

POISONED LAND

A 6 x 60 television drama based on real events by Miles Sloman

CORNWALL, 1979. 2 engineers perform routine maintenance at a secret facility hidden on a quiet stretch of Cornish coastline. By the time JACK (38) notices a leak, it's nearly too late. Head swimming and struggling to breathe he & COLIN (45) only just make it out, gasping in the sea air. A lucky escape - for now.

LONDON, 2019. Esteemed lawyer ALEC STEVENS (57), is celebrating with colleagues having just gotten another guilty-as-sin client off the hook - that is until a call out of the blue knocks him for six. Reluctant as he is, Alec knows that he must return home to his native Cornwall and right the wrongs of the past.

The case in question is the plight of his first love, ALICE (58) - her father, Jack, now 78, never recovered from his exposure at the Carnehaze facility; a former top-secret chemical research establishment built after WWII using laboratory equipment recovered from Nazi Germany. The plant having been closed nearly 30 years with all evidence buried on-site including incriminating materials dumped down a cliffside mine shaft. But Jack has been forced to lie to his doctors, unable to reveal the true nature of his illness for fear of prosecution under the official secrets act. Alec is their only hope of getting justice against the MOD - proper David versus Goliath stuff. Only Jack hates Alec's guts, having chased him out of Cornwall when he deserted his daughter at the alter over 30 years ago.

Alec's return is charged with emotion, having to bury the hatchet with Alice but also because he must face his family. Matriarch IRIS STEVENS (89) has never truly forgiven him for destroying their family name all those years go and since he came out, she wanted nothing to do with him. On arrival Alec finds a family unit twisted with grief. He's not been back since the death of his sister 10 years prior and despite supporting his wayward niece ANNABELLE (17) financially from afar (now in the ward of waster brother-in-law, GEORGE, 49), he learns the money is gone - having been pissed away down at the local.

Fighting on all fronts, Alec also has to win over the locals who, after years of false hope and hollow promises are reluctant to cooperate. Carnehaze casts a long shadow over the small community. After all, placing a dangerous facility far away from the postcard-perfect Cornwall seen by tourists and in an area of low employment where if you had a steady job that paid, you kept it, no matter the cost - It's unsurprising they don't trust outsiders.

An accident down a mine shaft whilst trespassing on the site to gather evidence leaves Alec in hospital and the MOD take matters into their own hands; upping their security presence and hiring a belligerent PR rep to smear Alec. They lock horns as predicted but Alec is dogged and on pulling the thread, the whole insidious story unravels; over 100 recorded accidents, 9 employee deaths, embellished reports, and a toxic legacy spanning 70 years, - it's clear he has a landmark case on his hands. He gathers testimony after testimony - each story dredging up horrifying flashbacks from the past and Alec becomes what he has always avoided; emotionally involved in the case. In helping the community to expel the ghosts of its past, Alec is forced to confront his own; looking behind his carefully constructed veneer and confronting the scared & closeted young man who fled all those years ago. And through this time of healing, he and Iris delicately reform their mother & son bond, finally making up for lost time.

But it's Colin's widow ELEANOR (87) who comes forward and reveals Iris as an accessory to this complex cover-up and now with the 50 year time clause lapsing on the redacted files - Alec is faced with a grim decision: expose the truth or protect his family. Finding himself entangled at the centre of a web of lies, Alec must face his own demons and the consequences of the damage he has caused. But as with most families and the toughest of cases, the heaviest secrets lie dormant - it takes courage to unearth them.

POISONED LAND brings to light the true story of Cornwall's Nancekuke facility. The government discussed its dark legacy only when forced to - continually restricting public and press knowledge. But now, with the release of previously unseen files - the story can finally be told.