

GENERALS DIE IN BED

a play by
David Jacklin

Adapted from the novel
by
Charles Yale Harrison

*To the bewildered youths –
British, Australian, Canadian, and German –
who were killed in that wood
a few miles beyond Amiens on August 8, 1918,
I DEDICATE THIS BOOK.
Charles Yale Harrison, 1928*

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FINAL

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CHARACTERS

A **soldier**, whose name we never learn
Anderson, a religious private from Northern Ontario
Brownie, an unlucky private
Fry, a private
Cleary, a private
Broadbent, the 1st soldier's good friend
The **sergeant**
A befurred **girl** in Montreal
Captain Clark, an English officer
An English **tommy**, who doesn't like German lice
An **MP** (Provost)
Karl's brother, a German soldier
His friend, another German soldier
The **Colonel**, of the soldier's battalion
An army **doctor**
Gladys, a Cockney prostitute
Renaud, a French-Canadian soldier
A German **sniper**, with three children
A **lieutenant**, from "D" company
An old **French woman** (who's probably 40)
Captain Yenny, who replaces Captain Clark
The **Doughboy**, an American soldier from Tennessee
The **brigadier-general**, of the soldier's brigade
An English **WAAC**, who's got mumps under the waistcoat
A **German officer**, who is a prisoner of war

Cast and voice assignments

The text is arranged for six voices: SOLDIER and VOICE A through E. The specified characters in the text should be divided up as convenient among the VOICE A through E actors.

Some notes on pronunciation

Unfortunately, we are inundated by American influence in this country, so I have to point out that the rank above sergeant and below captain is a lieutenant, which is pronounced "lef-TEN-ant", not "LOO-tenant" or "LEF-tenant". A member of the Women's Auxilliary Army Corp (WAAC) is called a "wack".

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NOTES:

Charles Yates Harrison enlisted in the 14th (Royal Montreal Regiment) Battalion (CEF) in October of 1914. He embarked for England in February of 1915 and for France in April of 1915. Remarkably, he served unscathed until August 18, 1918, when he was wounded at the Battle of Amiens and evacuated to England (Blighty, as it was called). After the war, he became a journalist and author, eventually returning to his native United States.

Generals Die In Bed was serialized in 1928 and published as a novel in 1930. It became an international best-seller. The New York Evening Standard called it "the best of the war books" and the New York Times: "a burning, breathing, historic document."

In Canada, however, the book was repudiated and suppressed because of four controversial elements.

1) in one chapter he refers to "the poppies of which the war-poets are writing about back home". This was taken as an attack on John McRae's poem In Flanders' Fields.

2) He says that Canadian soldiers looted and pillaged the town of Arras in Flanders in the spring of 1918. This is a persistent rumour that was prevalent before the publication of **Generals Die In Bed**. The military say this did not happen – but Harrison *was* there.

3) He says that an unnamed brigadier-general encouraged Canadian soldiers to "take no prisoners" at the Battle of Amiens, which would have been, while not actually a war crime, at least frowned upon. While there is no evidence of wide-spread shooting of surrendering soldiers, it is something that happened.

4) He suggests that HMHS Llandovery Castle, a British hospital ship that was sunk by a German U-boat and then had its lifeboats machine-gunned, killing over 300 Canadian wounded and nurses, was carrying war materiel and munitions. An official inquiry after the war determined that there was no evidence of it, but it is possible that a soldiers' rumour to that effect could have been circulating at the time of the Battle of Amiens. It has since been proven that the RMS Lusitania, torpedoed in 1915, was carrying war materiel, as well as neutral civilians.

Oh, and he also asserts that generals die in bed. It is a fact that 56 British and Commonwealth generals were killed in action during World War One. It is also a fact that 876,084 British and Commonwealth privates and other ranks died. Perhaps we can forgive a ex-private for having a bias.

No less a person than Sir Arthur Currie, Canada's top soldier and probably the best Allied general of the war, attacked both the book and Harrison personally and quite viciously. The result is that **Generals Die In Bed** has been largely forgotten, especially in Canada.

It should not be.

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MUSICAL NUMBERS

Act One

- 1 Whiter Than The Whitewash On The Wall (*Traditional*)
- 2 I Want To Go Home (*Traditional*)
- 3 Take Me Back To Dear Old Blighty (*A.J. Mills/ F. Godfrey/B. Scott*)
- 4 Shelled Last Night (a capella) (*Traditional*)
- 5 Gassed Last Night (a capella) (*Traditional*)
- 6 I Want To Go Home, reprise (*Traditional*)
- 7 Oh, It's A Lovely War (*J.P. Long/ M. Scott*)
- 8 Apres La Guerre Finis (a capella) (*Traditional*)
- 9 Marching Songs Medley (*Traditional*)
- 10 The Generals Have A Bloody Good Time (*Traditional*)
- 11 Oh, It's A Lovely War underscore (*J.P. Long/ M. Scott*)
- 12 Goodbye-ee (*R.P. Weston and Bert Lee*)

Act Two

- 13 Keep Your Head Down, Fritzie Boy (*C.W. Murphy/ W. David/ I. Rice*)
- 14 We Are Fred Karno's Army (*Traditional*)
- 15 Hush, Here Comes A Whizz-Bang (*R. P. Weston/ F. J. Barnes/ M. Scott*)
- 16 That's The Wrong Way To Tickle Marie (*H.J. Williams/ J. Judge*)
- 17 Grouching, Grouching, Grouching (*Traditional*)
- 18 I Want To Go Home, 2nd reprise (a capella) (*Traditional*)
- 19 Oh, I'll Take The Tripod (a capella) (*Traditional*)
- 20 And When They Ask Us (How Dangerous It Was) (*Jerome Kern*)
- 21 Take Me Back To Dear Old Blighty, reprise (*A.J. Mills/ F. Godfrey/B. Scott*)
- 22 And When They Ask Us, reprise (*Jerome Kern*)
- 23 Let's All Go Down The Strand (*C. W. Murphy/H. Castling*)

NOTE: All music used in this production, both traditional and attributed, is in the public domain.

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GENERALS DIE IN BED

Act One

*(Lights up. MARKER: Whiter Than The Whitewash.
The actors rise from seats in the house and make their way
onstage during the following.)*

ALL:

1 16 17 18 19
Whit er than the white wash on the wall. Whit er than the white wash on the

20 21 22
wall. Wash me in the water that you washed your dirty daugh ter in and

23 24 25
I shall be whit er than the white wash on the wall. On the wall. On the wall On the

26 27 28 29
wall. On the wall Whit er than the white wash on the wall. Wash me in the water that you

30 31 32
washed your dirty daugh ter in and I shall be whit er than the white wash on the wall. On the

Sing 5 Xs under dialogue below

33 34 35 36 1, 2, 3, 4
wall. On the wall On the wall. On the wall On the wall. On the wall On the wall. On the wall On the

(Lights change. MARKER: February, 1915)

- VOICE A: Some of the recruits are beginning to dribble into the barracks after a night's carousal down the line.
- VOICE B: In Montreal, "Down the line" is Cadieux Street, St. Elizabeth Street, Craig Street – a square mile of squalid brick houses with red light flooding the sidewalks with warm inviting glow. The houses are known by their numbers, 169 or 72 or 184.
- VOICE C: Some of us are lying in our bunks, uncovered, showing our heavy grey woolen underwear – regulation Army issue. The heavy odour of stale booze and women is in the air. Electric lights burn although it is long after "lights out".
- VOICE D: In the next bunk lies Anderson, a middle-aged, slightly bald man from

somewhere in the backwoods of northern Ontario. He is reading his Bible.

ALL:

5
37 wall. On the wall Oh, 38 Wash me in the wat er that you 39 washed your dir ty daugh ter in and
40 *Slower* I shall be whit er than the 41 white wash on the wall.

(Lights change. NOTE: PAUSE on picture of men on cots.)

FRY: ... three bucks?, I says. 'What the hell! I don't wanta buy yuh,' I says, 'I only want rent yuh for about twenty minutes.'

(There is a roar of laughter.)

So, 'I'm thirsty', I says. 'Where's the water?' When she's gone, I dips into her pocketbook and sneaks me back two bucks.

BROADBENT: Yeah, that's what you wish happened.

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FRY: Ask Brownie, he heard her bellyachin' – dincha, Brownie?

VOICE A: A lad, not more than seventeen, staggers to the centre of the room and retches into the slop-can.

VOICE B: Oh, for gawd's sake!

VOICE C: Hold it, Billy, hold it.

VOICE A: Missed it, by God!

ALL: Woo-hoo!

SOLDIER: In the far corner of the dormitory some of the boys begin to sing a war song with a mock pathos.

(Lights change. MARKER: I Want To Go Home.)

ALL:

8 *mf* I want to go home. I want to go home. I
17 don't want to go in the tren- ches no more where whizz- bangs and

22 shrap- nel, they whis- tle and roar Take me ov- er the sea where the

29 Al- ley- man can't get at me. Oh, my! I don't want to die.

37 I want to go home!

(Lights change. MARKER: Hey, listen fellers.)

VOICE B: Hey, lissen, fellers, don't none of you go down to 184 any more; they threw one of our men out tonight.

VOICE C: Yeah? We'll bust her joint up.

SOLDIER: Anderson's forehead is drawn into furrows. He jumps into the middle of the room, the seat of the underwear hanging comically in his rear. In an evangelical voice, he cries:

ANDERSON: Men, do you know you're sinning in the eyes of the Lord?

VOICE C: Oh, jesus!

VOICE B: Go to hell.

VOICE A: Take a jump in the lake.

ALL: Shut up, Anderson.

ANDERSON: Some of you men would put your bodies where I wouldn't put my swagger stick.

VOICE A: Shut up, sky pilot.

VOICE B: It's good for pimples.

SOLDIER: He stands on the bare floor, long face is set. His voice sounds like a piccolo above the braying of trombones.

ANDERSON: Well, anyway, God didn't make your bodies for that.

SOLDIER: The orderly sergeant crashes through the door.

SERGEANT: Lights out means lights out, ya miserable lot! Now, lights out!

(Lights change. MARKER: Lights out!)

SOLDIER: The room is quiet.

(Lights change. MARKER: I Want To Go Home, underscore.)

VOICE C: Our train leaves at eight. At four, the officers try to get the men in shape. More than half the battalion is drunk. Outside in the streets, we hear the sounds of celebration. Fireworks are being exploded. The band strikes up and we march and stagger from the parade square into the street.

VOICE D: The city is celebrating the departure of the battalion.

VOICE E: A mob cheers and roars.

VOICE A: Women wave their handkerchiefs.

VOICE B: Flowers are tossed into the marching ranks.

VOICE C: We are heroes, and the women are hysterical now that we're leaving.

WOMAN: Goodbye and good luck, boy-y-y-ys.

VOICE D: They break our ranks and kiss us.

SOLDIER: A befurred young woman puts her soft arm around my neck and kisses me. She has been drinking a little. I am only eighteen and I have not had any experiences with women like this. I like it.

She marches along by my side. Well, the battalion is no longer marching. We straggle, disorganised, down the street leading to the station.

WOMAN: Kiss me, honey, she commands.

SOLDIER: I obey. I want to stay with this fair girl who smells faintly of perfume. I grip her arm tightly.

WOMAN: Hey, soldier boy, you're hurting me.

VOICE E: We stagger into the train.

ALL: The train does not move.

VOICE E: The singing and cheering outside dies down.

ALL: The train does not move.

VOICE E: The people wander away.

ALL: The train does not move.

VOICE E: The station is deserted.

ALL: At last the train, slowly, begins to move . . .

(Lights change. MARKER: Take Me Back To Dear Old Blighty.)

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8 9 10 11 12 13 14

Take me back to dear old Bligh- ty! Put me on the train for Lon- don

15 16 17 18 19 20

town. Take me ov- er there; drop me an- y- where:

21 22 23 24 25 26

Birm- ing- ham, Leeds or Man- ches- ter, well, I don't care. I should love to see my

27 28 29 30 31 32

best girl. Cud- dl- ing up a- gain, we soon should be! So!

33 34 35 36 37 38

Tid- del- y, id- del- y, igh- ty! Hur- ry me back to Bligh- ty. Bligh- ty is the place for

39 40

me.

(Lights change. MARKER: April 1915. MARKER: We leave the piles...)

VOICE E: We leave the piles of rubble that was once a little Flemish town and wind our way up through the muddy communication trench. We stumble against the sides of the trench and tear our hands and clothing on the buried bits of barbed wire.

SOLDIER: Brown slithers into a water-filled hole. It has a green scum on it. Broadbent and I fish him out.

BROWN: I can't go any farther. Let me lie here. I'll come on later.

SOLDIER: We're blocking the narrow trench and the oncoming men trip over us.

VOICE D: Jesus, Brown, keep moving.

VOICE B: What the hell, Brown!

SOLDIER: Captain Clark pushes his way through. He is an Imperial, an Englishman.

CLARK: So it's you again! Come on, get up. Cold feet, eh, getting near the line? Get up, you're holding up the line. No wonder we're losing the bloody war. Here, sergeant, stick a bayonet up his behind – that'll make him move.

SOLDIER: Brown gets to his feet.

(Lights change. MARKER: It is midnight when we arrive.)

VOICE C: It is midnight when we arrive. Far to our right we hear the faint sound of continuous thunder. We have been warned that the enemy is but a few hundred yards off, so we speak in whispers. It is perfectly still. Sergeant Johnson appears around the corner of the bay.

SERGEANT: *(Whispering.)* One man up on sentry duty! Keep your gun covered with the rubber sheet! No smoking!

VOICE A: He hurries on to the next bay.

SERGEANT: *(Whispering.)* One man up on sentry duty! Keep your gun covered with the rubber sheet! No smoking!

SOLDIER: Fry mounts the fire-step and peers into No Man's Land. He is in his stockinged feet. His socks are wet with blood. His boots do not fit. Cleary and I sit on the firing-step. We light cigarettes against orders.

So this is war.

CLEARY: It's quiet.

SOLDIER: Yes, just like the country back home, eh?

Fry leans against the parapet motionless. I nudge his leg. He grunts.

Asleep?

FRY: No, I'm all right.

SOLDIER: What do you see?

FRY: Nothing. Wire and posts.

SOLDIER: Tired?

FRY: I'm all right.

SOLDIER: The sergeant reappears. We stump our cigarettes.

SERGEANT: Everything OK here? Look out over there. They got the range on us. Watch out.

SOLDIER: The sergeant goes. We light another cigarette. I imagine Montreal. It's no longer real. The trench, Cleary, Fry, the moon overhead – this is real.

In his corner of the bay, Fry shifts from one foot to another. It is time to relieve him. I step up onto the firestep and lay my rifle on the sandbags beside me. I look into the wilderness of posts and wire in front of me. I strain at the posts, trying to find movement – trying to find men.

I come awake with a jerk. Nothing moves in front of me.

So this is war, I say to myself. There is absolutely no sound.

The sergeant comes into the bay again.

SERGEANT: Keep your eyes open now. The wire's cut over there – they might come over on a raid.

SOLDIER: I stand staring into the darkness. Everything begins to move rapidly as I stare. I blink hard. Something leaps toward my face.

It is a rat, large as a tomcat. It disappears. I remember that it was fat, and I remember why.

Over in the German lines, the red-tailed comets of *minenwerfer* sail high in the air like the fireworks when we left Montreal. The sergeant rushes into the bay.

(Lights change. MARKER: Minnies!)

SERGEANT: Minnies! – and dashes on.

VOICE A: The night whistles and flashes red.

VOICE B: The trench rocks and sways.

VOICE C: Mud and earth leap into the air, come down upon us in heaps.

VOICE D: We throw ourselves upon our faces, clawing our nails into the soft earth in the bottom of the trench.

VOICE E: Another!

VOICE D: This one crashes to splinters about twenty feet in front of the bay.

VOICE C: Part of the parapet caves in.

VOICE B: We try to burrow into the ground like frightened rats.

SOLDIER: The battering splinters the air in a million fragments. I taste salty liquid on my lips. My nose is bleeding from the force of the detonations.

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VOICE B: A blinding flash and an exploding howl a few feet in front of the trench. The concussion batters against us. The air screams and howls like an insane woman.

SOLDIER: A shell lands with a monster shriek in the next bay. Suddenly, stars and land change places and revolve. I land on my shoulder, feet over my head.

God – God – please . . .

My bowels liquefy. I lie flat on my belly, waiting . . .

VOICE E: Suddenly it stops.

SOLDIER: I hear Fry whimpering near me. He is half covered with earth and debris. We begin to dig him out. To our right, they have started to shell the next company. We do not care. We are safe.

VOICE E: Without warning, it starts again.

VOICE A: We throw ourselves face down on the bottom of the trench.

(Lights change. MARKER: Shelled Last Night.)

VOICE A: It makes no difference whether it is Sunday or Monday. It is merely another day – a day on which one may die.

VOICE B: The shelling a few nights ago smashed our section of the trench. We are exposed on our left flank. We have to crawl on our bellies. Brownie straightened up for a moment in the latrine yesterday and a sniper knocked his helmet off.

BROWN: God, a man can't even pump shit without being shot at. Some war!

(Lights change. MARKER: Trenches day 2.)

VOICE C: We are being eaten alive by lice. We sit and dig feverishly in our chests, under our arms, between our legs. We can't sleep.

BROWN: I thought I was dead a dozen times. When that sandbag caught me on the head I thought I was a goner.

SOLDIER: You know, Brownie: ‘He who lives more lives than one, more deaths than one must die.’

BROWN: Dafuck's that?

SOLDIER: A line from one of Wilde's poems.

BROWN: Aw, crap.

SOLDIER: I begin to feel down the seam of my trousers for lice.

(Lights change. MARKER: Trenches day 3.)

When I am awake, I scratch as little as possible, but when I sleep, I scratch until I bleed. Yesterday, when I crawled into the dugout after sentry duty, I heard Brown moaning in his sleep and scratching under his arms. The English sapper who was helping us repair the trench the other night watched him scratch.

TOMMY: They're a filthy rice; the bloody swine.

SOLDIER: Who are?

TOMMY: The friggin' Germans! They brought the friggin' lice wiv 'em.

SOLDIER: Ya think maybe dirt and dead bodies might be the cause?

TOMMY: I says they're 'einie lice and I knaow. They got black stripes on 'em, 'ain't they? In Bligh'y, I never saw no louse wiv black stripes on 'em. They're bloody bosches. I knaow.

(Lights change. MARKER: Trenches day 4.)

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SOLDIER: Brown has new boots of soft brown leather.

BROWN: I found them near the shit house. They were a little dirty and bloody, but they're all right – just the right size.

VOICE D: On the way down to the latrine, a shell has torn a hole into one side of the trench. Some wire sticks out, and some old bully beef tins – and a pair of rotting feet without boots.

(Lights change. MARKER: Artillery duel.)

VOICE E: We are caught in an artillery duel. We are in the line – suddenly the enemy artillery begins to bombard us. We cower behind the sandbags, trembling, white-faced, tight-lipped. Red flares fly over our line. Our own guns reply. They hammer the enemy's front line. For an hour at a time, the steel and the fire and smoke rain down on us – and on the Heinies in the trenches across the way. The infantrymen on both sides suffer, are killed, wounded. This is called an artillery duel. We feel sorry for the poor bloody gunners.

(Lights change. MARKER: Resting.)

VOICE A: We are out on rest now for the third time. We have long since learned that

the word rest is another military term meaning something altogether different. Like artillery duel, for example.

VOICE B: We are taken from the trenches and march for endless hours to billets. The first day out we really rest. Then fatigues, march, drill, shining buttons, guard duty, practice grenade-throwing, machine gunnery, and at night we do wiring and trench-digging. This is called rest.

VOICE C: It is late afternoon; we are through with the day's fatigues and are sitting about digging mud off our boots, shining brass buttons, cleaning and oiling our rifles, and killing lice in between times.

VOICE D: Captain Clark gave us a stern lecture on cleanliness.

CLARK: You must shave every day. It gives you greater morale. How can you expect to kill a German when you have low morale?

VOICE E: When we shaved this morning in the ice water, our faces were blue for hours.

VOICE D: Brown has a talent. He can get caught on or fall into anything. An old bit of barbed wire, a shell hole filled with slime – the runoff from the latrine. Brown's uniform is almost in tatters.

CLARK: You're a disgrace to the uniform, Brown! Why shouldn't I put you on defaulters right now for it?

VOICE C: Brownie stares straight ahead.

CLARK: Sar'nt! Take that man's name!

SERGEANT: Yes, sir. What charge, sir?

CLARK: Silent insolence.

BROWN: I'll kill the bastard – that's what I'll do. I'm just waiting until we get into a real scrap. I'll plug the son of a bitch between the shoulder blades.

CLEARY: If you had a wish, what would you wish for?

BROWN: I'd wish that bloody bastard Clark was dead.

CLEARY: That won't put beans in your belly.

BROWN: Just the same, I'd give a month's pay to see him stretched out.

CLEARY: Clean sheets. Great big, white, cool sheets and no lice, and I'm willing to let White Britches live.

BROWN: The last night I slept between clean white sheets was with my wife. Oh, man! I wish I was home with Martha.

SOLDIER: Brownie, you'd cave in after the first ten minutes. We haven't had a decent meal for months. I mean a meal. I'd give everything I own for a big helping of English roast beef – big brown baked potatoes split open on top and sprinkled with a little paprika – and a great hunk of Yorkshire pudding. Top that off with a bottle of cool ale. And by beef I don't mean horse – it's gotta be soft, juicy, and red with a little blood oozing out of it.

CLEARY: The best meal I ever had was when I got my five days' leave in London. A tart took me to a place in Soho. Man, I put it away until I thought I would bust. You know, I think that soldiering makes your belly shrink –

VOICE B: It is a full hour before we'll get our hunk of grey war bread dipped in bacon grease and a mess-tin full of pale unsweetened tea.

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(Lights change. MARKER: Gassed Last Night.)

ALL:

The musical score is written for a single voice part, likely for a chorus or ensemble. It consists of four staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The melody is written in a simple, accessible style. The lyrics are written below the notes. The second staff continues the melody and lyrics. The third staff continues the melody and lyrics. The fourth staff concludes the piece with a double bar line. The lyrics are: 'Gassed last night, and gassed the night before. We're gon-na get gassed a-gain to-night, if we nev-er get gassed no more. When we're gassed, we're sick as we can be, 'cause phos-gene and mus-tard gas are much too much for me. They're warn-ing us! They're warn-ing us! One gas-mask a-mong the four of us. Glor-y be to God that three of us can run, so one of us can use it on his own.'

Gassed last night, and gassed the night be- fore. We're gon- na get gassed a- gain to- night, if we
nev- er get gassed no more. When we're gassed, we're sick as we can be, 'cause phos- gene and mus- tard gas are
much too much for me. They're warn- ing us! They're warn- ing us! One gas- mask a- mong the four of us.
Glor- y be to God that three of us can run, so one of us can use it on his own.

(Lights change. MARKER: Our enemies are...)

VOICE A: Our enemies are lice, some of our officers, and Death. The Germans aren't the enemy – only the officers call him that. We call him Heinie and Fritz. If we're really feeling unfriendly, we call him square-head. But our

persistent and ever-present foe is the louse.

(Lights change. MARKER: Awkward squad.)

SERGEANT: Squad, 'ten-shun! Now, then, smarter than that! As you were! Squad, 'ten-shun! Right – face! By the left, quick – march! On the double. Come on, Brown, get it right now. We'll be here all night if you don't snap into it.

(Lights change. MARKER: Estaminets.)

CLEARY: Come on, let's go. I can't bear to see it. Eighteen days in the line, get the guts shelled out of yuh – and then all the thanks yuh get is *that*.

SOLDIER: We sit down at a table. The madame, red-faced, mountainous bosom, beady eyes, serves us with a bottle of vin rouge.

CLEARY: Poor Brownie. Nothing to be done. He'll be too damned tired to come down here after he's done with defaulters.

SOLDIER: Nothing to be done. This is war: misery, heartache, agony, and nothing to be done. Better to sit here and drink. The blue haze of tobacco smoke begins to sway a little.

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CLEARY: They take our lives, our blood, our hearts; even the few lousy hours of rest, they take those, too. Our job is to give, and theirs is to take . . .

SOLDIER: We order another bottle.

(Lights change. MARKER: Six days...)

VOICE B: Six days in reserve, six days in support, six days in the front line – and then out to rest. Five or six days, then back again: six days, six days, six days, rest.

VOICE C: Different sectors but always the same trench: the same yellow, infested earth, the same screaming shells, the same rats with their corpse-filled bellies, the same lice, the same tree skeletons, holding up stubs of stark, shell-amputated limbs. No flowers grow.

(Lights change. MARKER: Sniper.)

VOICE D: Half a mile from our trench, hidden in the hollow of a tree, sits a sniper holding an oiled, perfect rifle. Our snipers get an extra rum ration. Sooner or later this German sniper will be caught in an advance by our troops. He

will crawl out of his hiding place, hold his trembling hands on high and stammer the international word for mercy. He will say that beautiful word comrade – and we will bayonet him like a trench rat. But now they bring him his little extra rations.

(Lights change. MARKER: It is greying in the East. NOTE: HOLD ON 2nd SLIDE: Soldiers cooking.)

VOICE E: It is greying in the east.

VOICE D: The war sleeps.

VOICE C: No guns.

VOICE B: We talk.

FRY: You'd think a guy would *like* to die, living a life like this but, but when the whizz-bang comes, we flop just the same.

SOLDIER: How do you know you're gonna get killed for sure?

VOICE D: Anderson's lips move in prayer. He gives us the creeps.

FRY: Maybe you'd only go blind or go batty or something.

SOLDIER: Yeah, that's it. How do you know you're gonna get killed?

VOICE A: It is dawn now.

VOICE B: A sparrow swoops down on the sandbagged parapet and sits looking at us, perky head cocked to one side. We look at him in amazement. He flies away suddenly towards the German lines.

FRY: Must be lost.

VOICE D: The ration carrier crawls round the corner and dumps a sandbag half filled with grub on the firing-step. Brown bends low to spread his rubber sheet along the firing-step, empties the food into the sheet, deftly cuts, slices, divides the food. He looks nervously over his shoulder and smiles faintly.

BROWN: Don't want to die before breakfast, eh?

VOICE D: Anderson stands up to get a better view.

BROWN: Head down, ya fool!

VOICE E: The rusty spoon for dishing out jam is stuck between two sandbags in the parapet over Brown's head. Brown stands up to reach for it.

(MARKER: Sniper – death of Brown.)

His head snaps back. He sags to the bottom of the trench.

VOICE D: Everything is quiet.

VOICE C: The sun is rising now. It throws a pink pearly light on the parados behind us and colours the splashed bits of Brown's brains.

VOICE B: Broadbent takes the bread and cheese out of Brown's haversack and shares it with us.

BROADBENT: He can't eat any more . . .

(Lights change. MARKER: I Want To Go Home.)

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The musical score is written for a single voice in treble clef with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). It consists of four staves of music. The first staff begins with a melisma '8' and a mezzo-forte 'mf' dynamic. The lyrics are: 'I want to go home. I want to go home. I don't want to'. The second staff continues with: 'vis- it La Belle France no more, 'cause, oh!, the Jack John- sons, they make such a roar'. The third staff continues with: 'Take me ov- er the sea where the snip- ers, they can't get at me. Oh, my! I'. The fourth staff concludes with: 'don't want to die. I want to go home!' and ends with a double bar line and a '2' indicating a repeat or a second ending.

(Lights change. MARKER: Summer, 1916. MARKER: Crossroads.)

VOICE A: It is shortly after midnight, and we straggle past belching field artillery and silhouetted waiting tanks.

VOICE B: Horse- and tractor-drawn guns, monster swaying supply-lorries roar, chug, and clatter on the cobble-paved road. Horses strain, chains clank. The enemy knows this is a crossroad.

ALL: Whiz-z-z-z. Cr-r-r-ung!

VOICE C: More red stabs into the blackness over our heads, faster and faster.

VOICE D: The air whines.

VOICE E: One bursts directly over us. The metal balls rattle on the cobblestones in front of us.

VOICE A: We take to the fields.

VOICE B: The road is an inferno.

VOICE C: The fire subsides.

VOICE D: Four men in our company are wounded. They are carried away.

(Lights change. MARKER: Smell it?)

CLEARY: Smell it?

SOLDIER: Yeah! What is that, Cleary?

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CLEARY: Beans.

SOLDIER: Beans?

CLEARY: Yes, beans; they smell like this when they are in blossom.

SOLDIER: Jeez, I thought beans smelled like farts.

CLEARY: It's a shame about Brownie.

SOLDIER: Yes. Oh, well. Better out of it.

FRY: Private chat?

CLEARY: Naw, Fry. Free for all.

SOLDIER: Just sayin' about Brownie.

FRY: Tough.

CLEARY: Aw, I don't know. Better out of it.

SOLDIER: D'you smell it, Fry?

FRY: Yes, what is it?

SOLDIER: Beans.

FRY: I thought beans smelled like farts.

SOLDIER: Yeah, they smell like this when they're in blossom.

CLEARY: Brownie'd love this. Always talking about potatoes and beans. Remember how he told that frog farmer how to dig his spuds?

FRY: Yeah, he came from Prince Edward Island.

CLEARY: Prince Edward Island potatoes. Used to see them back home in the markets.

SOLDIER: He sure liked to talk about farming.

FRY: Remember Martha?

CLEARY: Jeez, I'm sorry I kidded him about her.

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FRY: It used to get under his skin. He was a farmer, huh?

CLEARY: He's a dead farmer, now – and she's a farmer's widow.

SERGEANT: Fall in!

VOICE E: We march for hours.

(Lights change. MARKER: I heard we'll rest here...)

I heard we'll rest here for two weeks.

VOICE A: I heard a captain say to a sergeant that we're out for a month.

FRY: Payday, boys. You can get good cognac here for five francs a bottle. We're here for a month at least. I heard a lieutenant say it. It's a big village. I saw three good-looking tarts.

VOICE D: Two months, at least.

VOICE B: How d'you know?

VOICE D: Sergeant told me.

VOICE B: Aw . . !

VOICE D: Ask him!

VOICE C: Big scrap comin'. Gonna fatten us up. Two months' rest. Smell that! Real bacon! Sugar in the coffee, too.

VOICE B: Aw, latrine rumours!

VOICE C: Cognac, eggs and chips.

VOICE A: Wine, sardines, canned peaches and biscuits.

VOICE B: Fry said there were some good-looking Janes in this town.

VOICE C: I'm gonna eat until my belly begins to creak.

VOICE D: Me, too.

PERUSAL COPY ONLY (Lights change. MARKER: Oh, It's A Lovely War.) CONTACT AUTHOR FOR RIGHTS

ALL:

Oh! Oh! Oh! It's a love- ly war! Who would- n't be a sol- dier, eh? Oh, it's a shame to take the pay. As soon as re- veil- le has gone, we feel just as heav- y as lead, but we nev- er get up 'til the ser- geant brings our break- fast up to bed! Oh! Oh! Oh! It's a love- ly war! What do we want with eggs and ham, when we've got plum and ap- ple jam? Form fours! Right turn! How shall we spend the mon- ey we earn? Oh! Oh! Oh! It's a love- ly war.

(Lights change. MARKER: Hey, madame!...)

FRY: Hey, madame, six eggs apiece, a mountain of browned potato chips, a bottle of wine each.

SOLDIER: Hey, look, a crap game. Let's go.

FRY: Nah, I'm eatin' up mine, not throwin' it away. Hey, madame, encore, encore!

SOLDIER: What's she so moody about? Christ! This place is a bedlam. Come on, they're too friggin' loud for me. What have you got left?

FRY: Ten francs. C'mon, let's get another bottle of rouge.

SOLDIER: Let's take it to the barn and drink it there. Fry, look at that! Hello, girls!

FRY: Hey, mam'selle, voulez-vous coucher avec moi ce soir?

SOLDIER: Hey! Hey! Listen! I'll sing you a song:

a capella



FRY: Where ya going, girls?

SOLDIER: What the hell would they be wanting with us with all the damned one-pips around? C'mon, let's finish the stuff over here.



(Lights change. MARKER: Back to billets.)

MP: C'mon, c'mon, wake up! Back to billets.

SOLDIER: Fuck off.

MP: Wake up!

SOLDIER: Lea'me alone! Jeez, it's a provost!

MP: Back to billets, buddy.

SOLDIER: Yeah, okay. Fry! Fry!

FRY: Lea'me alone!

SOLDIER: Wake up! Back to billets.

CLEARY: Hey, look what the cat dragged in! You two look like shit. Hey, Fry, get any yet?

FRY: Fuck off, Cleary.

SOLDIER: Get any what?

CLEARY: Tarts!

SOLDIER: Scraggy-looking crew.

CLEARY: Any port in a storm.

BROADBENT: Anyway, so there's a little French tart, a little thin but a bit of all right.

Kind of lively eyes, big like. Voulez-vous coucher, I says, and she oui-oui's me. She takes me down to her *mother's* place and we go into a shed. 'Combien,' I says to her. 'Bully bif,' she says. 'Bully bif!' Can you believe it – for a tin of bully beef! Man, there'll be a run on the quartermaster's stores.

ANDERSON: Godless swine, these frogs. No morals. Small wonder that their country is laid in ruins.

ALL: Aw, shut up, Anderson!

BROADBENT: Well, anyway, I gives her the old soldier's farewell once and, after, she cuddles up real close and says . . .

(Lights change. MARKER: September 1916. MARKER: Back in the line.)

VOICE A: Back in the line. Constant turmoil. No rest. An endless storm of fire upon us. We are soldiers. That means saving your own skin and getting a bellyful as often as possible . . . that and nothing else.

VOICE B: Broadbent suspects that his piece of bread is smaller than the rest.

VOICE C: An oath is spat out.

VOICE D: Cleary replies.

VOICE E: They strike at each other with their fists, they kick with their heavy boots.

VOICE B: We tear them apart.

BROADBENT: You bloody rat.

FRY: Aw, shut up, Broadbent. Leave him be.

CLEARY: Who's a rat?

BROADBENT: You.

SOLDIER: Come on, come on, cut it out.

BROADBENT: Any man that'll steal another man's bread . . .

VOICE A: They rush at each other again. Again, we pull them apart.

VOICE B: Cleary wipes the blood from his face and begins to gnaw at his bread.

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(Lights change. MARKER: It is three in the morning.)

VOICE C: It is three in the morning.

VOICE D: The guns are quiet.

VOICE E: We sit on the damp floor of the dugout.

VOICE B: We have one candle between us and around this we sit chewing at the remains of the day's rations.

VOICE D: Shells begin to hammer the trench above.

VOICE A: The candlelight flickers.

VOICE E: Upstairs, the trench rings with a gigantic crack as each shell lands.

VOICE C: The candle is snuffed out by the concussion.

(Lights to black. No projection.)

VOICE A: The dugout is lit by a blinding red flash. The earthen stairway caves in.

VOICE E: Cleary strikes a match to light the candle. The small flame begins to spread its yellow light.

VOICE B: Another crash!

VOICE D: It is dark again.

CLEARY: God, you can't even keep your damned wick lit.

VOICE C: The bombardment swells, howls, roars.

VOICE E: Smoke fills the room.

FRY: The lousy swine! Why don't they come on over, if they're coming?

VOICE A: Clods of earth and pieces of the wooden supports come slithering down the stairway.

VOICE C: It is dark again.

ANDERSON: How do you expect to live through this with all your swearing and taking the Lord's name in vain?

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ALL: Shut up, Anderson!

ANDERSON: If I live through this, I'll never swear again, so help me God!

VOICE D: As quickly as it began, the bombardment stops.

VOICE B: We clear away the debris and go to the top of the broken stairs.

VOICE C: It is quiet and cool.

(Lights change. MARKER: The ration carrier says . . .)

VOICE A: The ration carrier says that Jerry's broken through up in Belgium.

VOICE B: Long as it's not here, it don't affect me.

VOICE C: Are you kidding? They'll pull us out of here and plug us in up there.

VOICE D: Who says?

VOICE E: We're bloody shock-troops, that's what we are.

VOICE A: Yeah.

VOICE E: Whenever the imperials cave in, up we go.

VOICE B: The lousy bastards won't fight unless there's a row of Canadian bayonets behind 'em.

VOICE D: Yeah, but lookit all the glory yuh get. Canadians saved the day.

VOICE C: To hell with glory. It's beer we want.

VOICE A: So, if Jerry breaks through, the war'll be over soon.

VOICE E: Are you kidding? It'll last for at least twenty years.

VOICE C: Twenty years!

VOICE E: That's what I heard. They're making sure about reinforcements for twenty years!

VOICE B: What do ya mean?

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VOICE E: They give the WAACs and the nurses ten days' leave and ten quid for every kid they have.

VOICE A: Go on!

VOICE E: War babies.

VOICE A: It'll all be over by Christmas.

VOICE E: Like hell. First they said three months, then six, then a year. It's two years now and it's only started.

VOICE B: It won't be over until every officer has a VC.

VOICE D: You don't get a VC unless you're dead.

VOICE B: Best kind of officer!

VOICE E: Why the hell would they want the war to end? They're making too much money.

ANDERSON: The war will end on August the first, nineteen seventeen.

SOLDIER: Got it all figured out, eh, Anderson?

ANDERSON: No. But it's all in the Book of Revelations. 'And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion.'

BROADBENT: What's that mean? It sounds like Greek to me.

ANDERSON: The leopard is France, the bear is Russia, and the lion is England.

CLEARY: Really? Where's Canada?

FRY: Under the lion's tail – gettin' shat on.

ANDERSON: Fry, please! 'And I saw one of his heads wounded unto death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast.' That was the first year of the war. 'And power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.' Now forty-two months is three and a half years and that means that the war ends on the first of August next year.

SOLDIER: Yeah, but do the generals know that?

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CLEARY: Better write 'em a letter, Anderson. They might forget the date.

FRY: Well, one night I was with a tart in London and she says –

(Lights change. MARKER: Brigade raid tonight.)

SERGEANT: Brigade raid tonight. You just volunteered.

SOLDIER: Must have been somebody else, sergeant. I never volunteer.

SERGEANT: Shut up and get your kit. There's ten days' leave in London after.

CAPTAIN: You are to destroy the enemy's trenches and bring back prisoners. Rush the trenches as soon as the bombardment lifts and drop charges into dugouts. At the end of five minutes, red flares will be lit on our parapets. This will be the signal that it is time to return and will show you the direction. Jump off is 12:02 ack emma. Eighty rounds each, four Mills grenades, rifles and bayonets. Letters, pay books, and other means of identification are to be left behind. The brigadier has ordered a half pint of rum for each man. Remember, red flares on our parapets is the signal to come back . . .

(Lights change. MARKER: The sky behind us.)

VOICE A: The sky behind us is stabbed with a thousand flashes of flame.

VOICE B: The earth shakes.

VOICE C: The air hisses, whistles, screams over our heads.

VOICE D: The barrage lifts to cut off the enemy's front line.

VOICE E: In that moment, we spring up, fire as we run.

VOICE A: Forty yards – *(Breathe heavily.)* – thirty yards – *(Breathe heavily.)* – twenty yards!

SOLDIER: I can see sandbags on the enemy parapets.

VOICE B: A man screams as he is hit.

VOICE C: Yellow flames shoot up from the ground in front of us.

VOICE D: Grenades!

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SOLDIER: Ten yards!

VOICE E: With a yell, we plunge, bayonets first, into the trench.

ALL: *(Yell.)*

VOICE A: Two men are in the bay in front of us. Bayonets reach and press. They fall.

VOICE B: The trench shakes with hollow detonations in the dugouts.

VOICE C: Green rockets sail into the black sky.

VOICE D: The whole front wakes up.

SOLDIER: I am alone. Something moves: a pot-shaped helmet. I lunge forward. The thrust jerks my body. Something collides with the point of my weapon. I pull, tug, jerk. It does not come out. His shrieks become louder and louder. His hands grasp the barrel of my rifle and he tries to help me pull. I put my foot up against his body and kick him again and again. He shrieks. No use. I push his hands away and pull again. Again, he shrieks. I pull the bolt on my rifle back. The click sounds sharp and clear. He knows what I am going to do. I close the bolt and pull the trigger. The bayonet snaps in two. He falls and rolls over, lies still. I am free.

I've been in this trench for hours. Where are the red flares? I see only the flickering orange gun flashes leaping into the black sky.

Two heads come out of a dugout. I point my rifle.

GERMAN: Kamarad! Kamarad!

VOICE D: A pair of kids, maybe seventeen, hands high.

VOICE A: The sky becomes smudged with a red glow.

SOLDIER: Kommen sie mit mir! Move! Macht schnell!

GERMAN: Nicht schiessen! Bitte! Nicht schiessen!

SOLDIER: We are back in the bay where he with my bayonet in his ribs lies.

GERMAN: Karl! Mein Brüder! Ein minute! Mein Brüder!

2nd GERMAN: Ja, ja, das ist sein Brüder.

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SOLDIER: Christ. Schnell! He takes papers from his brother's pockets.

There is nothing to say. We sit silently, waiting for the storm of steel to die down. The brother's cigarette goes out. I light it for him.

GERMAN: Du bist ein guter Soldat.

SOLDIER: I pat his shoulder.

GERMAN: Ach, es ist schrecklich – alles ist schrecklich ...

(Lights change.)

VOICE B: Clark is waiting, checking off the names of those who return. He looks with approval at the two prisoners.

SOLDIER: The colonel slaps me on the back. I ask that the prisoners be treated nicely.

CLARK: Of course – of course.

FRY: They're talking of giving you an MM.

SOLDIER: Only dead men get the MM.

BROADBENT: Forty missing out of the hundred who went over.

FRY: MacLeod got killed by a grenade as we leaped into the trenches.

BROADBENT: Here! Here's the cap from one of your prisoners. Take it.

SOLDIER: No, thanks.

BROADBENT: Take it! Send it home to your mother as a souvenir. Only two prisoners we got tonight. What cha shivering for?

SOLDIER: Cold, cold.

BROADBENT: What cha trembling? The raid's over. Yer safe. You'll get an MM and ten days' leave in London. They're all talking about it. You're going to get the MM.

SOLDIER: Where's Cleary?

FRY: He got it.

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SOLDIER: Where? How?

FRY: Right over there. As soon as the barrage started, they sent over a couple of heavies. A hunk of shell caved his helmet in. He's down at the MO's dugout. Here, what's the matter? Where are you going?

(Lights change. MARKER: Cleary is dead.)

DOCTOR: What is it, son?

SOLDIER: Cleary – Cleary, 'A' company.

DOCTOR: Pal? I'm sorry – he won't live. Do you want to see him?

SOLDIER: Yes. Is he conscious?

DOCTOR: No, he's out of it. Knocked out. Bad fracture of the skull. He'll soon pass out. Just a moment. No. He's dead.

(Lights change. MARKER: Marching songs.)

VOICE C: We march towards the city singing our smutty marching songs. Songs laden with humour to forget – the trenches! the dead! the unforgettable!

Generals Die In Bed Page 28

ALL:

Ma-dam, have you a daugh-ter fine? Par-ley voo? Ma-dam, have you a daugh-ter fine?
 Par-ley voo? Ma-dam, have you a daugh-ter fine, fit for a sol-dier up the line? Hink-y, dink-y
 par-ley voo? SOLDIER: Left! Right! Left! Right! Roar the dir-ty march-ing songs!
 Rain-ing, rain-ing rain-ing. Al-ways blood-y well rain-ing. Rain-ing all the morn-ing and
 rain-ing all the night. SOLDIER: Left! Right! Left! Right! Roar the dir-ty march-ing songs!
 March-ing, march-ing, march-ing. Al-ways blood-y well march-ing. When this war is ov-er, we'll
 blood-y well march no more.

ANDERSON: Suppose we were bombed or something. Imagine them going to meet their God with a dirty marching song on their lips.

ALL: Oh, shut up, Anderson!

Ma-dem-oi-selle from Ar-men-tieres, par-ley voo? Ma-dem-oi-selle from Ar-men-tieres,
 par-ly voo? Ma-dem-oi-selle from Ar-men-tieres, has-n't been fucked in for-ty years.
 Hink-y, dink-y, par-ley? Hink-y, dink-y, par-ley voo?

(Lights change. MARKER: We are to be inspected.)

VOICE A: We are to be inspected by the Chief of Staff and we are polishing our mustard-gas green brass buttons and oiling our mud-caked rifles.

VOICE E: We wait for hours.

VOICE B: No generals.

VOICE D: At last, a convoy of automobiles comes streaming down the road.

VOICE C: The company commanders shout orders.

CLARK: Battalion – present – arms!

VOICE B: Seven hundred rifles smack into vertical positions before our staring faces. We are motionless.

VOICE A: A little grey-haired man steps out.

SOLDIER: A louse comes to life in one of my armpits. The itch is unbearable. I want to drop my rifle and scratch. I try not to think of it, but the biting of the beast is an inescapable fact. Another fact is that to move would mean the orderly room and a few days' loss of pay. I stand still.

VOICE A: The general gets into his car and drives off. On the way back, we talk:

(Lights change. MARKER: A little runt, ain't he?)

ERY: a little runt, ain't he?

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VOICE B: Got a cushy job, too.

BROADBENT: Bet he's got a hundred batmen to shine his leather.

ANDERSON: He's got fifty medals . . .

VOICE C: Yeah, but he'll never die in a lousy trench like Brownie did.

SOLDIER: God, no. Generals die in bed.

BROADBENT: Well, that's a pretty good place to die.

ANDERSON: Where would we be without generals?

ALL: Oh, shut up, Anderson!

SERGEANT: March at – ease!

(Lights change. MARKER: The Generals Have A . . .)

Generals Die In Bed Page 30

ALL:

The gen- er- als have a blood- y good time. Par- ley voo? The gen- er- als have a blood- y good time. Par- ley voo? The gen- er- als have a blood- y good time fif- ty miles be- hind the line. Hink-y, dink-y, par- ley Hink-y, dink-y, par- ley? Hink-y, dink-y, par- ley voo?

(Lights change. MARKER: Hello, Canada.)

GLADYS: Hello, Canada. Got a match?

SOLDIER: What's yer name?

GLADYS: Gladys.

SOLDIER: Hello, Gladys.

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GLADYS: Let's have a drink.

SOLDIER: Sure.

GLADYS: Where shall we go tonight?

SOLDIER: Anywhere you say.

GLADYS: Do you want to go to the Hippodrome?

SOLDIER: Yes. Love me?

GLADYS: Yes. I love all the boys. Don't look like that. I have enough for you all, poor lads. Let's go t'the theatre, boy.

(Lights change. MARKER: The Hippodrome.)

VOICE OVER: UP TO YOUR WAIST IN WATER,
UP TO YOUR EYES IN SLUSH. *(Small laugh from group.)*
USING THE KIND OF LANGUAGE
THAT MAKES THE SERGEANT BLUSH. *(Bigger laugh.)*
WHO WOULDN'T JOIN THE ARMY?

THAT'S WHAT WE ALL INQUIRE.
DON'T WE PITY THE POOR CIVILIANS
SITTING AROUND THE FIRE? *(Big laugh.)*

OH, OH, OH, IT'S A LOVELY WAR!
WHO WOULDN'T BE A SOLDIER, EH?
OH, IT'S A SHAME TO TAKE THE PAY. *(Big laugh.)*
AS SOON AS REVEILLE HAS GONE,
WE FEEL JUST AS HEAVY AS LEAD,
BUT WE NEVER GET UP TILL THE SERGEANT
BRINGS OUR BREAKFAST UP TO BED. *(Biggest laugh.)*

| OH, OH, OH, IT'S A LOVELY WAR!
| WHAT DO WE WANT WITH EGGS AND HAM
| WHEN WE'VE GOT PLUM AND APPLE JAM?
| FORM FOURS! RIGHT TURN!
| HOW SHALL WE SPEND THE MONEY WE EARN?
| OH, OH, OH, IT'S A LOVELY WAR!

GLADYS: | Don't you like it, boy?

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SOLDIER: | No, these people have no right to laugh.

GLADYS: | But, silly, they're trying to forget.

SOLDIER: | They have no business to forget. They should be made to remember.

MAN: | *(Nudges soldier.)* I say, he's funny, isn't he? *(No response.)*

GLADYS: | *(Leaning across.)* Shell-shocked.

SOLDIER: | Come on, let's get out of here.

GLADYS: You're spoiling your leave. Can't you forget the front for a few days?

(Lights change. MARKER: A pub.)

. . . so when he left me, I decided I'd stay on in London. I didn't know what to
do so I took rooms in Baker Street and made a living . . . *that* way. But I'm
not like other girls . . .

SOLDIER: Let's go to your rooms.

GLADYS: Of course.

(Lights change. MARKER: Her room.)

Tea. Shall I lace it for you? A little rum?

SOLDIER: Of course.

GLADYS: My, but your uniform is rough.

SOLDIER: Listen, I like you. There's twenty pounds. Let me stay here for my ten days.

GLADYS: I was going to say that to you, but I was afraid you might misunderstand me. Most of my boys spend their whole leave with me. I don't like them running off in the morning. It's a little insulting –

(Lights change. MARKER: Her room 2.)

THE REST: *(In the dark.)* Bang! *(Lights up.)*

GLADYS: 'ere! What you going on about? Silly. That's only a motorcycle backfiring.

SOLDIER: I was sleeping. I thought it was . . .

GLADYS: You poor thing! Your face is white. Come back to bed.

(Lights change. MARKER: Her room 3.)

LADYS: Happy?

SOLDIER: Yes.

GLADYS: Then what are you crying about? You won't be cross if I tell you something? Promise?

SOLDIER: I promise.

GLADYS: I always feel sad when the boys cry in my bed. It makes me feel that it is my fault. You're not angry because I mentioned the other ones?

SOLDIER: No.

GLADYS: Now, now – go to sleep, boy.

(Lights change. MARKER: Her room 4.)

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SOLDIER: What's that? Bacon.

GLADYS: Bacon, crisp and brown, two fried eggs, a pot of marmalade, a mound of toast, all golden yellow and brown and tea. Hungry?

SOLDIER: Famished.

GLADYS: Knew you would be. All the boys are, first morning. Sit down, now. Tea?

SOLDIER: Yes.

GLADYS: Eat, boy.

(Lights change. MARKER: Her room 5.)

SOLDIER: I'd like to go to Whitechapel this evening.

GLADYS: Why?

SOLDIER: I've heard so much about it. I want to see it.

GLADYS: It's not nice there. Jack the Ripper came from there.

SOLDIER: I know, but I want to see more of London than just music halls, Hyde Park, and pubs.

GLADYS: You'll be robbed. Maybe, killed.

SOLDIER: I don't mind. I'm a criminal. Did I tell you that I committed murder?

GLADYS: Murder?

SOLDIER: It was some time ago. I came to a place where an enemy of mine was and I stabbed him and then I shot him and then I ran off.

GLADYS: Where?

SOLDIER: In a trench. His name was Karl and he wore a pot-shaped helmet.

GLADYS: You silly boy. I thought you had really murdered someone. Tonight is our last night together. Nothing too good for a soldier, tonight, boy.

(Lights change. MARKER: Last day. Victoria station.)

The last day. Well, these things come to an end sooner or later.

SOLDIER: We are at the station. She puts her arms around me, her body jerked by sobs. I kiss her passionately.

GLADYS: Have you been happy, boy?

SOLDIER: Crowds mill on both sides of us. We are jostled. I nod. Once more we embrace. She holds me tightly. I lift her face to mine and kiss her wet eyes. I run through the gate. I look back.

GLADYS: She is gone.

SOLDIER: I climb into the carriage. The train begins to move . . .

(Lights change. MARKER: Goodbye-ee.)

ALL:

Good- bye- ee. Good- bye- ee. Wipe the tear, bab- y dear, from your
eye- ee. Though it's hard to part, I know, I'll be tick- led to death to go. Don't cry- ee, don't
sigh- ee. There's a sil- ver lin- ing in the sky- ee. Bon soir, old thing! Cheer- i- o. Chin- chin! Na-
poo. Tood- le- oo! Good- bye- ee! Bon soir, old thing! Cheer- i- o. Chin- chin! Na-
poo. Tood- le- oo! Good- bye- ee!

END OF ACT ONE

GENERALS DIE IN BED

Act Two

(Lights change. MARKER: Keep Your Head Down...)

ALL:

Keep your head down, Friz- ie boy! Keep your head down, Frit- zie
boy! Late last night, by the "star- shell" light, we saw you! We saw
you! You were fix- ing up your wire, so we op- ened rap- id fire. If you
want to see you moth- er in the Fath- er- land, keep your head down, Fritz- ie boy!

-(Lights change. MARKER: September, 1917; MARKER: We are going into action...)

VOICE A: We are going into action; of that there can be no doubt.

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VOICE B: It is autumn. The packs tug at our shoulders. Our kit bangs and clanks against itself. Our greatcoats are wet with sweat.

VOICE C: We cease talking. Breath is valuable. Men begin to fall out of the ranks.

VOICE D: Shell holes everywhere. Gaps in the column grow wider. Captain Clark runs up and down shouting orders.

CLARK: Close up those goddamned gaps!

SOLDIER: Renaud marches by my side, an undersized French Canadian recruit. His knees sag. It is a miracle he can stagger along under his load.

RENAUD: It hurts me here.

SOLDIER: If it gets worse, fall out.

VOICE B: Up ahead, we see red bursts in the air. The road is being shelled. We do not speak to each other.

RENAUD: I cannot go on. I have a pain here. I will have to fall out, sir.

CLARK: Cold feet, eh? Fall in there, you.

VOICE C: Renaud begins to cry but does not move. Clark stands over him.

CLARK: Get up, you yellow-livered little bastard! Fall in.

VOICE D: Renaud hobbles to his place. We resume our march . . .

(Lights change. MARKER: I'm dreaming that Gladys . . .)

SOLDIER: I'm dreaming that Gladys is taking my tunic off, pulling at the pockets. I push her hands away. Once more, the tug at the pocket. I wake up.

It is a rat gnawing at my pocket. I sit up and it bares its teeth. I reach for my rifle. It dashes into a hole.

SERGEANT: Fall in! We're moving up. Fall in!

(Lights change. MARKER: Fred Karno's Army.)

ALL:

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(Lights change. MARKER: In the front line.)

VOICE E: In the front line. It is midnight. We are to go over at five.

VOICE D: It is jet black. The rum comes up and our lieutenant rations it out.

VOICE C: The hours drag.

VOICE B: Suddenly our guns in the rear open up.

VOICE A: The German line becomes alive with red shell bursts.

VOICE B: Firework signals leap into the air from the German trenches.

VOICE C: The guns maul each other's front lines.

VOICE D: It's an artillery duel.

VOICE E: Machine guns sweep No Man's Land.

VOICE A: The air overhead whistles, drones, and shrieks.

VOICE E: We crouch in the corner of the bay waiting . . .

VOICE D: The German shelling weakens. We are smashing their lines and batteries.
Their guns are nearly silenced.

RENAUD: When do we go over?

SOLDIER: Ten minutes. Stay with me, Renaud. Just – stay close.

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SERGEANT: Five minutes!

VOICE C: The trench shivers with the force of the blasting.

FRY: Hey, chum, so long. I won't come out of this.

SOLDIER: Don't be crazy, Fry.

FRY: I'm going to get it this time. And I don't care, either. I'm fed up.

SOLDIER: Just don't lose that Lewis gun.

VOICE A: Suddenly, No Man's Land explodes with a million shells.

VOICE B: Creeping barrage!

VOICE C: We are to advance behind the moving sheet of flame.

SOLDIER: Don't run, Renaud! Keep well behind the barrage. If you run into it, you'll be torn to pieces.

VOICE D: Captain Clark looks at his watch and shouts something. He puts a whistle to his lips and blows. We hear neither over the bursting of the shells.

(Lights change.)

VOICE A: We clamber up the ladder and out onto the field.

VOICE B: All along the line men are advancing with their rifles on guard.

VOICE C: We walk slowly behind the raging line of explosions. The curtain of fire moves on, methodically.

VOICE D: Out of the smoke behind us, tanks crawl, like huge beetles, spitting fire. They pass us. From one of the holes, a hand waves to us. We keep moving.

VOICE E: It is nearly dawn. A blue-grey light appears.

SOLDIER: Renaud walks by my side. His face is red with excitement now. To my left, Anderson and Fry walk together.

VOICE E: We reach the German front line.

VOICE D: It is pulverised. The trenches are almost flattened.

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VOICE C: Legs and arms in grey rags lie here and there.

VOICE B: The barrage leaps upon a wood about a hundred yards ahead of us. Torn trunks of trees fall near us. We dodge them.

VOICE A: Broadbent raises his rifle to his shoulder and shoots into the shattered branches.

VOICE C: A rifle drops – and then the man. The rifle is fitted with telescopic sights.

GERMAN: Drei Kinder – three children! Bitte!

VOICE B: Broadbent runs his bayonet into the kneeling one's throat.

VOICE D: It begins to rain.

VOICE E: Up in the sky, we see flashes of lightning, but we cannot hear the thunder for the artillery.

VOICE D: The pulverised earth mixes with the rain. We flounder and slip and fall in the ankle-deep mud.

VOICE C: Machine guns hammer at us.

VOICE B: Men begin to fall.

VOICE A: Shells explode out in front, showering us with slime.

VOICE B: Grenades land in the mud and do not explode.

VOICE C: We can see the enemy leave his positions and flee. We slide out of the mud of the field into the half-water-filled trenches.

VOICE D: It is six o'clock.

VOICE E: One hour to cross that field!

(Lights change. MARKER: Consolidation.)

The rain stops. It is quiet.

VOICE A: We open our haversacks and start to eat.

VOICE D: At noon they begin to shell our line. The fire is weak. It lasts about ten minutes.

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VOICE B: Suddenly it stops.

VOICE C: Counterattack!

VOICE A: We put the Lewis gun on the parapet. Broadbent works it while Anderson stands by feeding him ammunition. Dut-dut-dut. Dut-dut-dut. Dut-dut-dut. Careful, spaced, three-round bursts.

VOICE B: The Germans run slowly across the muddy field towards us. There are swarms of them. I fire my rifle into the slow-moving ranks.

VOICE C: They keep coming.

VOICE D: Dut-dut-dut-dut-dut. Dut-dut-dut-dut-dut. Broadbent fires five-round bursts from the Lewis.

VOICE E: Fifty yards from us, they break and run back to their lines again. We continue to fire until we can't see them any more.

VOICE D: The rain has started again.

VOICE C: In front of our lines, their wounded call for help.

VOICE B: We rest.

(Lights change. MARKER: They are coming again.)

VOICE A: They are coming again!

SOLDIER: We stand on the firing-step and shoot into the closely packed ranks. Every shot tells. My rifle is hot. To my right, the Lewis gun leaps and tugs as though it were a living thing.

VOICE B: We cannot miss.

VOICE C: On and on they come.

SOLDIER: Above the clatter of the Lewis gun, I can hear snatches of song. They are singing! They must be insane.

VOICE D: Our line is a line of flame. Every gun is in action.

VOICE E: The singing is quite distinct now.

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SOLDIER: For the first time, I am filled with hatred for these men. They want to kill me but I will stay here and I will kill them until I am shot or stabbed down.

VOICE E: They climb over their dead and wounded as they advance.

VOICE D: Broadbent no longer fires controlled bursts; he holds the trigger back until the pan is empty. Anderson slaps down another pan and Broadbent pulls the trigger again. Every burst cuts a swath in the attacking troops.

VOICE C: Suddenly, they break and retreat.

VOICE B: Their wounded crawl towards our trenches. We shoot at them.

VOICE A: One of them manages to crawl into our trench and falls near us. Half of his face is shot away.

SOLDIER: His breath smells of ether! No wonder they attacked like madmen! Their officers forced them to breathe ether!

VOICE B: It is nearly dusk.

VOICE C: Our ammunition is short.

VOICE D: We are lost.

VOICE E: Fry has a flesh wound in his right arm. His arm is stiff; he cannot move it.

ANDERSON: O Lord, look down upon me. Search me out in Thine infinite pity . . .

FRY: For God's sake, Anderson, don't tell the Lord where you are or we'll *all* get killed. Stop whining.

(Lights change. MARKER: The shells burst in front . . .)

VOICE E: The shells burst in front, come closer and closer.

VOICE D: Then stop.

SERGEANT: Stand to!

VOICE C: The field is full of them.

VOICE B: Shells scream and whistle and crash into the trenches, on the parapets, behind us, on all sides of us.

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VOICE A: We cower down.

VOICE E: The trench begins to cave in.

VOICE B: Sandbags are blown into the air.

VOICE D: The trench is nearly flattened.

VOICE C: The shelling lifts and passes to the rear.

VOICE E: Out in front, we hear a maddened howl.

VOICE A: Behind us, they have laid down a barrage to cut us off.

VOICE D: Anderson rolls from his gun and lies weeping in the bottom of the shallow trench.

SOLDIER: I tell Renaud to keep firing his rifle from the corner of the bay. Broadbent takes the gun and I stand by, feeding him what ammunition we have left. I hear a long-drawn-out hiss.

ALL: Ssss-s-sss!

SOLDIER: To my right, a stream of flame is shooting into the trench.

Broadbent! Get that bastard with the flamethrower.

Broadbent swings the Lewis gun and shouts at me.

BROADBENT: Grenades!

SOLDIER: A shriek to my right and odour of burning flesh. It does not smell unpleasant. I pull pins on Mills bombs and hurl them to the right.

We continue to fire towards the flame-thrower. Broadbent puts a fresh pan on the gun. He sprays the flame-thrower. A bullet strikes the tank on the man's back. He disappears in a cloud of flame and smoke.

VOICE B: The shrieking in the trench continues.

VOICE D: It is Renaud.

VOICE C: Flame sputters on his clothing. Out of one of his eyes, tongues of blue flame flicker. His clothing bursts into a sheet of flame.

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ALL: Blam! Blam! Blam!

SOLDIER: Broadbent looks at me and holsters his revolver.

(MARKER: Let's get the hell out.)

BROADBENT: Let's get the hell out.

SOLDIER: Fry, up and over. Try to get back.

CLARK: You there! Get down here!

SOLDIER: He's wounded, Captain.

CLARK: Get the hell down here.

FRY: I'm wounded, Captain.

CLARK: Get down here or I'll shoot you myself!

(Lights change. MARKER: Blam!)

ALL: BLAM!

SOLDIER: *(After a silence.)* All right. Fry, get back as best you can. Anderson, help him. Broadbent and me'll give them a bit more.

Broadbent goes to the gun and I throw a last pan on it. He sweeps across the field.

VOICE C: Dut-dut-dut-dut-dut-dut-dut-dut.

SOLDIER: We hop up over the parados and start to run toward our lines. Fry and Anderson run in front, Broadbent and I to the rear.

A shell lands between us.

Fry runs a few paces on the gushing stumps of his legs and collapses. He wraps his arms around my leg.

FRY: Save me. Don't leave me here alone.

SOLDIER: I shake him off. Anderson is nowhere to be seen. I run toward the woods with Broadbent.

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(Lights change. MARKER: A lieutenant from Company D.)

VOICE A: A lieutenant from Company D is in charge of us. He calls the roll.

LIEUTENANT: Anderson?

BROADBENT: Missing, sir.

LIEUTENANT: Fry?

BROADBENT: Dead, sir.

LIEUTENANT: Renaud?

SOLDIER: Dead, sir.

LIEUTENANT: Has anyone seen Captain Clark? Has anyone seen Captain Clark?

SOLDIER: Dead, sir.

LIEUTENANT: Hmmph. Looks like you and Broadbent are the only survivors of your section.

(Lights change. MARKER: Hush! Here Comes Whizz Bang)

ALL:

Hush! Here comes a whiz- bang! Hush! Here comes a whiz- bang!

Now, you sol- dier boys, run down those stairs. Down in the dug- out and say your prayers.

Hush! Here comes a whiz- bang! And, it's head- ing straight for you! And, you'll

see all the won- ders of No- Man's- Land if the whiz- bang finds you.

(Lights change. MARKER: The lorries stop.)

VOICE A: The lorries stop. We get out in the dark, fall in and march . . . somewhere.

SOLDIER: My boots are twisted and hard after being wet. They cut into my feet.

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VOICE B: We pass houses without gaping holes in them. Children peep out from behind half-opened doors and stare at us as we straggle past. Finally, we come to a halt in a neat village untouched by the war.

SOLDIER: Broadbent and I are quartered together in a real house occupied by an old woman, her husband – and two young women.

I limp to a chair, sink into it, untwist my puttees and take off my boots. My socks stick to my bloody feet, as raw-looking as uncooked hamburger. The old woman kneels down by my side and takes my foot in her hand.

OLD WOMAN: Mon pauvre garçon. Mon pauvre garçon. Marie, Jean! Aidez-le en haut.

SOLDIER: The daughters help me upstairs. Broadbent shakes his head.

BROADBENT: Jeez! You sure get all the luck.

SOLDIER: Madame fusses over my feet, pours oil on them, wraps them snugly.

BROADBENT: Jeez! You sure get all the luck.

VOICE C: Later, the house is dark and quiet. No lights are permitted.

SOLDIER: In the dark, I fumble to get undressed. The thought of a night in a bed hastens my movements. I feel in the darkness for the bed and throw myself onto it.

In the dark, my hand feels a young, warm, woman's body. Her hot breath beats into my face. We do not speak.

(Lights change. MARKER: Well, pretty new stripes.)

BROADBENT: Well, well! Pretty new stripes! You know what a corporal is, corporal?

SOLDIER: What, Private Broadbent?

BROADBENT: A batman for the privates. You get hell from the officers and no rest from your men.

SERGEANT: Company, by the right, quick – march!

SOLDIER: The old lady runs along by the side of my section for a few steps.

OLD WOMAN: Rappelles toi, prenez bien soin de ton pieds!

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SOLDIER: One of the girls comes out and puts a parcel of food into my hands. She puts her face up to mine and kisses me.

BROADBENT: Jeez! You sure get all the luck.

VOICE A: There are new faces on all sides of us. We turn up toward the line.

(Lights change. MARKER: That's The Wrong Way . . .)

ALL:

The musical score is written for a group of voices (ALL) in a 2/4 time signature with a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). The melody is simple and march-like. The lyrics are as follows:

2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
That's the wrong way to tick-le Mar- ie. That's the
13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21
wrong way to go. Don't you know that ov- er here, boys, They ___ like it
22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30
bet- ter like so! Oh! Oh! Oh! Hoo- ray pour La France, boys! Fare- well, Ang- le-
31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40
terre! We ___ did- n't know the way to tick-le Mar- ie, But now we've learned how!

(Lights change. MARKER: April, 1918. MARKER: The Commander In Chief.)

CAPTAIN PENNY: The commander-in-chief, himself, has chosen the Canadian Corps to act as shock troops to break this new German offensive. We are to be a flying column and, wherever the line weakens, we are to fill the gap. I hope that you will conduct yourselves to the greater glory of Canadian arms.

(MARKER: We march to an endless line . . .)

VOICE E: We march to an endless line of motor lorries. We pile on – twenty to a truck. We start south.

VOICE D: All day, as far as we can see, the line of black lorries stretches before us and behind us. We dash on without a stop. Occasionally, we change our direction. In the afternoon, we are unloaded while the lorries are refuelled. We look about for the field kitchens. There are none.

VOICE C: Hey, when do we eat?

VOICE B: How about some grub?

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CAPTAIN PENNY: Take it easy. Rations are waiting at our destination.

VOICE A: Where's that?

CAPTAIN PENNY: You'll soon know.

VOICE B: When do we get there?

CAPTAIN PENNY: In the morning.

VOICE C: Come on, boys! Are we downhearted?

VOICE D: You're goddamned right, we are.

VOICE E: T'hell with the war.

VOICE A: We want grub.

SERGEANT: By sections, mount!

(Lights change. MARKER: Night. We are still riding.)

- VOICE A: Night. We are still riding. We have not stopped for hours. There is no food. No water. No cigarettes.
- VOICE B: We urinate and defecate from between the bars at the side of the bouncing truck. A light drizzle begins to fall; there is no covering over the truck.
- VOICE C: To the left, an ammunition dump is on fire, blowing itself up as though a boy had thrown a match among a giant heap of fireworks a mile square.
- VOICE D: They say those 'coalbox' shells cost five thousand dollars each.
- VOICE E: Can you imagine what a barrage costs, then?
- VOICE D: Millions, I guess.
- VOICE E: What must a scrap like Passchendaele cost? They were hammering away there for months. First the Belgians, then the Imperials, then the Anzacs, and then us. They must've fired millions of shells . . .
- VOICE D: I bet that dump going up over there must cost a billion dollars.
- VOICE E: And somebody made a profit on those shells whether they are fired at the Germans or whether they just blow up . . .
- VOICE D: Just think of all the people that's getting a big hunk of swag out of all this. Shoes, grub, uniforms, bully beef . . .
- VOICE E: Christ, everything from battleships to rubbers for your cock, somebody's making a profit . . . and a big profit, too.
- VOICE D: Sure, and I'll bet thy don't want the war to end in a hurry.
- VOICE B: At Étaples, when I was goin' on my leave, I heard a madame in an estaminet say, with her gettin' five francs for a bottle of vinegar what she called vin blanc, she hoped the war never ended. Why should she?
- VOICE D: All of *us* wish the war was over, but there's plenty that don't.
- VOICE E: . . . them that make the shells, the clothes; them that sell the food, rifles, socks, underwear, ships, boots . . .
- VOICE B: Flags, aeroplanes, artillery . . .
- VOICE C: Officers with cushy jobs in Blighty . . .

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VOICE E: Paymasters in Millbank . . .

VOICE A: Society dames playing Florence Nightingale with wounded officers . . .

VOICE D: . . . there must be millions of them . . . !

VOICE E: . . . and in every country, too. In Germany and France and America . . . !

VOICE B: . . . all praying to God tonight for the war to last forever while we're riding in this goddamned lorry . . .

VOICE D: God must be listening to them. Look how long it's been going on.

VOICE C: They don't think of it the way we do. To them, it's just – a war.

VOICE A: Yeah, but we have to fight it.

VOICE E: There's two kinds of people in this world, pal – there's those that like wars and those that fight 'em.

(Lights out: black. MARKER: Three days without food.)
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VOICE A: Three days without being fed – two without water. No cigarettes. Our tongues are stiff in our mouths. Our clothes are wet with rain. Our packs tug painfully at our shoulders.

(Lights change. MARKER: No sign of life.)

VOICE B: No sign of life from the houses we pass. No smoke from the chimneys. No shopkeepers. Not a civilian soul. No signs of fighting, not even a solitary shell hole. It's as though a pestilence had swept over the town.

VOICE C: We are in the city of Arras. There is not a single soul in sight. We halt.

VOICE D: On both sides of the street – grocery stores, tobacco shops, clothing stores, wine shops. Tins of lobster, glass jars of caviar, tinsel-capped magnums of champagne.

BROADBENT: Look at that! That bottle looks important. Voov Clickwot. What is it?

SOLDIER: Champagne.

BROADBENT: Never had champagne. Look at this: Smoke De Reszke cigarettes.

SOLDIER: I'd bloody-well like to. Captain Penny! Where is everybody?

CAPTAIN PENNY: The Germans dropped a few long-range shells into the city a few days ago, and the citizens thought Heinie was about to enter, so they scarpered. They left everything just as it stands.

ALL: CRASH!

VOICE A: Splintering, falling glass!

VOICE B: The soldier steps through the window and comes out with a basket full of cigarettes. He tosses packages to his buddies.

ALL: CRASH!

VOICE C: More men stream through the gaping windows.

CAPTAIN PENNY: Stop that! You men! Stop that!

VOICE D: Men are hurling stones through windows and clambering in for supplies.

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SOLDIER: I come out of a splintered window with peas, lobster, caviar, wine. Broadbent and I visit many shops, then look for a place to rest. We kick in a window. In the dining room, the table is set for a meal.

In a little while, we are tackling lobster salad, French peas, bread and butter, and washing it down with great gulps of real red wine. We light up choice Turkish cigarettes, put our dirty feet on the table, and smoke in luxury.

We bathe with steaming water in a claw-footed tub and shave and powder with the late owner's razor and talcum. We throw ourselves on the valanced beds and fall asleep.

(Lights change. MARKER: A party is going on.)

VOICE E: A party is going on in the drawing room. Some drink. Some sprawl on the old-fashioned brocaded gilt furniture. Some dance with each other.

VOICE C: Hey, cut out that bloody shooting! You're filling the damned room with smoke.

VOICE B: Some of the guys bust into the church and took all the gold and silver ornaments . . .

VOICE D: I looked in at headquarters, the officers are havin' a great time too. Oh, it's a lovely war . . .

VOICE A: There's wine cellars in this town as big as a house. They'll never get the outfit out of here.

VOICE D: They'll send for the MPs.

VOICE E: We'll give 'em what for when they come, don't worry.

(MARKER: It is nearly dark.)

VOICE A: It is nearly dark. Up towards the line, the sky is beginning to be lit with the early evening's gun flashes.

VOICE B: Men stagger about, burdened with loot and drink. The officers stagger as much as the men.

VOICE C: A red glow colours the sky. They've set fire to some houses.

SOLDIER: Broadbent, do you know this is looting a town?

BROADBENT: Of course it is.

SOLDIER: There'll be merry hell to pay for this.

BROADBENT: They can't shoot the whole brigade.

Men lie drunk in the gutters. Others run down the street, howling drunk.

SOLDIER: There is nothing to do, so we find a bottle of cognac and drink it.

VOICE D: The flames of the fire to the south leap higher and higher.

VOICE E: Overhead, we hear the whirr of motors. Within minutes, shells begin to scream in.

VOICE A: The planes have reported that the city is occupied.

VOICE B: The shells come faster and faster.

VOICE C: Bodies begin to litter the streets.

VOICE D: Buildings take fire.

SOLDIER: Broadbent and me find a deep cellar. The rafters shiver with the force of the shell bursts.

After a while, we fall asleep . . .

(Lights change. MARKER: So they sent about ten MPs.)

VOICE E: . . . so they sent about ten MPs on horses. Figured they'd round us up, I guess. Soon as they comes around the corner, dut-dut-dut! Dut-dut-dut! Changed their minds pretty quick!

VOICE D: . . . rather fight the MPs than Heinie any day.

VOICE C: The officers are as drunk as we are . . .

VOICE B: Two guys got into a cellar, had one of those big vats. They turned on the faucet and got so drunk that they forgot to turn it off. When we looked through the trap door this morning, they were floating in about five feet of wine.

VOICE D: God, who would've thought that plain gravel-crushers like us would ever get rich pickin's like this?

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VOICE C: The soldier's dream come true, all right, all right.

VOICE E: Hey, I thought the Frogs is supposed to be our allies?

VOICE C: What, with vin rouge at five francs a bottle?

VOICE E: Why the hell didn't they just bring the grub up? You can't treat us like that.

(Lights change. MARKER: Grousing, grousing, grousing.)

ALL:

mf Grous- ing, grous- ing grous- ing. Al- ways blood- y well grous- ing. Grous- ing at the
ra- tions and grous- ing at the pay. Grum- bling, grum- bling, grum- bling. Al- ways frig- gin' well
grum- bling. When we get to Bligh- ty, we'll grum- ble nev- er- more.

(Lights change. MARKER: Later in the afternoon.)

VOICE A: Later in the afternoon, the officers appear.

VOICE C: Companies are reorganised.

VOICE D: MPs patrol the streets.

VOICE E: Night comes and we start up towards the front. In our packs, tinned goods, bottles of wine, cheap jewellery. We toss away blankets and extra shoes to make room.

ALL:

March- ing, march- ing, march- ing. Al- ways blood- y well march- ing. Mar- ching in the morn- ing and march- ing all the night. March- ing, march- ing, march- ing. Al- ways blood- y well march- ing. When this war is ov- er, we'll blood- y well march no more.

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(Lights change. MARKER: The enemy offensive stops...)

VOICE A: The enemy offensive stops just outside of Arras.

VOICE B: The front is quiet.

VOICE A: There is nothing to do but lie in the dugouts and talk.

(SFX: heavy shell passes overhead.)

VOICE B: Once in a while a heavy shell drones overhead on its way to the rear.

VOICE E: . . . it's about time this goddamned war ended.

VOICE D: . . . first we take one of their lousy trenches and then they take it back. They ought to call the goddamned thing a draw.

VOICE C: What the hell are we fightin' for, anyhow?

VOICE D: Search me.

VOICE C: Do we wanna fight?

VOICE B: Quit bellyachin'.

VOICE C: Well, I'm askin' yuh.

VOICE B: Naw, 'course not. Ast me somethin' hard.

VOICE C: . . . and Heinie don't wanna fight either, does he?

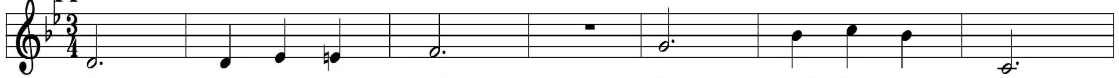
VOICE E: . . . and most of the officers don't neither . . .

VOICE C: Sure.

VOICE B: . . . and the Frogs . . .

VOICE C: Sure.

VOICE D: Well, then what the hell do we fight for?

VOICE A: *A cappella*

I want to go home. I want to go home.

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ALL: 
The bul- lets, they whis- tle, the can- nons, they roar...

VOICE C: I say the gravel-crushers on both sides ought to say 't'hell with it,' and just start to walk down the communication trenches.

VOICE B: Yeah, and what would happen then, eh?

VOICE C: Why, you goddamned fool, the bloody war would be over; that's what would happen.

VOICE A: C'mon, there – cut it out – cut it out. This kind of talk ain't gonna get you anywhere. It only makes you feel lousy.

VOICE E: Listen, pal, we can't feel any lousier than we feel right now.

VOICE A: Well, it won't do you any good.

VOICE C: God! Imagine all the gravel-crushers on both sides just walking down the line. Can yuh see the faces on the MPs?

VOICE D: Fat chance. If we had any bloody brains, we wouldn't be here in the first place.

(Lights change. MARKER: Hey, Canada!)

DOUGH-BOY: Hey, Canada! Y'all-uns up thar?

SOLDIER: Fer Chrissake's, keep quiet!

DOUGH-BOY: Strike a match er sumthin'. Ah cain't see nuthin'.

SOLDIER: Fer fucksake, Yank, keep quiet!

DOUGH-BOY: Who y'all callin' a Yankee?

SOLDIER: Quiet! And put that light out!

DOUGH-BOY: Hey, Fritzie! When's the war startin'? Oh, boy, wait until Fritzie hears we-all here.

VOICE C: Jesus, they're fifty yards away! Shut up!

DOUGH-BOY: Aw, t'hell . . .

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SOLDIER: Lets get goin', Broadbent.

DOUGH-BOY: Can the Kaiser!

VOICE C: For the love of God, keep quiet until we get out and then you can make all the goddamned noise you want to.

SOLDIER: Here ya go, Yank. Here's the listenin' sap; here's the latrine. Don't mix 'em up. Good luck to ya.

DOUGH-BOY: Don't need it. We-all gonna whup them boys asses! Bring on the war, Fritzie!

VOICE C: Yer gonna get all the war ya want, soon enough.

VOICE A: We file down the communication trenches, walking rapidly. Behind us, the noise continues. Finally we reach the road leading to the rear.

VOICE B: The first shells drop on the line behind us, followed by more and more. The shouting stops, replaced by screams.

VOICE C: Stretcher-bearers pass us on their way up to the line.

(MARKER: Oh, I'll Take The Tripod.)

ALL:

Oh __, I'll take the tri- pod and you take the gun, lad, and you'll be in ac- tion be- fore me. And

if you get shot, I'll __ take the bleed- in' lot, and I'll eat all your ra- tions in the mor- ning.

(Lights change. MARKER: Midsummer, 1918. MARKER: Eyes – right!)

SERGEANT: Eyes – right!

VOICE D: The general stands by the side of the road. We snap our heads in his direction. Our faces are as red as the poppies the war poets are writing about back home. We are burdened down by our packs. Our uniforms, wet with sweat, stick to us and chafe the skin wherever they touch. We form brigade square, as erect as fence posts.

SERGEANT: Present – arms!

VOICE E: Our bayonets flash in the sunlight

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SERGEANT: Stand at – ease!

VOICE A: The brigadier-general reads to us. We can hear about one word in ten.

GENERAL: . . . no instance of barbarism in the world's history can equal the sinking of this hospital ship . . . after the Llandoverly Castle was torpedoed, not a helping hand was offered to our wounded comrades . . . think of it, more than three hundred wounded Canadians struggling in the cold waters of the English Channel . . .

SOLDIER: The white morning sun shimmers on the general's brass. My eyes close.

GENERAL: . . . lifeboats sprayed by machine-gun fire as nurses appealed in vain to the laughing men on the U-boat . . . amputation cases, who couldn't swim, went to the bottom instantly . . .

VOICE B: It is easy to believe this story. We had seen the frenzied attackers when they came over reeking with ether.

GENERAL: . . . we are soon going have an opportunity to avenge the Llandoverly Castle . . . an enemy like the Hun does not merit humane treatment in war . . . if they choose to suspend the rules of civilised warfare, by God, two can play at that

game . . .

SOLDIER: My eyes open.

GENERAL: . . . history will recall that the gallant Canadians did not allow this wanton act of barbarism to go unavenged . . .

SOLDIER: I see heads moving here and there in the ranks.

GENERAL: . . . the battle in which we will soon be engaged will be remembered by generations still unborn as the Battle of Llandoverly Castle . . .

VOICE C: Men begin to shuffle in the ranks.

BROADBENT: Steady in the ranks!

SOLDIER: That was Broadbent. He's a sergeant, now.

GENERAL: . . . I'm not saying for you not to take prisoners. That's against international law. All that I'm saying is that, if you take any, we'll have to feed 'em out of our rations!

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SOLDIER: Some of us laugh.

(Lights change. MARKER: Where are we?)

VOICE A: Where are we?

VOICE B: How the hell do I know?

VOICE C: Amiens.

VOICE D: Where's that?

VOICE C: Where we are.

VOICE E: We're all gettin' ten days' leave in Paris after tomorrow.

VOICE A: Like hell.

VOICE E: This is going to be the last battle in the war.

VOICE D: General Foch is personally taking charge.

- VOICE C: That bastard's in his feather bed in Paris.
- VOICE B: They say there's five lines of artillery standing hub to hub on a twenty-mile front. One shell every second on every three feet of Heinie's lines.
- VOICE A: Christ, not even a louse will be able to live through that.
- VOICE E: Don't worry, you'll be all right!
- VOICE B: So, if this is the last battle, what happens after that?
- VOICE D: After that – we go home!
- VOICE C: Get out!
- VOICE E: We'll be here 'til we're old and grey.

(Lights change. MARKER: And, When They Ask Us . . .)

ALL:

And when they ask us how dan-ger-ous it was. Oh! we'll nev-er tell them.
No, we'll nev-er tell them. We spent each day in some ca-fé And chat-ted French girls night and
day; It was the cush-i-est job we ev-er had. It was the cush-i-est job
we ev-er had.

(Lights change. MARKER: Are we really supposed to . . . ?)

- VOICE E: Are we really supposed to take no prisoners?
- VOICE D: They can't order that.
- VOICE C: That's not official.
- VOICE B: Maybe it's not official, but it's unofficial.
- VOICE A: Anyone that would do what those bastards did to that hospital ship ought to get a bayonet.

VOICE B: What's the best way of not taking prisoners?

VOICE C: Shoot the bastards.

VOICE D: Don't waste a bullet. Use the bayonet.

VOICE E: Grenades are good . . .

VOICE C: Yeah, that's right. Slip a bomb in his pocket when he ain't lookin', pat him on the back and say, "Raus mit ihm, Heinie!" He runs about twenty yards and up he goes. I did that to a Fritz at Vimy. He just came apart . . .

VOICE B: The bayonet makes a messy job of it. The guts stick to the blade when you withdraw.

SOLDIER: It's the suction that does that.

VOICE D: A rifle makes a neat job. The bullet is hot when it hits. It sterilises as it goes through.

VOICE C: What, so he doesn't get germs?

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VOICE B: Why shouldn't we kill the bastards? At Ypres in 1915, I saw one of our officers crucified to a barn door.

VOICE A: Get out!

VOICE B: He had a Heinie bayonet through each hand and one through his feet. Crucified, by God.

VOICE E: Watch it. Here comes the Colonel.

COLONEL: How are you doing, boys? Had some hot food, have you? That's splendid. Well, boys, we'll have lots of souvenirs tomorrow, eh?

(Lights change. MARKER: We reach Heinie's front line..)

VOICE A: We reach Heinie's front line. Deserted. Not even bodies. The enemy must have withdrawn in advance.

SOLDIER: I feel a warm trickle on the sides of my neck. My ears are bleeding from the force and fury of the barrage we've been following.

VOICE B: The second line and still no resistance. The barrage has annihilated everything.

The trenches are flattened.

VOICE C: Out of the thin smoke, hazy silhouetted figures emerge.

SERGEANT: Here they come!

VOICE D: They come, but with funny jerky steps, holding their hands high above their heads.

VOICE E: We open fire as we advance. The silhouettes begin to topple over.

VOICE A: There are hundreds of them. They open their mouths wide. The rifle fire drowns out their words. This is for the Llandovery Castle, ya bastards. We are firing point-blank now.

GERMAN: Bitte! Bitte!

VOICE B: The hands ask for pity. There is none.

GERMAN: Mutti!

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VOICE C: The earth in front of us begins to shoot up little fountains of dirt.

VOICE D: We begin to run.

VOICE E: Captain Penny falls.

VOICE A: We run faster.

VOICE E: Machine guns hammer in front of us.

VOICE B: Men begin to fall.

VOICE D: We throw ourselves into a shell hole. The tanks are out in front of us. We'll wait . . .

VOICE C: Our colonel crawls into the hole.

COLONEL: What the hell are you doing here? Get up the ridge!

SOLDIER: The Lewis gun bounces on my shoulder. The ammunition pans clatter. Each step becomes agony. My body is a hammering cauldron of sound.

VOICE C: On the top of the ridge little spurts of yellow earth leap up, as Jerry sweeps the

ridge ahead of us.

SOLDIER: On and on! I feel like I'm running in a nightmare. The harder I try, the slower I get.

ALL: On and up!

VOICE B: A few more steps and we will fling ourselves down on the crest of the ridge and get the gun into action. A few more steps!

SOLDIER: I stumble and fall. I jump to my feet and run a few steps. I fall again. I try to get on my feet but my right leg gives way.

My right foot is spurting a ruby fountain.

I am frightened.

My God, I am wounded.

(Lights change.)

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I roll into a shell hole for safety.

I make my handkerchief into a tourniquet and tie it tightly above my ankle.
The blood ceases to spurt and drips now; drip, drip . . .

The noise of the battle sounds fainter and fainter . . .

(MARKER: I am wounded.)

I am wounded. I've . . . I've caught a Blighty!

I am glad – glad – soon I will see lights coming from houses and hear the voices of women and feel their cool hands on my face.

I begin to cry.

A sharp pain shoots up my leg.

I am thirsty. My mouth is gummy for lack of saliva. I crawl out of the shell hole, dragging my wounded foot after me. I'll find one of the dead and take his water bottle.

I slide into a large shell-hole. A man lies huddled at the bottom.

It is Broadbent. One of his legs hangs by a mere strip of skin and flesh to his thigh.

BROADBENT: Tell me – is it off?

SOLDIER: I lift his head up and give him a drink from his water-bottle. It is lukewarm.

BROADBENT: Tell me – is it off?

VOICE E: He twists his body and the last tether of skin gives way. The leg slides toward the bottom of the hole.

BROADBENT: . . . all the time – you know, in the night when I'd think – this is the thing I was scared of most . . .

SOLDIER: You'll be all right, chum.

BROADBENT: Is it off – all of it, I mean?

SOLDIER: Rest quiet. The stretcher-bearers will soon be here.

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BROADBENT: I know it isn't off – I can feel my toe when I wriggle it – it can't be off.

SOLDIER: Don't worry about it.

BROADBENT: Always said you got all the luck. Look at that foot. A Blighty. No more fatigues for you, just nurses and all the tail you can –

SOLDIER: Just rest quiet.

BROADBENT: I'm dying – I know it – God – and I'm glad. I don't want to go back – like this. . . Mother, mother . . .

SOLDIER: Like all the men I had seen die, Broadbent dies calling for his mother.

In the rear, I hear the stretcher-bearers calling to each other.

(Lights change. MARKER: Take me back to dear old Blighty.)

ALL:

8 9 10 11 12 13 14

Take me back to dear old Bligh- ty! Put me on the train for Lon- don

15 16 17 18 19 20

town. Take me ov- er there; drop me an- y- where:

21 Birm-ing- ham, Leeds or 22 Man- ches- ter, well, 23 I don't 24 care. 25 I should love to 26 see my

27 best 28 girl. 29 Cud- dl- ing up a- 30 gain, we soon should 31 be! 32 So!

33 Tid- del- y, id- del- y, 34 igh- ty! 35 Hur- ry me back to 36 Bligh- ty. 37 Bligh- ty is the 38 place for

39 me. 40

(Lights change. MARKER: The hospital train comes ...)

VOICE E: The hospital train comes to a halt near the sea and a bright-faced girl in a WAAC uniform comes into our car.

VOICE D: Hello, darlin'!

VOICE C: Hey, sweetheart!

WAAC: Hello, lads!

VOICE E: Come on over here and let's get to know each other!

WAAC: Oh, no. You're too sick for that!

VOICE C: But you ain't, darlin'!

WAAC: Oh, yes, I am.

VOICE A: What's the matter with you?

WAAC: I've got a Blighty, just like you.

VOICE D: What's wrong with you, then?

WAAC: I've got mumps under the waistcoat.

VOICE E: Mumps under the . . . ?

WAAC: I'm goin't 'ave a bybie, luv! Ten quid and a long leave, eh? But I'll see you when I get back, luv. All right, lads. Bring him in here. Careful, now. Right over there.

VOICE E: Hey, look, lads! It's Fritz himself!

VOICE C: How ya doin', Fritz?

VOICE D: Blimey, it's an officer!

VOICE E: Hoch der Kaiser!

GERMAN: Orderly! If zis car is occupied by privates, I ask zat I be removed to anoizzer car.

VOICE C: What! Throw the bastard off!

VOICE A: We don't want the damned swine!

VOICE B: Too good for us, eh, square-head?

GERMAN: Vell, orderly, are you going to take me to an officers' van?

WAAC: Orders were to bring you in here – sir.

GERMAN: I wish to see ze commanding officer of ze train.

WAAC: Well, maybe we can find a place somewhere else. Get the other end, George. Easy now. Up we go!

ALL: GOODBYE-EE! GOODBYE-EE!

VOICE C: Bloody Hun!

VOICE D: Only their bloody privates is bloody Huns. Their officers is fuckin' gentlemen. And we're – we're –

VOICE A: What the hell did you think this was – a privates' war? Listen, brother, this war ain't for us. All we gotta do is fight it. That's all.

VOICE E: We'll be aboard ship, heading for Blighty, soon. That's all I care about.

SOLDIER: They say they torpedo hospital ships – like the Llandoverly Castle.

VOICE C: The Llandoverly Castle? That was bloody murder, brother. Somebody oughta be shot for that.

SOLDIER: Yeah, the captain of that U-boat.

VOICE C: No, our officers! Don't you know? She was carryin' supplies and war material as well as wounded – it's a goddamned shame, that's what I say. You're lucky, mate. This one is only carryin' wounded .

SOLDIER: I remember the bright sun shimmering on the general's brass.

I remember his cold, dispassionate voice:

GENERAL: . . . sank first, couldn't swim, poor chaps . . . wanton act . . . must not go unavenged . . .

SOLDIER: I remember the funny jerky steps as they came running toward us with their hands held high above their heads.

I remember clasped hands lifted as we fired.

WAAC: Well, give my regards to Blighty, Canada. Have one for me.

SOLDIER: I am carried up the gangplank.

(Lights change. MARKER: And When They Ask Us, reprise.)
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ALL:

And when they ask us, and they're cer- tain- ly going to ask us, the rea- son
why we did- n't win the Croix De Guerre, Oh, we'll nev- er tell them. No, we'll nev- er
tell them there was a front but damned if we knew where! There was a
half tempo!
front but damned if we knew where.

(Lights change. MARKER: Curtain call (Let's All Go Down The Strand. After bows, they all sing.)

"Let's all go down the Strand! (Have a ba- na- na!) Let's all go down the Strand!
I'll be lead- er; you can march be- hind. Come with me, and see what we can find.

53 Let's all 54 go down the 55 Strand! (Have a ba- 56 na- na!) 57 Oh, what 58 a hap- py 59 land! 60

61 That's the place for 62 fun and noise, 63 all a- mong the 64 girls and boys. So 65 let's all 66 go down the

1 67 Strand!" All to- 68 geth- er, now! 69 Strand!" 2 70

*(They exit on the repeat of the chorus. Lights change.
NOTE: Pause video on red poppies until house is clear.)*

THE END

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