

A perpetually pretty Celia Johnson sits in a train carriage thinking: "This can't last. This misery can't last. I must remember that and try to control myself. Nothing lasts, really. Neither happiness nor despair. Not even life lasts very long. There'll come a time in the future when I shan't mind about this anymore. When I can look back and say quite peacefully and cheerfully how silly I was. But no, no, I don't want that to have to come ever. I want to remember every minute - always; always to the end of my days."

As she struggles with her guilt, regrets and the past, we have to wait until the last minute of the film for restoration...

I only ever watch the film, "Brief Encounter," on my own. I know that the first and last scenes will be watched through a misty veil of hot tears, rent by Noel Coward's pathos, David Lean's cinematographic ingenuity, and Eileen Joyce's performance of Rachmaninov's 2nd Piano Concerto.

The inception of a new year may seem a funny time to be watching this again. The whole story, though, rings in the changes: the old year is gone; it couldn't last. The new year is here with all the letting go of the past that it demands. There is nothing we can do about it. Except for one thing. The new start. (Thank you, Jesus.)

Celia playing the part of Laura plays the part of us all: finding heartbreak in that which is not hers to have. So where does she - and we - find true happiness? In the ever-patient, ever-understanding, ever-loving arms of her husband, Fred (Cyril Raymond). Fred should seem familiar to us - for he is God. Ever-patient Father, ever-loving Bridegroom, ever-wise Comforter.

Get on the 23.59 leaving 2012 for 2013, make your way back to our true home, where Fred's famous last line echoes exactly what God says at all new beginnings when we accept his open arms: "You've been a long way away. Thank you for coming back to me."

Pass the tissues. Such a happy ending. Beginning.