

On RISE:

A modest, makeshift engineer's workshop. WHITTLE and JOHNSON stand among equipment and numerous books. To one side are two chairs and small table between them - a modest lounge area where the two may take breaks. To the other stands the Whittle Unit, prototype jet engine, its nozzle pointing towards a sash window with its lower portion open.

WHITTLE stomps, JOHNSON watches.

WHITTLE: But why didn't they bloody go for it?!

WHITTLE inhales Benzedrine up his nose.

JOHNSON: Don't lose your wool, Frank. Something about calculations...seems they were surprised you wrote three plus two equals seventy eight.

WHITTLE: An oversight.

JOHNSON: Of course.

WHITTLE: My head's all over the place at the moment.

JOHNSON: Mine too.

WHITTLE: I feel clapped out, Johnson.

JOHNSON: Nothing else for it, old chap... I'll sort us out a brew.

JOHNSON begins to make tea.

Also it would seem they don't understand your new concept.

WHITTLE: What's not to understand? Forget the flaming motorjet. That was never going to get off the ground. This...*(Points to the large engine mounted at one side of his workshop)* ...is a simple jet propulsion gas turbine having a single-stage centrifugal compressor with bilateral intakes and driven by a single-stage turbine directly coupled. Combustion takes place in one chamber through which the working fluid passes from the compressor to the turbine, which is then used to extract some power from the exhaust and drive a similar compressor to those used for superchargers. The remaining exhaust thrust powers the aircraft. I mean *really* how difficult can *that* be to grasp?

JOHNSON: And too expensive...too impractical...too ugly.

JOHNSON delivers tea.

WHITTLE: God damn it! *(Pause)* Did you tell them they could have it for free?

JOHNSON: Yes.

WHITTLE: And?

JOHNSON: Still nothing.

WHITTLE: Ridiculous. Who was at this meeting?

JOHNSON: The usual wallahs, Major-General Sefton Cracknel, Sir Ellis Hunter and someone who I haven't seen for a while, Dr Alan Griffith

WHITTLE: Griffith! Griffith! Of course, the cringing vermin. That makes perfect sense. He's always been in it for his own gain.

JOHNSON: Really?

WHITTLE: Oh, yes. He's poisoned them against us.

JOHNSON: He always struck me as a rather decent chap.

WHITTLE: Do you think someone who writes a paper entitled *The phenomenon of rupture and flow in solids* can ever be called decent? No, no, no. Don't be fooled Johnson, Griffiths has been at work on his own turbine engine design for years, and poo-pooing our work for as long. He thinks he's a cut above the rest.

JOHNSON: Thinking on it, he did once refer to you as the slimy little guy who sweats a lot.

WHITTLE inhales Benzedrine through his nose.

Is there any way we can get hold of the Minister ourselves? Bypass Griffiths and these cronies. Go around the barn, so to speak.

WHITTLE: *(Lifts phone)* I'm all over it. *(Pause, as operator answers)* Hello, can I have the war office please, Whitehall one-four-two-six *(Pause)*...Hello? Hello?

JOHNSON: Bad line, Frank?

The MESSENGER enters and delivers to JOHNSON some items of mail.

WHITTLE: Terrible bloody line. Hello! Ah, at last! Can you hear me? What? What? Tuesdays, every Tuesday. Yes...What? No, I haven't got a cold! Now listen to me, this is a matter of vital, lethal, national and I dare say global importance...Hello? Hello? Hello? She bloody hung up on me...*(Pause as the operator says hang up and dial again please, sir, then -)* I will!

WHITTLE frantically replaces the phone and waits.

Whitehall one-four-two-six please...uh-huh, engaged!

JOHNSON: Don't worry, leave it for now. I have some post here. Perhaps something promising...

WHITTLE: Go on then, Johnson. Open it.

JOHNSON: Let's see. The first...is someone advertising double-glazing, whatever that is. Then this one's from Sporborg at British Thomson-Houston. Dear Frank, hope you are well... (*reading*)...June...dance lessons...itsy-bitsy...Soviet Union...loves the idea of the Turbojet and says it's just as well no other bugger has cottoned on to it otherwise we're all doomed....and also says thank you for the joke about the sixty thousand pounds...Ah...but we can use their factory anytime for testing if we get caught short, best wishes, etcetera and ...err...this one...blablabla, the Air Ministry has unanimously decided to back the gas turbine research of Doctor Griffiths.

WHITTLE: What?!

JOHNSON: It doesn't go into much detail...only that on the advice of various persons...

WHITTLE: Namely Griffiths.

JOHNSON: Blablabla...we believe The Whittle Unit would be of great use to the farming industry as a way to stir the curds when making cheese, an application it would be ideally suited to.

Phone rings.

WHITTLE: Hello? Ah, thank God you called back...Pardon? Yes, I did try to call you a minute ago. No, I didn't use any offensive language. Look I need to speak to Mr Shaw urgently...The minister... What? It wasn't a bloody missed call, how can it be a missed call if I spoke to someone? Well, I'm not sure now. I think her name was Doris...Doris! Hello? I don't believe it.

WHITTLE replaces the phone.

JOHNSON: Doris, Frank?

WHITTLE: She hung up.

JOHNSON: Seems like we're up against it a tad, old chap.

WHITTLE: You might say that...There's nothing else for it Johnson. Lesser men might throw in the towel at this point, but we need to just press on regardless.

JOHNSON: Great idea. And with some good old British pluck!

WHITTLE: Until someone takes a blind bit of notice.

JOHNSON: Agreed.