

PART 2: TRENCHES

Song: to the tune of Long, Long Trail

Nights are growing very lonely
Sitting on a mine
I am growing weary
Only strolling down the line
All the trench is full of water
Through it I must go
Though I'm getting wet, I'm not downhearted yet
Even if relief is slow.

There's a long, long trench a-winding
Into the land of the mines
Where the sausages are falling
And those dud five-nines
There are long, long nights of watching
Not unprofanely expressed
Till the day that I'll be going down
That long, long trench to rest.

All the trench is round us falling
Dig for all your life
On patrol we go out crawling
Armed with bomb and knife
In the day we go out sniping,
There we lie and wait;
If we see a Hun, at him we point a gun,
And put a bullet through his pate.

There's a long, long trench a-winding
Into the land of the mines
Where the sausages are falling
And those dud five-nines
There are long, long nights of watching
Not unprofanely expressed
Till the day that I'll be going down
That long, long trench to rest.

Trench Version by Lieutenant E.M. Sidebotham
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SCENE: YPRES

JOE I took a London Bus to the Front.

VOICE Not Battersea, boys, you're getting off in Berlin.

ALL Hurray!

JOE We were wet behind the ears: that's why we cheered.

VOICE Bailleul: bus terminates here. Everybody off and fall in!

JOE We marched out from the town on cobbled roads that turned into tracks, past canvas hospitals, till at dusk the tracks became duck boards crisscrossing a wet mud-marsh of shell holes where the pack mules and the horses sank to their girths, where the landscape was a dull mud graveyard of fallen trees and rough white wooden crosses.

VOICE Unknown soldiers.

JOE And coming the other way: a line of ragged wet tramps stuttering and stumbling and coughing.

VOICE Bloody hell! It's the army.

RAGGED SOLDIER You don't want to take that road, lads: don't you know there's a war on up there?

JOE Are we downhearted?

ALL No!

RAGGED Well you soon bloody well will be.

JOE And ahead of us, in the thickening air, flashes of light in the darkness and distant thunder rolling over the marshes.

VOICE They're having fun again.

JOE And when every nerve in my body tells me to run the other way, we trudge on towards the roaring storm and the trenches.

SERG Now this part could get exciting: we're crossing a bare skyline so keep your wits about you.

Whistling of falling shell

JOE A shell! And I dive to the ground, splashing into the wet.

Huge explosion.

JOE And all the others, the hardened trench rats, didn't so much as flicker as thirty yards ahead, there is a huge fountain of mud and a rattling spatter of shrapnel.

SERG You can get up now, son: it obviously didn't have your number on it.

VOICE Lucky it's not Friday, sergeant!

SERG Oh yes indeed: round here, we say it's very unlucky to die on a Friday.

JOE And then the first trench: it zigzags into the dark, and it's waist deep in water.

SERG Lift your packs and keep moving.

VOICE And keep your eyes peeled for submarines.

JOE We wallow deeper and deeper into the cold black slime with the star shells bursting overhead.

VOICE And everything is caught for a moment in the brilliant magnesium light.

VOICE Every shell shattered tree

VOICE Every flash of water.

VOICE Every outstretched hand.

VOICE Every dead face.

VOICE Fritz's welcome home fireworks, that is.

JOE Their artillery must have seen us because they send us a shower of bullets.

SERG Keep moving!

Song: Duke of York

Oh the Grand old Duke of York
He had ten thousand men
He marched 'em out of the frontline trench
And he marched them in again.

And when they were stood they had rum
And when they were sat they had bread
But when they put their heads 'bove the parapets
They were dead they were dead they were dead.

SCENE: TRENCHES

SERG Those of you new to this little nuisance will know darkness is your friend: during daylight hours, keep your heads down and don't put so much as a finger over the parapet.

VOICE Put that match out!

SERG The Alleymen are on higher ground than us: they can look down over us. Don't want a goodnight kiss from Fritz's snipers.

JOE The trenches are eight feet deep and they have names

VOICE We stroll down Lovers Lane

JOE And sniff the latrines off Lavender Walk

VOICE There's Sparrow Trench

JOE Idiots Corner

VOICE Rats Alley

JOE Chaos Trench

VOICE Gangrene Alley

VOICE And Stockport Road.

JOE And out beyond the parapet, beyond the wire, below the rolling thunder

SERG No Man's Land...

VOICE The leaves did not fall from the trees in No Man's Land, they were blasted away by shells.

VOICE And the boys we have lost lie out there:

VOICE The three months dead and the dying from last night's trench raid.

JOE And above us all, the living and the unburied dead, the falling shells make a strange whistling sound.

VOICE It will haunt me that sound.

JOE We are nocturnal digging creatures. In the dark we slither out over the top and burrow and dig and crawl like worms and lay out the wire. In the dark, we move up and down the line. And then in the half light of dawn and dusk we wait out the dangerous hours, rifles primed and ready.

SERG Stand to arms!

JOE And we stand, bayonets fixed, waiting and listening for an attack which never comes.

SERG Stand down and clean rifles.

VOICE And in the daylight, we clean and oil the bolts and the sweet complicated machinery of the Lee Enfield rifles.

VOICE Only clean things here.

SERG Because your lives depend upon 'em. Now get that cloth pulled through.

JOE And we nurse the rifles and wait, for someone somewhere else to decide what we should do: and the rats eat our fingers and our food; and the water rots our feet.

SERG Welcome to earth shattering shelling

JOE And earth shattering terror

VOICE And earth shattering boredom.

JOE It's easy to be brave at home.

VOICE At home it's easy to hate the enemy.

JOE But here, my enemy shares the mud and the bitter cold.
He understands the water filled holes that drown the
wounded and the exhausted.
My enemy understands better than the folk at home the
deaths that fly in the shattered metal shards of shells

VOICE We all see the faltering light of the falling flares

JOE My enemy and I die randomly, unexpectedly. We know the
sudden stupid deaths seen down the sights of a sniper's
rifle.

VOICE We don't fight: we sit in the mud and watch each other.

JOE It's what we have in common. It binds us. When the rain
falls, it falls on him too.

VOICE It's raining cats and dogs!

JOE Katzen und dachshunds, eh Fritz!

VOICE We don't look like soldiers anymore: we're all mudlarks!

JOE Hell doesn't burn and it isn't hot.

VOICE Hell is endless autumn rain.

JOE It pours till there can be no more rain to fall and still it falls,
filling every pock and shell hole and ditch and trench; it
runs from the sandbags and the parapets, drips from our
cloth caps, mufflers, great coats, rifles, into trenches
already deep with thick brown water.

VOICE This is a war where we wade, waist deep, and pick the lice
from the seams in our clothes.

JOE We pull mules and drowned men and ambulance wagons
out of the mud.

VOICE We fight with spades and bailing pales not rifles.

JOE And the rain falls

VOICE And falls.
SERG Never mind, lads, soon be Christmas.

JOE And it'll all be over by Christmas, won't it, Serg!

SERG Why, only this very morning I saw Fritz waving a white flag
and packing his suitcases!

VOICE I bet he's sad to leave Wulverghem.

JOE This isn't Wulverghem, is it? For a moment there I thought I
was in Venice.

VOICE Venice o' the North. Just south of Wipers.

JOE As I said, a right regular home from home.

Song: Home Sweet Home

Mid Pleasures and palaces though I may roam,
Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home;
A charm from the sky seems to hallow us there,
Which, seek thro' the world, is ne'er met with elsewhere.
Home.

Home! Sweet, sweet home!
There's no place like home.
There's no place like home.

SCENE: ALICE & WALTER

WALTER Mrs Nightingale.

ALICE Walter. I have something to tell you.

WALTER *(Horried!)* But... we haven't..

ALICE I'm leaving the Infirmary.

WALTER You are a married woman now.

ALICE Actually, I'm leaving England. I'm going to work in a
hospital abroad.

WALTER But... It can't matter so much anymore that you're married... the times are extraordinary... England needs nurses.

ALICE Some of the matrons are very starchy. But it's not that.

WALTER Then why?

ALICE Because, I need to do something.

WALTER I don't understand.

ALICE I need to do something useful.

WALTER You knit socks.

ALICE Even more useful than that.

WALTER Socks are very important to soldiers.

ALICE The women of the Empire are knitting so many pairs of socks that hosiery companies are having to let people go.

WALTER Scarves, then.

ALICE I want to do my part.

WALTER By doing what exactly?

ALICE I'm going to a field hospital.

WALTER A field hospital?

ALICE Yes. Look at these!

WALTER Trousers! Alice what on earth is going on?

ALICE There's a war going on. And these are what I shall be wearing if I go out with an ambulance. Dr Inglis says skirts are impractical for the units at such times.

WALTER I'm sure he does. And what units is he talking about here?

ALICE The Scottish Women's Hospital Unit.

WALTER You're going to Scotland?

ALICE No: Serbia. It all began in Scotland, but they have committees in London and there's one in Liverpool. That's where I went to hear Dr Inglis speak.

WALTER And did Dr Inglis tell you that it would also be extremely dangerous? It's all very well for him to put these noble ideas in your head...

ALICE She did mention that.

WALTER She?

ALICE Dr Inglis is a woman, yes. And the ideas are no more nor less noble than the ones you and Joe and Thomas had a few months ago.

WALTER But Alice...

ALICE But Walter. There's been another kind of war going on for a little longer than this one and I've just enlisted.

WALTER Oh Lord: you're not one of those Suffragettes, are you?

ALICE Walter: I'm a nurse. I'm going to the Front Line. This is a service that I can give to my country and give it with all my heart.

WALTER Alice, it's too dangerous...

ALICE Walter, I have to be able to decide for myself whether to take such a risk or not, rather than have it decided for me.

WALTER But you're a woman.

ALICE Yes, I am, and I'm asserting my right not to be delicate.

WALTER I'm not sure I like it.

ALICE You don't have to like it.

WALTER When do you leave?

ALICE After Christmas. And you won't be here to stop me.

WALTER Funny.

ALICE What is?

WALTER I'll be out there somewhere trying to kill people. And you'll be out there trying to save them.

ALICE Yes. Funny. Crikey! Look at the time! We'll be late

WALTER For what?

ALICE Carol singing at the Red Cross Hospital: we're singing for the wounded at Hoole Bank.

WALTER But, Alice... it's our wedding night.

ALICE And this will make it all the more special.

Song: In the Bleak Midwinter.

In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan,
Earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone;
Snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow,
In the bleak midwinter, long ago.

Angels and archangels may have gathered there,
Cherubim and seraphim thronged the air;
But his mother only, in her maiden bliss,
Worshipped the beloved with a kiss.

What can I give him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;
if I were a Wise Man, I would do my part;
Yet what I can I give him: give my heart.

SCENE: EARTH HARD AS IRON

JOE And then the rain stops. And the water seeps away a little. And the cold creeps in: a bitter cold that numbs our feet, till every step in the clumsy boots is an agony. And our fingers fumble at daily tasks. My breath tumbles out in white fogs. That's how I know I'm still alive: I can see that I'm still breathing. And then the cold deepens again and cuts like a jack-knife, and the flashes of water all turn to ice. Yesterday, I was taking a message because the wire was down and I met a boy with a stutter, a beggar with a cough and a man snoring with his eyes open. And Alice, I saw Thomas...

SCENE: REUNION

THOMAS Joseph Blakely!

JOE Just my luck.

THOMAS Pleased to see you too. What brings you here?

He has a hacking cough and is rough!

JOE Got a gold edged invitation. RSVP.

THOMAS I certainly ran away to a circus, didn't I?

JOE And what a bloody good circus, it is too.

THOMAS I bet you can't wait to be an actuary. Got any fags?

JOE You're too young to smoke.

THOMAS Nothing else to do.

JOE It's bad for your lungs.

THOMAS Snipers are bad for my lungs. Fags keep my fingers warm.

JOE Have you written to Alice?

THOMAS I thought she might still be angry with me.

BOOKIE Got the odds, Blakely.

THOMAS What we betting on this time?

BOOKIE The push.

JOE There's rumours again, then?

BOOKIE Going up and down the line like a bride's nightdress,
everyone's saying we'll be over the top before Christmas.
So I'm setting out the odds on who'll go west.
Private Atkins's is evens.
Corporal Joel is 2 -1
Sergeant Smith is 5 – 1
And the General, well he's at 100 – 1
Want a punt?

JOE No thanks.

BOOKIE Suit yourself: I've got to milk the company cow, anyway.

JOE The company cow?

BOOKIE You've not met Florrie yet?

THOMAS Couple of the lads found her straying about the fields after all the Belgians cleared off.

BOOKIE Lowing her head off to be milked. Beautiful little dun cow. And the Captain let us keep her what with Cheshire being a dairy county.

THOMAS We're the Cheshire cats that got the cream!

JOE (*Shivering*) Dear Alice, can't write much today: too much to do. I am keeping well: so don't worry – other lads down the line are having a much worse time than we are here.

THOMAS If she believes that, she'll believe anything.

JOE Stop reading my letters

THOMAS Stop writing them so loudly.

JOE Thomas is looking quite the thing. Very smart. You and mother should be very proud.

ALICE Dear Joe, I am now Mrs Nightingale. Mother is happy. We have a few days before Walter rejoins his Regiment. He had a few scrapes in Belgium, but he's raring to get back. I'm still cross with Thomas, but I'm glad to hear he's well. Mother's been so worried. I'm sending you both linen handkerchiefs and some lavender water

BOOKIE Lavender water?

JOE Go away.

ALICE Mrs Herbert gave them to us. She says that lavender aids sleep if you apply three drops to your pillow.

BOOKIE Smells like a mademoiselle's skirt round here. Oi! Who's farted?

JOE Didn't you get a letter?

BOOKIE No.

JOE Well go and write one and maybe you'll get one back.

ALICE I have also sent a tin of pineapple and a fruit cake: think of it as a wedding and Christmas cake.

JOE Cake, lads!

They eagerly crowd in and devour the cake not too politely. There is a whistling sound overhead.

VOICE Shell!

All dive for cover. Explosion.

VOICE Oi Fritz! If you want some bloody cake, you only have to ask.

SCENE: CHARMED LIFE

THOMAS Dear Joe, I've written to Alice. Have had a few adventures since our last encounter. We were moved to the back trenches. Snipers were out and we lost an NCO. C'est la guerre. It's good to be away from the front line. (*He looks at this, crosses it out*) The front line is... (*crosses that out too.*) Not much has happened other than we were set to digging trenches at the back whilst you lot were in the firing line. We were in water for much of the time and my poor feet took it badly. But I'm a lucky chap: one of the men in the company got promoted from the ranks. He was showing me his new revolver when it went off. Bullet missed me by inches, and then went through a partition and whizzed past two Signallers. How we all managed to be missed is a marvel. Still; could be worse: I could be back in the firing line for Christmas. I think I am living a charmed life.

He breaks down and cries. Hides tears.

NURSE Time to turn the lamps down.

THOMAS I just have to sign it, sister.

NURSE All the others are asleep.

THOMAS Five minutes more...

NURSE How old are you?

THOMAS Nineteen...

NURSE What's your first name, Private Blakely?

THOMAS Thomas.

NURSE How's the frostbite doing?

THOMAS It's... well, it's...

NURSE We had a soldier in here a few days ago with frostbite. He wasn't nineteen, he was fifteen. He was afraid to tell me he felt a little more comfortable because he thought I'd send him back to the front. But the Medical Officer and I had a talk and he gave him a Blighty Ticket.

He cries openly now. She hands him a handkerchief.

NURSE Shhh! Finish your letter, Thomas, and then lights out.

THOMAS Hope your singing isn't putting the wind up Fritz too much. On quiet nights, you can hear them talking. Got to go now: the sister is frowning at me! Please take care of yourself, Joe. We always argued, but I always admired you. Have the best Christmas you can get. Best regards, your brother Thomas.

Song:

It will all be over by Christmas
By Christmas we'll be marching home
And the snow will be falling, and we'll all be calling
We've not got a day more to roam, from home

SCENE: CHRISTMAS EVE

JOE Christmas Eve.

ALICE And in a message of good will, a German aeroplane drops the first ever bomb on English soil.

SERG It's a frosty day.

JOE A bright clear sniper's day.

SERG Season of goodwill to all men.

JOE Business as usual.

VOICE Some of us are planning to attack the Germans tonight.

VOICE We're going to give 'em a right barrage of carols.

JOE That'll shut up the Deutschland Uber Alles we've had for the past few nights.

VOICE Just you wait till darkness falls, Fritz.

SERG What gives, Blakely?

JOE All quiet, sir. Even the sniper's tree is empty, sir.

SERG See if he's moved position.

JOE He's not there.

SERG Message from HQ:

HQ: It is thought possible that the enemy may be contemplating an attack during Xmas or New Year. Special Vigilance will be maintained during this period.

SERG Find that sniper, Blakely, if it's the last thing you do.

VOICE And then a quarter moon rolls transparent in the afternoon sky.

JOE And afternoon fades into evening.

VOICE And the sun dips beneath the earth.

JOE And nothing moves.

VOICE The sky glows red but there's no shelling.

VOICE Just a sunset that drifts from red to blue.

JOE And everything settles into a strange silence

VOICE No shooting.

VOICE Nothing but stillness.

JOE It is so still that we can almost hear the frost crystals forming on our hair and beards.

VOICE Our breath falls in white clouds.

JOE And the sky is deepening to navy blue.

VOICE Stars.

JOE And everything dull is turning white with the rime.

VOICE Everything sparkling.

JOE And hushed.

VOICE Everything waiting.

VOICE Like a held breath.

JOE Listen.

VOICE I'm listening.

JOE Can you hear it?

VOICE It's Fritz. I can hear him talking quite plain. Can you see anything?

JOE (*Periscope*) Nothing. No... wait...Get the Sergeant.

VOICE What's up?

JOE Something's happening.

VOICE Serg!

SERG What is it?

JOE It's dark... But I can see lights.

Others go to the parapet to look.

SERG Keep your heads down, you bloody fools! What kind of lights?

JOE Little lights.

SERG What kind of little lights, Blakely?

JOE Sparkling lights... sir, like candles.

SERG Where?

JOE Along their parapets.

SERG Let me have a look. (*Takes a peek*) What the deuces are they up to? Keep watching, Blakely, I'll send a message down the line.

JOE Sir... there's more of them all along the parapet.

VOICE Shhhh! Listen!

A mouth organ far away....

Song: Stille Nacht

SOLO Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht!
Alles schläft, einsam wacht
Nur das traute hochheilige Paar.
Holder Knabe im lockigen Haar,
Schlaf in himmlischer Ruh,
Schlaf in himmlischer Ruh

JOE It's beautiful!

VOICE Shhhh!

MALE VOICES Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht!
Alles schläft, einsam wacht

Nur das traute hochheilige Paar.
Holder Knabe im lockigen Haar,
Schlaf in himmlischer Ruh,
Schlaf in himmlischer Ruh

ALL cheer and clap.

FRITZ Merry Christmas, Tommy!
JOE Merry Christmas yourself, Fritz!
VOICE Let's sing something back to them.
JOE Like what?

Song: O Come all Ye Faithful

VOICE Like this:
O come all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, o come ye to Bethlehem

ENGLISH Come and behold him
Born the king of angels
O come let us adore him

GERMAN Adeste fidelis, laeti triumphantes
Venite, venite in Bethlehem
Natum videte, regem angelorum
Venite adoremus, venite adoremus
Venite adoremus, dominum.

ALL cheer again!

VOICE They've gone quiet again.
SERG What are they doing now?
JOE There's silhouettes... they're climbing out onto the parapets!
VOICE Shall I shoot them sir?
SERG No! Don't shoot.

Song: Tipperary

GERMAN Es ist sehr weit nach Tipperary

Es ist sehr weit zu gehn
Es ist sehr weit nach Tipperary
Meinen liebsten schatz zu sehn
Leb'wohl Piccadilly
Adieu Leicester Square
Es ist sehr weit nach Tipperary
Doch dahin sehnt mich sehr.

ENGLISH cheer!

JOE Well done, Fritz!

FRITZ Come out, Tommy! Have a drink!

JOE No: you come out!

FRITZ You no shoot: we no shoot.

VOICE You first.

JOE They're all up on their parapets. I'm going out! (*and goes*)

SERG Blakely, what the bloody hell do you think you're doing?

JOE I'm going to meet Fritz.
And I stood up into the frozen air, breathing it into my lungs. Something's moving! There's some of them coming over...

SERG You! Stand sentry and keep your rifle primed. This might be a trap. (*Climbs out after JOE*) Wait for me, Blakely.

JOE And we climbed over the wire and walked out into the darkness...

SERG You haven't even got your rifle.

JOE Neither have you.

SERG If we die, Blakely, I'll bloody kill you.

GERMAN OFFICER Engländer! Gehen Sie zu den Lichtern spazieren! [Walk towards the lights]

JOE We can just see two men carrying aloft a little tree sparkling with candles coming closer and closer. And behind them, in the German trench, they're singing.

VOICES O Tannenbaum, o Tannenbaum,
 Dein Kleid will mich was lehren:
 Die Hoffnung und Beständigkeit
 Gibt Mut und Kraft zu jeder Zeit!
 O Tannenbaum, o Tannenbaum,
 Dein Kleid will mich was lehren!

SERG Good evening.

The Germans bow and click their heels.

GERMAN OFFICER Guten Abend. Wir wollen nicht Sie heute Abend schießen.

SOLDIER He says he does not want to shoot you tonight.

SERG Tell him, we also want a quiet Christmas.

SOLDIER Sie möchten ruhiges Weihnachten.

GERMAN OFFICER Gut. Abgestimmt. Kein Schießen.

SOLDIER He says it is agreed. No shooting.

SERG & OFFICER shake hands. OFFICER offers flask. SERG hesitates, but JOE is keen.

SERG Careful, Blakely...

GERMAN 2 It's cognac. Look. *(He takes swig and then offers it).*

JOE *(Drinks & coughs)* That's good. Very good. Gut.

They all laugh together...

GERMAN 2 Mein Name ist Ernest Hoffman.

JOE Hoffman. Me: Joseph Blakely.
 And then flakes of snow begin to fall, and in the dark, there is only this moment, and with the candlelight flickering on our faces, we can't see the uniforms, and we are the same, my enemy and me. We are ordinary men, not monsters like our governments tell us. We have names. We smile shyly, and it's Christmas Eve, and we are, both of us, freezing our faces off in a frozen foreign field, far from home.

HOFFMAN Merry Christmas, Joseph Blakely.

JOE Merry Christmas, Ernest Hoffman.

They salute. Germans bow, British bow in return.

FRITZ *(Calling from trench)* No more war, Englander!

TOMMY *(Calling)* No more war, Fritz!

FRITZ We want to go home, Tommy.

TOMMY Me too, Fritz

JOE Maybe this is the end of the war.

Song: Silent Night

ALL
Silent night, holy night
Son of God, love's pure light,
Radiant beams from thy holy face,
With the dawn of redeeming grace:
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.

SCENE: CHRISTMAS DAY IN NO MAN'S LAND

JOE Christmas Day. A seven o'clock dawn sifts through a white haze.

SERG Captain says that on account of the mist you may light fires.

JOE No need to tell us twice. We huddle around braziers, our faces burning and our feet and our backs shivering.

VOICE Happy Christmas one and all.

They clink metal mugs.

FRITZ *(Calling)* Hey! Tommy!

JOE It's the neighbours again!

HOFFMAN We wish to bury the dead. My officer wishes to agree a Truce.

CAPT Agreed. At midnight tonight I will fire two shots to signal the end of the Truce.

HOFFMAN Till midnight, then.

CAPT Till midnight.

They salute each other.

SERG Get yourself spades. We're digging graves.

JOE And we all climb out over the parapets into the daylight.

VOICE Dear God.

VOICE The desolation.

JOE And now we see what was hidden in the darkness.

VOICE Niemandsland.

VOICE A waste land scarred with shell holes

JOE A graveyard of the unburied dead.

VOICE They lie in streams gazing out with open eyes from under the frozen water.

JOE They died crawling for their trenches, crying for their loved ones, clutching faded photographs

VOICE They lie, contorted and mad and frozen and unburied.

VOICE Eyes frozen, mouths full of snow, hands clutching photographs, arms stretching to us.

VOICE Poor bloody bastards...

JOE We gather them for burial, and collect papers and pay-books from their pockets, and every one of them has been a friend of someone here. And as we dig, a little snow falls, and settles over the bomb craters, and the dead and unburied are shrouded under a fall of white that frosts their lashes and their lips. It is the first beautiful thing in a long time.

And we bury them, snow flakes cupped in their dead hands, like white feathers. On a day marking a birth, we mark death and we bury them side by side, the English, French and German dead. We threw in soil and snow over each man, my enemy and me. And together we planted crosses in the broken earth.

SCENE: THE BURIAL OF THE DEAD

- VOICES The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:
he leadeth me beside the still waters.
- VOICES Der Herr ist mein Hirte, mir wird nichts mangeln.
Er weidet mich auf einer grünen Aue und führet mich zum
frischen Wasser.
- VOICES He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the
paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
- VOICES Er erquicket meine Seele. Er führet mich auf rechter
Straße um seines Namens willen.
- VOICES Yea, though I walk through the valley of the
shadow of death; I will fear no evil: for thou
art with me; thy rod and thy staff they
comfort me.
- VOICES Und ob ich schon wanderte im finstern Tal, fürchte ich kein
Unglück; denn du bist bei mir, dein Stecken und Stab
trösten mich.
- VOICES Thou preparest a table before me in the
presence of mine enemies: thou anointest
my head with oil; my cup runneth over.
- VOICES Du bereitest vor mir einen Tisch im Angesicht meiner
Feinde. Du salbest mein Haupt mit Öl und schenkest mir
voll ein.
- VOICES Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all
the days of my life; and I will dwell in the
house of the Lord for ever.
- VOICES Gutes und Barmherzigkeit werden mir folgen mein Leben
lang, und ich werde bleiben im Hause des Herrn immerdar.

SCENE: SOUVENIRS

VOICE Football!

ALL cheer as a rubber ball is thrown across...

JOE And about a hundred men start kicking around a rubber ball with no sense of where a goal might be or even a score.

HOFFMAN Blakely! Ja?

JOE Hey! It's Hoffman!
I've got you a tin of bully beef.

HOFFMAN Ah! Danke. Cigar?

JOE And we all exchange things. Have some plum and apple jam.

FRITZ Have some beer, Tommy. We have plenty here.

TOMMY Cigarettes and rum.

FRITZ Sausage and sauerkraut.

TOMMY Christmas puddings and Maconochie's stew.

FRITZ Schnapps and cognac.

TOMMY Tea and chocolate.

FRITZ A pickelhaube! I don't want it anymore...

TOMMY Our English jack-knives.

FRITZ Caps are exchanged

TOMMY Badges

FRITZ Buttons

JOE And belts with buckles that say Gott Mit Uns.

FRITZ God with us.

JOE God is obviously with both of us. I wore it for the rest of my war.

FRITZ You come from where?

JOE Chester.

FRITZ Ach! Before the war I was working in Birkenhead.

FRITZ shakes his hand off.

FRITZ Er ist von Chester!

JOE And he took a card from his pocket and gave it me to post to his wife in Liverpool. I tucked it in my pocket with the buttons and the schnapps.

TOMMY Hey! Fritz: we the Cheshire Regiment invite you to Christmas dinner.

JOE And the Cheshires hauled out a pig they had found and killed, and men lit fires, and we roasted it and ate it in No Man's Land, my enemy and me. We've said we won't fight the Germans anymore and they've said they won't fight us! And it is cold, but we all feel warm, and snow falls like petals.

They all crowd around one German who is juggling and showing tricks.

JOE This is going to sound such a tall story when they tell it back in the billets. (*Shouts*) Thomas: you're not going to believe this, but this is the strangest thing that ever happened. Merry Christmas, little brother. Merry Christmas Alice and Walter and Mother. Merry Christmas Fritz! (*Drinks a swig of schnapps*)

Song: Auld Lang Syne

SOLO Should old acquaintance be forgot,
and never brought to mind?

VOICES Should old acquaintance be forgot,
in the days of auld lang syne?

ALL For auld lang syne, my dear,

for auld lang syne,
we'll take a cup o' kindness yet,
for the sake of auld lang syne.

For auld lang syne, my dear,
for auld lang syne,
we'll take a cup o' kindness yet,
for the sake of auld lang syne.

SCENE: GAVRILO PRINCIP

PRINCIP

After the held breath, the sound of two shots.
What happens now? I wanted to end something that day.
But the future was for others to determine.
I aimed at the Archduke.
I don't remember what I thought at that moment.
If I hadn't done it, the Germans would have found another
excuse for a war. And as for why: I am the son of peasants
and I know what is happening in the villages. That is why I
wanted to take revenge. We have loved the people. I have
nothing to say in my defence.
But, out by Schiller's Café, I didn't know the weight of it all;
the importance of the motorcar stopping in the Sarajevo
summer; because for a moment there was only birdsong,
and petals falling like snow, a held breath: one last moment
of an old world before it is shot to pieces.
I pull a trigger.
There are two shots.
I regret nothing.

Song: They Shall Not Grow Old

They shall not grow old, as we who are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We shall remember them

As the stars that shall be bright when we are dust,
Moving in marches upon the heavenly plain;
As the stars that are starry in the time of our darkness,
To the end, to the end, they remain.

Laurence Binyon *For the Fallen* 1914