

# ISLAND PICTURES

## THE SCAPEGOAT

Written by Charles Sturridge

Based on the novel by Daphne du Maurier

Produced by Sarah Beardsall  
and Dominic Minghella

Shooting Script

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79 Wardour Street London W1D 6QB 020 7851 8565  
[www.island-pictures.co.uk](http://www.island-pictures.co.uk)

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1 EXT. DRIVE, SPENCE HOUSE - DAY

1

Two pheasants wander aimlessly in the middle of a long tree lined drive. With a roar, a large van enters frame, the birds fly up, one escaping and the other falling back into the road, dead. We see it lying on the ground as the van, oblivious, continues on its way.

2 EXT. MARCH HALL SCHOOL - DAY

2

A run down Victorian prep school, with a stone terrace overlooking an incline. It is break time and we see some boys kicking a football - watched by a lone teacher, John Standing (30's), good looking but slightly frayed. A distant electric bell signals the end of break and the boys run up the terrace steps back towards the school.

FENTON

Is it true you've been sacked, sir?

John is well used to batting back their random questions.

JOHN

No, it is not true, Fenton and tuck your shirt in.

SMITH

So why are you leaving before the end of term, sir?

JOHN

That's for me and the Headmaster to know and you to wonder at Smith.

JOHNSTON

But there's definitely no more Greek?

JOHN

(stopping)

Correct, Johnston, there is definitely 'no more Greek'. The Headmaster in his wisdom has decided there are more useful subjects to study. Now run along, all of you, classes start in one minute.

The boys scatter, shouting their farewells as John turns to go.

3 EXT. SPENCE HOUSE - DAY 3

The van, with a sign reading 'Fincher's Home Electrical', passes a small church silhouetted in the evening light, goes past an old gardener burning a pile of autumn leaves and turns through the open gates of a huge and sprawling gothic mansion, carelessly littered with competing turrets, domes and gargoyles.

4 INT. BEDROOM, MARCH HALL SCHOOL - DAY 4

A tightly packed knapsack on a single bed beneath a window, blankets folded army style. John fits one last book into the bag and picks it up, feeling its hefty weight on his shoulder. He takes a final look around the small study/bedroom to make sure he has left nothing behind. There is a soft knock at the door.

JOHN

Yes.

He turns to see the door open and a very small boy, Seaton (9) standing there.

SEATON

Do you want some help with your bag, sir?

John looks from the large knapsack to the small boy.

JOHN

No, thank you Seaton. I can manage.

He makes for the door.

5 EXT. SPENCE HOUSE - DAY 5

The van doors are opened, flooding the interior with light and revealing a large box tied in position in the middle of the van and beyond, a bald man, Mr Fincher (50's), with his assistant, and a little girl, Mary Lou (8), with a boyish figure and short hair with Charlotte (50), the housekeeper, dressed in black.

MARY LOU

Is that it?

FINCHER

That's it right enough, Miss.

The assistant climbs into the van.

MARY LOU

Granny says it's the devil's work.

FINCHER

(unimpressed)

Does she? I can't say I've ever heard it called that before. Stand back now.

He climbs up into the van as Mary Lou watches.

MARY LOU

Did you know, if you touch it your hair stands on end?

CHARLOTTE

(taking her away)

You're not going anywhere near it, young lady.

6

INT. HALLWAY, MARCH HALL SCHOOL - DAY

6

The Headmaster, a brisk moderniser in his forties, wearing a dark suit and a university tie, is striding along a panelled corridor with John carrying his knapsack. They pass school trophies and wooden plaques with rolls of names depicting war heroes and cricket captains. Boys start to spill out of the classroom at the end of a lesson.

HEADMASTER

I'm glad there are no hard feelings, John. It was a difficult decision, but Major Hulton has a young family.

JOHN

Of course, Headmaster. And French Conversation is a more... practical subject for the boys. I see that.

HEADMASTER

(the knapsack)

Is that all you're taking?

JOHN

(simply)

It's all I need.

HEADMASTER

(loud)

Don't run in the corridor, how many times Machin!

(to John)

So, a walking tour?

JOHN

I thought it was a chance to see a bit of the world, what's left of it. I've always wanted to visit...

HEADMASTER

(interrupting)

Quite. The Romance of the Road and all that.

They reach the front door and the Headmaster opens it.

HEADMASTER (CONT'D)

Are you sure I can't telephone for a taxi? It's three miles into town.

JOHN

No. Thank you. I thought I'd start as I mean to go on. My train isn't till six.

HEADMASTER

Well, Bon Voyage.

They shake hands.

JOHN

(fluent french)

'Ne courez jamais de n'importe quoi'.

HEADMASTER

(not understanding)

Quite.

The Headmaster closes the door and, shaking his head, turns back into the school.

7

INT. HALL, SPENCE HOUSE - DAY

7

A stone flagged passageway runs from the front of the house. On one side of it is a cluttered area with boots and a walking stick and an old bicycle. On the other is a large ornate hall with a ping pong table in the middle of it. The walls are hung with paintings, although we may notice a few spaces where some are missing. Mr. Fincher and his assistant are carrying a large television set, watched by Nina (30's), attractive in a slightly over-emphatic way and Blanche (40's), elegant, hair swept tightly back. Mary Lou and Charlotte watch.

FINCHER

Where do you want it ma'am?

NINA

Wherever people usually put it?

FINCHER

It would normally go in the sitting room, Mrs Spence.

NINA

That's not entirely helpful in a house like this.

(to Blanche)

What do you think Charlotte? Library, Long Drawing Room, Morning Room, the Stamp Room, the Old Parlor?

CHARLOTTE

I think we should wait till Mr Spence is back.

BLANCHE

(decisive)

Let's put it in the Drawing Room for now. This way, Mr Fincher. Is it easy to work?

Fincher and his assistant move off.

FINCHER

I would suggest that I discuss the technical details with the gentleman of the house.

NINA

Johnny isn't back from London, besides he can barely boil a kettle, I don't think he'll be much use.

Charlotte and Mary Lou watch them go.

- |    |   |    |
|----|---|----|
| 8  | SCENE DELETED   | 8  |
| 8A | EXT. STATION HOTEL - NIGHT  | 8A |
|    | John walks up a cobbled street towards the lights of a Railway Hotel bar, decorated with a string of bunting and a portrait of the young Princess Elizabeth.  |    |
| 9  | INT. BAR, STATION HOTEL - NIGHT   | 9  |
|    | John enters the crowded public bar, his boots are covered with mud and he looks a little dishevelled. He drops his knapsack on a seat, takes off his coat and makes his way to the bar. We notice that there is more bunting. |    |

John tries ineffectually to get the attention of a barmaid and catches sight of himself in the long mirror that runs along the back of the bar. He looks at himself and then is startled by a large man coming straight up to him.

LANDLORD

Here's your change sir, and your room's ready whenever you are.

He moves off up the bar leaving a very startled John holding a ten bob note.

JOHN

Excuse me, I think...

He moves up the bar trying to get his attention to explain that he has given the change to the wrong person and catches sight of himself again in another mirror... only this time it is not a mirror him, and the man across the bar is downing a large brandy. John tries to identify who he is looking at. It's hard to work out in the crowd but he sees someone push away from the bar. Pretty sure he is following the right person, but unable to see the face, John follows, clutching the ten bob, towards the gents.

10

INT. GENTS, STATION HOTEL - NIGHT

10

John comes into the empty gents, still holding the change and looks around. There is a sound from one of the stalls and it is clear that the person he is following is in there. The chain is pulled and John, rather than be seen, hurries into the next stall and closes the door. Immediately his exact double comes out of the first door. We follow the 'double', Johnny, towards two basins where he washes his hands. John cautiously comes out of his stall and peers at Johnny who looks up and catches sight of him. John immediately ducks back into the stall but Johnny comes after him and stands outside the stall.

JOHNNY

Hello?

John inside seems to be hearing his own voice. He remains still. Johnny outside pushes on the door. It is not locked and swings open revealing John.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

You're not the devil by any chance are you?

John looks equally astonished.

JOHN

No. I think this might be your change.

He holds up the money and Johnny takes it.

JOHNNY

Thank you!

JOHN

The landlord thought...

Their clothes of course are different and Johnny is wearing a smart overcoat, but the faces are uncannily the same.

JOHNNY

Well you can hardly blame the poor chap. Come out into the light where I can get a proper look at you.

He leads John towards the mirror, riveted by the seeming miracle in front of him.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

It's incredible, don't you think? Who the hell are you?

JOHN

John.... John Standing. Who are you?

JOHNNY

Johnny Spence. Pleased, in fact completely astonished to meet you! Have you got time for a quick one? Come on, you must have, my shout.

They head for the exit.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

We'll probably discover we have dozens of cousins in common. Do you have many? Cousins?

JOHN

No, not really.

JOHNNY

I have a whole herd of them. Can't stand a single one, all scroungers. After you.

Johnny opens the door, letting another customer pass as they exit.



11 INT. DRESSING ROOM, SPENCE HOUSE - NIGHT

11

Close on a set of photographs hung on the wall above a chest of drawers, a shrine to achievement, Etonian sports teams, army platoons, pictures of Johnny in uniform, a crude hand decorated dinner plate with the inscription: 'To Captain J. Spence, we shall never forget, from the men of 16th Paras July 1944'. A hand reaches out to lift the wedding photo off the wall, accidentally dislodging the painted plate which crashes to the floor. Frances (late 20's), Johnny's wife, lets out a cry of horror and, clutching the wedding photo, gets down on her knees to look for the plate which has fallen behind the chest of drawers. On her knees she stretches out to reach the broken pieces.

MARY LOU (O.S.)

Is that daddy's plate?

Frances sits up, holding three pieces.

FRANCES

(almost in tears)

I hardly touched it.

MARY LOU

He'll be cross with you.

FRANCES

I know.

MARY LOU

I'll tell him it was me.

FRANCES

Certainly not, then he'll be cross with you.

MARY LOU

I know a place where I can get it mended. Then he'll never know at all.

Frances is unconvinced.

12 INT. BAR, STATION HOTEL - NIGHT

12

Johnny is paying the Landlord (for the room and a bottle of whisky) then he takes the bottle and two glasses and carries them to John who is sitting at a table with his coat and rucksack beside him.

JOHNNY

This should keep us going.

(sitting)

You're not rich by any chance are you?

JOHN  
(taken aback)  
Er... No, not at all.

JOHNNY  
Pity.  
(brightening)  
I was in a brothel once, in Paris,  
they had a set of twins who cost a  
thousand francs an hour. I'm not  
sure we're quite in that league,  
but the circus maybe, or cabaret,  
what do you think?  
(before John can  
reply)  
Cheers anyway.

They clink glasses and John takes a cautious sip.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)  
Where are you from?

JOHN  
Wales.

JOHNNY  
Father?

JOHN  
He's dead now. Worked down the  
mines all his life.

JOHNNY  
You don't sound much like a taff?

JOHN  
My dad wanted me to go to  
university, that was his dream. I  
went up before the war, got my  
degree and came back talking like  
a bishop, as he used to say.

JOHNNY  
Well, we're definitely not  
related, I've never passed an exam  
in my life.  
(offering a  
cigarette)  
Smoke?

JOHN  
Thanks.

JOHNNY  
(lighting it)  
What about family, are you  
married?

JOHN

No, no I'm not.

JOHNNY

You must have some relations?

JOHN

Just a maiden Aunt in Colwyn Bay.

JOHNNY

Lucky dog.

JOHN

Well, you haven't met her.

JOHNNY

What I wouldn't give to be in your position!

(raises glass)

To your freedom, long may it last!

He drains his glass and after a moment's hesitation, John does the same.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

What time's your train?

JOHN

I missed it. The next one's not till midnight apparently.

JOHNNY

Let's go and find something to eat then.

(taking rucksack)

You won't need that, I'll put it with my things. I've taken a room here.

He takes the coat and rucksack.

13

INT. LADY SPENCE'S BEDROOM, SPENCE HOUSE - NIGHT

13

A dark room dominated by a large bed in which lies Johnny's mother, the formidable Lavinia Spence. She looks pale and exhausted in the dimly lit room as she takes a gulp of air from the oxygen cylinder by the bed. The furniture in the room is heavy and old, there is a sofa in front of the fireplace and a small table with chairs in front of the window. Around the walls there are a selection of rather macabre religious paintings, mostly celebrating acts of torture, the crucifixion and other martyrdoms. Beside the bed, Charlotte is carefully filling a syringe from a half empty ampoule of liquid morphine.

LADY SPENCE

Is there enough?

CHARLOTTE

There's plenty.

LADY SPENCE

But there's still no word from him?

CHARLOTTE

No.

LADY SPENCE

Something's happened, I know it.

CHARLOTTE

Mrs Paul thinks he probably missed the train.

LADY SPENCE

What would she know? Nobody in this house understands my son except me. Johnny doesn't like to fail. Are you sure there's enough?

Charlotte sits on the bed and rolls up her sleeve.

CHARLOTTE

I'm sure. This will stop you worrying.

She injects her.

LADY SPENCE

(closing her eyes)

Of course it will. It stops everything. Soooooo...beautifully.

She surrenders to the drug as Charlotte tucks the bedclothes around her.

14

INT. RESTAURANT, NR STATION - NIGHT

14

The down at heel restaurant is empty except for one very fat man dining alone on a steamed pudding. John is sitting at a table by himself. The waiter gives him two menus. Johnny emerges from the back carrying two mugs.

JOHNNY

They're happy about the booze as long as we drink it in these. Cheers.

(taking menu)

Waiter, two large steaks, very well done with mashed potato and gravy.

He hands the menus to the waiter and raises his glass.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

So, a walking tour? The open road  
is your oyster and all that.

JOHN

(cautious)

Well, I have some ideas. What  
about you?

JOHNNY

Funk. Complete funk! I had a  
bugger of a day up in town, was on  
the train back, had a couple of  
drinks and thought: 'What am I  
doing, going home like a lamb to  
the slaughter?'. So, off I got,  
and here I am.

He drinks.

JOHN

What about your family, won't they  
be worried?

JOHNNY

About me? Never. About themselves?  
Definitely.

(holding his mug in  
the air)

Waiter! More of your delicious  
tea!

(to John)

Greed, that's what makes the world  
go round. Men, women, children,  
whatever you do, they still want  
more! No one's ever satisfied.

JOHN

(wry)

It doesn't take much to satisfy  
me.

JOHNNY

You're lucky, the world's your  
playground. Mine hangs round my  
neck like a rope. Ignore me, it's  
not everyday I get the chance of  
talking to myself without being  
carted off to the funny farm! I'm  
rather enjoying it.

John is clearly pained at his loudness. The waiter  
arrives with a teapot.

JOHNNY

(taking it)

Don't worry, I'll do this.  
It is pretty extraordinary, us  
meeting like this, isn't it?

JOHN

Yes, I suppose it is.

JOHNNY

Don't you think there's something  
special about now. This moment  
between the death of one monarch  
and the coronation of the next?

JOHN

What do you mean?

JOHNNY

Well, anything can happen! The  
throne is empty, no one is in  
charge!

(grins)

To anarchy!

John raises his mug uncertainly as Johnny downs his in  
one.

JOHN

To anarchy.

John hesitates and then drinks his down.

JOHNNY

(refilling)

A man after my own heart.

15

EXT. ALLEY NR RESTAURANT, NR STATION - NIGHT

15

John and Johnny emerge slightly unsteadily and head up  
the road. John has now had quite a lot to drink and is  
beginning to enjoy Johnny's company. Johnny however, if  
anything, seems to have sobered up.

JOHN

Of course Plato believed that man  
was split in half by Zeus so that  
he couldn't compete with the gods.  
Which means, if you think about  
it, that everyone has a twin  
somewhere in the world and it's  
just a question of looking for  
them.

JOHNNY

(mind elsewhere)

You're not a professor are you?

JOHN

Teacher. Well. Ex-teacher. What's the time? I need to get to the station.

JOHNNY

You've got plenty of time. Anyway we left all your things at the pub so you have to come back. Come on.

He takes John's arm and leads him up the street.

WAITER (O.S.)

Sir?

They turn to see the waiter from the restaurant standing with their coats.

WAITER (CONT'D)

(to Johnny)

Your coats, sir.

JOHNNY

(Takes John's)

That's's his.

Before John can protest the waiter comes up and starts to help him into the coat.

JOHN

I can't wear this!

JOHNNY

Of course you can. It's a perfect fit. Could have been made for you.

He takes John's arm and leads him off up the road.

JOHN

What was that you said about the gods? When they keep us apart we are nobody but together we can rule the world!

The waiter watches them head off unsteadily up the street.

16

EXT. FOUNDRY GATE - EARLY MORNING

16

A large brick building, dominated by a furnace chimney. We move down past a wrought iron sign that reads 'Century Glass Foundry' to see the foundry workers making their way on foot and by cycle through the gates into work.

17 INT. MANAGER'S OFFICE, FOUNDRY - DAY

17

A gloomy room lit by a single window, a large table stands in the middle covered with papers and ledgers and there is a roll top desk in one corner. Standing by the window is Paul (35), looking out with the air of a boy who has lost his homework. He turns as the door opens and Arthur Moffat (60), the works manager, enters carrying a stack of ledgers.

ARTHUR

Well, what's the verdict?

PAUL

There isn't one.

ARTHUR

What do you mean?

PAUL

Exactly that. We haven't heard. He's disappeared. He checked out of his club in London yesterday morning, and he was booked on the three fifteen. George met the train but he wasn't on it, or the three that followed.

ARTHUR

And he didn't telephone the house?

(no answer)

If we're to keep to the plan I should issue the notices this morning. It's going to be a hell of a business.

PAUL

I know. But we'll just have to wait, I can't give the authorisation without him.

(shrugs)

You know what Johnny's like.

Arthur looks worried.

18 INT. ROOM, STATION HOTEL - DAY

18

A thin beam of light from a gap in the curtains pierces the gloom of the bare furnished room, a bed, a bedside table, a couple of chairs and a chest of drawers. There is someone asleep, we hear the sound of a train moving past. A smart leather suitcase with Johnny's coat draped over it along with the rest of Johnny's clothes are on one of the chairs. The figure in the bed turns over and groans, a head comes up into the light and drops back down again with a groan. It is impossible to be sure who it is.