

Overlord, Part IV

Stuart Cooper, Director (1975)

Dear Readers,

We had a bit of a dilemma about how to translate ‘ragazza,’ referring to the role played by Julie Neesam, introduced in this installment. It was clear to us that the Italian would be “ragazza,” not “donna,” for an unmarried female, about eighteen years old. In English, though – at least nowadays – she would clearly be called a ‘woman.’ We don’t believe in literal translation; we need to convey in English the actual feel of the Italian word. So automatically translating ‘ragazza’ to ‘girl’ wasn’t even a consideration.

In our photo-stories, while writing in a standard, modern Italian, we still endeavor to accurately reflect the time, place and people of the story. For our English language films, this means maintaining – in the translation documents – the slang, non-standard grammar, and other language elements as they are in the film, because they are intrinsic to the characters.

The ‘ragazza’ is never named in *Overlord*. The production notes call her role “The Girl.” In the recently recorded commentary on the Criterion DVD, Director Stuart Cooper refers to her as “The Girl.” Clearly at that time and place – wartime Britain – she would be referred to as a ‘girl.’

Hence, after many discussions and much consideration, in keeping with the production notes for the film, we translate this role as “The Girl.”

Tom and Arthur find their way to the dance hall and duck in out of the rain.
Arthur says, “Right then, Tom. This is it. Lots of lovely crumpet* just waiting for it. Are you ready?”
Tom nods and asks, “Have you got any cigarettes?”
“Here. Take ‘em.” He hands them over. “Right. Fit?”
Tom seems a little nervous. “I’ll follow you.”
They head inside and the door closes behind them. On the door is a poster for the Women’s Land Army, instructing, “Give Generously.”**

**A pastry, usually toasted and served hot with melted butter. But in British slang: a collective noun for sexually attractive women.*

***The Women's Land Army, created during World War II (but based on a similar organization formed during WWI) sent female civilians to work on British farms, as replacements for men who were in military service.*

“Good evening,” the barman greets them. “Early tonight, lads?” He’s wearing a white shirt and a black bow tie. On a high shelf behind the bar, we see the outline of a radio.
“Got any wine, have you?” asks Arthur, the sophisticate.
“Wine?!” The barman is incredulous.

Arthur concedes defeat. “Two pints of brown ale then, please.”
“Vintage?” the barman asks sarcastically.

“Look around, my boy,” says Arthur. “What do you see?”
“Half the regiment.”
“Yeah.” Arthur turns to get the drinks and says “ta” to the barman.

The camera zooms in on Tom. Something has caught his eye. With his gaze fixed on a point across the room, he takes a drag on his cigarette.

It’s a girl (Julie Neesam) seated on a bench by the window. Hair pinned back, she’s wearing a dark dress with a simple pattern and a white collar; her legs are crossed modestly at the knee.

He heads across the room, past men who stand around chatting. Somehow they haven’t noticed her at all. She looks up.

“Hello,” Tom says tentatively.
“Hello” she answers, with a shy smile.
“You haven’t got a drink.”
“No.”
“Can I... Can I get you one?”
“No, thank you.”

He drops his cigarette on the floor. “Have you been here long?” he asks.
“What, sitting on this bench, you mean?”
“No. Here, generally.”
“About as long as most people, I suppose.”
“Oh.”

After a pause, she asks, “And you?”
“What?”
“How long have you been here?”
“Just arrived really. But, um,” – looks away – “I don’t think I’ll stay long.”

“It’s a bit dull, don’t you think?” he comments, still with his gaze away from her.
“What’s dull?” She looks at him with an open, unguarded expression.
“Dances, all this.”
“I don’t think dancing’s dull.”
Tom turns back to her suddenly, “Oh?”

“No.”
“Well, then let’s... Uh, will you have a dance with me, please?”
“I don’t mind if I do.”
“Come on then.” He offers his hand and she takes it, rising to her feet.

They dance, without speaking, to the slow music of the band.

Suddenly she winces. "Watch out!" she warns, not unkindly.

"I'm sorry. I'm not very good on my feet."

"Shall we stop then?"

"No." Tom says. "Let's go on, please."

When the dance is over, he asks, "Was that any better?"

"You're not as bad as all that," she reassures him.

We hear the hum of conversations around them as the music continues.

"Shall we go outside for a bit?" asks Tom.

"What for?"

"The rain's stopped," he points out.

"All right."

They walk towards the door, still holding hands from the dance.

"Is this your coat?" Tom asks, pointing.

"Yes."

He hands it to her and she puts it over her arm. They walk to the door, which he holds open for her. To the side, we see a saxophonist playing in the bandstand.

It's dusk, and their figures are dark as they walk along. We see their faces, though, softly lit.

"Have you seen any action?" she asks.

"Not really."

"What do you mean: 'Not really'?"

"Well, I've been on training," he explains. "That was tough!"

"Really?"

"Yes!" He laughs.

"Do you like it?"

"What?"

"Being a soldier."

"Not much, no."

"Then why are you?"

"A soldier?"

"Yes."

"I was called up, like everyone else."

"Is that all?"

"No. It's got to be done. We've got to finish it off and pay back the ones who started it."

"Yes."

Tom stops walking. The Girl turns and looks at him, then steps towards him. "I think you're very nice," he says.

"Do you?"

"Yes, I do."

"I like you too."

"I feel much better now." He stammers, "I was quite... nervous when I first talked to you. It's funny."

“I know. You thought the dance was awfully dull.”

“I didn't, really.”

“No?”

“No.”

“Can I kiss you?”

“If you want.”

He leans over and kisses her gently.

Then he smiles at her.

“I've got to go now,” she says. “I'm with my brother. He's in the band.”

“Oh... Well, when can I see you again?”

“Whenever you'd like. Not tomorrow.”

“Monday?”

“Yes. I'd like that.”

“Here, at six,” he proposes.

“All right.”

“Will you walk me back to the hall?” she asks.

“Anywhere you'd like.”

“Back to the hall.”

“I wish I'd met you before. There's so little time now.”

“What do you say that for?”

“I don't know... It's just a feeling.”

“You'll be back... and there'll be time.” She leans in towards him.

They kiss again. After a sudden cut, we see Tom and The Girl standing in an empty landing craft as it races through the water. She puts her hands on Tom's chest, leans in and kisses him.