



“THE OTHER LANDSCAPE”

A screen adaptation of the classic Scottish novel by Neil Gunn

Short pitch

1950's. David Urquhart is searching for Douglas Menzies. Menzies is searching for his dead wife. What they find will change their lives for ever. A film of love, death, and the metaphysical, set in the wild Scottish Highlands.

Pitch

Douglas Menzies a film composer has submitted a short story, 'The Cliff', to Alan Townbee's London Literary magazine. It reads like 'mad music in the nature of an overture'. Townbee wants more and sends his Scots friend, anthropologist David Urquhart to the Highlands to track down Menzies.

It is a mission that will challenge Urquhart's beliefs and wrench him out of his sheltered academic life.

At his hotel Urquhart discovers that Menzies and his wife Anna, had moved to a remote cliff top manse the previous year, following Anna's miscarriage precipitated by Menzies infidelity.

The composer had abandoned films and had begun writing a symphony. But when the notes failed to flow, he wrote 'The Cliff' about a terrible shipwreck and the eternal battle between creation and the forces of destruction exemplified by a figure known as The Wrecker.

Through his conversations with Menzies, Urquhart is shaken to realise 'The Cliff' is a metaphor for Anna's recent death during a second miscarriage. Urquhart's rationalism is slowly upended by the metaphysics of Menzies' emotional and intellectual quest to use music to penetrate what he calls 'the other landscape' and find Anna.

One of the other guests at the hotel, a retired diplomat, Major Thorneybank, counters Menzies's influence on Urquhart with his colonial cynicism and fear of the unknown. Thorneybank holds court over a small party of English fishing guests, and the tensions between them and their local ghillies provide a comedic sub-plot of two cultures in conflict.

Urquhart's rationalist foundations shattered, his life is further upended by Catherine, the landlord's daughter, singing at a ceilidh, a moment that mirrors the first meeting between Anna and Menzies years before.

Following the path Menzies has set for him Urquhart is caught up in an ever more powerful cycle of recurrence.

Meanwhile the sparring between the locals and the English guests leads to the Major's temporary disappearance and a hotel fire.

Reconciliation comes when Menzies heroically rescues a local boatman and an English guest in a storm at sea.

Urquhart, who has grown in maturity and understanding persuades Menzies he may never defeat the forces of destruction and the Wrecker, but he can finish his creation, the symphony. Menzies does, but the price his high.

Descending the perilous cliff Menzies falls to his death on the rocks below - perhaps reaching



his "Other Landscape" and Anna.

In a final act of recurrence and renewal Urquhart and Catherine have the child so tragically denied to Menzies and Anna.

USP

The Other Landscape was an iconoclastic novel of its time and this adaptation will excite and intrigue audiences with a novel mix of period drama, romance, philosophy, and the metaphysical.

Characters

The action of the film takes place in the remote far north west of Scotland in the early 1950's.

Douglas Menzies [50's]	Film composer
David Urquhart [late 30's]	University anthropology lecturer
Anna Menzies [30's]	Teacher/artist
Catherine McGillivray [20's]	Hotel worker
Major Thorneybank [60's]	Retired English diplomat
Lachlan McGillivray [40's]	Ghillie
Sam Mor [50's]	Hotelier
Alan Townbee [40's]	Literary magazine editor
Dan McClellan [60's]	Boatman
Mrs McClellan [60's]	Anna's friend
Mr Lockworth [50's]	English barrister/fishing guest
Mr McClean [50's]	Estate factor
Mr Swithin [50's]	Insurance assessor

(plus an assortment of local ghillies and English sporting guests, male and female, at Sam's hotel)

The Novel

The author was one of the most significant Scottish writers of the last century and this was his final novel. He uses it, through a tale of emotional and physical turmoil, to raise some impossible questions about the mystery of life.

The action, both deeply tragic and ironically humorous, takes place against the backdrop of the remote coastal Highlands where the influences of nature and Celtic tradition propel the protagonists to their destiny.

The questions remain unanswered but the novel ends with a final glimmer of hope and renewal.

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