INT. ROHAN HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

CLIVE has changed into civvies and is soaking his feet in a bowl of hot water. Tea has been laid and the family assembled. They watch CLIVE warily. They have learned to live without him and his reappearance has upset the new balance.

CLIVE
Hand me my backpack, Bill.

BILL hands it to him and CLIVE proudly pulls out an unlabelled can and plants it firmly on the centre of tea table.

GRACE
....

CLIVE
Jam.

BILL and SUE jump for joy.

BILL AND SUE
(chanting)
Jam! Jam! Jam!

GRACE
Jam? What kind of jam? It's not like any jam I know.

CLIVE
...

The table falls deathly silent. They stare at the can as though it was a time bomb.

CLIVE
It's all right. It came from a German chip. It got sunk, and this stuff washed ashore, crates of it. Jam. Our fellows found it on the beach, by the rifle range.

GRACE picks it up gingerly, turns it, searches the blank silver-grey metal for a sign, a clue, a portent.
GRACE
We don't know anything about it

CLIVE
Well, it's off ration. We know that.

GRACE
...

CLIVE surveys the suspicious hostile faces. Angrily, he seizes the can and jabs it clumsily with the paper opener.

GRACE
Come away, children. I don't want you to stand too close while he's opening it.

They retreat to the corner of the room. CLIVE has it opened and bends back the top to reveal a deep-red jam. GRACE ventures forward and peers at it.

CLIVE
Well?

GRACE
...

CLIVE
Jam is jam! It's just jam!

DAWN
...

BILL
You don't like jam. You hate jam. You never eat jam.

DAWN
That's not the point.

There is an impasse. They stare at it gloomily. CLIVE waves grandly at the jam.

CLIVE
...

GRACE
You taste it.

The eyes turn on CLIVE. The situation forces their resentment for one who has not shared in their hardships, who abandoned them, in fact. The jam has become a test. He looks into the faces of his family. Resolutely, he takes up a teaspoon, picks up the can and begins to eat. Grimly and steadily he
ladles the jam to his mouth. They watch him carefully for signs of pain. Before their doubts are dispelled, he has consumed a third of the can. BILL is the first to crack.

BILL
Give us some, Dad.

CLIVE stops eating, puts the can back on the table and they all dig in. The tension is dispelled. SUE climbs on CLIVE'S lap and he feeds her himself. They laugh and chatter and stuff bread and jam in their mouths.

GRACE
...

CLIVE
That's it.

GRACE
Why didn't they say that before you started?

CLIVE
I wasn't too old when I started the course. I was too old when it finished.

GRACE
...

CLIVE
A clerk. I'm doing a typing course. I'll be typing for England.

GRACE goes to him, puts an arm around him.

GRACE
...

He looks up at her, beaten, uncomprehending. She kisses him.

GRACE
You're such a baby.

The DOORBELL SOUNDS. DAWN scoots out to answer it.

BILL
...

CLIVE grins, quickly recovered from his bad moment.

CLIVE
You know what I always say? Jam is jam, the world over.
DAWN reappears with BRUCE. CLIVE darts a querying look at GRACE. He winces at the sight of his little girl looking up adoringly at a Canadian soldier.

DAWN
Bruce, this is my father. Dad, this is Corporal Bruce Carey.

CLIVE laughs awkwardly, outranked.

BILL
Bruce, look! Dad got some German jam.

SUE
...

They laugh. BRUCE looks at it with mock suspicion, then tastes it with his fingertip. His eyes bulge and he clutches his throat.

BRUCE
The poison was at the bottom.

He falls to the ground in the most agonized convulsions. The children scream with laughter and jump on top of him.