

**BURY THE DEAD**  
By  
Irwin Shaw

preceded by:

**A Town Hall Meeting**  
By  
Joe Calarco

**CAST OF CHARACTERS**

**DONNA LYNNE CHAMPLIN**

Our Host  
A Rabbi  
Bess Schelling  
Joan  
Julia Blake  
Katherine Driscoll  
Mrs. Dean  
Martha Webster

**JEREMY BECK**

A Captain  
Charley  
Private John Schelling/First Corpse

**FRED BERMAN**

A Sergeant  
A Doctor  
An Editor  
Private Henry Levy/Second Corpse

**MATT SINCELL**

First Soldier  
A Whore  
Private Walter Morgan/Third Corpse

**JEFF PUCILLO**

First General  
Private Tom Driscoll/Fourth Corpse

**MANDELL BUTLER**

Second Soldier  
A Stenographer  
A Reporter  
Private Jimmy Dean/Fifth Corpse

**JAKE HART**

A Priest  
Third Soldier  
Second General  
Bevins  
Private Webster/Sixth Corpse

*The Time: Now*

*The Place: An auditorium of a typical suburban Middle School somewhere in the Northeast.*

*The space is not in the best condition. The remnants of several recent school functions are present. A banner saying Ainsley Middle School Fall Music Fest droops from above. A projection screen from a lecture is pulled down upstage center. An upright piano from a concert is peaking out from the wings. There is a lectern from the school election debate with an American flag standing next to it. Handmade signs from the election are still taped to the proscenium. A series of three very well made posters says, "Eddie Evans has four E's going for him. Three are in his name. The fourth is for experience!" On the other side of the proscenium a not very well made tattered poster says, "The only choice is your choice! Make it now! Vote for Mary Jane!" There are two long tables placed haphazardly around the stage. Seven or eight chairs are also stacked on the stage.*

*Downstage center stands OUR HOST smiling brightly, and a little teary, quite moved by the turnout. She is in a lovely, modest, dress. She has a large overstuffed purse/bag over one arm and holds a paper grocery bag in her other hand. There is a boom box at her feet.*

### **OUR HOST**

Before we begin.

*She pulls out a bag of soft batch cookies from the shopping bag.*

Treats! Don't move now. Just stay. Right. There. Promise me now. Okay, good. And...

*She darts into the wings to go down the side steps into the audience. We visually lose her for a bit, but we still hear her.*

Hold, hold, hold... I'm coming. Don't forget about me. I'm just—oh my—such a mess—chaos—oh my-- I'll be there.

*She reappears in the house.*

*(Sigh.)* Well look at that. Isn't this nice? Isn't this just-- *(to an audience member)* Cookie?

*She starts passing out cookies to the audience.*

This is the way the world should be. Gathering. Talking. Sharing. *(to another audience member)* Cookie? They're store bought I know, but I didn't have the time, it's mortifying I know, but I just didn't have the time.

*She is in the audience now, up one of the aisles, and looks back at the stage.*

Oh look at that. Quite the election wasn't it? Poor Mary Jane Bittermeyer. She'd have made an excellent 7th grade class president if my opinion matters for anything. She takes lessons from me, and I have to say, just for the record—she is an exceptional flutist, and from my experience—flutists are among the most level headed and even keeled individuals I've ever come across- just the type of person you'd want as a leader if an opinion from the peanut gallery counts for anything anymore. It's a shame, a terrible, terrible shame.

*(to an audience member about the cookies)* Take one and pass them on if you would for me? Thanks.

So... excuse me while I just...

*She heads back up onto the stage the same way she came. We lose her again for a brief time, but we still hear her.*

Don't leave now! I'm coming... I'm moving... Oh Lordy... What has happened to cleanliness and organization? If Mary Jane had been elected things would be-

*She reappears back on stage.*

Whew. *(looking around the stage)* Well, well, well, would you just look at this? It's a mess and a half I tell you. I didn't have the time, it's mortifying I know, but I just didn't have the time. But! Your attendance and patience has inspired me. So. I'll just this 'n' that, lickity split, and we'll get started in a jiff.

*She starts arranging the space: taking down the posters and the banner, setting up the tables and the chairs.*

First of all, we wouldn't all be here except for one man. George Stephanopoulos. You know from *This Week*.- from *This Week with George Stephanopoulos*? Now I had always been a David Brinkley fan from back in the day, from *This Week*

*with David Brinkley.* We were raised on it. But then they brought in that George Stephanopoulos, and I have to say it out loud- at the time I did not trust him. It had nothing to do with him personally mind you, though with all that inside scoop on the Clintons—just what did he know exactly?- I just wasn't sure if I could believe anything he said, and, well, then to desert them, like he did, no matter my feelings on the Clintons which are just so north, south, east, and west, with a u-turn in the middle, that we'd be here for a month of Sundays if I opened up that can of worms, but still, to just walk away and write a book about people who brought you to where you are, well, I just wasn't sure how I felt about that, so I decided I needed to keep my distance from him so to speak, til he proved himself, well...worthy of my attention 'cause I am very loyal, that's just the way I am, and it just felt like too much of a betrayal to give him my time- my Sunday mornings, 'cause David Brinkley? He was... my compass so to speak. He was quieter, you know what I mean? But now? Everything is just chitchat and blather, blather. Everyone's so much louder, every which way, here, there and everywhere. I swear I hear things nowadays that I have no business knowing about in places such things just shouldn't be mentioned. Why, I was at the supermarket just a couple of weeks ago and I heard someone—

Michael Rasbury 10/21/08 7:40 AM

Comment: MIC 1 Moves Podium and Blows into the Microphone

*She stops her set up and peers out into the audience.*

Wait... Barb? Barbara Forrest, are you out there? (*She waits for a response. There is none.*) Good. So. (*She continues with her set up*) I was at the supermarket and someone, who shall remain nameless, was on their cell phone and asked for a divorce right there in the middle of the fruits and vegetables. Can you imagine? And for me, well, all of this "look, look, see what I'm doing" seemed to start when that George Stephanopoulos took over from David Brinkley, so I held him a little bit responsible, but still, every Sunday morning, I'd turn the t.v. on, out of habit, you know, cause that's what happens on Sunday mornings at my house, just after breakfast. I turn on the t.v. I do the dishes, I vacuum, I toss in some laundry, never really paying much attention to what's on the screen, though every once in awhile that Cokie Roberts would say something I felt the need to give a listen to. But then, that George Stephanopoulos started scrolling the names of the dead soldiers from over there in Iraq and Afghanistan. I'm not even sure how long he had been doing it before I took notice, but one day, I was dusting the tv, and I saw those names, and the ages next to the names and well, it just stopped me, right there, on my knees with the dust rag up against the glass. And it just reminded me of *The Waltons*- such a beautiful little show—I miss it, I do. There is the episode when Pearl Harbor is attacked and everyone up there on Walton's Mountain is getting ready to listen to FDR speak on the radio, and Cora Beth Godsey says to her husband Ike. Ike Godsey? She says, "You know I've always wanted a son. But now when I think of all the mothers across the land- Mothers of sons- I think, that is one burden I will not have to bear." That's what I thought of when I saw those names scrolling. All those mothers. Not one of those soldiers was over the age of 23. Can you imagine? And so I started paying attention. Every Sunday. I started watching, really watching *This Week* again, and well, I became absolutely, completely,

through and through, infatuated with George Stephanopoulos. Every week he'd show those names, and I just thought, "Now there is a good man." So I sent him a letter. I did. To ABC. *To This Week*. *To This Week With George Stephanopoulos?* He didn't write back. I didn't take it personally mind you. Oh no. He's a busy man. With all the chaos and catastrophe he deals with on a daily basis, he must really need to go and have a normal life and get away from it all I imagine. My baby sister belongs to the same gym as he does, down there in Washington. In Washington D.C? Can you imagine? Walking into the gym, the gym you belong to, with your little shorts and your little t-shirt and there is that George Stephanopoulos running on one of those treadmills right beside you. Can you imagine? Deborah says he's very short, even shorter than he looks on the t.v. Can you imagine? I just wouldn't be able to stand it. Not for one second. Why, just looking at him on the t.v. - I have to sit on my hands some Sundays to keep myself from walking up to the screen and giving those cheeks a little pinch. And if I saw him live? Well... I don't know. All I have to say is he'd better watch his heini 'cause you know I'd be givin' that a little tippity tap without thinking twice. And I just want to muss up that hair of his. Mm. And after that I can't be responsible for myself, beg your pardon.

*She finishes her final preparations for the evening.*

So. I think I've gotten everything set up here. And I'm ready to begin. *(calling up to the balcony)* Zach?! You all know Zachary Connor don't you? He's helping me out this evening. *(conspiratorial aside to the audience)* To be honest it's a little punishment for not practicing properly the last two weeks. He could play Carnegie Hall if he set his mind to it. Zach?! Can you give me a little somethin' somethin' here? A little illumination. *(a spot light hits her)* Oh my. That'll get your attention, now won't it? And hit the house lights for me?

*House lights go out.*

There we are. See? Much better.

So. Welcome. Welcome, one and all to a town hall meeting.

I am here for a purpose. *(calling up to the booth)* First slide please?!

*A slide of an aerial view of Washington D.C. appears on the screen.*

Very nice. *(gesturing to the booth)* Mary Jane Bittermeyer ladies and gentlemen! Give her a hand! *(conspiratorial aside to the audience)*. I thought it was the least I could do after that terrible, terrible, loss. *(back up to the booth)* Thank you dear!

I have returned from our nation's capitol. From Washington. Washington D.C?  
My baby sister Deborah goes to grad school there and well, he-

*She gestures to the booth, and a huge slide of George  
Stephanopoulos, beaming, pops up on the screen.*

-he does live there. MmMm. Scrumptious. Next!

*She gestures up to the booth and the next slide  
appears which is of the Vietnam War Memorial.*

Ohhhh. Yes... See?

*She stares up at the slide for a long moment.*

What's left to be said? (*gesturing to the booth*) Next!

*A slide of the WW II Memorial appears on the screen.*

Oh! Oh, oh, oh! Have you seen this? The World War Two Memorial. Such a...  
gesture of appreciation. So majestic. So strong. Deborah says it looks fascist. Can  
you imagine? She got a little slippitty slap on the cheek from me for that. And  
then she said. "Well, the German army may have lost the war but German  
architecture apparently triumphed in the end here on the Washington Mall." I  
had to walk away from her after that statement. Imagine what our grandparents  
would have to say if they had heard that. (*gesturing to the booth*) Next!

*A picture of the Washington World War One  
memorial appears on the screen.*

Oh my, now this was a surprise. A memorial for World War One. At first I was a  
little miffed I have to say. The Great War. And this is all that it's given? But then...  
it was so quiet. It's set in the middle of some trees—like in a grove- and well—you  
sort of forget you're in Washington—in Washington D.C? – in a city—and I  
almost felt—I know this is silly—but I felt like I was maybe in a forest somewhere  
in France or someplace—and I felt closer to the names—all the names that were  
carved into that white marble. And then I saw the date it was built—dedicated—  
and it was---

*She rummages through her purse and pulls out a little pad to check the dates.*

--1931, and the World War Two memorial wasn't authorized to be built until 1993 and it didn't open until 2004, Vietnam 1982—And Deborah says they're planning a memorial for Martin Luther King, but there are arguments and debates over who knows what and they don't know when it'll be started. And well, just look at New York City. Where is that new building? That Freedom Tower? Those families must be so-... I mean, can you imagine? All that loss, and what is there to show for it? All those loved ones, all these wars and catastrophes, having to wait so long for a place to go, to go and remember. Such a long wait. Can you imagine?

So what will happen for our boys and girls now, over there in Iraq and Afghanistan? When will they get their memorial? And why we've never even seen the coffins and things.

Still! George Stephanopoulos keeps scrolling the names--- not as many to be sure- but still – there they are—every Sunday --- scrolling up my t.v. screen. 19, 20, 21 years old... Can you imagine? George knows it's important.

So I thought we could do something here tonight. I mean me going and standing in front of the White House or starting a petition to get a memorial started isn't going to do anything now is it? So. I thought we could do something together. To remember, you know, to not wait. I was **planning** to do a little somethin' somethin', a hodgepodge- a little this'n'that-

*She goes to her purse and pulls out pieces of loose-leaf paper.*

-read some poems and letters written by soldiers--- so beautiful--- and sing some war songs—Wait—

*She pushes out the piano from the wings*

And then? Mary Jane. Mary Jane Bittermeyer? She's a genius I tell you. She's a whiz with the history. Why last year, in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade she did a project where she drew full map renderings of all the troop movements, for both sides, of the Battle of Waterloo. Can you imagine? The girl is fascinated with war. And she gave me this.



*She holds up a script of Bury the Dead.*

Bury the Dead by Irwin Shaw. He wrote the Rich Man Poor Man. Now there's a book to read if you want a little pick me up. Anyway, he wrote this play in 1936 when he was just 23 years old. Can you imagine? He wrote it between the World Wars, you know during peacetime. I gave it to Deborah to read, and she said he was ahead of his time. So I thought we could do a little reading? That's what they call it. I thought we could do a reading of it. I thought it'd be fun if we got some people up here to help me out. So.

*She opens the script.*

To start with, I need four young men. Zach can I get a little light out there please?

*The house lights come up a bit. She peers out into the crowd.*

Four young men...

*She inches over toward one of the wings.*

But first...

*She reaches into the wings and pulls JAKE onto the stage. He is dressed like a mechanic.*

Surprise! Some of you out there know my husband. *(to Jake)* Oh don't look like such a gloomy Gus. Give me a smile.

*He doesn't. He takes a script and goes to sit down toward the middle of the table.*

*(to the audience)* He'll say I dragged him into this, but he's a showman at heart.

*She turns back and sees where her husband is sitting.*

Oh. Oh no, sweetie, you're in the wrong place. You don't come in til the end of the scene, so you should sit over here on the side.

*She goes over and pulls out a side chair for him.*

**JAKE**

I'm fine right here.

**OUR HOST**

Oh, no, no , no, we need to do this right, come on now.

**JAKE**

I'm good, okay. Just get started, it's fine.

**OUR HOST**

Now, now, now... *(to the audience)* He can get like this.

**JAKE**

Like what?

**OUR HOST**

Oh, you know.

**JAKE**

No, no I don't.

**OUR HOST**

You ladies out there know what I'm talking about.

**JAKE**

Je-sus!

**OUR HOST**

Shhh!!!

**JAKE**

*(threateningly)* I'll leave.

*OUR HOST shoves the chair under the table.*

**OUR HOST**

Fine.

*JAKE folds his arm defiantly.*

**JAKE**

Fine.

*Pause, as they have a stand off. Finally she pulls the chair out again.*

**OUR HOST**

We'll wait.

*Finally JAKE gets up and plants himself in the side chair.*

(to the audience) Whew, right? Okay then! Three more young men!

*FRED stands up and raises his hand high.*

**FRED**

Yeah. Here. I'll do it.

**OUR HOST**

Oh. Oh well. Okay then. That was easy. Why don't you come on up here then and we'll—

*FRED runs down the aisle and jumps up onto the stage.*

Oh my, you've got some fire in you, now don't you? With your get up, I think you should play the Sergeant.

*She hands him a script.*

**HENRY**

Cool.

**JAKE**

I coulda played the Sergeant.

**OUR HOST**

Hush.

*She peers back out into the audience.*

Two more. Two more.

*MANDELL raises his hand slowly.*

Oh! There. There! Come on up here young man.

*MANDELL comes down the aisle and rather than jumping up on the stage, he goes up the side stairs and comes up through the wings.*

Aren't you a dear? How old are you sweetie?

**MANDELL**

Twenty.

**OUR HOST**

Oh, you're just a baby. *(handing him a script)* Here. You'll be Second Soldier. *(peers back into the audience.)* One more. Just one more.

*MATT slowly stands, walks down the aisle to the edge of the stage and stands there.*

Oh. Alrighty then. You'd like to participate?

*He doesn't answer and just thrusts his hand out.*

Okie dokey then.

*She hands him the script. He doesn't move for a moment.*

If you could just-

*He jumps on stage.*

O-kay. If you boys could just sit at this table.

*They do. She goes behind the lectern and speaks into the mike.*

I'll be reading the stage directions so everyone will know what's going on. And if you boys could remember to project, that would be fine and dandy.

Ok then. Let's begin.

*The house lights dim again. OUR HOST begins to read from the script into the microphone.*

Michael Rasbury 10/29/08 6:23 PM  
**Comment:** Scene 1

"Bury the Dead, by Irwin Shaw. Time: The second year of the war that is to begin tomorrow night." Fascinating. "Scene : A torn-over battlefield some miles behind the present lines." Oh!

*She gets the boom box and turns it on. We hear the sounds of battle.*

Michael Rasbury 10/21/08 7:41 AM  
**Comment:** MIC 2 Microphone

"The skirmish has ended and the landscape now lays quiet."

*She slowly and dramatically lowers the volume on the boom box until it is silent.*

Michael Rasbury 10/21/08 7:41 AM  
**Comment:** SOUND CD 3 Sounds of Battle

Michael Rasbury 10/21/08 7:41 AM  
**Comment:** SOUND CD 4 Fade Sounds of Battle

“A common grave big enough to accommodate six bodies lies down stage center. A Sergeant stands on the edge of the grave, smoking as members of a burial detail dig unhappily.”

*These guys are not actors so this reading isn't particularly good, and it's the first time they're seeing this text so it can stumble and stutter.*

**FIRST SOLDIER**

Say, Sergeant, they stink.

**OUR HOST**

“The soldier waves his shovel at the corpses.”

**FIRST SOLDIER**

Let's bury them in a hurry.

*Though not an actor, the guy FRED is playing is a natural.*

**SERGEANT**

What the hell do you think you'd smell like, after you'd been lyin' out for two days—a god-damn lily of the valley? They'll be buried soon enough. Keep digging.

**OUR HOST**

Oooo... very nicely done. Impressive.

**SECOND SOLDIER**

Dig and scratch!

**OUR HOST**

“The second soldier scratches himself. “

**SECOND SOLDIER**

Dig and scratch! What a war! When you're not diggin' trenches you're diggin' graves.

**FIRST SOLDIER**

Who's got a cigarette? I'll take opium if nobody's got a cigarette.

**SECOND SOLDIER**

When you're not diggin' graves you're scratchin' at fleas. By God, there's more fleas in this army than-

**FIRST SOLDIER**

That's what the war's made for—the fleas. Somebody's got to feed 'em.

**SECOND SOLDIER**

I used to take a shower every day. Can you imagine?

**SERGEANT**

All right, Mr. Lifebuoy, we'll put your picture in the Saturday Evening Post—in color.

**SECOND SOLDIER**

When you're not scratchin' at fleas, you're bein' killed. That's a helluva life for a grown man.

**FIRST SOLDIER**

Who's got a cigarette? I'll trade my rifle—if I can find it—for a cigarette. For Christ's sake, don't they make cigarettes no more?

**OUR HOST**

“He leans, melancholy, on his shovel.”

**FIRST SOLDIER**

This country's goin' to the dogs for real now.

**SERGEANT**

Lift dirt, soldier. Come on! This ain't no vacation.

**FIRST SOLDIER**

I heard of guys packin' weeds and cow flop into cigarettes in this man's army. They say it has a tang. Got to try it some day.

**SERGEANT**

Hurry up!

**OUR HOST**

“He blows on his hands.”

**SERGEANT**

I'm freezin' here. I don't want to hang around all night. I can't feel my feet no more.

**SECOND SOLDIER**

I ain't felt my feet for two weeks. I ain't had my shoes off in two weeks. I wonder if the toes're still connected. I wear an 8A shoe. Aristocratic foot, the salesman always said. Funny—going around not even knowin' whether you still got toes or not. It's not hygienic really.

**SERGEANT**

All right, friend, we'll make sure the next war you're in is run hygienic.

**SECOND SOLDIER**

In the Spanish-American War more men died of fever than-

**FIRST SOLDIER**

Get him!

**OUR HOST**

“He beats viciously at a large rat in the grave.”

*The guys start to really get into these next lines about killing the rat.*

**FIRST SOLDIER**

Get him! Kill the bastard!

**SECOND SOLDIER**

He's coming this way! We've got him cornered!

**FIRST SOLDIER**

Bash his brains out!

**SECOND SOLDIER**

You got him with that one!

**SERGEANT**

Come on now, you're wasting time.

**OUR HOST**

“The soldiers swing savagely at the rat.”

*This part of the scene has relaxed them a bit and the text starts to read more easily.*

**FIRST SOLDIER**

There. That fixed him. The god-damn-

**SECOND SOLDIER**

You'd think the rats'd at least wait until the stiffs were underground.

**FIRST SOLDIER**

Did you ever see such a fat rat in your whole life? I bet he ate like a horse, this one.

**SERGEANT**

All right, all right. You're not fightin' the war against rats. Get back to your business.

**FIRST SOLDIER**

I get a lot more pleasure killin' rats than killin' them.

**SERGEANT**

Rats got to live, too. They don't know no better.

**FIRST SOLDIER**

Here you are, Sergeant.

**OUR HOST**

“He scoops up the rat on his shovel and presents it to the Sergeant.”

**FIRST SOLDIER**

A little token of our regard from Company A.

**SERGEANT**

Stop the smart stuff! I don't like it.

**FIRST SOLDIER**

Ah, Sergeant, I'm disappointed. This rat's a fine pedigreed animal—fed only on the choicest young men the United States turned out in the last twenty years.

**SERGEANT**

Come on, wise guy.

**FIRST SOLDIER**

Notice the round belly—bank clerks, mechanics, society-leaders, farmers—good feeding—

**OUR HOST**

“Suddenly he throws the rat away.”

**FIRST SOLDIER**

I didn't enlist in this bloody war to be no bloody grave-digger!

**SERGEANT**

Tell that to the President. Keep diggin'.

**SECOND SOLDIER**

This is deep enough. What're we supposed to do—dig right down to hell and deliver them over first-hand?

*Suddenly we hear a voice out of the darkness in the audience.*



**JEFF**

A man's entitled to six feet a' dirt over his face! We gotta show respect to the dead.

**OUR HOST**

*(peering out into the audience)* Umm.... Shhh...! Excuse me, quiet please. Thank you. Continue please.

*The guys on stage are a little thrown and are not sure what to do. OUR HOST motions for FRED to go on.*

**SERGEANT**

Keep diggin'..

**SECOND SOLDIER**

I hope they don't put me too far under when my turn comes. I want to be able to come up and get a smell of air every once in so often.

**SERGEANT**

Stow the gab, you guys! Keep diggin'.

**FIRST SOLDIER**

They stink! Bury them!

**SERGEANT**

All right, Fanny. From now on we'll perfume '-em before we ask you to put them away. Will that please you?

**FIRST SOLDIER**

I don't like the way they smell, that's all. I don't have to like the way they smell, do I? That ain't in the regulations, is it? A man's got a right to use his nose, ain't he, even though he's in this god-damn army.

*Again we hear a voice coming out of the darkness of the audience.*

**JEFF**

Talk respectful when you talk about the army, you!

*The spotlight scans the audience and finally lands on JEFF. He is in a suit and looks a little ruffled as if he had a long day at the office and was dragged here by his wife. He has an American flag pin on his lapel. He purposefully walks down the aisle, up the side stairs, through the wings and onto the stage. He*

*grabs a script from OUR HOST and starts leafing through it.*

**OUR HOST**

Okay. Well this is good, this is... Enthusiasm, passion—a- a- a need to participate... umm.. Bravo. Bravo to you sir!  
Back to the script. (*gleefully to the audience*) Exciting!

**MANDELL**

It's a song.

**OUR HOST**

Pardon?

**MANDELL**

This next part looks like a song.

**OUR HOST**

Oh. Oh! Oh, goody!

**MATT**

I don't sing.

**MANDELL**

Me neither.

**OUR HOST**

No worries gentlemen.

*She heads toward the piano.*

This is my expertise! Gather 'round.

*MATT and MANDELL gather around the piano.  
FRED and JAKE look on. JEFF continues to feverishly peruse the script and does not join.*

Okay now, let me just take a look see at the text. I didn't have the time, mortifying I know but I just didn't have the time.

I'll just have to use my composition skills, now won't I? Fun!

*She starts to figure out a tune and teaches the boys.*

*(singing)* Oh, the lovely army . . . *(to Mandell)* Now you try that.

**MANDELL**

Oh, the lovely army...

**OUR HOST**

Oh, I see! This is like a call and response type of song while they bury the bodies. *(to Jake)* Honey, you come over too and be a soldier for now and *(to Fred)* you jump away from playing the Sergeant for a smidge. This'll just sound swell with all of you. I can't resist bunches of men singing together.

*FRED and JAKE gather round the piano too. She teaches the following.*

Oh, the dear army . . .

Oh, the sweet army . . .

Oh, the scummy, stinking, god-damn army . . .

*They all end up having a good time with it, maybe even adlibbing more and more profane lyrics. As it continues JEFF stops perusing the script and stares at them astonished.*

**JEFF**

That's a fine way to talk in the presence of death!

*The guys look at him. He's starting to piss them off.*

**JAKE**

We'd talk in blank verse for you, only we ran out of it our third day in the front line.

**MANDELL**

What do you expect, we're just common soldiers.

**MATT**

Come on. Let's put 'im away.

*The guys start to move in on JEFF.*

**FRED**

*(clenching his fist, getting ready for a punch)* I'm getting blisters big enough to use for balloons here.

*JAKE runs behind JEFF and holds his arms behind his back, and FRED moves in to slug him. OUR HOST gets between them.*

**OUR HOST**

Gentlemen. Gentlemen! Please!

*The guys stop, a little bit surprised by their own violence.*

Let's remember where we are.

*After a moment the men break apart and compose themselves and sit in chairs at the tables back in reading positions. JAKE takes on the role of THIRD SOLDIER in the rest of the scene.*

*(to the audience, trying to laugh it off) Oh my oh my oh my... Put men in a room together and you see what happens? Now where were we? (she goes through her script.) Yes, the soldiers are getting ready to put the bodies into the grave. "The Sergeant barks at them."*

**SERGEANT**

All right! All right! If you're in such a hurry—put 'em in.

**OUR HOST**

"Soldiers start carrying the bodies over toward the trench. Other soldiers, still in the trench, take the bodies from them and lay them down, out of sight of the audience." Oh. Oh my, that would be quite a sight to see on stage now wouldn't it?

**SERGEANT**

Put 'em in neat, there.

**FIRST SOLDIER:**

File 'em away alphabetically, boys. We may want to refer to them, later. The General might want to look up some past cases.

**THIRD SOLDIER**

This one's just a kid. I knew him a little. Nice kid. He used to write dirty poems. Funny as hell. He don't even look dead.

**FIRST SOLDIER**

Bury 'im. He stinks.

**SERGEANT**

If you think you smell so sweet yourself Baby, you oughta wake up. You ain't exactly a perfume-ad soldier.

**SECOND SOLDIER**

Chalk one up for the Sergeant.

**FIRST SOLDIER**

You ain't a combination of roses and wisteria, either, Sergeant, but I can stand you, especially when you don't talk. At least you're alive. There's something about the smell of dead ones that gives me the willies. Come on, let's pile the dirt in on 'em.

**OUR HOST**

"The Soldiers scramble out of the grave."

**SERGEANT**

Hold it.

**THIRD SOLDIER**

What's the matter now? Do we have to do a dance around them?

**SERGEANT**

We have to wait for chaplains. They gotta say some prayers over 'em.

**FIRST SOLDIER**

Well, where are they? Do we have to stand here all night waiting for those guys, to come and talk to God about these fellas?

**THIRD SOLDIER**

Who's got a cigarette?

**SERGEANT**

Attention! Here they are!

**OUR HOST**

"A Roman-Catholic priest and a rabbi enter."

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**OUR HOST**

“The Priest stands at the head of the grave, chants the Latin prayer for the dead. The Rabbi goes around to the other end and recites the Hebrew prayer.”

*She pulls out her boom box again.*

*She turns it on, playing Latin prayers and then jumping to the Kaddish, back and forth between tracks.*

*While the Hebrew and Latin recordings go on, FIRST SOLDIER hears something no one else on stage or in the theatre does.*

Michael Rasbury 10/21/08 7:43 AM

**Comment:** SOUND CD 5-11 Latin Prayers and Kaddish

**FIRST SOLDIER**

I heard a groan. (*The Rabbi and Priest recording continues*) I heard a groan!

**SERGEANT**

Shut up, soldier!

*As the Latin and Hebrew goes on, FIRST SOLDIER gets up from the table and starts moving around the*



*space trying to find where the sound only he can hear is coming from.*

**OUR HOST**

Oh! Oh, I'm so sorry. I missed my cue. "In the middle of the prayers, a groan is heard, low, but clear. The chants keep on. Another groan is heard."

*FIRST SOLDIER clamps his hand over her mouth.*

**FIRST SOLDIER**

Stop it! I heard a groan.

*JAKE pulls him off her.*

**SERGEANT**

Keep quiet!

*FIRST SOLDIER suddenly turns downstage and points out, just off the edge of the stage, where the "grave" would be.*

**FIRST SOLDIER**

It's from there...

*He runs over and shuts off the CD player.*

Hold it! Somebody down there groaned.

*A projection of the shadow of a dead soldier appears upstage on the projection screen. The cast stares out front in amazement. Things have changed.*

**SERGEANT**

Oh, my God...

**FIRST SOLDIER**

He's alive...

*Not believing what they're seeing, JEFF, MANDELL, and JAKE start saying whatever prayers come to mind.*

**SERGEANT**

Why the hell don't they get these things straight? Pull him out!

*Nobody can move. The praying goes on.*

Michael Rasbury 10/21/08 7:45 AM  
Comment: SOUND 12 Low Tones

**FIRST SOLDIER**

Stop them!

Michael Rasbury 10/21/08 7:45 AM  
**Comment:** SOUND 13 Fade Latin Prayers

Get them out of here! Live men don't need them!

**FIRST SOLDIER:**

There! (*Pointing.*) It came from there!

**JEFF**

I heard it!

*A second projected shadow joins the first on the screen upstage. We hear soft, unintelligible whispers as another four shadows join until we see six shadows of soldiers on the screen upstage.*

Michael Rasbury 10/21/08 7:45 AM  
**Comment:** SOUND 14 Three Short Single Whispers, each more insistent

**SERGEANT**

What do you want?

*The whispers continue. No one can understand them. Finally FIRST SOLDIER bends down at the edge of the stage. He "translates" for the corpses. It is not an easy task. He sometimes has to strain to understand them and often repeats words or phrases. It is truly like he is listening to and translating a foreign language he doesn't know very well.*

Michael Rasbury 10/21/08 7:46 AM  
**Comment:** SOUND 15 Short Single Whisper

**MATT**

"Don't-... Don't bury us."

**THIRD SOLDIER**

Let's get the hell out of here!

**SERGEANT**

Stay where you are! I'll shoot the first man that moves.

**MATT**

"Don't bury us. We don't-... We don't want to be buried."

Michael Rasbury 10/21/08 7:47 AM  
**Comment:** SOUND 16 Medium Length Single Whisper

**SERGEANT**

Christ....

Michael Rasbury 10/21/08 7:47 AM  
Comment: SOUND 17 Slow Build of Whispers, Starts with a single voice

**OUR HOST**

(rifling through her pages) Ummm... Um ... “The Sergeant rushes off, calling for the Captain.”

Michael Rasbury 10/29/08 6:24 PM  
Comment: Scene 2

*FRED runs up to JAKE with his script to try to get him to take the role of the Captain.*

**FRED**

Captain!

*JAKE can only stare straight out toward the grave. FRED runs up to MANDELL.*

Captain?

*MANDELL also can only stare straight ahead toward the grave. FRED runs up to JEFF.*

Where the hell is the Captain?

*JEFF responds as the others have. FRED starts to exit into one of the wings to leave; he’s had enough of this. The whispers get louder, stopping him in his tracks. MATT continues to translate. Again, it is not always easy for him to decipher or understand what he is hearing from the whispers so he translates with some effort.*

**MATT**

“Don't—...don't go away....Stay with us....We want to hear the sound of men --- of men talking... Don't be afraid--- afraid of—afraid of us....We're not really different from you. We're dead. That's all...Are you afraid of six dead men? You, who've lived with the dead, the....the so-many dead, and eaten your bread by their side when there was no time to bury them and you were hungry?...Are we different from you? An ounce or so of lead in our hearts, and none in yours. A small difference between us....Tomorrow or the next day, the lead will be yours too. Talk as our equals. Say something to us. Forget the grave, as we would forget it. . . .”

Michael Rasbury 10/21/08 7:52 AM  
Comment: SOUND 18-24 Whispers Start and Stop

**THIRD SOLDIER**

Do you—do you want a cigarette?

*FRED backs up terrified and falls.*

**FRED**

I'm not drunk!

*He goes down into the audience to make them understand.*

I'm not crazy, either! They just—got up, all together—and looked at us. Look—look for yourself...!

*He holds his script out to the audience hoping someone will take it and restore some order.*

Captain?!... See?

*A voice comes from the audience.*

**JEREMY**

I see.

*The spotlight scans the audience and lands on JEREMY.*

I was expecting it to happen—some day. So many men each day.

*He walks down the aisle and takes the script from FRED.*

(reading from the script) “It's too bad it had to happen in my company.”

*He looks to everyone on stage and takes on the role of the CAPTAIN.*

**CAPTAIN**

Gentlemen!

*All the men snap to attention.*

At ease!

*Suddenly MATT grabs the boom box from OUR HOST, turns it on to a blaring, driving, drum cadence, and he holds it up to the mike to amplify it even more. The other guys run and re configure the space.*

Michael Rasbury 10/21/08 7:53 AM  
Comment: SOUND CD 25 Drum Cadence

*The guys move the tables, the lectern, and the American flag around. The projection of the soldiers is replaced with a huge projection of the American flag. The music suddenly stops and we are in the office of the General. FIRST GENERAL sits while the SECOND GENERAL stands behind him.*

**CAPTAIN**

I'm only telling the generals what I saw.

**FIRST GENERAL**

You're not making this up, Captain?

**CAPTAIN**

No, General.

**FIRST GENERAL**

Have you any proof, Captain?

**CAPTAIN**

The men in the burial detail and the sergeant, sir.

*Pause.*

**FIRST GENERAL**

In time of war, Captain, men see strange things.

**CAPTAIN**

Yes, General.

**FIRST GENERAL**

You've been drinking, Captain.

**CAPTAIN**

Yes, General.

**FIRST GENERAL**

When a man has been drinking, he is not responsible for what he sees.

**CAPTAIN**

Yes, General. I am not responsible for what I saw. I am glad of that. I would not like to carry that burden, along with all the others.

Michael Rasbury 10/21/08 7:55 AM

**Comment:** SOUND 26 Fade Drum Cadence

Michael Rasbury 10/21/08 7:55 AM

**Comment:** "Audience" Actors start to take on character here.

**SECOND GENERAL**

Come, come, Captain, confess now. You were drinking and you walked out into the cold air over a field just lately won and what with the liquor and the air and the flush of victory...

**CAPTAIN**

I told the general what I saw.

**FIRST GENERAL**

Yes, we heard.

**SECOND GENERAL**

We forgive you for it. We don't think any the worse of you for taking a nip. It's only natural. We understand. So take another drink with us now and forget your ghosts.

**CAPTAIN**

They weren't ghosts. They were men—killed two days, standing in their graves and looking at me.

**FIRST GENERAL**

Captain, you're becoming trying.

**CAPTAIN**

I'm sorry, sir. It was a trying sight. I saw them, and what are the generals going to do about it?

**SECOND GENERAL**

Forget it!

*The FIRST GENERAL holds his hand up to quiet the SECOND GENERAL.*

**FIRST GENERAL**

A man is taken for dead and put in a grave. He wakes from his coma and stands up. It happens every day—you've got to expect such things in a war. Take him out and send him to a hospital.

**CAPTAIN**

Hospitals aren't for dead men. What are the generals going to do about them?

**SECOND GENERAL**

Don't stand there croaking, "What are the generals going to do about them?"

*Again the FIRST GENERAL holds his hand up to quiet the SECOND.*

**FIRST GENERAL**

Have them examined by a doctor. If they're alive, send them to a hospital. If they're dead, bury them. It's very simple.

**CAPTAIN**

But -

**FIRST GENERAL**

No buts, sir.

**CAPTAIN**

Yes, sir.

**FIRST GENERAL**

Take a doctor down with you and a stenographer. Have the doctor dictate official reports. Have them witnessed. And let's hear no more of it.

**CAPTAIN**

Yes, sir. Very good, sir. (*Wheels to go out.*)

**FIRST GENERAL**

Oh, and, Captain ...

**CAPTAIN**

(*Stopping.*) Yes, General.

**FIRST GENERAL**

Stay away from the bottle.

**CAPTAIN**

Yes, sir. Is that all, sir?

**FIRST GENERAL**

That's all.

**CAPTAIN**

Yes, sir.

**OUR HOST**

A light is thrown on the burial scene again where a doctor is seen examining the corpses in their graves.

*MATT enters with a large rolling, canvas, storage, bag. He takes out a stethoscope and puts it on FRED. He takes out a clipboard and hands it to MANDELL*

Michael Rasbury 10/21/08 7:59 AM

**Comment:** This scene is stylized, less realistic with overlapping text and non-realistic movement.

Michael Rasbury 10/26/08 3:39 PM

**Comment:** SOUND 26.5 Low Tone

**DOCTOR**

Number one. Evisceration of the lower intestine. Dead forty-eight hours.

Michael Rasbury 10/29/08 6:26 PM

Comment: Scene 3

**STENOGRAPHER:**

*(Repeating.)* Number one. Evisceration of the lower intestine. Dead forty-eight hours. *(to witnesses.)* Sign here.

*JAKE moves in and signs. MATT holds up a second boot. DOCTOR examines it with his stethoscope.*

**DOCTOR**

Number two.

**JEREMY**

Number three.

**JEFF**

Number four.

**JAKE**

Number five.

**DOCTOR**

Bullet penetrated the left ventricle.

**JEREMY**

Fracture of the skull ...

**JEFF**

Destruction of the genito-urinary system...

**JAKE**

Bullets penetrated both lungs...

**DOCTOR**

*(overlap Jeremy)* Dead forty-eight hours.

**STENOGRAPHER**

Dead forty-eight hours. *(To witnesses.)* Sign here.

**JEREMY**

and avulsion of the cerebellum. Dead forty-eight hours. *(overlapping)*

**JEFF**

by shell-splinters. Death from hemorrhages. Dead forty-eight hours. *(overlapping)*



**JAKE**

Severe hemorrhages. Dead forty-eight hours. (*overlapping*)

**DOCTOR**

Number six. Destruction of right side of head from supra-orbital ridges through jawbone (*overlapping*) Hum. (*in clear*) You'd be a pretty sight for your mother, you would. Dead forty-eight hours.

**STENOGRAPHER**

Number six. Destruction of right side of head from supra-orbital ridges through jawbone. You'd be a pretty sight for your mother you would. Dead forty-eight hours. Sign here.

**DOCTOR**

What are you doing there?

**STENOGRAPHER**

That's what you said, sir.

**DOCTOR**

I know. Leave out—"You'd be a pretty sight for your mother you would." The generals wouldn't be interested in that.

**STENOGRAPHER**

Yes, sir. Sign here.

*JAKE signs.*

**DOCTOR**

Six, is that all Captain?

**CAPTAIN**

Yes, Doctor. They're all dead?

All dead. **DOCTOR**

A drink Doctor? **CAPTAIN**

Yes, thank you. **DOCTOR**

*Back in the General's office the DOCTOR and the CAPTAIN stand before the GENERALS.*

Doctor. **FIRST GENERAL**

Yes, General. **DOCTOR**

Lights up on the General's office. **OUR HOST**

In your reports here you say that each of these six men is dead. **FIRST GENERAL**

Yes, sir. **DOCTOR**

Then I don't see what all the fuss is about, Captain. They're dead—bury them. **FIRST GENERAL**

I am afraid, sir, that that can't be done. They are standing in their graves. They refuse to be buried. **CAPTAIN**

Do we have to go into that again?! **SECOND GENERAL**

*The FIRST GENERAL holds his hand up to quiet the SECOND.*

We have the doctor's report. They're dead. Aren't they, Doctor? **FIRST GENERAL**

Yes, sir. **DOCTOR**

Michael Rasbury 10/29/08 6:26 PM

**Comment:** Scene 4

Michael Rasbury 10/21/08 8:00 AM

**Comment:** Somewhere between realism and the staged reading format.

Michael Rasbury 10/26/08 3:44 PM

**Comment:** SOUND 26.6 Fade Low ToneA

**FIRST GENERAL**

Then they aren't standing in their graves, refusing to be buried, are they?

**DOCTOR**

Yes, sir.

**FIRST GENERAL**

Doctor, would you know a dead man if you saw one?

**DOCTOR**

The symptoms are easily recognized.

**FIRST GENERAL**

You've been drinking, too.

**DOCTOR**

Yes, sir.

**FIRST GENERAL**

The whole damned army is drunk! *(to the Second General)* I want a regulation announced tomorrow morning in all regiments. No more liquor is to be allowed within twenty miles of the front line upon pain of death. Got it?

**SECOND GENERAL**

Yes, General. But then how'll we get the men to fight?

**FIRST GENERAL**

Damn the fighting! We can't have stories like this springing up. It's bad for the morale. Did you hear me, Doctor? It's bad for the morale and you ought to be ashamed of yourself!

**DOCTOR**

Yes, sir.

**FIRST GENERAL**

This has gone far enough. If it goes any farther, the men will get wind of it. We have witnessed certificates from a registered surgeon that these men are dead. Bury them. Waste no more time on it. Do you hear me, Captain?

**CAPTAIN**

Yes, sir. I'm afraid, sir, that I must refuse to bury these men.

**SECOND GENERAL**

That's insubordination, sir.

**CAPTAIN**

I'm sorry, sir. It is not within the line of my military duties to bury men against their will. If the generals will only think for a moment you will see that this is impossible.

**FIRST GENERAL**

The captain's right. It might get back to Congress. God only knows what they'd make of it.

**SECOND GENERAL**

What are we going to do then?

**FIRST GENERAL**

Captain, what do you suggest?

**CAPTAIN**

Stop the war.

**SECOND GENERAL**

Captain!

*The FIRST GENERAL holds his hand up to quiet the SECOND GENERAL.*

**FIRST GENERAL**

Captain, we beg of you to remember the gravity of the situation. It admits of no levity. Is that the best suggestion you can make, Captain?

**CAPTAIN**

Yes. But I have another— If the generals would come down to the grave themselves and attempt to influence these—ah-corpses—to lie down, perhaps that would prove effective. We're seven miles behind the line now and we could screen the roads to protect your arrival.

**FIRST GENERAL**

We'll see. In the meantime it must be kept quiet. Remember that. Not a word. Nobody must know. God only knows what would happen if people began to suspect we couldn't even get our dead to lie down and be buried. This is the god-damnedest war. Remember, not a word, nobody must, know, quiet as the grave, mum. Shhh!

**OUR HOST**

Two soldiers are on post in the front lines, behind a barricade of sandbags.

*JEREMY as CHARLY and JAKE as BEVINS sit and lean up against the pile of sand bags MATT has made.*

“The sound of guns is very strong. “

Michael Rasbury 10/29/08 6:27 PM

Comment: Scene 5

*MATT takes the boom box again and turns it on. War sounds emanate from it.*

“There are flashes of gunfire.”

Michael Rasbury 10/21/08 8:00 AM

Comment: SOUND CD 27 Realistic Sounding War Sounds

**BEVINS**

Did you hear about those guys that won't let themselves be buried, Charley?

**CHARLEY**

I heard. You never know what's gonna happen next in this lousy war.

**BEVINS**

What do you think about it, Charley?

**CHARLEY**

What're they gettin' out of it, that's what I'd like to know. They're just makin' things harder. I heard all about 'em. They stink! Bury 'em. That's what I say.

**BEVINS**

I don't know, Charley. I kinda can see what they're aimin' at. Christ, I wouldn't like to be put six foot under now, I wouldn't. What the hell for?

**CHARLEY**

What's the difference?

**BEVINS**

There's a difference, all right. It's kinda good, bein' alive. It's kinda nice, bein' on top of the earth and seein' things and hearin' things and smellin' things.

**CHARLEY**

Yeah, smellin' stiffs that ain't had time to be buried, that sure is sweet.

**BEVINS**

Yeah, but it's better than havin' the dirt packed onto your face. I guess those guys felt sorta gypped when they started throwin' the dirt in on 'em and just couldn't stand it, dead or no dead.

**CHARLEY**

They're dead, ain't they? Nobody's puttin' them under while they're alive.

**BEVINS**

It amounts to the same thing, Charley. They should be alive now. What are they— a parcel of kids? Kids shouldn't be dead, Charley. That's what they musta figured when the dirt started fallin' in on 'em. What the hell are they doin' dead? Did they get anything out of it? Did anybody ask them? Did they want to be standin' there when the lead poured in? They're just kids, or guys with wives and young kids of their own. They wanted to be home readin' a book or teachin' their kid c-a-t spells cat or takin' a woman out into the country in a open car with the wind blowin'...That's the way it musta come to them when the dirt smacked on their faces, dead or no dead...

**CHARLEY**

Bury them. That's what I say.

**OUR HOST**

“There is the chatter of a machine gun off in the night. “

*Machine gun sounds added to war sounds*

Michael Rasbury 10/21/08 8:01 AM  
Comment: SOUND CD 28 Close Gun Fire

“Charley is hit... He staggers.”

**BEVINS**

Charley— Charley . . .

**OUR HOST**

“The machine gun chatters again.”

*Additional machine gun sounds added to war sounds*

Michael Rasbury 10/21/08 8:01 AM  
Comment: SOUND CD 29 Close Gun Fire

“Bevins is hit. He staggers.” Bevins is hit?

**OUR HOST**

Oh, my God...

*Machine gun sounds and war sounds increase in volume*

Michael Rasbury 10/21/08 8:01 AM  
Comment: SOUND CD 30 Fade Battle Sounds

Keep it quiet.

*Machine gun sounds and war sounds out*

**OUR HOST**

Ummm... where were we now? Uh, um, yes... an editor's office...

*During the scene, in the background, MATT makes a monument out of two sandbags, a rifle, a pair of boots, a helmet, and dog tags.*

Michael Rasbury 10/21/08 8:02 AM  
**Comment:** SOUND CD 31 Printing Presses

Michael Rasbury 10/29/08 6:27 PM  
**Comment:** Scene 6

**REPORTER:**

That's the story! It's as straight as a rifle-barrel, so help me, God.

**EDITOR**

It didn't happen.

**REPORTER**

So help me God, I got it straight. Those guys just stood up in the grave and said, "The hell with it, you can't bury us!" God's honest truth.

**OUR HOST**

"The editor picks up the telephone."

**EDITOR**

Get me Macready at the War Department. It's an awfully funny story.

**REPORTER**

It's the story of the year—the story of the century—the biggest story of all time—men gettin' up with bullets in their hearts and refusin' to be buried.

Michael Rasbury 10/21/08 8:02 AM  
**Comment:** MIC 32 Microphone as Telephone

**EDITOR**

Who do they think they are—Jesus Christ?

**REPORTER**

What's the difference? That's the story! Are you goin' to put it in?

**EDITOR**

Hold it! *(Into telephone.)* Macready!

Michael Rasbury 10/21/08 8:02 AM  
**Comment:** MIC 33 Microphone as Telephone

**REPORTER**

What's he got to do with it?

**EDITOR**

Hello? Macready? Hansen from the New York-... Yeah... Listen, Macready, I got this story about the six guys who refuse to be-... Yeah...

Michael Rasbury 10/21/08 8:02 AM

**Comment:** MIC 34 Microphone as Telephone

**REPORTER**

What does he say?

**EDITOR**

Okay, Macready. Yeah, if that's the way the Government feels about it-... Yeah...

Michael Rasbury 10/21/08 8:03 AM

**Comment:** MIC 35 Microphone as Telephone

**REPORTER**

Well?

**EDITOR**

*(Putting down telephone.)* No.

**REPORTER**

Holy god-damn, you got to. People got a right to know.

**EDITOR**

In time of war, people have a right to know nothing. If we put it in, it'd be censored anyway.

**REPORTER**

Ah, this is a lousy business.

**EDITOR**

Write another human-interest story about how the boys in the front-line sing "I Can't Give You Anything but Love," before they go over the top-

**REPORTER**

But I wrote that last week.

**EDITOR**

Write it again.

**REPORTER**

But these guys in the grave, Boss. Lloyds are giving three to one they won't go down. That's a story!



**EDITOR**

Save it. You can write a book of memoirs twenty years from now. Make that "I Can't Give You Anything but Love" story a thousand words, and make it snappy. The casualty lists run into two pages today, and we got to balance them with something.

*MATT has finished building the first monument. And stands next to it as the CAPTAIN and the GENERALS arrive.*

**CAPTAIN**

There they are sir.

Michael Rasbury 10/21/08 8:03 AM  
Comment: SOUND CD 36 Fade Printing Presses

**OUR HOST**

Lights illuminate the grave where the corpses are still standing hip deep. Soldiers look on as the General arrives.

Michael Rasbury 10/29/08 6:27 PM  
Comment: Scene 7

**CAPTAIN**

What are the generals going to do about them?

**FIRST GENERAL**

I see them Captain. Stop saying "What are the generals going to do about them?"

**SECOND GENERAL**

Who do they think they are? It's against all regulations.

**FIRST GENERAL**

Quiet, please, quiet. Let's not have any scenes. Men! Listen to me. This is a strange situation in which we find ourselves. I have no doubt but that it is giving you as much embarrassment as it is us.

We're all anxious to get this thing over with just as quickly and quietly as possible. I know that you men are with me on this. There's no reason why we can't get together and settle this in jig time. I grant, my friends, that it's unfortunate that you're dead. I'm sure that you'll all listen to reason. Your country demands of you that you lie down and allow yourselves to be buried. Must our flag fly at half-mast and droop in the wind while you so far forget your duty to the lovely land that bore and nurtured you? I love America, gentlemen, its hills and valleys. If you loved America as I do, you would not-... *(He breaks down, overcome.)* I have studied this matter and come to the conclusion that the best thing for all concerned would be for you men to, lie down peaceably in, your graves and allow yourselves to be buried.

**FIRST GENERAL**

Men, perhaps you don't understand. You're dead men, don't you realize that? You can't be dead and stand there like that. Here... here... I'll prove it to you. (*he gets at Doctor's reports.*) Look! A doctor's reports. Witnessed. Witnessed by Private McGurk. This ought to show you. You're dead, officially, all of you! We're a civilized race, we bury our dead. Lie down!

Private Schelling! Private Morgan! Private Levy! Private Dean! Private Webster! Private Driscoll! Lie down! As Commander-in-Chief of the Army as appointed by the President of the United States in accordance with the Constitution of the United States, and as your superior officer, I command you to lie down and allow yourselves to be buried.

Tell me— What is it going to get you, staying above the earth? (*Not a sound from the Corpses.*) I asked you a question, men. Answer me! What is it going to get you? If I were dead I wouldn't hesitate to be buried. Answer me... What do you want? What is it going to get you...?

Why don't you talk? Explain it to me, make me understand.

Lie down!

Oh, God, oh, my God...

*The cast looks at OUR HOST, waiting for direction on what comes next.*

**OUR HOST**

Yes... yes... “A red spotlight picks out two whores, dressed in the uniform of their trade on a street corner.”

*She looks to the men. They start to disperse.*

I suppose I couldn't ask one of you fine ladies out there to play such questionable character. That'll have to be me then.

*MATT goes and grabs her purse. They struggle for it.*

Hey! What are you--?! Stop that!

*MATT takes a tube of lipstick from her purse, stands face to face with her and puts the lipstick on his own lips. He takes on the role of the WHORE and grabs OUR HOST and plays the scene with her.*

**FIRST WHORE**

I'd lay 'em, all right. They oughta call us in. We'd lay 'em. There wouldn't be any doubt in anybody's mind after we got through with 'em. Why don't they call us in instead of those generals? What do generals know about such things? Call the War Department, Mabel, tell 'em we'll come to their rescue at the prevailing rates. We're willing to do our part, like the papers say—share the burden! Oh, my Gawd, I ain't laughed so much...

*He goes up to JAKE.*

Say, Johnny, Johnny, what'cha doin' tonight? How'd ya like- ?

*OUR HOST pulls JAKE away from MATT.*

Share the burden— Oh, my Gawd...

*MATT grabs OUR HOST and kisses her violently on the lips, then wipes the lipstick from his mouth with the back of his hand, smearing it across his face. He grabs the script from her and reads the next stage direction.*

“The battlefield. Soldiers from burial detail are, sitting around a covered fire.”

*FRED sits at the piano and plunks out I Can't Give You Anything But Love. OUR HOST grabs her purse to fix her makeup.*

Michael Rasbury 10/29/08 6:28 PM  
Comment: Scene 8

Michael Rasbury 10/29/08 6:28 PM  
Comment: Scene 9

Michael Rasbury 10/21/08 8:04 AM  
Comment: Live Piano “Can't Give You Anything But Love”

**THIRD SOLDIER**

This is a funny war. It's rollin' downhill. Everybody's waitin'. Personally, I think it's those guys there that- (*gestures to grave.*)

Michael Rasbury 10/21/08 8:04 AM

**Comment:** A very realistic setting, but with piano underscoring

**SERGEANT**

Nobody asked you. You're not supposed to talk about it.

**SECOND SOLDIER**

Regulation 2035a.

**SERGEANT**

Well, I just told ya.

*He continues his tinkering at the piano and hums softly along with himself.*

**THIRD SOLDIER**

Say, listen, think about those guys there. How do you think they feel with you howlin' like that? They got more important things to think about.

**SERGEANT**

I won't distract 'em. I got an easy-flowin' voice.

**THIRD SOLDIER**

They don't like it. I can tell.

**SECOND SOLDIER**

Well, I like to hear him sing. And I'll bet they do, too. I'm gonna ask 'em...

**SERGEANT**

Now, listen, we're not supposed to talk to-

*SECOND SOLDIER slowly approaches the grave. He is embarrassed, a little frightened.*

**SECOND SOLDIER**

Say, men, I-

*CAPTAIN comes on. SECOND SOLDIER and THIRD SOLDIER stand at attention. SERGEANT keeps playing.*

**CAPTAIN**

Sergeant.

**SERGEANT**

Yes, sir!

*He stops playing the piano and stands at attention.*

**CAPTAIN**

You know that none of the men is to talk to them.

**SERGEANT**

Yes, sir. Only, sir-

**CAPTAIN**

All right. *(To Second Soldier.)* Get back there, please.

**SECOND SOLDIER**

Yes, sir! *(he salutes and goes back.)*

**SERGEANT**

*(Under his breath to Second Soldier.)* I warned ya.

**SECOND SOLDIER**

Shut up. I wanna listen to what's goin' on there.

*CAPTAIN has meanwhile seated himself on the edge of the stage and talks to the men as if they're in the grave.*

*Behind him the rest of the men begin slowly making individual monuments for themselves with two sand bags, a rifle, two boots, a helmet and a pair of dog tags. MATT sits at his already made monument and slowly puts dirty camouflage, makeup on his face, turning himself into a soldier who has clearly been through hell.*

**CAPTAIN**

Gentlemen, I have been asked by the generals to talk to you. My work is not this. *(he indicates his uniform.)* I am a philosopher, scientist, my uniform is a pair of eyeglasses, my usual weapons test tubes and books. At a time like this perhaps we need philosophy, need science. First I must say that your general has ordered you to lie down.

**THIRD CORPSE**

We used to have a general.

**SIXTH CORPSE**

No more.

Michael Rasbury 10/21/08 8:05 AM

**Comment:** This is the first time we hear corpses. They are played by the "Audience" actors. The dead men build memorials on stage.

**FIFTH CORPSE**

They sold us.

**CAPTAIN**

What do you mean—sold you?

**FOURTH CORPSE**

Sold us for twenty-five yards of bloody mud.

**SECOND CORPSE**

A life for four yards of bloody mud.

**CAPTAIN**

We had to take that hill. General's orders. You're soldiers. You understand.

**SIXTH CORPSE**

We understand now. The real estate operations of generals are always carried on at boom prices.

**SECOND CORPSE**

A life for four yards of bloody mud. Gold is cheaper, and rare jewels, pearls and rubies.

**THIRD CORPSE**

I fell in the first yard.

**SIXTH CORPSE**

I caught on the wire and hung there while the machine gun stitched me through the middle to it.

**FOURTH CORPSE**

I was there at the end and thought I had life in my hands for another day, but a shell came and my life dripped into the mud.

**FIFTH CORPSE**

Ask the general how he'd like to be dead at twenty. (*Calling, as though to the Generals.*) Twenty, General, twenty!

**CAPTAIN**

Other men are dead.

**THIRD CORPSE**

Too many.

**CAPTAIN**

Men must die for their country's sake—if not you, then others. This has always been. Men died for Pharaoh and Caesar and Rome two thousand years ago and more, and went into the earth with their wounds. Why not you?

**SECOND CORPSE**

Men, even the men who die for Pharaoh and Caesar and Rome, must, in the end, before all hope is gone, discover that a man can die happy and be contentedly buried only when he dies for himself or for a cause that's his own and not Pharaoh's or Caesar's or Rome's.

**CAPTAIN**

Still—what is this world that you cling to it? A speck of dust, a flaw in the skies, a thumbprint on the margin of a page printed in an incomprehensible language.

**SIXTH CORPSE**

It's our home.

**FOURTH CORPSE**

We've been dispossessed by force, but we're reclaiming our home. It's time that mankind claimed its home—this earth—its home.

**CAPTAIN**

We have no home. We are strangers in the universe and cling, desperate and grimy, to the crust of our world, and if there is a God and this His earth, we must be a terrible sight in His eyes.

**SECOND CORPSE**

We're not disturbed by the notion of our appearance in the eyes of God.

**CAPTAIN**

The earth is an unpleasant place and when you are rid of it you are well rid of it. Man cheats man here and the only sure things are death and despair. Of what use, then, to remain on it once you have the permission to leave?

**THIRD CORPSE**

It's the one thing we know.

**FIFTH CORPSE**

We didn't ask permission to leave. Nobody asked us whether we wanted it or not. The generals pushed us out and closed the door on us. Who are the generals that they can close the door on us?

**CAPTAIN**

The earth, I assure you, is a mean place, insignificantly miserable.

**SIXTH CORPSE**

We must find out for ourselves. That's our right.

**CAPTAIN**

Man has no rights.

**FOURTH CORPSE**

Man can make rights for himself. It requires only determination and the goodwill of ordinary men. We've made ourselves the right to walk this earth, seeing it and judging it for ourselves.

**CAPTAIN**

There is peace in the grave.

**SECOND CORPSE**

Peace and the worms and the roots of grass. There's a deeper peace than that which comes with feeding the roots of the grass.

*All the monuments are finished being built.*

**CAPTAIN**

Yes, gentlemen.

*SECOND SOLDIER moves slowly to the monument he has built and talks to it.*

**SECOND SOLDIER**

I... I'm glad you-...you didn't... I'm glad. Say, is there anything we can do for you?

**SERGEANT**

Listen soldier-

**SECOND SOLDIER**

Shut up, Sergeant! *(Then very softly and warmly to the monument.)* Is there anything we can do for you, friend?

**JEREMY**

Yeah. You can sing . . .

*There is a pause in which the SECOND SOLDIER turns around and looks at the SERGEANT. SERGEANT goes to the piano, sits, and plays and sings a simple, beautiful rendition of I Can't Give You Anything But Love. As he does, JAKE and JEREMY put on dirty camouflage war makeup.*

Michael Rasbury 10/21/08 8:05 AM

**Comment:** Live Piano "I Can't Give You Anything But Love"



*Fred's voice falters but he keeps playing as OUR HOST goes to the lectern mike. During the following JEREMY builds his monument.*

**OUR HOST**

Umm... "We see three business men debating over lunch in a big city." The First Business man says, "Ssh! Keep it quiet. Sink 'em with lead." Then the second Businessman says, "Bury them. Bury them six feet under." And the first Businessman says "What are we going to do?" So the second Businessman says "We must keep up the morale." And a Third Businessman says, "Lead! Lead! A lot of lead!" .... Lead. Um... And then the Second Businessman says, "What do we pay our generals for?" And then the whole Chorus of Businessmen says "Shhh...!" Blackout... Blackout.

Michael Rasbury 10/29/08 6:28 PM

Comment: Scene 10

*The SERGEANT takes up the lyric again and finishes the last phrases of the song. FRED then stands and goes over to stand by his monument as:*

Michael Rasbury 10/21/08 8:05 AM

Comment: MIC 37 Microphone

**OUR HOST**

*(under her breath)* Oh, Jesus, our God and our Christ, Who has redeemed us with Thy blood on the Cross at Calvary, give us Thy blessing on this holy day, and cause it that our soldiers allow themselves to be buried in peace, and bring victory to our arms, enlisted in Thy Cause and the cause of all righteousness on the field of battle. Amen.

Please, God, keep it quiet...

*OUR HOST notices all the boys by the monuments. She isn't sure what to do with that.*

**OUR HOST**

*(reading from the script)* "A newspaper office."

*None of the boys move. She goes and pulls FRED and MANDELL downstage.*

Michael Rasbury 10/29/08 6:29 PM

Comment: Scene 13

"A newspaper office!"

*FRED and MANDELL read the script over her shoulder. They are not into these roles much anymore.*

**REPORTER**

Well? What are you going to do?

**EDITOR**

Do I have to do anything?

Michael Rasbury 10/21/08 8:06 AM

Comment: Returns to stage reading atmosphere with "Audience" actors.

**REPORTER**

God damn right you do...They're still standing up. They're going to stand up from now till Doomsday. They're not going to be able to bury soldiers any more. It's in the stars. You got to say something about it.

**EDITOR**

All right. Put this in. "It is alleged that certain members of an infantry regiment refuse to allow themselves to be buried."

**REPORTER**

Well?

**EDITOR**

That's all.

**REPORTER**

That's all?

**EDITOR**

Yes, Christ, isn't that enough?

*MATT takes a page from OUR HOST'S script and goes to the microphone to read the following. As he does, FRED and MANDELL put the dirty camouflage makeup of war on their faces.*

**MATT**

"It has been reported that certain American soldiers, killed on the field of battle, have refused to allow themselves to be buried. Whether this is true or not, the Coast-to-Coast Broadcasting System feels that this must give the American public an idea of the indomitable spirit of the American doughboy in this war. We cannot rest until this war is won—not even our brave dead boys..."

Michael Rasbury 10/29/08 6:29 PM  
Comment: Scene 14

*JEREMY stands and holds up a mirror for JEFF as he puts on his soldier makeup.*

Michael Rasbury 10/21/08 8:06 AM  
Comment: MIC 38 Microphone

**FIRST GENERAL**

Have you got any suggestions Captain?

Michael Rasbury 10/29/08 6:30 PM  
Comment: Scene 15

**CAPTAIN**

I think so General. Get their women.

**FIRST GENERAL**

What good'll their women do?

**CAPTAIN**

Women are always conservative. It's a conservative notion—this one of lying down and allowing yourself to be buried when you're dead. The women'll fight the general's battle for them—in the best possible way—through their emotions.. It's the general's best bet.

**FIRST GENERAL**

Women— Of course. You've got it there, Captain. Get out their women. Get them in a hurry. We'll have these boys underground in a jiffy. Women. By God, I never thought of it. Send out the call. Women!

*All the guys, fully in their makeup but still in their "street clothes," go to the lectern and speak into the microphone as a group.*

**ALL SIX MEN**

We have been asked by the War Department to broadcast an appeal to the women of-

**JEFF**

Private Driscoll.

**JEREMY**

Private Schelling.

**MATT**

Private Morgan.

**JAKE**

Private Webster.

**FRED**

Private Levy.

**MANDELL**

And Private Dean-

**ALL SIX MEN**

All reported dead. The War Department requests that the women of these men present themselves at the War Department Office immediately. It is within their power to do a great service to their country.

*We hear the distant sounds of war.*

Michael Rasbury 10/21/08 8:07 AM  
Comment: SOUND 38 Air Raid Siren

**OUR HOST**

What's that...? What's happening here...? What--- What is going on? This is--...  
What is this....?

Michael Rasbury 10/29/08 6:31 PM

Comment: Scene 17

*A far off plane approaches. The six men start to walk off stage taking the lectern with them. The only things left onstage scenically are the projection screen with the six silhouettes of the soldiers, the monuments, and the American flag.*

Gentlemen? What...? What is this? (to the audience) I'm sorry ladies and gentlemen. I'm—

*The plane gets closer and closer until a bomb is dropped. We are in the full throws of war. A booming voice of the GENERAL comes over the speakers.*

*OUR HOST is terrified. She tries to exit through the wings but we hear the sound of huge crashing, closing, doors, locking her (and us) in. She tries to escape through the audience. The spotlight stalks her.*

**FIRST GENERAL (V.O.)**

Go to your men. Talk to them. Make them see the error of their ways, ladies. You women represent what is dearest in our civilization—the sacred foundations of the home. We are fighting this war to protect the foundations of the homes of America! Those foundations will crumble utterly if these men of yours come back from the dead. I shudder to think of the consequences of such an act. Our entire system will be mortally struck. Our banks will close, our buildings collapse, our army will desert the field and leave our fair land open to be overrun by the enemy. Ladies, you are all Gold Star mothers and wives and sweethearts. You want to win this war. I know it. I know the high fire of patriotism that burns in women's breasts. That is why I have called upon you. Here is your chance to do your part, a glorious part. You are fighting for your homes, your children, your sisters' lives, your country's honor. You are fighting for religion, for love, for all decent human life. Go ladies, do your duty. Your country waits upon you!

Michael Rasbury 10/21/08 8:07 AM

Comment: SOUND 39 General V.O.

Michael Rasbury 10/21/08 8:07 AM

Comment: SOUND 40-44 Door Slams

Michael Rasbury 10/21/08 8:08 AM

Comment: SOUND 45 Expressionistic Air Attack

*OUR HOST is in the audience holding her purse and her script, trapped in a glaring spotlight. The*

*projection screen flies out revealing our six men dressed in army fatigues from different eras.*

No.... **OUR HOST**

*The soldiers move downstage and stand next to their individual monuments. They begin to dismantle the monuments and put on the boots and dog tags and helmets and pick up the rifles. OUR HOST looks to the audience and holds out the script...hoping...*

Michael Rasbury 10/21/08 8:08 AM  
**Comment:** SOUND 46 Aftermath Melts into this scene.

Please...? Someone...?

*Light comes up on SCHELLING. He looks at OUR HOST in the audience.*

Bess... **SCHELLING**

*The script falls from Our Host's hands and flutters to the floor.*

Michael Rasbury 10/21/08 8:09 AM  
**Comment:** Our Host becomes a character at this point and represents each woman in the following scenes.

Michael Rasbury 10/29/08 6:31 PM  
**Comment:** Scene 18

Bess.

**BESS SCHELLING**

Did it hurt much, John?

**SCHELLING**

How's the kid, Bess?

**BESS**

He's fine. He talks now. He weighs twenty-eight pounds. He'll be a big boy. Did it hurt much, John?

**SCHELLING**

How is the farm? Is it going all right, Bess?

**BESS**

It's going. The rye was heavy this year. Did it hurt much, John?

**SCHELLING**

Who did the reapin' for you, Bess?

**BESS**

Schmidt took care of it—and his boys. Schmidt's too old for the war and his boys are too young. Took 'em nearly two weeks. The wheat's not bad this year.

Schmidt's oldest boy expects to be called in a month or two. He practices behind the barn with that old shotgun Schmidt uses for duck.

**SCHELLING**

The Schmidts were always fools. When the kid grows up, Bess, you make sure you pump some sense into his head. What color's his hair?

**BESS**

Blond. Like you...What are you going to do, John?

**SCHELLING**

I would like to see the kid—and the farm—and-

**BESS**

They say you're dead, John.

**SCHELLING**

I'm dead, all right.

**BESS**

Then how is it- ?

**SCHELLING**

I don't know Maybe there's too many of us under the ground now. Maybe the earth can't stand it no more. You got to change crops sometime. What are you doing here, Bess?

**BESS**

They asked me to get you to let yourself be buried.

**SCHELLING**

What do you think?

**BESS**

You're dead, John.

**SCHELLING**

Well . . . ?

**BESS**

What's the good?

**SCHELLING**

I don't know. Only there's something in me, dead or no dead, that won't let me be buried.

**BESS**

You were a queer man, John. I never did understand what you were about. But what's the good?

**SCHELLING**

There're a couple of things, Bess, that I ain't had enough of. Easy things, the things you see when you look outa your window at night, after supper, or when you wake up in the mornin'. Things you smell when you step outside the door when summer's on and the sun starts to turn the grass brown. Things you hear when you're busy with the horses or pitchin' the hay and you don't really notice them and yet they come back to you. Things like the fuzz of green over a field in spring where you planted wheat and it's started to come out overnight. Things like lookin' at rows of corn scrapin' in the breeze, tall and green, with the silk flying off the ears in the wind. Things like seeing the sweat come out all over your horse's fat flank and seein' it shine like silk in front of you, smelling horsey and strong. Things like seein' the loam turn back all fat and deep brown on both sides as the plough turns it over so that it gets to be awful hard walkin' behind it. Things like taking a cold drink of water outa the well after you've boiled in the sun all afternoon, and feelin' the water go down and down into you coolin' you off all through from the inside out.... Things like seein' a blond kid, all busy and serious, playin' with a dog on the shady side of a house. There ain't nothin' like that down here, Bess.

**BESS**

Everything has its place, John. Dead men have theirs.

**SCHELLING**

My place is on the earth, Bess. My business is with the top of the earth, not the under-side. It was a trap that yanked me down. I'm not smart, Bess, and I'm easy trapped—but I can tell now. I got some stories to tell the farmers before I'm through—I'm going to tell 'em.

**BESS**

We could bury you home, John, near the creek—it's cool there and quiet and there's always a breeze in the trees.

**SCHELLING**

Later, Bess, when I've had my fill of lookin' and smellin' and talkin'. A man should be able to walk into his grave, not be dragged into it.

**BESS**

How'll I feel—and the kid—with you walkin' around like—like that?

**SCHELLING**

I won't bother you. I won't come near you.

**BESS**

Even so. Just knowin'...

**SCHELLING**

I can't help it. This is somethin' bigger'n you -bigger'n me. It's somethin' I ain't had nothin' to do with startin'. It's somethin' that just grew up outa the earth—like—like a weed—a flower. Cut it down now and it'll jump up in a dozen new places. You can't stop it. The earth's ready for it.

**BESS**

You were a good husband, John. For the kid—and me—won't you?

**SCHELLING**

Go home, Bess. go home...

*Live music transition as OUR HOST goes into her purse and takes out some makeup and powders her face as lights focus on PRIVATE LEVY.*

**JOAN**

You loved me best, didn't you, Henry—of all of them—all those women—you loved me the best, didn't you?

Michael Rasbury 10/21/08 8:09 AM

**Comment:** Live Harmonica

Michael Rasbury 10/29/08 6:31 PM

**Comment:** Scene 19

**LEVY**

What's the difference, now?

**JOAN**

I want to know it.

**LEVY**

It's not important.

**JOAN**

It's important to me. I knew about the others, about Doris and that shifty-eyed Janet. Henry, you're not a live man, are you, Henry?

**LEVY**

No, I'm all shot away inside.

**JOAN**

Must wars always be fought in the mud like this? I never expected it to look like this. It- it looks like a dump heap.

**LEVY**

You've gotten your shoes muddy, They're pretty shoes Joan.



**JOAN**

Do you think so Henry? They're lizard. I like them too. It's so hard to get a good pair of shoes nowadays.

**LEVY**

Do you still dance, Joan?

**JOAN**

Oh, I'm really much better than I used to be. There are so many dances back home nowadays. Dances for orphan relief and convalescent hospitals and Victory Loans. I'm busy seven nights a week. I sold more Victory Loans than any other girl in the League. I got a helmet - one of their helmets-one with a bullet-hole in it, for selling eleven thousand dollars' worth.

**LEVY**

Out here we get them for nothing, by the million—bullet holes and all.

**JOAN**

That sounds bitter. You shouldn't sound bitter.

**LEVY**

I'm sorry.

**JOAN**

I heard Colonel Elwell the other day. You know Colonel Elwell, old Anthony Elwell who owns the mill. He made a speech at the monthly Red Cross banquet and he said that that was the nice thing about this war- it wasn't being fought bitterly by our boys. He said it was just patriotism that kept us going. He's a wonderful speaker, Colonel Elwell; I cried and cried.

**LEVY**

I remember him.

**JOAN**

Henry, do you think we're going to win the war?

**LEVY**

What's the difference?

**JOAN**

Henry! What a way to talk! I don't know what's come over you. Really, I don't. Why, the papers say that if they win the war, they'll burn our churches and tear down our museums and- and rape our women.

**LEVY**

*(laugh)*

**JOAN**

Why are you laughing, Henry?

**LEVY**

I'm dead, Joan.

**JOAN**

Yes. Then why—why don't you let them bury you?

**LEVY**

There are a lot of reasons. There were a lot of things I loved on this earth.

**JOAN**

A dead man can't touch a woman.

**LEVY**

The women, yes—but more than touching them, I got a great joy just from listening to women, hearing them laugh, watching their skirts blow in the wind, noticing the way their breasts bounced up and down inside their dresses when they walked. It had nothing to do with touching them. I liked to hear the sound of their high heels on pavements at night and the tenderness in their voices when they walked past me arm in arm with a young man. You were so lovely Joan with your crimson hair and long hands.

**JOAN**

You always liked my hair. (*pause*) No woman will walk arm in arm with you, Henry Levy, while you cheat the grave.

**LEVY**

No. But there will be the eyes of women to look at and the bright color of their hair and the soft way they swing their hips when they walk before young men. These are the things that mean life and the earth to me— the joy and the pain. These are the things the earth still owes me, now when I am only thirty— joy and pain—to each man in his own way, a full seventy years, to be ended by an unhurried fate, not by a colored pin on a general's map. What do I care for the colored pins on a general's map?

**JOAN**

They are not only pins. They mean more.

**LEVY**

More? To whom? To the generals—not to me. To me they are colored pins. It's not a fair bargain—this exchange of my life for a small part of a colored pin.

**JOAN**

Henry, how can you talk like that? You know why this war is being fought.

**LEVY**

No. Do you?

**JOAN**

Of course, everybody knows. We must win! We must be prepared to sacrifice our last drop of blood. Anyway, what can you do?

**LEVY**

Do you remember last summer, Joan? My last leave. We went to Maine. I would like to remember that—the sun and the beach and your soft hands—for a long time.

**JOAN**

What are you going to do?

**LEVY**

Walk the world looking at the fine, long-legged girls, seeing in them something deep and true and passionately vital, listening to the sound of their light voices with ears the generals would have stopped with the grave's solid mud.

**JOAN**

Henry. Henry. Once you said you loved me. For the love of me, Henry, go into the grave.

**LEVY**

Poor Joan. *(Stretches out his hand tenderly as if to touch her.)*

**JOAN**

*(Recoiling.)* Don't touch me. *(Pause.)* For love of me.

**LEVY**

Go home, Joan. Go home.

*Live music transition as PRIVATE MORGAN starts to build a wall with the sandbags left over from the monuments. Throughout the scene he keeps tearing down the wall and meticulously, obsessively, rebuilds it in another location, getting behind it with his rifle, checking out its feasibility as a sniper's nest. OUR HOST goes to her purse and starts rummaging around for a handkerchief.*

**MORGAN**

Stop crying, Julia. What's the sense in crying?

Michael Rasbury 10/29/08 6:32 PM

Comment: Scene 20

**JULIA**

No sense. Only I can't stop crying.

**MORGAN**

You shouldn't have come.

**JULIA**

They asked me to come. They said you wouldn't let them bury you—dead and all.

**MORGAN**

Yes.

**JULIA**

Why don't they kill me too? I'd let them bury me. I'd be glad to be buried—to get away from all this. I—I haven't stopped crying for two weeks now. I used to think I was tough. I never cried. Even when I was a kid. It's a wonder where all the tears can come from. Though I guess there's always room for more tears. I thought I was all cried out when I heard about the way they killed Fred- my kid brother. I used to comb his hair in the morning when he went to school. Then they killed you. They did, didn't they?

**MORGAN**

Yes.

**JULIA**

It's hard to know like this. I—I know, though. It—it makes it harder, this way, with you like this. I could forget easier if you-...But I wasn't going to say that. I was going to listen to you. Oh, my darling, it's been so rotten. I get drunk. I hate it and I get drunk. I sing out loud and everybody laughs. I was going through your things the other day—I'm crazy... I go through all your things three times a week, touching your clothes and reading your books. You have the nicest clothes. There was that quatrain you wrote to me that time you were in Boston and-... First I laughed, then I cried, then-... It's a lovely poem—you would have been a fine writer. I think you would have been the greatest writer that ever-...I-... Did they shoot your hands away, darling?

**MORGAN**

No.

**JULIA**

That's good. I couldn't bear it if anything happened to your hands. Was it bad, darling?

**MORGAN**

Bad enough.

**JULIA**

But they didn't shoot your hands away. That's something. You learn how to be grateful for the craziest things nowadays. People have to be grateful for

something and it's so hard, with the war and all... Oh, darling, I never could think of you dead. Somehow you didn't seem to be made to be dead. I would feel better if you were buried in a fine green field and there were funny little flowers jumping up around the stone that said, "Walter Morgan, Born 1913, Died 1937." I could stop getting drunk at night and singing out loud so that people laugh at me. The worst thing is looking at all the books you piled up home that you didn't read. They wait there, waiting for your hands to come and open them and-...Oh, let them bury you. There's nothing left, only crazy people and clothes that'll never be used hanging in the closets. Why not?

**MORGAN**

There are too many books I haven't read, too many places I haven't seen, too many memories I haven't kept long enough. I won't be cheated of them.

**JULIA**

And me? Darling, me... I hate getting drunk. Your name would look so well on a nice simple chunk of marble in a green field. "Walter Morgan, Beloved of Julia Blake." With poppies and daisies and those little purple flowers all around the bottom, and-... Now they can put my name on the casualty lists, too.

*She pulls a handgun from the purse.*

What do they call those purple flowers, darling?

*She puts the gun to her head. Gunshot.*

*Blackout except for a special on DRISCOLL who is playing the harmonica.*

*OUR HOST goes into her purse and takes out a photograph. She makes her way from Corpse to Corpse looking at their faces, holding the picture up to each to see if she can match the picture to the man. She stops at CORPSE SIX/WEBSTER.*

Michael Rasbury 10/21/08 8:10 AM  
Comment: SOUND 47 Gunshot

Michael Rasbury 10/21/08 8:10 AM  
Comment: Live Harmonica

**KATHERINE**

I'm Katherine Driscoll. I—I'm looking for my brother. He's dead. Are you my brother?

Michael Rasbury 10/29/08 6:32 PM  
Comment: Scene 21

**WEBSTER**

No.

*She goes on to CORPSE TWO/LEVY, stops, looks, compares him to photograph, and moves on to CORPSE ONE/SCHELLING.*

**KATHERINE**

I'm looking for my brother. My name is Katherine Driscoll. Do you know me?

**SCHELLING**

No.

**KATHERINE**

His name is Tom Dris-

**DRISCOLL**

I'm Tom Driscoll.

**KATHERINE**

Hel—hello.

*She holds the picture up to him to compare.*

I don't know you. After fifteen years—And...

**DRISCOLL**

What do you want, Katherine?

**KATHERINE**

You don't know me either, do you?

**DRISCOLL**

No.

**KATHERINE**

It's funny—my coming here to talk to a dead man—to try to get him to do something because once long ago he was my brother. They talked me into it. I don't know how to begin.

**DRISCOLL**

You'll be wasting your words, Katherine.

**KATHERINE**

They should have asked someone nearer to you—someone who loved you—only they couldn't find anybody. I was the nearest, they said.

**DRISCOLL**

That's so. You were the nearest.

**KATHERINE**

And I, fifteen years away. Poor Tom. It couldn't have been a sweet life you led these fifteen years.

**DRISCOLL**

It wasn't.

**KATHERINE**

You were poor, too?

**DRISCOLL**

Sometimes I begged for meals. I wasn't lucky.

**KATHERINE**

And yet you want to go back. Is there no more sense in the dead, Tom, than in the living?

**DRISCOLL**

Maybe not. Maybe there's no sense in either living or dying, but we can't believe that. I traveled to a lot of places and I saw a lot of things, always from the black side of them, always workin' hard to keep from starvin' and turnin' my collar up to keep the wind out, and they were mean and rotten and sad, but always I saw that they could be better and some day they were going to be better and that the guys like me who knew that they were rotten and knew that they could be better had to get out and fight to make it that way.

**KATHERINE**

You're dead. Your fight's over.

**DRISCOLL**

The fight's never over. I got things to say to people now—to the people who nurse big machines and the people who swing shovels and the people whose babies die with big bellies and rotten bones. I got things to say to the people who leave their lives behind them and pick up guns to fight in somebody else's war. Important things. Big things. Big enough to lift me out of the grave right back onto the earth into the middle of men just because I got the voice to say them. If God could lift Jesus-

**KATHERINE**

Tom. Have you, lost religion, too?

**DRISCOLL**

I got another religion. I got a religion that wants to take heaven out of the clouds and plant it right here on the earth where most of us can get 'a slice of it. It isn't as pretty a heaven—there aren't any streets of gold and there aren't any angels, and we'd have to worry about sewerage and railroad schedules in it, and we don't guarantee everybody'd love it, but it'd be right here, stuck in the mud of this earth, and there wouldn't be any entrance requirement, like dying to get into it. Dead or alive, I see that, and it won't let me rest. I was the first one to get up in this black grave of ours, because that idea wouldn't let me rest. I pulled the others

with me—that's my job, pulling the others. They only know what they want—I know how they can get it.

**KATHERINE**

There's still the edge of arrogance on you.

**DRISCOLL**

I got heaven in my two hands to give to men. There's reason for arrogance.

**KATHERINE**

I came to ask you to lie down and let them bury you. It seems foolish now. But...

**DRISCOLL**

It's foolish, Katherine. I didn't get up from the dead to go back to the dead. I'm going to the living now.

**KATHERINE**

Fifteen years. It's a good thing our mother isn't alive. How can you say good-bye to a dead brother, Tom?

**DRISCOLL**

Wish him an easy grave, Katherine.

**KATHERINE**

A green and pleasant grave to you Tom, when finally, finally... green and pleasant.

*Live music transition. Several soldiers take the American flag off of the pole and perform the regimented ritual of folding the flag for the military dead. They present it to OUR HOST. She approaches DEAN clutching the flag to her chest.*

Michael Rasbury 10/21/08 8:10 AM

Comment: Live Harmonica

**MRS. DEAN**

Let me see your face, son.

**DEAN**

You don't want to see it, mom.

**MRS. DEAN**

My baby's face. Once, before you-...

**DEAN**

You don't want to see it, mom. I know. Didn't they tell you what happened to me?

**MRS. DEAN**

I asked the doctor. He said a piece of shell hit the side of your head—but even so-

Michael Rasbury 10/29/08 6:32 PM

Comment: Scene 22



**DEAN**

Don't ask to see it, mom.

**MRS. DEAN**

How are you, son? Oh, I forgot. I asked you that question so many times while you were growing up, Jimmy. Let me see your face, Jimmy—just once.

**DEAN**

How did Alice take it when she heard?

**MRS. DEAN**

She put a gold star in her window. She tells everybody you were going to be married. Is that so?

**DEAN**

Maybe. I liked Alice.

**MRS. DEAN**

She came over on your birthday. That was before this—this happened. She brought flowers. Big chrysanthemums. Yellow. A lot of them. We had to put them in two vases. I baked a cake. I don't know why. It's hard to get eggs and fine flour nowadays. My baby, twenty years old...Let me see your face, Jimmy, boy.

**DEAN**

Go home, mom. It's not doing you any good staying here.

**MRS. DEAN**

I want you to let them bury you, Baby. It's done now, and over. It would be better for you that way.

**DEAN**

There's no better to it, mom—and no worse. It happened that way, that's all.

**MRS. DEAN**

Let me see your face, Jimmy. You had such a fine face. Like a good baby's. It hurt me when you started to shave. Somehow, I almost forget what you looked like, Baby. I remember what you looked like when you were five, when you were ten—you were chubby and your cheeks felt like little silk cushions when I put my hand on them. But I don't remember how you looked when you went away with that uniform on you and that helmet over your face. Baby, let me see your face, once...

**DEAN**

Don't ask me. You don't want to see. You'll feel worse—forever---if you see---

**MRS. DEAN**

I'm not afraid. I can look at my baby's face. Do you think mothers can be frightened by their children's-

**DEAN**

No, mom.

**MRS. DEAN**

Baby, listen to me, I'm your mother. Let them bury you. There's something peaceful and done about a grave. After a while you forget the death and you remember only the life before it. But this way—you never forget. It's a wound walking around forever, without peace. For your sake and mine and your father's. Baby-

**DEAN**

I was only twenty, mom. I hadn't done anything. I hadn't seen anything. I never even had a girl. I spent twenty years practicing to be a man and then they killed me. Being a kid's no good, mom. You try to get over it as soon as you can. You don't really live while you're a kid. You mark time, waiting. I waited, mom—but then I got cheated. They made a speech and played a trumpet and dressed me in a uniform and then they killed me.

**MRS. DEAN**

Oh, Baby, Baby, there's no peace this way. Please, let them-

**DEAN**

No, mom.

**MRS. DEAN**

Then once, now, so that I can remember—let me see your face, my baby's face...

**DEAN**

Mom, the shell hit close to me. You don't want to look at a man when a shell hits close to him.

**MRS. DEAN**

Let me see your face, Jimmy...

**DEAN**

All right, mom... Look.

*He turns his face to her. She responds.*

*Live music transition. Lights focus on WEBSTER.  
OUR HOST approaches him. There is a long silence.*

Michael Rasbury 10/21/08 8:11 AM

Comment: Live Harmonica

**MARTHA WEBSTER**

Say something.

Michael Rasbury 10/29/08 6:32 PM

Comment: Scene 23

**WEBSTER**

What do you want me to say?

**MARTHA**

Something—anything. Only talk. You give me the shivers standing there like that—looking like that.

**WEBSTER**

Even now—after this—there's nothing that we can talk to each other about.

**MARTHA**

Don't talk like that. You talked like that enough when you were alive. It's not my fault that you're dead.

**WEBSTER**

No.

**MARTHA**

It was bad enough when you were alive and you didn't talk to me and you looked at me as though I was always in your way.

**WEBSTER**

Martha, Martha, what's the difference now?

**MARTHA**

I just wanted to let you know. Now I suppose you're going to come back and sit around and ruin my life altogether?

**WEBSTER**

No. I'm not going to come back.

**MARTHA**

Then what?

**WEBSTER:**

I couldn't explain it to you, Martha.

**MARTHA**

No! Oh, no—you couldn't explain it to your wife. But you could explain it to that dirty bunch of loafers down at that damned garage of yours and you could explain it to those bums in the saloon on 'F Street.

**WEBSTER**

I guess I could. Things seemed to be clearer when I was talking to the boys while I worked over a job. And I managed to talk so people could get to understand what I meant down at the saloon on F Street. It was nice, standing there on a Saturday night, with a beer in front of you and a man or two that understood your own language next to you, talking—oh, about Babe Ruth or the new oiling system Ford was putting out or the chances of us gettin' into the war...

**MARTHA**

It's different if you were rich and had a fine beautiful life you wanted to go back to. Then I could understand. But you were poor. You always had dirt under your finger nails, you never ate right, you hated me, your wife, you couldn't stand being in the same room with me. Don't shake your head, I know. Out of your whole life, all you could remember that's good is a beer on Saturday night that you drank in company with a couple of bums.

**WEBSTER**

That's enough. I didn't think about it then. But I guess I was happy those times.

**MARTHA**

You were happy those times. But you weren't happy in your own home. I know, even if you don't say it. Well, I wasn't happy either. Living in three damned rooms that the sun didn't hit five times a year. Watching the roaches make picnics on the walls. Happy!

**WEBSTER**

I did my best.

**MARTHA**

Eighteen-fifty a week! Your best. Eighteen-fifty, condensed milk, a two-dollar pair of shoes once a year, five hundred dollars' insurance, chopped meat, God, how I hate chopped meat! Eighteen-fifty, being afraid of everything—of the landlord, the gas company, scared stiff every month that I was goin' to have a baby! Why shouldn't I have a baby? Who says I shouldn't have a baby? Eighteen-fifty, no baby!

**WEBSTER**

I woulda liked a kid.

**MARTHA**

Would you? You never said anything.

**WEBSTER**

It's good to have a kid. A kid's somebody to talk to.

**MARTHA**

At first. In the beginning. I thought we'd have a kid some day.

**WEBSTER**

Yeah, me too. I used to go out on Sundays and watch men wheel their kids through the park.

**MARTHA**

There were so many things you didn't tell me. Why did you keep quiet?

**WEBSTER**

I was ashamed to talk to you. I couldn't give you anything.

**MARTHA**

I'm sorry.

**WEBSTER**

In the beginning it looked so fine. I used to smile to myself when I walked beside you in the street and other men looked at you.

**MARTHA**

That was a long time ago.

**WEBSTER**

A kid would've helped.

**MARTHA**

No, it wouldn't. Don't fool yourself, Webster. The Clarks downstairs have four and it doesn't help them. Old man Clark comes home drunk every Saturday night and beats 'em with his shaving strap and throws plates at the old lady. Kids don't help the poor. Nothing helps the poor! I'm too smart to have sick, dirty kids on eighteen-fifty.

**WEBSTER**

That's it.

**MARTHA**

A house should have a baby. But it should be a clean house with a full icebox. Why shouldn't I have a baby? Other people have babies. Even now, with the war, other people have babies. They don't have to feel their skin curl every time they tear a page off the calendar. They go off to beautiful hospitals in lovely ambulances and have babies between colored sheets! What's there about them that God likes that He makes it so easy for them to have babies?

**WEBSTER**

They're not married to mechanics.

**MARTHA**

No! It's not eighteen-fifty for them. And now...now it's worse. Your twenty dollars a month. You hire yourself out to be killed and I get twenty dollars a month. I wait in line all day to get a loaf of bread. I've forgotten what butter tastes like. I wait on line with the rain soaking through my shoes for a pound of rotten meat once a week. At night I go home. Nobody to talk to, just sitting, watching the bugs, with one little light because the Government's got to save electricity. You had to go off and leave me to that! What's the war to me that I have to sit at night with nobody to talk to? What's the war to you that you had to go off and-- ?

**WEBSTER**

That's why I'm standing up now, Martha.

**MARTHA**

What took you so long, then? Why now? Why not a month ago, a year ago, ten years ago? Why didn't you stand up then? Why wait until you're dead? You live on eighteen-fifty a week, with the roaches, not saying a word, and then when they kill you, you stand up! You fool!

**WEBSTER**

I didn't see it before.

**MARTHA**

Just like you! Wait until it's too late! There's plenty for live men to stand up for. All right, stand up! It's about time you talked back. It's about time all you poor miserable eighteen-fifty bastards stood up for yourselves and your wives and the children they can't have! Tell 'em all to stand up! Tell 'em! Tell 'em!

*Final Montage begins. Music... The soldiers take each other in and come to a silent agreement.*

Michael Rasbury 10/21/08 8:11 AM  
Comment: SOUND 49 Final Collage

**FIRST GENERAL (V.O.)**

It didn't work.

Michael Rasbury 10/29/08 6:33 PM  
Comment: Scene 24

**REPORTER (V.O.)**

I knew it wouldn't work!

**FIRST GENERAL (V.O.)**

But keep it quiet. For God's sake, keep it quiet.

**REPORTER (V.O.)**

Smear it over the headlines!

**EDITOR (V.O.)**

Put it in the headlines.

**REPORTER (V.O.)**

It didn't work!

**EDITOR (V.O.)**

They won't be buried!

**REPORTER (V.O.)**

Extra! Extra! They're still standing.

**VOICE (DONNA LYNNE) (V.O.)**

Don't let them back into the country.

**REPORTER (V.O.)**

From now on they'll always stand!

**SECOND GENERAL (V.O.)**

What'll happen to our war?

**REPORTER (V.O.)**

You can't bury soldiers any more.

**FIRST SOLDIER (V.O.)**

They stink.

**VOICE (FRED) (V.O.)**

What are we going to do about them?

**FIRST SOLDIER (V.O.)**

Bury them!

**FIRST GENERAL (V.O.)**

Pray! Pray!

*[We hear a hymn (?)]*

**VOICE (FRED) (V.O.)**

It will take more than prayers.

**FIRST GENERAL (V.O.)**

God must help us!

**VOICE (FRED) (V.O.)**

What are prayers to a dead man?

**FIRST GENERAL (V.O.)**

Down on your knees all of you, and pray with your hearts and your guts and the marrow of your bones.

*The soldiers head upstage.*

Michael Rasbury 10/21/08 8:12 AM  
Comment: Interior to the collage

**VOICE (FRED) (V.O.)**

They're standing! Mankind is standing up and climbing out of its grave.

**REPORTER (V.O.)**

Extra! Extra!

**VOICE (JAKE) (V.O.)**

Have you heard?

**REPORTER (V.O.)**

It didn't work.

**VOICE (JAKE) (V.O.)**

It didn't work.

**OUR HOST (LIVE)**

It didn't work. . . .

**REPORTER (V.O.)**

They're still standing!

*The soldiers are in a line upstage.*

**MRS. DEAN (V.O.)**

My baby.

**MRS. SCHELLING (V.O.)**

My husband.

**JULIA BLAKE (V.O.)**

My lover.

**FIRST SOLDIER (V.O.)**

Bury them!

**VOICE (JEREMY) (V.O.)**

Plant a new crop! The old crop has worn out the earth.

**FIRST SOLDIER (V.O.)**

They stink!

**VOICE (JEREMY) (V.O.)**

Plant something besides lives in the old and weary earth.

**REPORTER (V.O.)**

Extra! It didn't work!

**FIRST GENERAL (V.O.)**

The Day of Judgment is at hand.



**VOICE (FRED) (V.O.)**

Somebody do something. Call up the War Department!

**VOICE (JEFF) (V.O.)**

We've got to put them down!

**VOICE (FRED) (V.O.)**

Call up Congress!

**REPORTER (V.O.)**

You can't put them down.

**VOICE (FRED) (V.O.)**

Call up the Roman Catholic Church!

**VOICE (JEREMY) (V.O.)**

Put one down and ten will spring up like weeds in an old garden.

**VOICE (FRED) (V.O.)**

Somebody do something!

**SECOND GENERAL (V.O.)**

Use lead on them, lead!

**FIRST GENERAL (V.O.)**

Bury them. Bury the dead.

**VOICE (MANDELL) (V.O.)**

Extra! Extra! They're still standing.

**DRISCOLL (V.O.)**

Private Driscoll.

**SCHELLING (V.O.)**

Private Schelling.

**MORGAN (V.O.)**

Private Morgan.

**WEBSTER (V.O.)**

Private Webster.

**LEVY (V.O.)**

Private Levy.

**DEAN (V.O.)**

And Private Dean-

*DRISCOLL goes up to OUR HOST.*

**DRISCOLL (V.O.)**

I didn't get up from the dead to go back to the dead. I'm going to the living now.

*He lays his rifle down in front of her.*

**KATHERINE DRISCOLL (V.O.)**

A green and pleasant grave.

*He climbs off the edge of the stage as SCHELLING approaches OUR HOST.*

**SCHELLING (V.O.)**

There're a couple of things, Bess, that I ain't had enough of.

*He lays his rifle down in front of her.*

**BESS SCHELLING (V.O.)**

You were a good husband John.

*He climbs off the edge of the stage as DEAN approaches OUR HOST.*

**DEAN**

I was only twenty, mom. I hadn't done anything. I hadn't seen anything.

*He lays his rifle down in front of her.*

**MRS. DEAN (V.O.)**

Let me see your face, Baby.

*DEAN climbs off the edge of the stage as LEVY approaches OUR HOST.*

**LEVY (V.O.)**

There were a lot of things I loved on this earth.

*He lays his rifle down in front of her.*

**JOAN (V.O.)**

You loved me best, didn't you, Henry?

*LEVY climbs off the head of the stage as WEBSTER approaches OUR HOST.*

**MORGAN (V.O.)**

There are too many books I haven't read, too many places I haven't seen, too many memories I haven't kept long enough.

*He lays his rifle in front of OUR HOST.*

**JULIA BLAKE (V.O.)**

Walter Morgan, Beloved of Julia Blake, Born 1913, Died 1937.

*MORGAN climbs off the stage as WEBSTER approaches OUR HOST.*

**WEBSTER**

I couldn't explain it to you, Martha.

*He lays his rifle in front of OUR HOST.*

**MARTHA WEBSTER (V.O.)**

There were so many things you didn't tell me.

*The soldiers are now all off the stage in a line.*

**DRISCOLL (V.O.)**

I got things to say to people now. Important things. Big things.

**OUR HOST (LIVE)**

Tell 'em...

*The soldiers head off...*

**LEVY (V.O.)**

It's not a fair bargain—this exchange of my life for a pin on a General's map.

**WEBSTER (V.O.)**

I didn't see it before.

**DEAN (V.O.)**

I got cheated.

**MORGAN (V.O.)**

I won't be cheated.

**WEBSTER (V.O.)**

That's why I'm standing up now, Martha.

**SCHELLING (V.O.)**

You can't stop it. The earth's ready for it.

**OUR HOST (LIVE)**

Tell 'em. Tell 'em all to stand up! Tell 'em! Tell 'em!

*Blackout.*

*End of play.*