feet throughout the march looks up at this fresh wave of cheering. Leon mutters something behind him, laughing. Gareth gives a distracted smile and looks around at the milling, pounding crowd, his seriousness back in place as the Sheffield team files in. He is as humble as he is serious and just as loved for they all cheer him the most: 'our captain one and only' –*

*“The atmosphere is breathtakingly infectious. This, of course is the last match of Group A which kicked off with a spectacular and unstoppable Cambridge victory over Warwick. Later Warwick went off to defeat Sheffield, so the only way Sheffield can hope to qualify is by beating Cambridge in this match by a three goal margin– It is a modest hope, really. And we are about to hear the whistle any second... Yep– it is time”!*

*From the second it kicks off, it is only about Cambridge: Leon to Brown to Moody to Warrington to Leon to Gareth and a sailing shot on the goal– saved –*

*‘OOOOH,’ the crowd goes.*

*Titan intercepts the ball from a Sheffield centre midfielder where it was thrown by their goalkeeper and feeds it back to his own: Leon to Brown to Rookewood who makes a spectacular run with it towards the penalty area: the Cambridge attack forms itself in hot pursuit: a kick as the ball lands at Gareth’s feet: he turns brilliantly a full three sixty degree and fends it past two Sheffield defenders and kicks it into the goal keeper’s outstretched embrace–*

*‘OOOOH’...*

*“Some would say our captain has just missed a clear opportunity but”...*

*The attack builds up once more as the clock ticks into its fourth minute, the possession probably ninety percent to ten. Rookewood once again makes a run towards the penalty area, leaving two marking defenders behind. He gives a long and brilliantly abrupt long cross to Warrington who kicks it with equal agility at Gareth but Leon intercepts it in the middle and delivers a powerful volley home inside the net–*

*The deafening scream of the crowd blares –*

*“What a shot! This is brilliant stuff from Blackwell as he decides to take the game by the scruff of its neck. Stunning. Sheffield really has no answer to this midfield”...*

*As Leon surfaces from the embraces of his teammates he turns to the crowd and waves: the cameraman is very acute to pick out the exact person in the multitude: Fehmin Ashton waving merrily back at him with both her hands, a beautiful smile*

*and at her feet her dropped book: Charles Dickens; The Old Curiosity Shop. The camera swings back to him as he kisses the palm of his hand in her direction –*

*“And apart from his brilliant football he is known for his equally brilliant theatrics too”.*

*A soft click of the camera into the 26th minute of the match right at another goal attempt by Leon which hits the cross bar and is slapped out by the goal keeper –*

*‘OOHH’...*

*“Sheffield should thank goalkeeper Alexis Drachma who has saved their goal net from being breached six times already in the opening half hour of the game”.*

*Moody intercepts the ball from one of the Sheffield midfielders and charges towards the goal, dodging several Sheffield players in the mix; he passes the ball to Gareth who passes it back to him as he positions himself with a clear shot space. He juggles with the ball as he deceives another defender and shoots a sweet back-heel shot in the goal net–*

*The crowd goes wild and frantic with screaming.*

*Gareth takes the time to scan the crowd; distracted. The camera randomly takes in a sea of jubilant Cambridge supporters truly enjoying their time here and then stops at Hasselbach sitting in his Oxford hoodie. A row above him and several seats away is Isaac Belmont who wears an official UCL football jersey–*

*“If I were them I would definitely be worried with this performance by Cambridge. So the play resumes and we start off with Blue who passes it to Carter who sends a long cross to Warrington. Warrington pushes it back to Titan; the priceless Cambridge deep lying playmaker who” –*

*– pushes the ball even deeper to Handel. Handel sends it in a high kick back to him, as they toy with the Sheffield attack and Titan beautifully feeds the ball to Gareth in an extremely long cross traversing three quarters of the pitch roughly; Gareth connects with it a split second too late and a sure header turns into only another attempt on target.*

*‘BOOOOH’...*

*Gareth shakes his head regretfully and studies the crowd –*

*“Well if it isn’t someone’s day today, despite it being collectively Cambridge’s, it is the skipper, surely. Three clearly missed chances and some collection of loose passing here and there already in his keep”...*

*The camera takes in the Coach watching Gareth closely: shrewdly with Jehovah standing in his reserve trappings beside him.*

*“Would he make the needed substitution for Cambridge, we all are thinking as Cabel Jehovah has stood up from the benches. But with a lead of two goals to none, I wouldn’t be too worried about substituting before the first half. Perhaps that is what he is thinking too. And there we have it: the whistle for half time”.*

*The second half: a camera-click: a selective blur; the crowd regales in the cheering: a poster of the Cambridge team with the caption: “Most likely person to lift the trophy this tournament: Gareth Rothschild”... Gareth, surprisingly still not substituted continues in the same demeanour that has formed his style of the day. A flirting courtship between himself and the crowd now turning into a serious love affair; the game a distraction it seems, he scans it furtively. The camera now delves more curiously at his quarry. A zoom in at Hasselbach whose eyes are riveted at Gareth; the camera catches him just as he turns to look at Belmont seated a row above who unlike Hasselbach is far from sympathetic, wallowing, his eyes narrowed shrewdly at Gareth, calculating. A pass by Rookewood rolls past Gareth and the ball skids out of play.*

*Moody and Rookewood exchange a look before falling back into the rhythm of the play.*

*The camera forgets itself (and the match) and pursues the crowd now, chasing after the skipper, copying his move... A sea of jumping ecstatic faces in a horrible mute... Hurried scanning, harried scanning, a blur that blends several people into dark homogenous shapes, the whole crowd, jumping, ecstatic faces of the crowd cheering in mute... the camera is bent on fishing the quarry now... Blur and blur— The camera stops: a man sitting with his head bowed and a white jacket, hood drawn. He looks up, picking his moment: it’s him! It can’t be! The man who said he wasn’t the jury. He could be used to scare children in stage adaptations and shady places on Halloween. He excels his act: smiles—*

*The sound comes back in a rush of full volume screaming as Gareth, rooted to a spot a moment ago now falls flat on the field just as the ball sent sailing by Warrington lands home inside the goal. It is mayhem.*

*The crowd cheers, and the crowd intakes a mutual breath rather sharply—*

*Rothschild is still flat on the field.*

*The Cambridge players form a protective ring around him as the referee comes running in, followed by the paramedics. A minute of hubbub and then Gareth is borne away on a stretcher board, his eyes closed as everyone on the crowd tries to spot his breathing. He is breathing. And they watch until his stretcher board disappears through the vomitorium.*

*The resuming whistle blows. Several Cambridge players are too distracted to begin and Sheffield comes very near the goal several times as the defence struggles with its momentum. They gain it finally and soon prove it as the match waddles into the 71st minute, Titan with a well-executed interception of the ball beautifully dribbles it and an accurate shot from the edge of the penalty area neatly sees the ball home: a staggering score-line of four goals to none.*

*The midfield comes back into play now, alive with dangerous long crosses and effortless switch of wings as the ball passes between Warrington and Rookwood. A purely aggressive and innovative header by Jehovah sends the ball rocketing inside the goal post, leaving the net shuddering.*

*The crowd gives up then, even though there are still a good three to four minutes of play. A mixture of chants and victory songs with a fizz here and there of uncorked champagne bottles, the euphoria surpassing the maximum mark on some meters just as the referee blows the final whistle...*

*The footage freezes on the sparkling crowd and once again goes into rewind, the netted ball shooting out of the goal net five times and the numerous other goal attempts all retracing their progress and coming to a halt right at their perpetrator's feet. Gareth gets up from the ground where he had fallen flat and he goes around anti-clockwise now to his original position. The referee takes the whistle out of his mouth and the Cambridge team marches backwards inside the tunnel and the tunnel doors close in: back from where they came from.*

*A small click as the scene changes and also rewinds in a fast blur: Gareth and Leon disentangling themselves from an embrace on the field. A lot of players retrace their step; the ball is passed around in reverse, changing owners very rapidly before arcing from the goalkeeper's embracing arms and coming to rest at Gareth Rothschild's feet.*

*Pause; the scene freezes. Then this scrolls across the cinema screens:*

*August 11 @ 10:00am, Cambridge vs. Warwick, 1st match of "The trophy of the Golden Triangle"...*

*This footage:*

*The match is arrested as the commentator reels on...*

*"Frustration grows in the Cambridge camp as they advance with yet another attack, with twelve attempts on goal and nine on target, the score line still stands nil at both ends. Here comes Blackwell. Moody now who passes it back to Blackwell. Excellent tackle as he passes to Warrington. Warrington to Moody... Rookwood now. Rookwood is running now. Blackwell takes position further inside the penalty area. Blackwell now– Rothschild– he turns and– ROTHSCHILD SCORES!"*

*The crowd erupts as the team dissolves their skipper into embraces...*

*"Cambridge's first goal of the tournament by none other than the man who would have won the poll for the audience choice for the first scorer of the tournament– and how they love it".*

*The game resumes and a few streaks of counterattacks by Warwick grow more accurate in their quality. The Cambridge defence, being up to the task, handle them*

*and keep feeding the ball back into their midfield. This tussle of ball-possession and attempts-at-goal carries on to the edge of the first half before Leon, as ever an embodiment of aggression, wrestles the ball past two defenders in the commotion of the penalty area. In this struggle a sweet flicker of ball by Leon swings it inside the net.*

*Leon turns and spots Gareth and by terms of celebration they embrace, jubilant on the field.*

*The footage freezes, rewinds. They disentangle from the embrace, and the ball juggles in reverse, zigzagging between booted feet before coming to lie once more at Gareth's feet.*

*Cinema screens go dark.*

*End of Act Four.*