

CAPTAIN MARTIN

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J. DE SAINT-FERJEUX

C A S T

Captain MARTIN Company Commander in charge of Hill 5004 Stronghold. Heavy pipe-smoker. Mannerism indicating his mood. White haired.

Lieutenant DAVID Sub-Lieutenant. Just out of Cadet School. Deputy to Martin.

Sergeant-Major THOMAS Company Sergeant-Major. Former colonist in Hill 5004 area.

Sergeant WILSON National Serviceman. Martin got him promoted in spite of his background : teacher and allegedly communist sympathizer.

Doctor VERNON Brigade's Medical Officer.

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER Versatile and ambitious young captain on Brigade Headquarters staff

7th Actor : (1) Barman, (2) Male Prisoner, (3) Female prisoner.

8th Actor : (1) Radio-operator, (2) Corporal.

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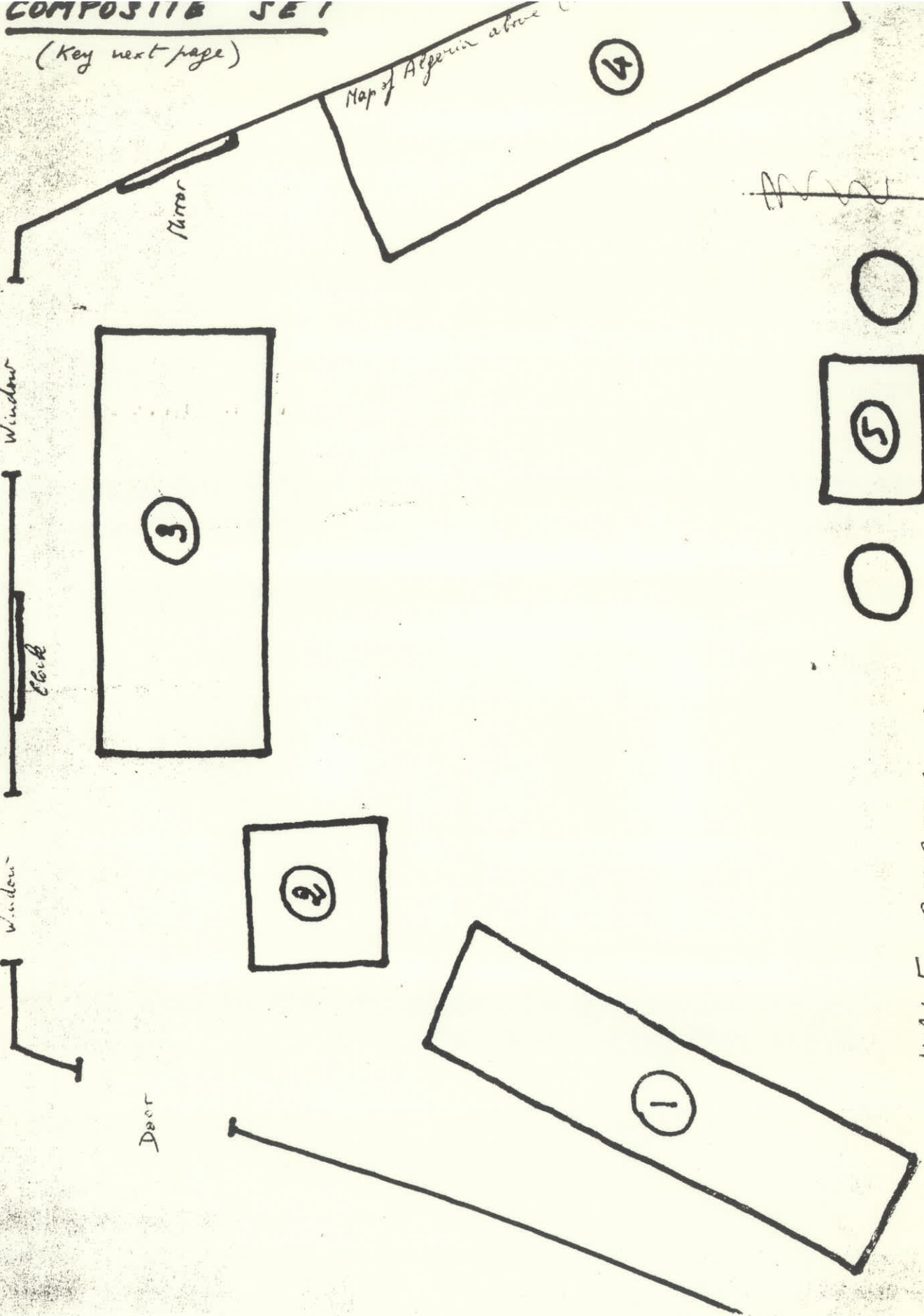
AUTHOR'S FOREWORD

The action takes place in Algeria.

However this Algerian background has been kept sufficiently vague to allow anyone mentally to shift many scenes somewhere else, say Vietnam or South America.

COMPOSITE SET

(Key next page)



CHAIR

KEY TO COMPOSITE SET

USE : - Changeovers done by the actors themselves (e.g. pulling screen with bottles painted on it for "bar"; e.
- Changeovers' time indicated in script (and usually in front of the audience)

DESCRIPTION :

MESS : ① as bar
② as "pin-up" side of the swivel box (1' x 1' x 1')
③ as billiard table
④ as sofa
⑤ as low chess table (used for breakfast too)

SIGNALS : ① as radio-operator's desk
② as loudspeaker (other side of swivel box)
③ as map-table
④ as operator's bed
⑤ as off-duty coffee table
Note : add map-holder on castors when used

CAPTAIN'S ROOM : ① as wardrobe
② as bookshelf (curtain cover pin-up)
③ as captain's desk
④ as captain's bed
⑤ as coffee-table
Note : add chair when needed

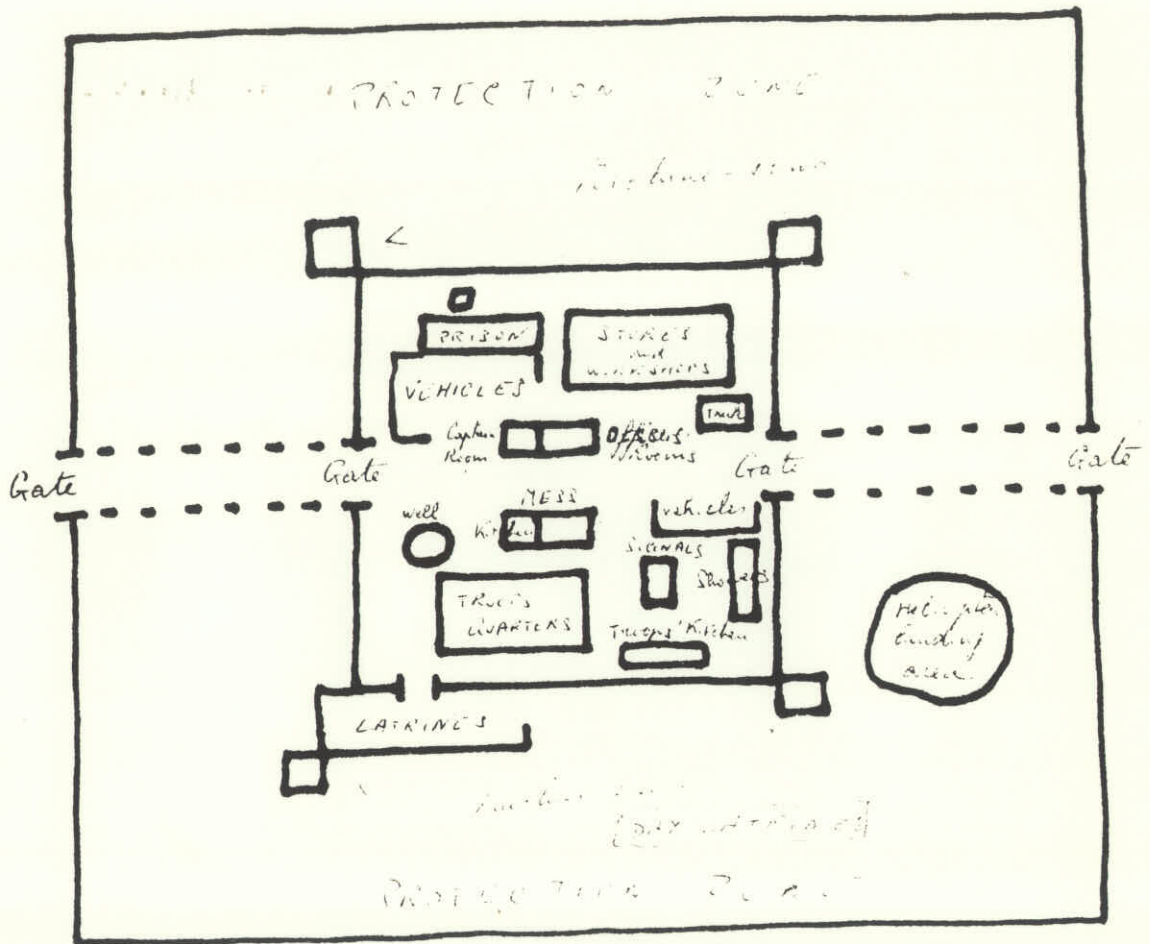
Note : The half-curtain should be hung very loosely on rings to make it very easy to pull it open and closed by hand.

HILL 5004 STRONG HOLD

and the CAVE



HILL 5004 STRONGHOLD



A C T I

(While the audience moves in the half-curtain is closed. On it are roughly pinned, from left to right :
 (i) the sketch-map of Hill 5004 area, (ii) the author's foreword, and (iii) the rough plan of Hill 5004 stronghold. The same should be printed on the programmes too. When the lights go out these inscriptions should still be seen for a few moments. Then three actors, coming from among the audience, take them away and pull the half-curtain open.

SCENE 1

(9.30 p.m. Mess set. Enter Thomas who realises he's by himself and starts doing his gymnastics. After a while, starts doing push-ups and doesn't hear Lt. David coming in.)

DAVID : Good evening Sergeant-Major. Still training !

THOMAS (in between push ups) : Evening Sir.....197.....
 198..... 199..... two hundred !

DAVID : How many did you do to-day ?

THOMAS : Only two hundred to-day, but I do some other exercises as well.

DAVID : Why such an intensive training ?

THOMAS : It's not easy to remain fit in this stronghold, is it ?

DAVID: You've got a point there.

THOMAS: Of course I have. Look at the Captain looking 10 years older than he is!

DAVID: Where is the barman ?

THOMAS: Probably in the kitchen. I'll get him.

(EXIT)

(Lt. David inspects the nude, shrugs his shoulders and goes to the map of Algeria which he studies thoughtfully)

(ENTER WILSON)

WILSON : Evening Sir !

DAVID : Good evening Sergeant !

WILSON : Not a bad evening after such a hot day, is it!

DAVID : Still a bit hot though!

WILSON : You'll get used to it. After a while your body adapts itself to the climate.

DAVID : Thank you very much, Sir ! You teachers can't help lecturing, even outside the classroom.

WILSON : Sorry !

DAVID : That's alright! Let's forget the weather.

(ENTER THOMAS FOLLOWED BY BARMAN)

THOMAS : Glorious night, isn't it ? Before the war you would have loved to sleep by the side of your swimming pool!

DAVID : Did you have your own ?

THOMAS : Of course I did. This district was very rich before the rebellion. Even the smaller farms were doing quite well.

WILSON : They sure did ! Labour was so incredibly cheap : no wonder the natives got sick of it !

THOMAS : If you feel so much for the rebels, why don't you join them, big mouth ? Is it that you haven't got the guts or is it that you still prefer your comfort ?

DAVID : Enough ! Stop talking politics here !

THOMAS : Alright, as soon as you stop this young communist bastard shooting his mouth about what he doesn't know.

WILSON : I'm not a communist and I won't let you call me a bastard.

THOMAS : Is that so little boy ? And what are you going to do about it ?

DAVID : Thomas ! Stop this nonsense !

THOMAS : Alright ! Alright ! Don't get upset, I only thought that Sergeant Wilson was looking for a fight.

DAVID : Physical violence is not the answer to all problems Thomas, and you know that the captain wouldn't tolerate a fight.

THOMAS : Well, there are quite a few things that
our captain

(interrupted by Captain Martin entering in a rather
good mood, and toying with a bunch of identity plates)

MARTIN : So you were going to say something rude
about me Thomas, weren't you ?

THOMAS : No sir, not really. Would you care for
a beer ? I was going to pay for a
round.

MARTIN : Good idea. Thanks.

WILSON : Not for me, please !

THOMAS : Do you want something else ?

WILSON : No, thank you. I'm not thirsty.

THOMAS (to barman) : Three beers. Put them on my account,
will you.

MARTIN : Guess what ? I've got your dog-tags
for tomorrow.

THOMAS : What for ?

MARTIN : We got to wear them outside the
stronghold. New orders !

THOMAS : Even for ordinary patrols ?

MARTIN : Yes. Starting with the ground-protection
of the supply column tomorrow morning.

WILSON : Easier to wear them all the time then !

MARTIN : Yes. Might help us to believe we're
fighting a real war again.

DAVID : What do you mean ?

MARTIN : They might want to make us believe it
is no longer just an undeclared war!

DAVID (shocked, aside to Martin) : Sir!

MARTIN (loudly) : What ?

DAVID (embarrassed, almost whispering) : We shouldn't
talk politics with subordinates!

MARTIN : Nonsense! What else could you talk
about in a stronghold? Anyway, here
you are :

(reads discs)

Second Lieutenant David

(hands it out)

Sergeant-Major Thomas

(hands it out)

Sergeant Wilson, National Serviceman.

(hands it out)

Mind you, I wish all the career sergeants
could be as good as you Wilson!

WILSON : Thank you Sir!

MARTIN : What about the barman ?

THOMAS : He's got this. The troops were already
supposed to wear it.

(They finish their beer while Wilson sets the chess
board)

DAVID : Would you care for another beer ?

(Captain and Thomas nod)

Have one with us Wilson. I've been here

for a few days and it's my first chance
to buy you a drink.

WILSON : Alright, thanks.

DAVID : Four beers !

(pays cash)

THOMAS (to captain) : Game of billiards ?

MARTIN : Yes.

(they start playing)

WILSON (to David) : Do you play chess ?

DAVID : Yes, with pleasure, but I'm not too good !

(they start playing. The barman moves the clock to
9.45 p.m. and goes back to his bar. Then each team
gets another drink and the barman puts the clock on
10.00 p.m. and leaves. Games go on silently)

MARTIN : That was a short game. You're too good
for me. Should we leave it at that ?

THOMAS : If you don't mind : I've got to go !
Good night !

(Thomas pulls the half-curtain closed while the
lights dim. Then he stays on the proscenium and
whistles softly)

(End scene)

A C T ISCENE 2

(10.00 p.m. on proscenium. After Thomas has whistled the eighth actor appears dressed in corporal and armed with a submachine-gun. With him is the seventh actor (the former barman) dressed as a prisoner, fettered and carrying pick and shovel. If there is no trap-door on the proscenium, any trick (e.g. using the side steps) will do to simulate the hole)

THOMAS : Hurry up! Make him finish that one.

CORPORAL: But Sergeant-Major!

THOMAS : What ?

CORPORAL : That's the hole for the new latrine.

THOMAS : Excellent, let the shit go with the shit.

CORPORAL (laughing ^m weekly) : Alright

(to prisoner) : Come on! Hop in you scum!

(as the prisoner doesn't seem to understand the corporal pushes him in and gestures his orders as well)

: Make it twice as deep, and bigger too,
and you'd better hurry up!

(silence while the prisoner works)

THOMAS : Why is he crying ?

CORPORAL : He believes the grave is for him.

THOMAS : Christ! That's the best I've heard to-day!

CORPORAL : They do a better job when they think it's for themselves.

THOMAS : My word, you're a genius : where did you learn that ?

CORPORAL : Oh, I don't know. But that's a fact.

THOMAS : Do you think he's heard what we said ?

CORPORAL : Doesn't matter, he doesn't speak French.

THOMAS : How do you talk to him ?

CORPORAL : He understands orders when I kick him as well.

THOMAS : Excellent. Tell him to hurry up.

CORPORAL (prodding the prisoner) : You heard bastard :
Hurry up!

THOMAS : At least you know how to handle this vermin - not like our captain!

CORPORAL : What do you mean ?

THOMAS : Don't be silly. You know what I mean : Our captain tries to fight a war without killing people! Ever heard of such nonsense before ?

CORPORAL : Well - er - no Sergeant-Major, but I'd rather not get mixed up with what them officers do! See, I'm just a corporal, I can't win.

THOMAS (ignoring his plea) : Do you think that they sent that young fellow David to replace the captain ?

CORPORAL : But why should they want to replace the captain ?

THOMAS : Because he's no good. I told you : he's a pacifist.

CORPORAL : Please Sergeant-Major, don't get me mixed up with all that political stuff - All what I want to do is to do my job and put my pay aside. The beauty of this war is that we can save like mad!

(kicking the prisoner) :

Hurry up, you bastard.

THOMAS (half- soliloquy) : You see, if the Intelligence Officer's coming from Brigade Headquarters it must be for something! Mustn't it ?

If it was just to torture a prisoner quietly, away from the city, he could have found a stronghold closer to Headquarters.

So let's put two and two together : they send the Intelligence Officer to give the captain his last warning before kicking him out. Obvious, isn't it ?

CORPORAL: I don't understand what you're talking about.

THOMAS (fetching cigarette) : Doesn't matter. Cigarette

CORPORAL : No thanks. It's too dangerous in the night.

THOMAS : What the hell!

CORPORAL : Glows a lot, doesn't it ?

THOMAS : So we'll get killed.

CORPORAL (moving away) : No, thanks. I'd rather not.

THOMAS : D'you feel we're going to win the war ?

CORPORAL : Don't know.

THOMAS : What are they going to do with us after, if we lose ?

CORPORAL : They'll put us back in barracks.

THOMAS : Sometimes I wish the bastards had killed me too when they burnt my farm.

CORPORAL: The prisoner's finished the job.

THOMAS : Alright! Get him out and let's get back.

(while getting out they pull open the half-curtain and the lights come back to the mess set when they are gone)

(End Scene)

A C T ISCENE 3

(10.15 p.m. - mess - Captain astride on the chair watches David and Wilson finishing their chess game)

DAVID: Check !

WILSON: Well, it looks like check-mate.

DAVID: Hold on! (they try all possibilities)
- Yes, you're right!

WILSON : You're a much better player than you
said. I should have been more careful.

MARTIN (interrupting) : I did not want to interrupt the
game as you seemed to enjoy it so much
(addressing Wilson) : but you'd better go and do
your round of the sentries !

WILSON : Yes Sir! Sorry for being late!
(exit quickly)

MARTIN : Want another drink ?

DAVID : Yes Sir! Thanks.

MARTIN : You don't have to say Sir after every
second word! Life here is very
different. A mountain stronghold is
like a ship and the captain is absolute
master, but we don't stand on formality.

DAVID : At Cadet School, though, they warned us against the erosion of discipline in a closed community like this.

MARTIN : Forget about Cadet School. I don't need all the drill and parade nonsense to be the boss.

Where is the bloody barman ?

DAVID : Probably asleep : it's 20 past 10.

(turns the clock)

MARTIN : Fair enough! Beer ?

(goes round the bar and gets 2 beers)

DAVID : Thank you !

MARTIN : By the way, normally there is no more drinking after 10.

DAVID : Yes I though I had seen that on the notice over there !

MARTIN : Correct, but it's easier to break the rules when you've made them yourself, isn't it ?

DAVID :

MARTIN : Don't panic : I'm not that bad ! I was only joking.

(pause)

What do you think the Intelligence Officer is coming here for ?

DAVID : Didn't they tell you ?

MARTIN : No - And how do you know ?

DAVID : I heard it at Brigade Headquarters on my way here the Division Commander was having lunch with Brigade Staff.

MARTIN : And the Major-General is a friend of your father I suppose.

DAVID : No, he is my father's junior, but they worked together, for a while, at the Ministry.

MARTIN : What are you doing in my company with all your family connections ?

DAVID : Sir! I was only answering your question honestly.

MARTIN : Alright.

(pause)

Want a game ?

DAVID (taking a cue) : Yes, but I'm not too good.

MARTIN : We've already heard that one about chess. You start.

DAVID (after missing) : Any chalk ?

MARTIN : Over there.

You still haven't told me what the Intelligence Officer is coming here for.

DAVID : Well Should we say that, basically, both Brigade and Division think that this company is not active enough.

MARTIN : Go on!

DAVID : The Secret Service is complaining about Wilson too.

MARTIN : No! Not again! They agreed to clear his record when he was wounded while trying to save one of his men. And the text of his citation says that he is an outstanding Non-Commissioned Officer.

DAVID : They don't deny this.

MARTIN : It's your turn.
Wilson's our best fellow for looking after his men. And in this stupid war, that we're going to lose anyway, the only important thing is to keep your men alive.

DAVID : It certainly is important, but in the long run

MARTIN (interrupting) : Listen, David, if you had been through all I have, the "long run", as you say, wouldn't mean a thing to you.

DAVID : I'm sorry. I didn't mean to personalize this discussion.

MARTIN : I do, David, I do !
As you are in my company you may just as well know me to know exactly where you stand.
You see it's pointless to argue : we

DAVID :

are two different kinds of people, with two completely different kinds of lives
Why ?

MARTIN :

Because your career is open, David, you hope to become a big brass.

DAVID :

Sir!

MARTIN :

No, don't shrug your shoulders : it's perfectly normal.

Your turn!

I'm not interested in the "long run" simply because I'm far too disillusioned for that. You see, my own career was doomed before it started.

DAVID :

What do you mean ?

MARTIN :

I was called up at the beginning of the Second World War and I finished it as an acting major. Then, in 1945, the bastards made me go back to the rank of lieutenant in peace-time and I wasn't game to resign as I didn't have any other job.

DAVID :

But that was a political decision that affected hundreds of officers.

MARTIN :

Maybe - but I was the victim just the same.

Then I tried just about everything to regain my lost rank, but all they did

to give me more

so many years, I'm just an old captain involved in another stupid war while waiting to be pensioned off.

DAVID : This is not a stupid war.

MARTIN : Come on. You're an intelligent man : you can't be that naive that you don't see it.

DAVID : See what ?

MARTIN : See that this war doesn't make sense.

DAVID : No wars ever made sense for those who didn't believe in them.

MARTIN : So what ?

DAVID : So this war is not any more stupid than any other war. It's just more complicated because there is no clear-cut front line.

MARTIN : I suppose you got that garbage from Cadet School, you fool!

DAVID : I wish you could only avoid being rude with your subordinates. Good night Sir.

MARTIN : Night!

(Exit David. Martin shrugs his shoulders and pulls the half-curtain closed, staying behind it -

Lights fade -)

(END SCENE)

A C T ISCENE 4

(11.10 p.m. Thomas and the Corporal (8th actor)
carrying submachineguns, appear on the proscenium with a
female prisoner (7th actor) gagged and heavily shackled
and fettered. Dim light)

CORPORAL : Still can't see why doing it in the
dark. I can't see my own hands. It's
just ridiculous.

THOMAS : I thought you were brighter. Can't
you get it into your head we couldn't
shoot a girl before pitch-dark ?

CORPORAL : No. Why not ?

THOMAS : What about Wilson ?

CORPORAL : Oh yes. But I've always said there
shouldn't be any communists in the army.

THOMAS : Yeah thickhead - and they would get
away with it while the rest of us
would have to do the job.

CORPORAL : There should be some way to get rid of
them.

THOMAS : Of course ! That's what I've always
been saying. We should do what the

real communists do in Russia : they have concentration camps for those who aren't happy with the system.

CORPORAL : Look, she's bleeding!

THOMAS (after check) : That's nothing, just a bit of haemorrhage.

CORPORAL : Of what ?

THOMAS : Nothing, she just had too much sex over the last few days.

CORPORAL : She sure did. Life would be great if we could get bodies like hers everyday.

THOMAS : Come on! We're talking too much.
Give us a hand to put her in the hole.
And check she's right in.

CORPORAL : That's alright, she can't move. D'you want me to shoot her now ?

THOMAS : No, after all it's still better if we avoid the noise. Get your shovel and put ~~put~~ the earth back in.

(the corporal puts his submachinegun across his back and starts burying the woman when he is interrupted by Wilson)

WILSON : Stop it! Good God I can't let you do this!

(the corporal stops hypnotized by Wilson's submachinegun)

THOMAS: Don't be a fool Wilson! If you shoot us it's the firing squad for you.

WILSON: Nevermind that! Get the girl out of the hole.

THOMAS : You're mad Wilson : helping a prisoner to escape is treason, that's still the firing squad for you.

WILSON : She won't escape : take her back to the stronghold.

THOMAS : That's very cruel you know : she will be killed anyway : all you're doing is to torture her twice.

WILSON (after hesitating); Then free her!

THOMAS : You'll never get away with that one Wilson. Even the Captain will drop you. You're finished.

WILSON : No he won't.

THOMAS : Want a bet ? He knows that I'm going to get rid of her. It's just that he never wants to see any dirty work.

WILSON : You're lying.

THOMAS : If you're so sure why don't you free her ?

WILSON : Take her back for the time being.

THOMAS : You've already forgotten that it is the worst torture to be killed twice.

WILSON : I'm sure the Captain will change his mind.

THOMAS : It won't make the slightest difference.
Don't forget that the Intelligence
Officer is coming with the supply column
in a few hours.

WILSON : Take her out.

THOMAS (to Corporal) : O.K., take her out.

CORPORAL (after trying) : I can't.

THOMAS : Undo the fetters. I'll help you.

WILSON : Come on!

(As soon as she is out the woman starts running away
offscene. Thomas aims carefully and shoots her.
The corporal comically drops on his knees and begs
for his own life. Wilson trains his weapon on
Thomas but hasn't got the courage to fire.)

CORPORAL : Please Sergeant don't kill me! I didn't
do it! You saw it : I didn't do it.

THOMAS : On your feet you crawling idiot. Of
course he won't kill you. What I have
done is perfectly legal. Shooting a
runaway prisoner is quite O.K. Wilson,
isn't it ?

(Wilson, crushed, walks away silently)

CORPORAL : Phew! I really thought he would do it.

THOMAS : Because you're a fool.
Intellectuals are not really dangerous

because they are too intelligent and see all the consequences.

Just force them to commit themselves and they won't do anything : they don't want to give up their nice life these days!

Even if they write about it, so what ? Listening to the truth is the most boring form of entertainment, isn't it ?

CORPORAL :

I don't understand what you're talking about.

THOMAS :

Nevermind. Get the body back in the hole, will you !

(Corporal walks offstage. Thomas pulls the half-curtain opened and disappears too. All lights out)

(END SCENE)

A C T ISCENE 5

(11.30 p.m. When the lights gradually come back on the mess set the captain is alone, brooding, sitting astride on the chair and facing an oil-lamp on the chess table. Enter Wilson still awfully upset)

WILSON : I'm glad you're still here sir. May I have a drink ?

MARTIN : What's the matter ?

WILSON (looking as if he was going to vomit, and helping himself to the brandy in a port glass) : It's Thomas sir! He was trying to bury her alive.

(drinks the whole glass, nearly chokes himself and yet drinks another glass then sits on the couch)

MARTIN : You saw him did you ?

WILSON : Yes, horrible ?

(embarrassing silence. The captain goes to the bar and gets a brandy for himself)

MARTIN : D'you want another one, I'll put it on my account.

WILSON : Thanks.

(pause)

Why didn't you stop him ?

MARTIN :

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How could I, Wilson ? How could I ?
There is an unwritten rule about having
that sort of job done in the mountain
strongholds. You've got to take it in
turn, sort of !

WILSON :

But surely if you refuse

MARTIN :

You can't really refuse Wilson, other-
wise they would give your company to
somebody else. And then

WILSON :

At least you wouldn't

MARTIN :

I haven't finished Wilson. Just
think ! What would be the point for
me to get transferred to Brigade
Headquarters without being given any
responsibilities. I would end up in
the loony-bin in no time. Was it worth
it for this female terrorist who would
have been shot anyway ? Do you know
it was mostly women and children who
got maimed and killed by the two bombs
she planted in a restaurant and in a
supermarket .

(pause - pours two more drinks)

The first time she got away with it :
not enough evidence, that's what the
judges decided ! So the second time
the Intelligence Service didn't want
to take any chance.

WILSON : Why did they give her to us ?

MARTIN : It was our turn, and I was less reluctant about that one because of her awful record. And also our Intelligence Officer wanted Thomas to do the job as he thought she might try to run away. I didn't think that Thomas would do it the way you say.

WILSON (bitter) : Yes, of course ! But Thomas is such an insane sadist.....

MARTIN : Listen, you're going too far now ! Thomas's not an angel but he's got reasons for his behaviour, and he's not even the worst !

WILSON : What do you mean ?

MARTIN : Last night I had to throw out several privates who'd got wind of the execution and wanted to volunteer - just for the hell of it !

WILSON : No !

MARTIN : Yes, and at least two of them will go to mass when the Chaplain arrives with the supply column in the morning.

WILSON : Good God !

MARTIN : I guess the Chaplain will tell them how to talk it away. In one of his sermons I heard him justify torture from the

altar, just before the Holy Communion.

What a monstrous joke it was!

WILSON : Yes but Thomas' sadism

MARTIN : I already told you to leave Thomas alone.
He probably wanted to avoid the noise.
I'll see him about that!

WILSON : How can I forget about it when it makes
me so sick ?

MARTIN : Just think how Thomas must have felt
when he saw his wife raped and killed.
They also burnt his farm. His two
children died in the fire.

He was going round the bend when his
psychiatrist suggested that his remark-
able knowledge of this district could
be of use to the army.

WILSON : How come he saw it and yet survived ?

MARTIN : I meant saw it from the distance. The
terrorists disappeared as he reached
his farm.

WILSON : Did he try to get them at once ?

MARTIN : Night was falling, what could he do ?

WILSON : What did he do though ?

MARTIN : How could I know ? This is pointless.
You haven't got a family : how can you
judge him ?

WILSON : So he did nothing immediately, and yet he's been enjoying his revenge ever since.

MARTIN : Stop it! If you don't want to talk like an adult, I don't see why ^{I'm} wasting my time with you. I'll send you to bed.

WILSON : And you become an adult when you stop having feelings about what's right and wrong.

MARTIN : Yes. That's enough.

(pause, then more gently)

Listen Wilson, I didn't mean to hurt you. But, you see, as long as this senseless war lasts we'll need people like Thomas to do the jobs we don't want to do. You forget that we are not fighting soldiers : we're fighting terrorists.

WILSON: During the war the Germans were also thinking that the undergrounds all over Europe were mere terrorists.

MARTIN : I suppose they did.

WILSON : My father died in Auschwitz.

MARTIN : I know.

(pause)

And you can't help comparing us with

the Germans during the war!

(Wilson nods - Pause)

WILSON : Could I ask you a question ?

MARTIN : Go ahead.

WILSON : Why are you staying ?

MARTIN : I've got to wait for my full pension. I need it badly to keep my family going : my eldest son has just started university and there are two girls and a boy after him.

WILSON : I meant here.

MARTIN : Brigade Headquarters would be worse again : fancy having to work with the Intelligence Officer everyday!

WILSON : Not any worse than Thomas.

MARTIN : You're wrong, and anyway I'm Thomas' boss, while the bloody Intelligence Officer would try to patronize me.

WILSON : At least he's a less disgusting type of sadist than Thomas.

MARTIN : Rubbish. His hypocrisy's fooled you.

WILSON : Can't see the connection.

MARTIN : Thomas, in a way, is honest at least. He does believe that there is a solution, and that peace will come to this country as soon as it's been cleansed by fire

and sword, as he puts it.

WILSON: What a nice programme !

MARTIN : Shut up, will you. You're too young to understand that the Intelligence Officer is only after social promotion for himself.

WILSON: I can see that, but you probably oversimplify, and

MARTIN (interrupting) : Let's forget about it. We'll have another drink and go to bed. Could you get it please ?

(pause)

(Wilson does it and Martin moves the clock to 11.40)

Thanks, that's better.....although drinking is no bloody solution either !

WILSON: What about trying to be sent back home on medical ground ?

MARTIN : I never cheat, Wilson .

(pause)

Besides that's no solution either ! Running away quietly is just another form of condoning.

WILSON: That's interesting that you should say that !

MARTIN : Why ?

WILSON: No. Sorry Sir. I was going to talk about the Germans again.

MARTIN : Go ahead.

WILSON (hesitating) : I visited Auschwitz after the war, with my mother..... she speaks German.

MARTIN : Go on !

WILSON: She said all the people of the area claim that during the war they believed the concentration camp was a soap factory.

MARTIN : Yes.

WILSON : She says that the Nazis couldn't have ruled Germany if the Germans had not accepted them.

MARTIN : Yes.

WILSON : She often told me that there is no real difference between doing and condoning.

(pause)

That's why I still haven't been game to tell her about my mention in the despatches.

MARTIN : She's right you know. There is no difference between doing and condoning

(pause)

I'll have to see Thomas in the

morning. It's no good letting him do
the dirty work for me and pretending
not to see it.

(lights fade out)

(END SCENE)

A C T ISCENE 6

(6.35 a.m. - Light coming back. Mess set -
Barman cleaning. Knock on the door)

BARMAN: Who's that ?

OPERATOR (i.e. 8th actor) : The radio operator.

BARMAN : Come in, the coast is clear.

OPERATOR : I saw you were up.

BARMAN : Yes. What about you ?

OPERATOR : Just finished the half-past-six radio
contact.

What time do you think they'll turn
up ?

BARMAN : Don't know. They all spent half the
night drinking. All acting queer at the
moment : must be about that girl
Thomas shot.

OPERATOR : Got enough time to make us a cup of
coffee ?

BARMAN : Yes, why ?

OPERATOR (contemplating the nude) : The coffee we
get from the company's kitchen's
shocking. I wouldn't mind officer's

OPERATOR : Alright.

 (fingering the nude's pubic hair)
She's really good looking!

BARMAN : Not much help though : what we need is
the real thing.

OPERATOR : Sure. But it's easier to masturbate
with pictures of the good-looking ones,
isn't it ?

BARMAN : Are you going to do these glasses or not?

OPERATOR : Alright, alright.

 (they start working)

 You're lucky, you go to town more
often than me. My oath, if they don't
take me down soon I'll have to stuff a
bloke.

BARMAN : I heard the doctor is bringing a couple
of prostitutes with the convoy.

OPERATOR : You're sure ?

BARMAN : No, but he probably will because last
month very few people got leaves to go
to the brothel in the town.

OPERATOR : Bringing pros here is against the
regulations, isn't it ?

BARMAN : I don't think Doctor Vernon worries too

much about the regulations. He'll probably hide them in an ambulance.

OPERATOR : Gosh it'll be funny if the Chaplain finds out!

BARMAN : How could he? He'll be busy most of the time with his mass and confessions.

OPERATOR : Well, I can easily imagine young Lieutenant David whoring first and then going to confession.

BARMAN (while turning clock to 6.40) : David! You're joking. He's an upper-class bloke : he would be far too shy!

OPERATOR : What about the others?

BARMAN : I don't know.

OPERATOR : What about the captain?

BARMAN : No. He's a real family man : I don't think he would do that!

OPERATOR : You're talking about it as if it was disgusting. Man, you're getting a bit stuffed up behind your bar.

BARMAN : You'd better get lost now. Thomas might turn up.

OPERATOR : Alright. Alright.

(exit Operator - Barman sets table for breakfast)

(enter Thomas)

THOMAS : Morning. Breakfast ready ?

BARMAN : Aren't you supposed to have it altogether
with the briefing ?

THOMAS : That's changed. Get us that breakfast
quickly, will you.

BARMAN : Alright, it won't be long.

(Exit barman. Thomas plays billiards
by himself, misses, and starts doing
some exercises and then push-ups)

(Enter David)

THOMAS : Good morning.

DAVID : Good morning. Already working ?

THOMAS : Waiting for breakfast.

DAVID : What about the briefing ?

THOMAS : The Intelligence Officer will give it
himself later on.

DAVID : When the convoy is here?⁹

THOMAS : No. He's coming by helicopter.

DAVID : How do you know ?

THOMAS : I took the message. The operator
wasn't in signals.

DAVID : Did you tell the Captain ?

THOMAS : Not yet.

DAVID : Then you'd better do it at once or
he'll think you've been over his head
and hell will break loose.

THOMAS : Well !

DAVID : I'm serious Thomas : he already wants to tell you off about last night. Don't push your luck too far.

THOMAS : Alright. Could you tell the barman to give my breakfast to somebody else.

DAVID : I'll have it, but what about you ?

THOMAS : I'll do without. It's good for my diet.

DAVID : But why ?

THOMAS : The Intelligence Officer asked me to try to avoid clashing with the captain. He'll be here in a moment and will handle the situation himself.

DAVID : Alright. Makes sense. Where are you going ?

THOMAS : I'll have a look at the wood-chopping party. That's good exercise too.

(Exit Thomas. Enter barman comically surprised to see Thomas go without his breakfast)

DAVID : I'll have it. Put it on the table, I'll be back in a minute.

(Exit David. Operator sticks his head in through the door)

OPERATOR : Coast clear ?

BARMAN : Not really. That one will be back in a

minute and the captain won't be long now.

OPERATOR (coming in) : Nevermind!

Hurrah for doc! The whores are coming!

They just told me on the radio!

Come on, man, cheer up!

(he charges the barman, pretending to be a fighting bull. The barman at first tries to stop it but soon warms up to the game, using his tea-towel as a red rag, and then starts worrying again about somebody coming in)

BARMAN : Stop it you fool, they'll be in any minute.

OPERATOR : Bugger them all! It's D-day, the pros are coming.

(he charges again but nearly falls over as the barman instinctively stands at attention as the captain comes in)

MARTIN (laughing) : Hey! Hey! What's going on in here ?

BARMAN : }
OPERATOR : } Nothin, sir! Sorry sir! Just mucking about!

MARTIN : Well, what's the matter ?

OPERATOR : Er..... well sir I was
going to say.....

MARTIN : To say what ?

BARMAN : He wanted to tell you that the prostitute
were coming sir! We just got carried
away a bit Sir! Sorry Sir!

MARTIN : Is that all ?

(laughs)

And is the Chaplain still coming ?

OPERATOR : Yes Sir.

MARTIN : Well - that should make it an interest-
ing day!

(to operator) : Now go back to signals.

OPERATOR : Yes Sir.

(Exit)

MARTIN : Where's everybody ?

BARMAN : I don't know Sir, but the Lieutenant will
be back in a minute.

MARTIN : Get the Sergeant-Major and tell him I
want to see him at once!

(Exit barman. Captain puts the
clock on 7.00 then goes to the
nude. After fingering the pubic
hair he smells his own fingers
absentmindedly. Enter David who
coughs, most embarrassed)

MARTIN : Good morning ! What's the matter ? Got a sore throat ?

DAVID : No. Er..... I well

MARTIN : Vernon's bringing a couple of whores with the convoy, do you want a quickie ?

DAVID (blushing) : No ! Thank you ! Not here !

MARTIN : Well, too bad ! But I can assure you that no one would know.

DAVID (interested) : Ah ?

MARTIN : I might have a go myself if I've got the time after Vernon's examination !

DAVID (horrified) : Examination ? Aren't the women healthy ?

MARTIN (laughing) : Yes of course ! Otherwise they couldn't work for the army. I was talking about my own medical visit. I hate going to town, so Vernon's going to see me here.

DAVID : Of course ! How foolish of me..... Yes, as a matter of fact, you look a bit tired.

MARTIN : Tired ? What do you mean ?

(moves towards the mirror)

DAVID : Well your eyes and perhaps..... your hair.....

MARTIN (interrupting) : Rubbish ! It just

happened that I turned white early like others go bald or have blue-eyes.

(looks in the mirror with concern)

DAVID : I'm sorry Sir!

MARTIN : Sorry about what ? There's nothing to be sorry about.

(pause)

By the way, talking about age, I wish you could shave with a proper razor.

DAVID : Why ?

MARTIN : That electric shaver of yours turns your skin all pink and makes you look too young to inspire respect to the rank and file.

(David, worried, goes to mirror.

Some mimicking while Martin, back at the table, smiles broadly)

DAVID : I'll order a razor and blades to-day. I should have it by the next convoy.

MARTIN : Who's having breakfast ?

DAVID : Myself as a matter of fact.

MARTIN : Why don't you wait for the briefing ?

DAVID : Didn't you know that the Intelligence Officer is coming by helicopter to give the briefing himself ?

MARTIN (nearly suffocating) : What ? In my own company. And I'm the last one to know. Where's the bloody operator ? I'll wring the bastard's neck.

(Exit Martin. David smiles, but when he touches his chin he gets worried again and goes back to the mirror. Enter the barman who surprises him in this position)

DAVID : Couldn't you knock ?

BARMAN : The Captain ordered me not to as I come in and out too often.

DAVID : Alright. Don't just stay like that. You may just as well start preparing the Captain's room : the Intelligence Officer will be here soon.

BARMAN : Alright Sir.

(Exit David. The barman changes the set to Captain's-room set. Then he pulls the half-curtain closed and disappears off-scene)

(END SCENE)

A C T ISCENE 7

(Just before 7.30 a.m. Thomas appears on the proscenium and walks up and down. Then appears the operator)

THOMAS: What the hell are you doing here ?

OPERATOR: I'm waiting for the helicopter. I think I can hear the noise.

THOMAS: Nevermind that! Get back to signals.

OPERATOR : I can't Sergeant-Major. The Captain wants me to take the Intelligence Officer to him as soon as he lands.

THOMAS: Alright, then you stay here. I must see him for half a sec. Then you can take him to the Captain.

OPERATOR: I wouldn't do that Sergeant Major, the Captain is in a rotten mood!

THOMAS : You bloody do what I tell you, and mind your business. Stay here. That's an order. Understand ?

(Helicopter's noise. Exit Thomas)

OPERATOR (to audience) : If you ask me they're all soft in the head in this bloody

company! You've hardly received an order than you receive the counter-order

Mind you it's got advantages too. It kills time more quickly. You never get bored. Plenty of entertainment! Did you see bloody Thomas?

(Mimics the Sergeant-Major "stay here. That's an order", etc., and imitates his gait)

(Here the actor may also give an ad-lib. send-up of Martin and David)

But you still haven't seen the best: our petulant Intelligence Officer. That's really what you would call self-made upper-class!

(mimics the Intelligence Officer with riding whip and haughty countenance)

I'm sure he would love to sport a monocle if he wasn't sweating so much in the heat here!

(mimics the monocle bit with a coin when the Intelligence Officer turns up with Thomas. Then he

awkwardly freezes at attention,
bordering panic)

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER (pointing his riding whip) :

Who's this nut over there ?

THOMAS : The operator.

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : Why did Martin pick the
village idiot ?

THOMAS : He's alright! He's supposed to take you
to the Captain at once.

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER (to operator) : Wait for
me by the gate.

OPERATOR : But Sir.....

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : You understood! Clear out!

(operator goes offstage)

(to Thomas) : I'll have to see you later.
I don't want to antagonize Martin, or
at least not yet!

(the Intelligence Officer stretches out
his hand. Thomas, rather surprised
shakes hands and the Intelligence Officer
puts a judo ^{grip} hold on his hand and forces
him to bend to the ground)

THOMAS : Ouch! What the hell are you doing ?

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : I'm sure you didn't know
that one.

(releases him)

THOMAS : No. Could you teach me ?

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : Yes. After I've seen
Martin. How's your training going ?

THOMAS : Fine. What about yours ?

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : Alright. But I can
hardly find the time. I'm awfully busy
at Headquarters and I'm also doing a
teach-yourself course in Russian with
records and all.

THOMAS : Russian ? What for ?

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : This war mustn't make us
forget our European mission.

THOMAS : I see. (looks rather bemused)

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : O.K., now you go and get
things ready for the briefing.

THOMAS : Alright.

(Exit)

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : Operator!

OPERATOR (voice offstage) : Yes Sir.

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : Come back. Hurry!

OPERATOR (out of breath) : Yes Sir.

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : Come with me. I want to
go to signals before seeing your capt.

OPERATOR : But Sir.....

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : Shut up and do what
you're told.

(both disappear offstage, the
operator meekly following the I.O.

(END SCENE)

A C T ISCENE 8

(7.45 a.m. Martin appears on the proscenium,
finishing to do up his fly)

MARTIN (to himself) : What's the bloody
bastard doing ?

(he pulls the half-curtain open and moves
towards the mirror, still talking to himself)

I bet he's having a chat with Thomas.
I should have prevented that!

(looking in the mirror)

You're losing your grip Peter!
Getting old too. That young prick was
right you know!

(knock on the door. Martin rushes to his desk
in a vain attempt to compose himself, but is
seen by the I.O. who walks in at once)

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : Good morning Sir.

MARTIN : You seem to be in a hurry. I didn't
have much of a chance to tell you to
come in.

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : Sorry! I thought I heard

you answering. And as a matter of fact I am in a hurry. Lots of things to do to-day.

MARTIN : Then why didn't you come here as soon as the helicopter landed ?

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : Just had a quick chat with Thomas.

MARTIN : You're supposed to see me before talking to my non-commissioned officers.

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : Alright, we'll talk about this in a moment. We've got a few other items on the agenda.

MARTIN : In my company I'm the one who orders the items on the agenda.

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : I'm sorry the conversation is taking this turn, Sir, but I've received specific instructions from Brigade, with the blessing of Division headquarters.

MARTIN : What instructions ?

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : I'm in charge of the operation on the cave.

MARTIN : Am I supposed to take orders from you ?

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : Yes Sir. I know you are many years my senior, but the Brigadier gave me an official letter signed by the

Major-General and putting me in charge

MARTIN : You're teasing me !

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : I'm afraid I'm not, and incidentally, should you refuse to cooperate, I'm supposed to take over your own job as well until you've had an interview with the Major-General.

MARTIN : Does that mean that I would have to go to Division Headquarters ?

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : Yes Sir with the helicopter that brought me here.

MARTIN : Could I see the letter ?

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : Certainly, but I warn you : the Major-General doesn't think much of you.

(silence while he reads)

MARTIN (returning letter) : Alright, what's the idea ?

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : They can't afford any longer to keep up a company that's completely useless : you see you haven't scored anything for quite a while now, not a single weapon, not even a suspect arrested, nothing !

MARTIN : Come on ! What's the difference now :

what's the point in risking our men's
lives as we're pulling out anyway ?

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : The government want an
honourable peace.

MARTIN : So ?

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : To obtain an honourable
peace we must intensify the fighting.

MARTIN : But that's crazy.

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : No. It's just politics.

(pause)

MARTIN : What if I refuse ?

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : You'll lose your Company
of course, and I suppose you'll be
retired early as well. That would mean
losing an awful lot of money.

MARTIN : What if I go to the press and tell the
truth.

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : You're joking. No one's
ever interested in the truth for very
long! The press would use you and drop
you. Don't be a fool Martin, you've
got a family.

MARTIN : But can't you see how absurd this war is?

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : So ?

MARTIN : Don't you feel ashamed to have people
killed now ?

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : No. I already told you
it's the only way we can negotiate an
honourable peace.

MARTIN : Is it ?

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : I'm not a politician, but,
as far as I can see, it is.

MARTIN : Do you mean that the politicians have
already moved in for the liquidation ?

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : I don't know, but I
suppose so.

MARTIN : God help the poor people who got
involved with us !

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : Let's hope the
administration does something for them
too !

MARTIN : (sad, disillusioned laugh)

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : You were talking about
Thomas.

MARTIN : Yes.

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : From now on, you're not
supposed to interfere with him when he
does a job for me.

MARTIN : That's not possible : you're asking me
to condone what he does.

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : . What are you ^ktalking about

MARTIN : Condoning a crime is just as bad as
committing it yourself.

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : Listen Martin, it's time you wake up and forget about all this intellectual nonsense.

MARTIN : Oh yes!

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : We are doing a job in a war-torn country, not philosophizing in a university coffee-shop.

At the moment Thomas' job is a sad necessity, and he's not to be interfered with.

MARTIN : I bet it's not all that sad for you.

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : Stop being childish will you. And of course you realize that we'll have to get rid of Wilson.

MARTIN (jumping) : What do you mean ?

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : We'll have him transferred.

(Martin looks relieved. The I.O. understands and laughs)

Oh! I see! Did you really think that I was going to shoot him?

No, I'm not a murderedⁿ. Gosh! You need a rest. You're phantasizing a bit too much.

Anyway, I'll see you at the briefing. Don't forget that you've got to give me your answer.

MARTIN : When ?

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : The sooner the better.

(Exit I.O. Captain stays motionless.

All lights out)

(END ACT I)

(I N T E R V A L)

A C T II

(Comic scenes and musical scenes may be shortened if the producer feels the play is too long for his audience.)

SCENE 1

(8.00 a.m. - Signals - The room is set for the briefing, with an enormous blackboard on castors facing the audience. On the blackboard are pinned on top of each other: (i) a sketch of the cave's main entrance, (ii) the sketch-map of Hill 5004 area which was pinned on the half-curtain at the beginning of Act I, and (iii) a large army-map of the brigade's district. The audience should be able to follow the briefing on the map and sketches. The operator is busy at his desk and Thomas is studying the map on the blackboard when the I.O. comes in.)

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : All ready ?

THOMAS : Yes, Sir.

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : Get them all in.

THOMAS : Most of them are out with the ground-protection for the convoy, or doing routine fatigues.

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : I know. I mean those who are concerned with the operation on the cave.

THOMAS : Alright.
(Thomas goes off-stage and comes back with David and Wilson.)

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : Where's the captain ?

DAVID : He's coming.

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : Alright. Sit down.

(They sit down and wait. When the captain comes in all three and the operator stand up while the I.O. looks annoyed.)

MARTIN : No. Sit down. The Intelligence Officer is giving the briefing.

(The three sit down and the operator moves towards the door.)

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER (to operator) : No. Stay in.

(I.O. addresses actors as well as audience and can't help pontificating a bit, pointing with his riding whip. Martin's agitation is growing as the speech goes.)

Let's have a look at the map first.

(pointing) Here is our stronghold,

and here the track followed by the convoy. At the other end, here, is hill 7000 with the track continuing on the southern side of 7000 while, as you're aware of it, the main entrance to the cave is on the northern slope, which is why we're wasting our time, when we're mounting operations on wheels. Look at this sketch.

(takes the map off, uncovering sketch)

Here is the top of hill 7000. Along here the vehicle track. Here the main entrance and here the other two possible exits. As they've got a watch all day long on top of 7000 you can imagine that they see us coming from miles away and can just about take their time to walk out of the cave into the thick bushes on the river-bank where they wait for night-fall.

(slightly pompous)

But this time we've

(interrupted by voice on the loudspeaker)

LOUD
SPEAKER : Martin Company, Martin Company,
Brigade calling - Over.

OPERATOR : Brigade, Martin Company receiving
loud and clear - Over.

LOUDSPEAKER : Martin Company, routine check.
Convoy proceeding. End communication.
Over.

OPERATOR : Got your message. Over.

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : So I was saying that this
time we've got for them the surprise of
their life. The two exits have been
blocked by Brigade's Commando. Our boys
did a magnificent job : they got into
position on foot last night and, as
you've heard, they haven't been seen,
otherwise (pointing at loudspeaker)
Brigade would have let us know.

Good, now have a look at the sketch
of the cave's main entrance. We're
facing it and the north is in our back.

(undoes first sketch, uncovering second one

Here is the main entrance with the
mule-track on the narrow ledge : here.
On this side, after a few yards, the
ledge widens a bit: here - let's call

this "spot one". (writes it on the sketch) On the other side the mule-track goes to the top of this little rocky outcrop about 100 yards from the cave. Let's call the outcrop "spot two". (writes)

(pretentiously) : Now I'm sure you wondered why the other two big helicopters came here with me this morning! That was simply to make the rebels believe it was the air protection for some big brass-hat coming to inspect the stronghold, so they won't suspect anything and won't evacuate the cave.

The rest should work without any trouble. When the convoy leaves the stronghold, the three helicopters will take off as if to go home, and then turn back and swoop on the cave's entrance. In the first helicopter landing on "spot two" (points it) will be Thomas and three more marksmen, together with the special engineers' team. Incidentally the engineers have already got their instructions for the destruction of the cave.

(pause. Clears his voice)

The second helicopter will have to land on spot one to block off the mule-track. There shouldn't be too much danger if the party jumps out of the helicopter very quickly and shelters behind the boulders. We'll take volunteers for that one!

DAVID : Could I take it Sir!

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : No. I want to take you in my own helicopter to give you a chance to study the whole district.

WILSON : I'll go Sir!

(Martin jumps, prepared to interfere, but is not game to do it in public)

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER (sarcastic) : Do you want to say something, Captain Martin ?

MARTIN : No.

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : Well, if you haven't got any questions, that's all. ~~Well, the officers, and Thomas and Wilson stay for their instructions.~~

(while David and Thomas chat inaudibly, Martin takes Wilson aside)

MARTIN : Are you going mad ? Can't you see that

you'll be right in Thomas' line of fire ?

WILSON : What do you mean ?

MARTIN : After last night's incident it could be an awful temptation for him.

WILSON (incredulous) : You're not serious Sir!
Thomas wouldn't go that far!

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : Wilson, come here will you ?

MARTIN : He's coming.

(to Wilson) : Listen, I can arrange to send somebody else : there will be no shame for you!

WILSON : No Sir. You see, in action, when the fight is equal, at least things are not quite so dirty!

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER (impatiently) : Wilson!

WILSON : Yes Sir. (goes to him)

(Captain repressing his emotions, sits down.
Thomas pulls the half-curtain closed)
Behind the curtain change to captain's room set.

(END SCENE)

ACT II(SCENE 2)

(8.15 a.m. Proscenium. Radio operator appears carrying a chair and a guitar and addresses audience while getting ready to play.)

OPERATOR : The mongrel's changed his mind and kicked me out now. Must be preparing something pretty nasty !

Bastard of a war I tell you but what can you do when you're only a radio-operator ? Mind you we do have fun sometimes too and as mum said in her last letter : as long as you keep your own hands clean, who could blame you for what's going on ?

(shrugs his shoulders and starts playing an anti-war song, ' Le deserteur ', which he sings as well, quite pleasantly. The song should be sung in French with a translation flashed on the half-curtain.)

Le déserteur

Messieurs qu'on nomme grands
 Je vous fais une lettre
 Que vous lirez peut-être
 Si vous avez le temps.
 Je viens de recevoir
 Mes papiers militaires
 Pour aller à la guerre
 Avant mercredi soir.
 Messieurs qu'on nomme grands
 Je ne veux pas la faire
 Je ne suis pas sur terre
 Pour tuer les pauvres gens
 Il faut pas vous fâcher
 Mais il faut que je vous dise
 Les guerres sont des bêtises
 Le monde en a assez.

Depuis que je suis né
 J'ai vu partir les pères
 J'ai vu mourir les frères
 Et les enfants pleurer ;
 Les mères ont trop souffert
 Quand d'autres se gobergent
 Et vivent à leur aise
 Malgré ce goût de sang.
 Il y a les prisonniers
 On a volé leurs âmes
 On a volé leurs femmes
 Et tout leur cher passé.
 Demain de bon matin
 Je fermerai ma porte
 Au nez des années portées
 J'irai par les chemins.

Je mendierai ma vie
 Sur la terre et sur l'onde
 Du vieux au nouveau monde
 Et je dirai aux gens :
 ' Profitez de la vie
 Eloignez la misère
 Les hommes sont tous des frères
 Gens de tous les pays. '
 S'il faut verser le sang
 Allez verser le vôtre
 Messieurs les bons acôtres,
 Messieurs qu'on nomme grands.
 Si vous me poursuivez
 Prevenez vos gendarmes
 Que je serai sans armes
 Et qu'ils pourront tirer,
 Et qu'ils pourront tirer.

(When he's finished the song he plays the first few bars again while day-dreaming. David appears on the proscenium.)

DAVID : Not a bad tune, but I'd rather you didn't play anti-war songs here. The Sergeant-Major is in signals looking for you, you'd better hurry up, I'll look after your guitar.

(Exit operator.)

(David sits down and fingers the guitar for a few moments, then can't help playing the same song.)

... Il y a les prisonniers
On a volé leurs âmes
On a volé leurs femmes
Et tout leur cher passé.
Demain de bon matin
Je fermerai ma porte
Au nez des années mortes
J'irai par les chemins.

Je mendierai ma vie
Sur la terre et sur l'onde
Du vieux au nouveau monde
Et je dirai aux gens :
' Profitez de la vie
Eloignez la misère
Les hommes sont tous ...

(Interrupted by the Intelligence Officer)

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : Getting sentimental!

Playing anti-war songs now! What next?

DAVID : Sorry, I wasn't really thinking!

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : Well!

DAVID : Just trying this guitar. You see I play the violin reasonably well but I thought I couldn't bring it here.

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : I should hope not! You'll have to get a lot tougher in the commando. Do you still want to join it?

DAVID : Of course I do. I must get a citation before the war ends.

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : It certainly would boost your chances of reaching flag-rank!

DAVID : I mean.....

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : No need to be apologetic. Pack up your gear and sent it down with the convoy. I'll take you in the helicopter. You'll start training tomorrow morning.

DAVID : Thank you so much for all you've done.

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER: It's alright. Now I want to show you and Thomas a new way to interrogate prisoners without leaving any traces.

DAVID : What do you mean ?

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : The electricity business is not terribly efficient. If you do not put enough power the suspects get used to it, and on the other hand if you give them a real shock the electrodes mark the skin. The Red-Cross and the Press start kicking up a fuss about it.

Here comes Thomas with the prisoner and the gear.

(Enter Thomas and the 7th actor dressed as the prisoner again.)

THOMAS : Where do you want the chair Sir ?

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : That's just to represent the sides of the trough

(puts it about $2\frac{1}{2}$ ft. from the other chair

At headquarters I use an old bath-tub, but you can easily build a big trough with a few bricks and a bit of concrete. Then you fill it up with water and I'll show you how to strap the prisoner. (to Thomas): Make him sit on the ground !

(I.O. and Thomas do the strapping as I.O. explains, while David looks increasingly uncomfortable.)

THOMAS : Alright Sir!

(prisoner sits on the ground.)

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : Knees tight together!

Arms over the knees, handcuffs resting
on the ankles!

THOMAS : The handcuffs will still make marks!

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : Doesn't matter, everyone

is used to see handcuffs marks! Give
us the iron-bar! See, we slip it
under the knees and above the arms.
Pass the rags. With a bit of padding
the bar won't mark his arms either.
Now we put it on top of the water,
using the bar as a spit.

THOMAS : Makes him look funny, like a pig on a
spit!

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : Exactly! And see, from
now on you can do the job by yourself.
When you hold his head above water he's
alright and can easily talk. As soon
as you let go he starts drinking: it's
amazing how much it speeds up their
thinking!

DAVID : But Sir, that was the water-torture
used by the Germans during the war!

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : Who's asking you to make stupid comparisons ?

THOMAS : How long can you leave them under without making them kick the bucket ?

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER (not realizing that the captain is coming) : It varies with each individual. You've got to use your own judgement. In the beginning you can try your hand with prisoners who've already been written off! Then it doesn't matter.

MARTIN (to Intelligence Officer) : Oh yes, it does matter : it gives you a still bigger kick when the prisoner dies, doesn't it ? Not to mention the pleasure of corrupting a young fellow like David.

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : What the hell are you doing here?

MARTIN : You really make me sick. You're the filthiest mongrel I've ever seen.

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : If you weren't so old *and* decrepit I might have fancied knocking your teeth in for that one.

MARTIN : I'm not scared of you! Don't you ever put your hands on me or you'll bloody

come only second best!

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : Poor, pathetic old clown!

(Martin tries to jump at the I.C.'s throat
but is contained by David and Thomas.)

DAVID (to I.O.) : Sir! Please!

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : He'll be right! Probably

just his senile way to give me his
answer. Take him back to his room.

And you, Thomas, take the prisoner back.

MARTIN : No. It's not. Although you disgust me
so much, I'll stay here.

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER: Alright.

(Exit Intelligence Officer and then Thomas
with the prisoner. David tries to take the
captain's arm, but Martin regains his
composure)

MARTIN : I'm alright David. I'm sorry. It was
foolish of me to lose my temper, I
should never have tried to smash him
in your presence.

DAVID : Sir, you shouldn't try it at all :
he's ^{fit} ~~just~~ as ~~a~~ fiddle and they say he's
a judo expert.

MARTIN : I'm older than him, I know, but that

judo business, it's probably just another example of his bragging.

DAVID : I don't think so.

MARTIN : Nevermind. Let's go.

(They move behind the curtain. Then operator comes and collects the two chairs, the stick and the rags, and pulls the curtain open as he moves offstage.)

(END SCENE)

A C T II(SCENE 3)

(8.30 a.m. Captain's room (and later on proscenium)
Martin sits on the bed, next to the guitar and David is
leaning against the desk facing the audience.)

DAVID : Perhaps you misunderstood the
Intelligence Officer.

MARTIN : What do you mean ?

DAVID : He wasn't really trying to make me do
it. He only wants me to be able to
supervise the interrogations to make
sure it's done as decently as possible.

MARTIN (with a very sad, soft laugh) : You look
like an honest fellow David. You must
have been brainwashed at Cadet School :
Can't you see that there is no difference
between doing and condoning when you take
part in a torture session.

DAVID : No, I can't see that.

MARTIN : Come on David! Torture is always wrong
in any circumstances and there can't be
any difference between the torturers.

DAVID : I go along with that. But you couldn't
be called a torturer as long as you

haven't given the order yourself and as long as you don't dirty your own hands.

MARTIN : Isn't a torture session dirty enough to dirty the hands of the watchers too?

DAVID : No : it's not. This question was settled at the Nuremberg trials of Nazi criminals after the war. The only Nazis who were hanged were either high ranking officials who had issued the orders, or the actual executioners who had carried out the mass-killings.

MARTIN : That doesn't make any difference.

DAVID : Why ?

MARTIN : Because it was not possible to hang all the Germans. That's why. And that's all what your what-not trials prove. Can't you see that you bloody fool.

DAVID : Raising your voice, Sir, won't improve the quality of your argument, and I've already asked you last night to avoid being rude.

MARTIN : What ? So you are going to tell me what I'm supposed to do. You've got to be kidding little boy.

DAVID : Better be a little boy than an old ruin.

MARTIN (moving towards him) : Take that one
back before I break you.

DAVID (smartly getting behind the desk) : You'll
have to hurry if you want to break me :
the Intelligence Officer got me trans-
ferred to the Commando. I'm leaving
after the operation on the cave.

MARTIN : So you're leaving the sinking ship,
like a rat!

DAVID : You're being gratuitously rude again.

MARTIN : Alright. Sorry. Are they going to
disband this company or something ?

DAVID : I don't think so, but if I stay here
I haven't got any chance whatsoever to
get a mention in the despatches.

MARTIN : Well good luck!

DAVID : I'm sorry Sir, I didn't mean to break
the news that way!

MARTIN : Doesn't matter!

(Exit Captain. David doesn't know what to
do. Then goes to the bed and absentminded-
ly plays the tune on the guitar. Then he
realizes that he is still in the captain's
room and prepares to leave when the
operator knocks on the door.)

DAVID : Come in.

OPERATOR : Isn't the captain here ?

DAVID : No. Why ?

OPERATOR : The convoy is here.

DAVID : Alright, let's go. The captain's probably already there. Thanks for your guitar.

OPERATOR: Pleasure.

(they pull the half-curtain closed and stop by the side of the proscenium.)

DAVID : I'll go to the convoy. You go back to signals.

(David disappears offstage at once while the operator crosses the proscenium again and stops half-way.)

OPERATOR (addressing audience and stroking his guitar) : I wish they could play it more often! They would be less neurotic in this silly stronghold.

(he starts playing a few bars. The actor is welcome to do it ad lib.)

(Barman appears on the proscenium.)

BARMAN : Don't you know the women are here?

OPERATOR : Of course I do. I've already booked the

young mountain girl : she's got
beautiful little tits.

BARMAN : What are you doing here then ?

OPERATOR : They'll start only in a few minutes,
they are putting up the cubicles.

BARMAN : Here comes doctor Vernon, so everything
must be under control.

(BARMAN & OPERATOR) : Morning Doc !

VERNON : Good morning boys. Seen Wilson ?

OPERATOR : Yes, he's packing up. We'll send him
to you.

VERNON : Thanks.

(Exit Barman and Operator. Vernon pacing
the proscenium and looking worried.)

WILSON : Morning Doc. Looking for me ?

VERNON : Morning. So you're going.

WILSON : Yes, to-day with Lieutenant David, in
the Intelligence Officer's helicopter.

VERNON : Why such a hurry ?

WILSON : We'll be able to ^{go} straight down,
immediately after the operation on the
cave, without holding up the convoy.

VERNON : You mean that you'll be in the operation,
on your last day. That's silly!

WILSON : Why ?

VERNON : It would be too stupid if something

happened to you the last day. Do you want me to see Martin about that ?

WILSON : No. As a matter of fact I volunteered.

VERNON : Are you crazy ?

WILSON : No. I wanted to cleanse myself before leaving this depressingly rotten war. You see when the odds of the fight are equal, it's not as disgusting.

VERNON : You're right out of your mind. How could I ever ask you to keep an eye on Martin when you're just about worse than him ?

Anyway how has he been keeping since last time ?

WILSON : Rather poorly I'm afraid, and it's probably getting worse.

VERNON : Worse ? Why ?

WILSON : Thomas' sadism I suppose, and I think this morning the Intelligence Officer gave him an ultimatum.

VERNON : About what ?

WILSON : I don't know, I just heard Thomas making a joke about it.

VERNON : Well, I'd better see him at once. See you later.

WILSON : See you Doc.

(~~lights fade~~. Vernon pulls half-curtain
open and ~~lights come back on~~ ^{enters} Martin's
room.)

(END SCENE)

A C T II(SCENE 4)

(8.45. Captain's room set. Enter Vernon after pulling the half-curtain open. Martin brooding on his bed.)

VERNON : 'morning Peter, how are you ?

MARTIN : Good morning Jim.

VERNON : What's this ultimatum business about ?

MARTIN : Just that : an ultimatum. Either I back whatever Thomas does, and of course try to have more people killed, or I simply lose my company.

VERNON : What's the reason ?

MARTIN : He talked about intensifying the fighting to negotiate an honourable peace.

VERNON : What are you going to do ?

MARTIN : Bugger if I know.

VERNON : Have you accepted his conditions ?

MARTIN : Yes and I'm bloody ashamed of myself.

VERNON : Don't dramatize Peter. It looks like we're going to pull out in a matter of months, possibly weeks.

MARTIN : So it's all the more criminal to have people killed now.

VERNON : You won't have to. I can easily have you sent home on health grounds.

MARTIN : No Jim. Running away is just another form of condoning.

VERNON : What the hell are you taking about ?

MARTIN : Condoning a crime is just as bad as committing it yourself.

VERNON : That's a bit of an overstatement, isn't it ?

MARTIN : No.

VERNON : Right, get undressed right to your pants.

MARTIN : We're not going through the whole thing again ?

VERNON : No, just a quick check. Could you lie down ?

(Martin lying on the bed in his underpants looks more like an oldish clerk than an operational unit commander. He is aware of it, and all the more tense for it.)

MARTIN (pointing at the stethoscope) : That business again.

VERNON : Yes. Doctors always do. Looks technical : it makes them feel good !

(auscultation goes on.)

Try to relax a bit, you're awfully tense

MARTIN : I know.

VERNON : Try to breathe deeply.

MARTIN (sitting on the bed) : Listen Jim,
it's no good going through it again.

VERNON : Alright, it can wait till next week.
What's upsetting you so much ?

MARTIN : I've been thinking about committing
suicide.

VERNON : Go on.

MARTIN : The awful thing is that I haven't got
the guts, while I used to think I
would be game.

VERNON : (encourages him with nod
and grunt)

MARTIN : So, to make everything else worse, now
I know I'm a coward.

VERNON : Medically speaking that's bullshit
Peter : (a) many people toy with
the idea of suicide while very few do
it, and (b) I've known you long
enough to know that you're not a coward.

MARTIN : Stop patronizing me for goodness sake !
Military courage is sheer lack of
imagination.

VERNON : Rubbish : that's another cliché.

MARTIN : No Jim. You take risks because you believe you're invulnerable.

VERNON : Why do you suddenly think so ?

MARTIN : I've been thinking a lot lately.

VERNON : Yes, I guess so. That's your worst problem as a matter of fact.

MARTIN : You mean because I'm not very intelligent and I haven't got any education ?

VERNON : Don't be silly! Nothing to do with that.

MARTIN : What do you mean then ?

VERNON : Exactly what I say : Your problem is that you've been thinking too much lately.

MARTIN : Rubbish! What about you ? A doctor like you must be brooding a lot in this stupid war.

VERNON : No.

MARTIN : Come off it!

VERNON : No, I've stopped, believe it or not!

(sits on Martin's desk)

I've been through the same sort of depression as you, not so long ago. Nearly went off my nut : I even started writing.

MARTIN : Why didn't you go on ?

VERNON : Oh yes ! Sure ! Do you want some samples of my megalomaniac platitudes?

(quotes himself)

"East or West, Communist or Capitalist, the white man's world is hopelessly rotten".

Another one :

"The only thing the white man could still do for humanity is to die without fuss".

MARTIN : But that's true.

VERNON : Perhaps ! And so what ? (laughs)
What saved me is that I turned my mind to trivia : I learnt to play chess.

MARTIN : You're teasing me.

VERNON : Not a bit. Psychiatrists call it occupational therapy : you just prevent your mind from thinking. The more trivial the hobby the better it works, provided it forces you to concentrate.

MARTIN : And what about now ?

VERNON : I'm still doing the same. Whenever I am in a meditative mood I immediately keep my mind busy on any sort of nonsense. At the moment I'm teaching

myself welding in Brigade's workshop.

MARTIN : Hmm !

VERNON (putting his stethoscope in his ears) :
O.K. let's try to take your blood
pressure.

(blood-pressure reading goes on silently
for a while)

MARTIN : Your business about occupational-
whatever-you-call-it is just an escape.

VERNON : Of course it is. That's the whole
point !

MARTIN : That's not good enough.

VERNON : Too right ! But it's better than
finishing up in the nut-house.
Now, relax a bit will you, I want to
take your blood-pressure again.

(proceeds silently)

MARTIN : Is it high ?

VERNON : A bit ! Like everyone of us I suppose :
too much grog and frustration. But
yours isn't bad. Nothing to worry
about at the moment.

MARTIN : Thanks.

VERNON : So, what sort of hobby could we find
for you ?

It's a bit hard up here, I admit.

Why don't you come down for a few weeks
you wouldn't lose your company if it's
a rest for medical reasons.

MARTIN (obstinate) : No.

(Martin starts to get dressed)

VERNON (buying time) : Don't get dressed please.
Could you sit on the bed. I would like
to check your reflexes.

MARTIN (aggressive) : What's the point in
pretending. You know my reflexes are
O.K. Just a bit slow because I'm an
old alcoholic who's wasted his life in
the army.

VERNON : Go on.

MARTIN : "Go on", "Go on". Can't you see there
is nothing to go on about ?

VERNON : (grunt)

(Martin starts to get dressed)

Listen I'm out of cigarettes, I'll get
some. I'll be back in half a sec.

(Exit Vernon. When he's dressed Martin
sits on the bed, brooding again.)

(Vernon comes back with a bottle and two
glasses as well.)

VERNON : Sorry for being so long. Everything
alright. Let's have a fag and a drink.

(holds out cigarettes)

MARTIN : Thanks. I prefer my pipe.

(Martin gets his pipe. Vernon moves the
chess table to the bed and pours.)

VERNON : Cheers !

MARTIN : Cheers !

VERNON : That's better ! (pause) What were
you saying ?

MARTIN : Not much, but I got annoyed when you
seemed to say I was the only person to
be really disgusted with this war.

VERNON : It's not what I meant to say Peter. I
was only saying that the others do not
let it ruin their lives.

MARTIN : You mean they are not really involved?

VERNON : Exactly. With the exception of those
who are in jail or in the loony-bin !

MARTIN : You're exaggerating.

VERNON : No.

MARTIN : What about the opposition in the
universities at home ?

VERNON : Being in the opposition is just an
academic gimmick.

MARTIN : What do you mean ?

VERNON : Academics are one of the biggest frauds of our modern world. They are bags of wind : just words, words, words !

MARTIN : Even if you were right I still couldn't have your business about not getting involved.

VERNON : Why ?

MARTIN : Because, in fact, we are all responsible for what's happening at the moment.

VERNON : Do you mean that you are responsible for the war ?

MARTIN : Yes, and you too, for that matter.

VERNON : Come on Peter ! That's rubbish. You and I are just ants in the anthill.

MARTIN : No.

VERNON : Ah !

MARTIN : For a start we are not ants

VERNON : Alright, but

MARTIN : I haven't finished, Jim!

Secondly, it is the worst lie ever invented by man because if we say that we are only ants in the anthill, then our leaders can also say that they are only insects drifting in the wind of

history and then no-one is responsible for anything and anything whatsoever can be justified.

VERNON : Alright! Alright! You're talking like a university professor!

But you can't tell me that our president thinks of himself as a mere insect!

MARTIN : You're trying a joke to escape the problem again, Jim!

VERNON : Yes Peter, I do. I've already told you that the mental hospitals are full of people who did not want to escape the problem.

MARTIN : And you think that's where I'm going to end up too.

VERNON : No, because I hope to make you see the light before.

MARTIN (bitter) : And what you call "to see the light" in fact is to blind yourself to the horror of this useless war.

VERNON : That's correct Peter.

MARTIN : Haven't you got a conscience Jim?

VERNON : I'm not too sure what you're driving at as I've already explained my position.

But I can tell you that as a doctor

you soon learn to deal with life day by day, otherwise you would be driven up the wall, war or no war!

MARTIN : Do you ?

VERNON (ignoring the sarcasm) : I understand you Peter because I've known you for so long, but let's face it, you put them in an impossible situation.

MARTIN : Do I ?

VERNON : I'm afraid so ! After having accepted to kill people for nearly twenty five years, you suddenly reject the rules of the game.

(pause)

Listen Peter, I could manage to have you sent home on medical grounds, this way you wouldn't lose any money.

MARTIN : No, thanks.

VERNON : Why ?

MARTIN : Because this war is wrong.

VERNON : They don't see it this way.

MARTIN : They are wrong.

VERNON : SO ?

MARTIN : We must do something about it.

VERNON : Like what ?

MARTIN :

VERNON : Like what, Peter ?

MARTIN : I don't know, and that's what's driving me mad ! For goodness' sake stop it !

(pause)

VERNON (softly, as to a very sick person) :

Listen Peter, you've already shown clearly enough that you disagree with this war. You can't do any more without harming yourself and your family without achieving any results.

MARTIN : You're the same as the Intelligence Officer, you're also asking me to condone what's going on.

VERNON : Peter remember that there is nothing you can do without destroying yourself. What's the point as everything would go on as before anyway !

MARTIN : You've changed a lot Jim, haven't you ?

VERNON : Not really, I've just learnt to live.

MARTIN : Ha !

VERNON : People our age can't afford any more to look at life in terms of right and wrong only.

MARTIN : Why ?

VERNON : Right and wrong are abstractions. Life is the reality.

MARTIN : Meaning ?

VERNON : Take a trivial example. If a butcher starts thinking it's wrong to kill animals for meat that's his own problem. But if he follows his conscience and tries to interfere with meat-eaters he'll soon be out of a job, and that has nothing to do with whether he is right or wrong.

MARTIN : And you think I'm your butcher.

VERNON : Well, put it this way : an army man who refuses to do what he is told is just about as useless as a butcher who refuses to handle meat.

(pause)

And remember that you've got an honourable way out if you want. I can have you transferred on health grounds.

MARTIN : No Peter. Thank you! To me running away is condoning, and condoning is just as bad as doing. Good God, I wish I had never married!

VERNON : I've got to go and have a look at the bloody women!

MARTIN : I'm sorry I took so much of your time!

Did you have any other visits ?

VERNON : No. It's amazing how the health of a mountain company suddenly improves when you bring the whores !

(laughs and moves towards the door)

Listen, even if you stay, I'm sure you'll be alright as long as you don't do anything rash over the next few weeks.

MARTIN : What do you mean ?

VERNON : In acute cases of depression, like yours, it's not unusual to have bouts of violence.

MARTIN : How did you guess ?

VERNON : Guess what ?

MARTIN : This morning I nearly thumped the Intelligence Officer.

VERNON : Peter, please. Don't be crazy. He would flatten you like a pancake in no time.

MARTIN : You're not serious.

VERNON (realizing how disturbed Martin is) :
You're still very tense Peter. I must give you something to relax. What about these? Take one three times a day until the next convey, and I'll see you again then.

MARTIN : Alright, thanks. It might help
me to sleep a bit.

VERNON : Yes, it will. I must go now, the
convoy's leaving soon. See you.

MARTIN : See you next week. I don't think
I'll bother to see the convoy out.

VERNON : Good ! Stay out of the Intelligence
Officer's way as much as you can.
See you next week.

(Exit Vernon. Martin looks at his tablets, shrugs
his shoulders and takes one with the rest of his
beer, then closes the half-curtain.)

(END SCENE)

A C T II(SCENE 5)

(9.15 a.m. Proscenium. Appears Intelligence Officer with a pack on his back and carrying a gun-case. Then comes Thomas.)

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : 9.15. You're late.

THOMAS : Sorry Sir! Doctor Vernon kept asking me to look after Wilson. What does he think I am? A nurse for the mentally retarded.

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : Forget about them and hurry. Put this red flag on my pack, will you?

THOMAS (doing it) : What's the idea?

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : Simple. The Engineers got a prisoner who volunteered to get into the cave to give a message to the rebels inside.

THOMAS : How did they manage to get him to volunteer?

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : Simple again. He's got his plane ticket in his pocket, and they also promised him a job in Paris.

THOMAS : I see.

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER: But he won't have to use

the ticket : they'll blow the charge he's carrying to destroy the cave.

THOMAS : No, that's going too far! Killing them's O.K., but not when you've promised them their freedom.

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : You're right, but their prisoner hardly deserves the name of human being. One of the worst records of atrocities I've ever come across.

THOMAS :(grunt)

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : I also forgot to tell you : Division Headquarters is trying to get you the Legion of Honour.

THOMAS : Really.

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER (holding out form) : Look!

The Major-General has already signed the application. I only have to mail it to the Defence Department as soon as I'm back at Brigade.

THOMAS : Marvellous. What am I supposed to do ?

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER (using his riding whip to point at the red flag, in his back on the pack) : This material is phosphorescent and will be quite easy to see when the chap is in the cave.

THOMAS : So ?

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : Should the detonator fail to blow the charge, you could set it off by shooting at the red flag.

THOMAS : You're joking. I'll be a hundred yards away.

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER (taking the rifle out of the case and screwing the long barrel)
I brought a precision rifle with a telescopic sight, so 100 yards will be kid's play for a marksman of your caliber.

THOMAS (toying with the rifle) : What a beauty !

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : Isn't it ?

THOMAS : But.....how do you think the captain will take it ?

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : Martin is no problem any more, my dear Thomas. Our venerable captain doesn't appear to have the courage to relinquish his command in spite of his delicate conscience.

THOMAS : How are you sure the whole thing is going to work ?

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : Because the engineers have done it before in other districts.

THOMAS : You're serious ?

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : Perfectly serious, I've visited one of the caves just after it was destroyed. Actually it was rather funny. They call it the flying-arm cave because one of the prisoner's arms was ripped off by the explosion and landed far below in the valley.

(They laugh, not aware that Martin has been listening to the last part of their conversation.)

MARTIN (to I.O.) : And that makes you laugh!
You really are the filthiest mongrel
I've ever seen.

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER (undoing his pack and giving it and the gun-case to Thomas) :
Get into the helicopter and tell them
I'll catch up with you in time. I won't
be long.

THOMAS (to I.O.) : You're not going to hurt
him.

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : No. Don't worry. Now
you go. Hurry up.

(Exit Thomas)

(Then I.O. Looking particularly arrogant and playing with his riding whip, addresses

Martin again.)

Is it that you've changed your mind and want to give me a negative answer my dear colleague ?

MARTIN : For a start cut out your bullshit. Your aping of the upper-class doesn't impress me.

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : How could you ever know anything about upper-class manners when your birth-mark is crass mediocrity ?

MARTIN : You shouldn't talk about birth. My mother was very poor but she didn't have a lover when I was born.

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER (pressing his riding whip against Martin's chest) : Bastard !

(Martin, surprisingly quickly, brushes the riding-^whip off. The I.O. loses it but manages to put his Judo ~~move~~^{both guys} on Martin's hand and to force him to bend right to the ground.)

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : Bastard ! You know this isn't true and I could take you to court for it.

MARTIN (trying to break loose and getting hurt)
Ouch ! Stop it, anybody could come in !

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : Fine ! Should I parade you

in front of your Company ? They would certainly enjoy seeing their proud captain in this position !

MARTIN : I'll kill you.

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : That's interesting : where's your fine philosophy gone ? The righteous captain Martin is a pacifist, but nonetheless he would love to kill me, and do you know why ? Just because I threaten to humiliate him in front of his company.

MARTIN (in pain) : Ouch !

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : See my dear captain, we all have our limitations, haven't we ?

(throws him on the ground. Martin massages his sore arm and cries in shame while getting up slowly.)

Should I take it that you still want to stay with your company and co-operate with us ?

(no answer. I.O. walks away. Then exit Captain, slowly, looking old and defeated.

(END SCENE)

A C T II(SCENE 6)

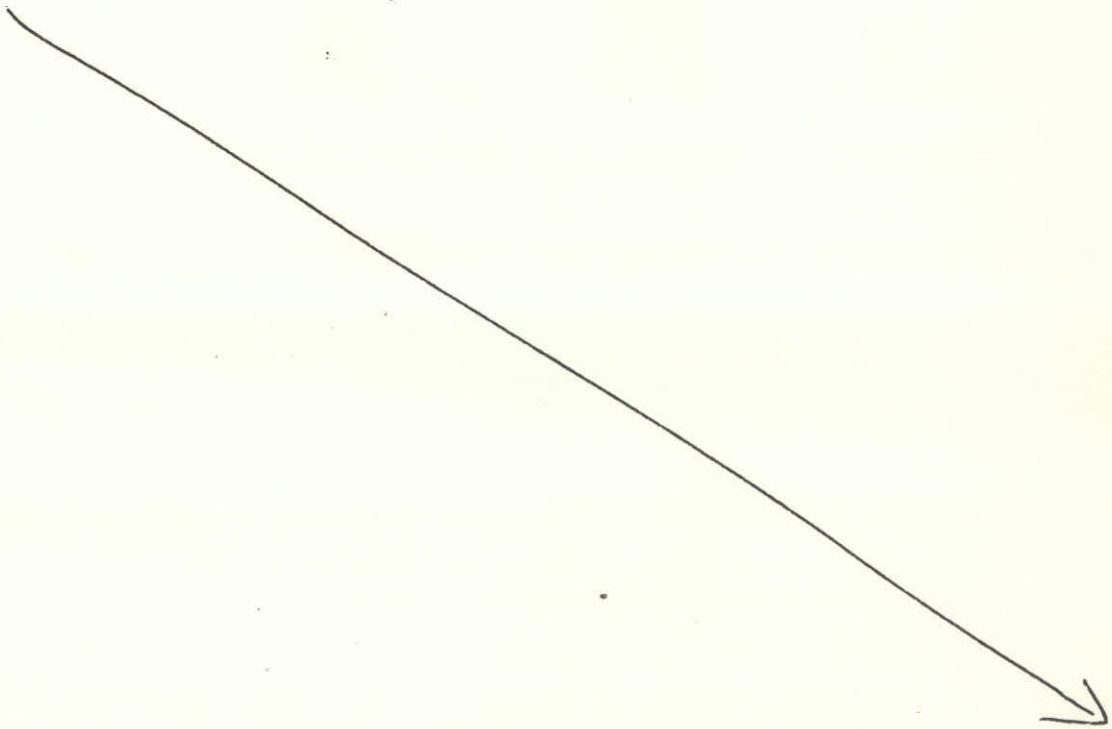
(9.30 a.m. Proscenium, then signals. While the operator is on the proscenium the set is changed to signals behind the curtain. Helicopters and convoy leaving noises.)

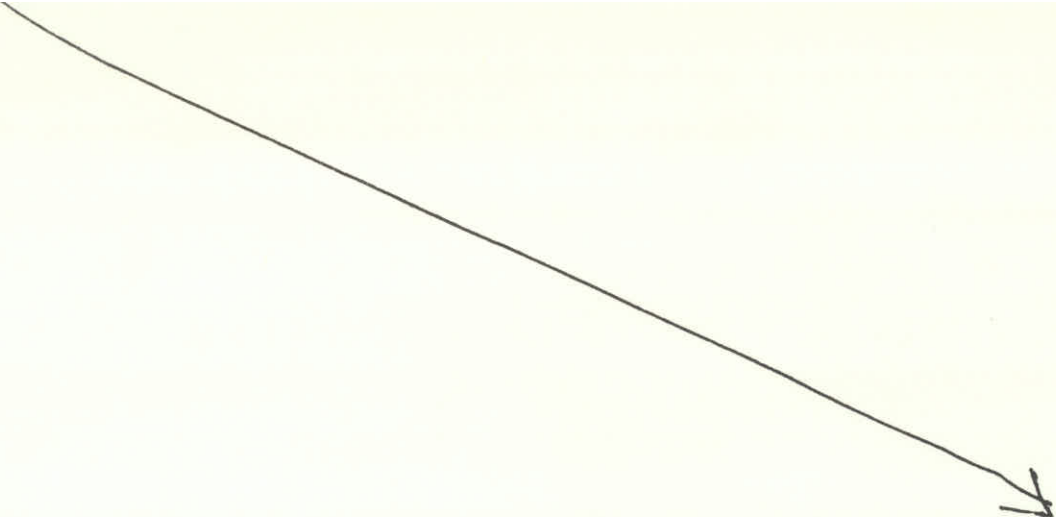
OPERATOR : And so the war goes on again
as they all do

The lovely ones, the dirty ones
what the heck!

The glorious ones, the holy ones
all the same noise :

Bang, bang





(imitates noises of rifles, guns, bombs, et
with both his guitar and his mouth. Then
addresses the audience again) :

How's that for shit-house poetry ?

(bows ceremoniously towards audience) :

Anyway the little mountain girl wasn't
bad compensation! What a glorious pair
of little tits!

(turning his head towards the curtain) :

I wish they weren't making so much
noise! Can't hear meself thinking!

(plays another few bars until the signals
set is ready. Then addresses the audience
again) :

I'd better not leave the captain by
himself in signals for too long.

Pretty low our old man! Poor chap! ~~!~~

(pulls the half-curtain open and walks into signals. Sketch of the cave's entrance still there. Martin still brooding on the bed.)

OPERATOR : Have they reached the cave ?

MARTIN : Not yet.

OPERATOR : Do you mind if I play ?

MARTIN : No.

(starts playing)

(interrupted by the loudspeaker)

LOUDSPEAKER : Company. Thomas calling. Over

(Captain grabs the microphone)

MARTIN : Captain receiving. Over.

LOUDSPEAKER : Both Wilson and myself have landed safely.

The big helicopters are proceeding back to Division.

Intelligence Officer's helicopter inspecting the area. Over.

MARTIN : Alright. Be extremely careful and do not open fire without instruction. Over

LOUDSPEAKER : Over.

(pause. Operator resumes his playing while the captain paces the room nervously.)

LOUDSPEAKER : Company. Thomas calling. Over.

MARTIN : Captain listening. Over.

LOUDSPEAKER: There is a lot of movement at the entrance of the cave. Over.

MARTIN : Keep an eye on them and do not open fire. I'll contact the Intelligence Officer.

LOUDSPEAKER : Company. Intelligence Officer speaking. I heard the conversation. Helicopter proceeding back to cave entrance. Over.

MARTIN : Thomas did you hear that ? Over.

LOUDSPEAKER : Yes. Over.

(tense silence. Operator about to resume his playing but not game to play loudly. Captain pacing up and down and smoking still more nervously.)

LOUDSPEAKER (tense voice) : Company! Company!
Wilson speaking. They are leaving the cave, what should I

(interrupted by very heavy fire over the loudspeaker. Wilson tries to dominate the noise) :

On me..... Help..... MAYDAY...
MAY..DAY...
/Tell Thomas to stop firing. Tell.....

(loud explosion in loudspeaker. Wilson's radio goes dead. Captain frantically trying to stop Thomas firing) :

MARTIN : Thomas, stop firing. Understand: Stop firing at once. Can't you bloody hear ? Stop firing.

(firing stops. Captain calms down)

MARTIN : Thomas, tell me what happened ?

LOUDSPEAKER : Company, not too sure myself. Everything happened so quickly.

The rebels ran over Wilson at an incredible speed. One of his men must have panicked and fired at us. Then my fellows opened fire~~d~~ too.

Incredible confusion! Real hell

What should I do ? Over.

MARTIN (changed voice) : You killed him, you bloody murderer.

(drops microphone which keeps swinging at the end of its cord, and stands in front of it, in a daze)

LOUDSPEAKER : You saying that I assassinated Wilson : Christ you've gone mad!

If you don't apologize at once I can tell you you'll be sorry for it!

(silence)

Can you hear me ? Over.

(silence)

Company can you hear me ? Over.

(silence)

Company I leave your channel and switch
over to Brigade's. End communication.

(captain leaves signals without a word.
Silence)

LOUDSPEAKER : Martin company. Intelligence
Officer calling. Over.

OPERATOR : Company receiving. Over.

LOUDSPEAKER : Lieutenant David landing in your
stronghold with instructions. Wait. Over

OPERATOR : Over.

(silence. Then helicopter noise. Then
enter David)

DAVID : Go and have a look at the captain!

(Exit operator. David takes the microphone
and switches to Division Channel)

Division. Division. Martin company
calling. Over.

LOUDSPEAKER : Division receiving loud and clear
Over.

DAVID : Second Lieutenant David speaking.
Could I speak to the Major-General
regarding Captain Martin. Over.

LOUDSPEAKER : Won't be a moment. Stand by.
Over.

(silence. Then enter operator)

DAVID : How is he ?

OPERATOR : He doesn't answer. I had a peep
through the window. He's just sitting
on his bed with his revolver in his
hand.

DAVID : Go back and watch him, but don't
interfere.

OPERATOR : Alright Sir.

(Exit - Silence)

LOUDSPEAKER : Major-General speaking. What
happened to your captain ? Over.

DAVID : Has the cave incident been reported
to you ? Over.

LOUDSPEAKER : Yes by your Brigade Intelligence
Officer. What about Martin ? Over.

DAVID : He is sitting on his bed, holding his
revolver. Should I do something ? Over

LOUDSPEAKER : No. Wouldn't do any good.
We'll stop the convoy and your

Intelligence Officer will pick up your doctor with my helicopter. They'll be with you in a few minutes. Anything else ? Over.

DAVID : No thanks. Over.

LOUDSPEAKER : If anything else happens, contact Division directly on this channel. Over

DAVID : Thank you.

LOUDSPEAKER : End communication. Over.

(David goes to the door and calls the operator)

OPERATOR : Yes Sir.

DAVID : Stay here. Stand by on Division channel as well as our own. I'll look after the company and write my report. The Intelligence Officer and the Doctor will be here in a few minutes.

OPERATOR : Alright Sir!

(Exit David. Operator starts playing again

Depuis que je suis né
J'ai vu partir les pères
J'ai vu mourir les frères
... etc.

A C T II

(SCENE 7)

(9.45. Signals. Operator still playing.
Stands at attention when the Intelligence Officer
and the doctor walk in.)

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : Where is Lieutenant David?

OPERATOR : Watching the captain and looking after
the company Sir.

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : Bring him here.

OPERATOR : Yes Sir.

(Exit)

VERNON : I'll go and look after Martin.

(Exit Vernon. Enter David)

DAVID : Thanks for coming!

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : That's alright. So,
what happened to Martin ?

DAVID : I've prepared a written report on
everything.

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : Very good, let's have a
look!

(reads. Silence. David watches him
anxiously.)

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : That's excellent. Thanks.

DAVID : Sir!

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : Yes, what's the matter ?

DAVID : Do you think Thomas killed Wilson ?

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : Looks very much like it,
doesn't it ?

DAVID : Yes. And.....er.....

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : What's the matter ? You
want to know whether Thomas was ordered
to do it, and you're not game to ask ?

DAVID : Yes!

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : Well, to my knowledge he
wasn't, and I don't think there was much
of a point as Wilson was going anyway!

DAVID : Good God! Do you mean that Wilson died
for nothing ?

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : Dying is dying!
whether for something or for nothing the
difference is rather thin!

DAVID : I.....(pause)

Are you going to have Thomas charged?

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : What ? Certainly not.
You're right out of your mind.

DAVID : Why not ?

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : Not enough evidence.

DAVID : Not if the bullet came from Thomas' rifl

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : Could be an accident.

DAVID : What about the circumstantial evidence?

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : We would make fools of ourselves.

DAVID : Why ?

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : Because in the end the case would be dropped or swept under the carpet by the president.

DAVID : What do you mean ?

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : Just what I say. It's pointless to try.

DAVID : But why ?

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : Military Justice is to Justice what Military music is to music.

(pause - reads parts of the report again)

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : And it would discredit the army too. No, honestly, I can't see the point!

DAVID : Pardon me asking sir, but how can you reconcile this with your conscience ?

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : Conscience is a product of leisure. I'm a very busy man.

DAVID : Hmm! -

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : Listen David, you're a very capable young fellow (waves David report) and you belong to a family with a brilliant military tradition. Don't let this incident mar your career.

DAVID : Incident ?

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER (ignoring the question) :

As I'll be staying here for a few days, you can have a seat in the helicopter as well as Martin. You'll have a chat with the Major General and then with your father. Then you'll go to the Commando at once.

DAVID : Thank you !

(Enter Vernon)

DAVID : How is he ?

VERNON : I'm afraid he'll need a few days rest in neurology.

DAVID : Neurology ? Is he insane ?

VERNON : Let's hope not !

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : Listen David, you'd better go and start packing up now.

(Exit David)

VERNON : Where is he going ?

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : To Division headquarters

and to his father. It must have been a pretty harrowing experience for such a young fellow!

VERNON : Yes, but who's going to look after the Company ?

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : I'll stay here for a few days until things get sorted out.

VERNON : I see..... There is a problem though.

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : What ?

VERNON : It will be another shock again for Martin to have to leave his men to you.

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : Sorry, but the Major-General's orders are quite explicit : with or without David, I am to stay here.

VERNON : What about trying to contact him on the radio ?

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : It's useless. The Major General thinks we've already spent too much time on this one man's problems. If all the officers were like him there would be no time for fighting.

VERNON : The world might be better for it !

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER : Listen, if you want to

talk nonsense, you'd better do it with somebody else. I've got more urgent things to do, like looking after this useless company.

(Exit)

VERNON (after pause) : The bastard might have a point, Jim! You're becoming quixotic again : you're slipping!

(pause)

Who the hell said sanity is doing as you're told ?

Can't remember really

(pause)

LOUDSPEAKER : Martin company. Martin company Division calling. Over.

VERNON : Martin company receiving loud and clear Over.

LOUDSPEAKER : You must hurry up with the helicopter. The Major General wants it back by 10.15. Acknowledge. Over.

VERNON : Got your message. Over.

LOUDSPEAKER : End communication. Over.

(Vernon sets clock on 9.55 and looks at his own watch)

VERNON : Gosh, they don't give us much time.
Why such a hurry ?

(pause. Thinks hard.)

Yes, of course, to-day's Saturday :
he wants it to pick up his mistress !

(addressing audience) :

See ! It's easy : just do as you're
told.

The general's mistress needs the
helicopter, so why should we worry
about anything else ?



- THE END -