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## **Cast of Characters**

CORPORAL IRA MASON, 22 years old, male, a smartass in many ways

PRIVATE FIRST CLASS HAWKINS, 20, a nice boy

PRIVATE SMITH, 20 or so, female, she takes no crap from Mason

CAPTAIN BATES, late 20s, male, an officer and a gentleman type

MAJOR ADAMS, 33, a man of conscience

COUNSEL, 30 or so, male or female, a reasonable individual

COLONEL EDWARD SAVAT, M.D., 50, a healer

COLONEL HASTINGS, 55, a soldier of soldiers

EVIE, a nurse, mid-20s

## **Production Notes**

The immediate setting is the front office of an army processing center in a foreign land. The office looks like any other clerical setup except for the army issue type equipment, the photographs of military officials and political leaders on the wall, the national flag conspicuously placed, and the two men in uniform working behind the main desk. The stage should be set up so that the office is separated from a small office space where Major Adams sits reading journals. There should also be a separate space from both these areas that can be utilized to simulate other locales such as the mess hall, stockade gates, and courtroom. A fourth separate space should allow for setup of the Rialto Theatre.

# A WAR STORY AT THE RIALTO

by Jeanne Beckwith

## Scene 1

*(As the scene opens, CPL. IRA MASON is speaking on the phone. PFC. HAWKINS sits typing diligently. CPL. MASON's voice is patient and kindly.)*

**MASON.** What was that name again? Ryan? Can you spell that, please? R.Y.A.N., Second Lieutenant Ryan? Well sure, sure. We wouldn't want to get that wrong, would we? Yes, indeed, *(Pause.)* Sir. I will check on those papers right away. No problem. I can't imagine what could have happened. Some silly mix-up, I'm sure. I'll get right on it. Goodbye. *(Pause.)* Sir.

*(He hangs up the phone and takes the piece of paper he has been writing on, wads it up and tosses it free-throw style into the waste basket.)*

**HAWKINS.** Somebody's gonna catch you doing that someday, Ira, and you're gonna be in big trouble.

**MASON.** Catch me doing what, Hawkins?

**HAWKINS.** I started processing some guy named Ryan last week. I put his papers in your "out" basket.

**MASON.** Did you?

*(Peering into his "out" basket.)*

It's not there now. It's a damn shame how these things get mislaid.

*(He selects a file from a stack on his desk and lets it slip down between the desk and filing cabinet.)*

It's a shoddy system all right.

**HAWKINS.** You shouldn't do things like that, Ira. One of these days somebody's gonna see you doing that, and you're gonna be in big trouble.

**MASON.** You just saw me do it. Am I in big trouble?

**HAWKINS.** I mean if somebody—you know—somebody—somebody with some authority saw you. If Major Adams caught you. That would be big trouble.

**MASON.** First, he would have to establish that I had done it on purpose. That I wasn't just being absent-minded. That I wasn't just clumsy or inefficient. I doubt if the military is going to court-martial me on those grounds. It would be a dangerous precedent.

**HAWKINS.** But it isn't a very nice thing to do. You don't even know Lt. Ryan.

**MASON.** Second Lt. Ryan, you mean, and what's to know? Lousy little jerk wants an early out. I hate him.

**HAWKINS.** Why?

**MASON.** Why? Since when do I need a reason for an irrational emotion?

**HAWKINS.** You don't even know him.

**MASON.** Why would I want to know him?

**HAWKINS.** I just meant that you can't hate someone you don't know.

**MASON.** I hate lots of people I don't know. Phil Donahue. Tom Selleck. Jim Nabors.

**HAWKINS.** You hate Jim Nabors?

**MASON.** Your problem, Hawkins, is that you don't hate anyone.

**HAWKINS.** How do you know that I don't hate you?

**MASON.** I'm your hero and role model, Hawkins. I'm the guy you look up to. Confess. You get off on my campaign against injustice.

**HAWKINS.** I don't think that injustice has anything to do with it.

**MASON.** You just think I'm a sonofabitch.

**HAWKINS.** I didn't say that.

**MASON.** And anyway, why should you be sticking up for some chicken shit second lieutenant? By all the laws of nature, this guy should be dead. Do you have any idea how high the percentage of second lieutenants who get snuffed in their first tour of combat is?

**HAWKINS.** No. What is it?

**MASON.** What is it? *(Pause.)* Incredibly high. That's what it is—and this guy thinks he can buck the percentages. He thinks he can save his ass by getting out early. He wants me to help him.

**HAWKINS.** That's your job, Ira. You're supposed to process people out early. Is he eligible?

**MASON.** What's that got to do with it? Other second lieutenants are out there taking their chances with the rest of us.

**HAWKINS.** What chances are we taking Ira? We're pretty far from the front.

**MASON.** Well, there's the current situation, isn't there? That's pretty much the same as being at the front? And besides, I've got our personal integrity on the line here, Hawkins. And I have no intention of—

*(PRIVATE SMITH enters hurriedly with a pile of mail. She is dressed in a flak jacket. She's out of breath. MASON attempts to intercept her and claim the mail, but SMITH eludes him and deposits all of it on Hawkins' desk.)*

**MASON.** I'm the senior staff person in here, Frances. You're supposed to give the mail to me.

**SMITH.** Don't call me Frances. My mother doesn't even call me Frances. And if I don't give the mail to Hawkins, it'll end up in the wastebasket. Everyone knows that. Do you think I'm stupid?

**MASON.** Well, Frances, as a matter of fact, I do.

**SMITH.** There's nothing for you anyway. I already looked.

**MASON.** Your prurient interest in the details of my married life is nauseating, Private Smith. It leads me find your presence in the army highly suspect.

**SMITH.** What's that supposed to mean?

**MASON.** A woman—in a man's world. It speaks for itself.

**SMITH.** Fuck off, asshole. You're the one who reads your letters out loud to anyone in listening range—which no one with any sense would be if they could help.

**MASON.** I read my letters aloud in a vain attempt to help raise the level of your vocabulary, Frances.

**SMITH.** Those words I know. Anyway, I think she's gotten tired of waiting for you. When was the last letter, anyway? Must be two weeks, huh?

**HAWKINS.** Ten days.

**MASON.** I am sick of having my personal life a topic of general interest.

**SMITH.** Oh, it's not all that interesting, Ira.

**MASON.** Don't you have more mail to deliver?

**SMITH.** Lots. Just not to you.

**MASON.** Goodbye, Frances.

*(SMITH grins and turns to depart. She opens the door slightly and peers out.)*

**SMITH.** Still looks clear! Maybe the Doc's given up.

**MASON.** I hope he lobs a grenade right up your—

**HAWKINS.** Keep your head down!

*(SMITH gives him a thumbs up and waves gaily at MASON.)*

**SMITH.** Don't be bitter, Ira. Maybe she's just waiting until she has something to say to you. Which in your case might not be all that easy.

*(Ducks out as MASON stands.)*

**MASON.** Don't call me, Ira! Damn her! Women have no place in the army unless they're nurses or secretaries.

**HAWKINS.** Then you wouldn't have a job, Ira. You'd have to go to the front and fight and die for your country.

**MASON.** I'm doing my part for the civilized world. Don't you ever worry about that!

**HAWKINS.** I never worry about that, Ira—can I call you Ira?

**MASON.** *(Moping:)* I don't care. None of it matters. My life is shit.

**HAWKINS.** (*Filing through the mail:*) The Major got another brown envelope from Princeton. I think they really want him to come teach there. (*Holding the envelope up to the light:*) I wish you could see something through these manila envelopes.

**MASON.** Tampering with the mail will get you court-martialed, Hawkins, a lot faster than my screwing around with a couple of old files.

**HAWKINS.** I hope they hold the job for him. I know Uncle Badger is holding my job open at the gas station, but I'm family.

**MASON.** Uncle Badger? Jesus!

**HAWKINS.** You could process the Major out early. I don't think he'd ask you himself 'cause he's so shy and all, but it would be a kinda nice thing for you to do.

**MASON.** He's still got ten months and seventeen days to serve. He might as well kiss fall semester goodbye. I am not compromising my principles for an academic—especially one dumb enough to have signed up for ROTC just to help pay for graduate school.

**HAWKINS.** It wasn't so dumb. Nobody thought there would be another war.

**MASON.** There is always another war, Hawkins. Take my word for that. Anyway, if I can't get out early, nobody should.

**HAWKINS.** I don't understand why you can't. You've got as much right as anyone else. Why don't you just process yourself out and be done with it? Then you could—

**MASON.** I could what?

**HAWKINS.** Well—I just thought. Your wife. Maybe it would be a good thing if you could go home. And see your wife.

**MASON.** Your concern for me is touching, Hawkins, but I assure you that there is nothing wrong between my wife and myself.

**HAWKINS.** I just thought it would be...well...

**MASON.** I can't go home, Hawkins. I have to stay here and look after you. If I left, they'd promote you, and the first thing you'd do is process yourself out and disgrace your mother.

**HAWKINS.** I would never disgrace my mother. Anyway, I don't mind it here so much. It's better than working at Uncle Badger's even if he is keeping the job open for me. I don't mind pumping gas, but I like...to type.

**MASON.** Hawkins. You are one of the few people I know, the few men I know who would ever admit that he liked to type. It's why I'm so fond of you.

**HAWKINS.** I wish you'd process Major Adams out, Ira. I think he'd be happier at Princeton.

**MASON.** He doesn't like to type?

**HAWKINS.** Well, he doesn't have to. I do it for him.

**MASON.** *(There is no possible reply to this.)* Can't you hurry with those letters?

**HAWKINS.** There really isn't anything for you.

**MASON.** Smith is stealing my mail.

**HAWKINS.** I didn't get anything either.

**MASON.** No one ever writes to you.

**HAWKINS.** My mother writes to me.

**MASON.** Once a week. You get one letter a week. On Thursdays.

**HAWKINS.** That's because it takes exactly eight days for letters to get here, and she volunteers at the hospital on Wednesdays so she has to go right past the post office.

**MASON.** She keeps writing you the same damn letter.

**HAWKINS.** Have you been reading my mail?

**MASON.** I don't have to. I know the kind of letters that mothers who volunteer at the hospital write. "Dear Son, Just a note to let you know that we are all fine." "Fine"! Who the hell is ever "fine"?

**HAWKINS.** Maybe you'll get something tomorrow.

**MASON.** *(Pause.)* Ten days! She's never gone this long before.

**HAWKINS.** Maybe she's just real busy.

**MASON.** The last time she didn't write, she'd bought a sofa and didn't want to tell me. A sofa! My mother gave us a perfectly nice Naugahyde couch when we got married. Mediterranean design. But no. She has to have a sofa!

**HAWKINS.** Is there a difference between a couch and a sofa?

**MASON.** My point exactly! She's supposed to be saving that money I send her so I can go back to school when I get out. Not spend it on sofas!

**HAWKINS.** Maybe, she's lonely. Sometimes women buy things when they're lonely.

**MASON.** I wanted to have it all put in a direct deposit account in my own name. Then if she'd wanted anything, she could just ask me, and we could discuss it like civilized human beings.

**HAWKINS.** It's kinda hard to have to keep asking someone for what you want.

**MASON.** But the army won't let you set up the accounts that way.

**HAWKINS.** A sofa is not such a big thing. There are lots worse things she could be spending money on. When you get home, it might be kinda nice to have a new sofa to sit on.

**MASON.** What else could she be spending money on? Huh? Say it Hawkins. Men. She could be spending my money on other men. She's lonely. Far way. With a nasty absentee husband who bitches when she buys a sofa. We hardly knew each other when we met. I should have expected this.

**HAWKINS.** Most people hardly know each other when they meet.

**MASON.** We were from different worlds, Hawkins!

**HAWKINS.** She's very pretty in those pictures you've got.

**MASON.** What time is it back home? She's probably screwing someone right now.

**HAWKINS.** Ira, don't say things like that.

**MASON.** On my new sofa!

**HAWKINS.** At least it's not the one your mother bought.

**MASON.** I wish it was! You ever been naked on Naugahyde?

*(The door opens and CAPTAIN BATES enters. He is a few years older than the other two. He is dashingy handsome and obviously enjoys his role as a warrior.)*

**HAWKINS.** May I help you?

**BATES.** I've been on the phone with some Corporal down here named Mason. Is he in? Tell him it's Captain Bates. Matthew Bates.

**HAWKINS.** Cpl. Mason?

*(During the ensuing exchange neither HAWKINS nor MASON pays BATES any attention at all. It is as if a wall separates them. He, meanwhile, keeps shifting back and forth to peek out through the blinds at something that he obviously finds curious and unsettling.)*

There's someone here to see you, Cpl. Mason.

**MASON.** To see me?

**HAWKINS.** He says that he's Captain Bates.

**MASON.** Well, he would, wouldn't he? There was a Master Sergeant Bates we processed last week. Are you sure this isn't him?

**HAWKINS.** This is Captain Bates. *(Whispering:)* He's the one you put in that pile in the broom closet.

**MASON.** Broom closet! What would Captain Bates be doing in a broom closet.

**HAWKINS.** *He's not in the broom closet. He's right here. He wants to talk to you. Now.*

**MASON.** Looks to me as if he's more interested in the scenery. Ah, Captain Bates!

**BATES.** *(Turning back to the desk:)* What? Oh, yes. Are you Mason?

**MASON.** I am Corporal Mason. Yes.

**BATES.** *(Returning to the desk:)* I spoke with you last week—about my processing out of here.

**MASON.** I talk to so many people, but I think I remember your case. You applied for an early out. I take it you aren't enjoying your stay here.

**BATES.** Well, it's not a goddamned resort, you know. I've been up-country for six months.

**MASON.** In the thick of the fighting, I imagine.

**BATES.** You can say that again. No fun and games up there.

**MASON.** You don't enjoy fighting?

**BATES.** No one enjoys fighting, Corporal.

**MASON.** No?

**BATES.** Oh, there's something to be said for it. It pushes a man to his limit.

**MASON.** You don't say?

**BATES.** I didn't get these medals sitting on my ass.

**MASON.** I can imagine.

**BATES.** We lost a whole squad last week.

**MASON.** A whole squad?

**BATES.** Damn fine men.

**MASON.** Friends of yours?

**BATES.** Well, I didn't know any of them personally.

**MASON.** Well, that's good.

**BATES.** I knew of them.

**MASON.** Perhaps you can write their families.

**BATES.** I'm sure the General will do that.

**MASON.** That's what Generals do, isn't it? At least those guys won't have to apply for processing out. They won't have to come all the way down here.

**BATES.** Uh, no.

**MASON.** Well, that's war for you.

**BATES.** You can say that again. No desk jobs at the front. Don't get me wrong. I think you boys down here do a fine job. Couldn't do ours without you. Got to have a good support staff. Always critical.

**MASON.** Especially at processing out time.

**BATES.** (*Chuckles.*) Can't deny that. No sir.

(*MASON chuckles with him.*)

So. What do we need to do here?

**MASON.** We?

**BATES.** To get the ball rolling on this. I sent all the forms back, but nothing's come through.

**MASON.** Hawkins! Have you seen Captain Bates' C640 around here anywhere?

**HAWKINS.** Uh, I can find them. I think.

**BATES.** You think? What do you mean, "you think"?

**MASON.** Hawkins is a confirmed rationalist. He thinks and therefore he knows that he exists.

**BATES.** I don't know what the hell you're talking about. But you better wise up to the fact that you're talking to an officer, and if you're not careful son, I'm going to have you written up. Do you get my drift?

**MASON.** Oh, yes. (*Pause.*) Sir. I get your drift.

**HAWKINS.** What I mean, sir, was that with the computers down right now, I'll have to do a manual search. That's sometimes a problem. There's not much storage space here.

**MASON.** There's the broom closet.

**HAWKINS.** I might have to go over to central stores. They aren't always open. Things—well, things are a little upside down right now. Things are a little difficult.

**BATES.** Difficult?

**HAWKINS.** If you could just come back through tomorrow or the day after, I know I can get this all sorted out.

**BATES.** You damn well better! I came down here on a 48-hour pass. It's been six weeks since I filled out those forms. I should have had those papers weeks ago. I know when I'm getting the run around and—

*(A barrage of gunfire is heard along with the shatter of broken glass. BATES throws himself on the floor covering his head. HAWKINS and MASON check their watches and begin calmly to put the covers on their typewriters and clear away the desk. On the other side of the partition, MAJOR ADAMS, who has dozed off, wakes with a start. He looks chagrined at the disturbance. While the next lines are spoken, he will be putting on a flak jacket and a helmet. He will be ferreting around looking for a bull horn.)*

**BATES.** What? What the hell— Hey get down you two! What the hell do you think you're doing?

**HAWKINS.** It's five o'clock, sir. The office closes at five o'clock.

**BATES.** Where's that gunfire coming from? There isn't any action around here. The fighting's a good hundred miles away.

**HAWKINS.** Oh, that's nothing sir.

*(Helping BATES to his feet.)*

Now, if you can just back in here tomorrow morning we can—

**BATES.** Who the hell is shooting at us? Where's that gunfire coming from?

**HAWKINS.** Don't worry about that sir, it's just the Doctor.

*(HAWKINS and MASON put on their helmets and flak jackets.)*

**BATES.** Doctor?

**MASON.** From the hospital.

**HAWKINS.** He's been firing at us in the evenings.

**MASON.** He wants us all to process out.

**BATES.** He wants what?

**HAWKINS.** He wants us to go away.

**MASON.** It's nothing personal. He doesn't dislike us particularly. He's never even met Hawkins.

**HAWKINS.** Yes, he has. I met him at the Christmas party.

**BATES.** What the hell are you talking about? Who does he want to go away?

**HAWKINS.** The army—the soldiers we process in. He wants us to process them all out. That's why he's shooting at us.

**BATES.** Is he out of his mind?

**HAWKINS.** I think he's just tired of the war. He wants it to end.

**BATES.** What does Central Command have to say about all this? Why haven't they done something?

**HAWKINS.** The Major's going to take care of it. I bet he's working on it right now.

*(MAJOR ADAMS knocks over a desk lamp in his office.)*

Probably.

**BATES.** He has to report something like this to his superiors.

**HAWKINS.** Things are only a little out of hand, sir. Major Adams and the Doctor are really good friends. They go to the movies together in town all the time. He wouldn't want to see the Doctor get in trouble for something that could be straightened out right here.

**MASON.** Major Adams was a behavioral psychologist. This kind of thing is right up his alley.

**BATES.** But, he can't just take that kind of responsibility on himself.

**HAWKINS.** Now, if you'll just come back in the morning, we'll clear up this whole business with your papers in no time at all.

**MASON.** Not too early in the morning.

*(Another burst of gunfire. MASON goes to the door and peers out.)*

We can probably just make it to the mess hall. You coming, Hawkins?

**HAWKINS.** Sure. What are they serving tonight?

**MASON.** Don't you worry about anything, Captain Bates. I'm sure those old papers of yours are around here someplace.

*(He and HAWKINS exit, hurriedly. HAWKINS pops his head back in.)*

**HAWKINS.** Just pull the door shut behind you, Captain Bates. There's no one going to steal anything.

*(He salutes and exits. BATES slips over and peers out the window. There is a hail of gunfire. He ducks behind the desk. On the other side of the partition, MAJOR ADAMS has finally found his bullhorn. He is a slim, soft-spoken, bookish sort in his mid-thirties. He opens the door to the office and steps into the main area, passing the desk where BATES is crouching without seeing him there. MAJOR ADAMS peeks out the window and then goes to the main door. With a burst of energy he flings it open and begins speaking through the bullhorn.)*

**ADAMS.** Eddie!

*(Burst of gunfire. MAJOR ADAMS steps back and stands with his back to the wall beside the door. He turns slightly and tries again.)*

All I can say, Eddie, is that you're being darn silly about all this. Eddie! Can you hear me?

*(More gunfire. MAJOR ADAMS sighs and turns back to the room. He notices CAPTAIN BATES.)*

Oh. Hello. *(Pause.)* It's after five. You'd better come back in the morning if you want to see Cpl. Mason.

**BATES.** I've already seen Cpl. Mason.

**ADAMS.** Oh. *(Pause.)* I hope he's taken care of you then. *(Hopefully:)* Has he?

**BATES.** Can you tell me what the hell is going on here, Major?

**ADAMS.** The offices close at five. I've thought about extending the hours on Thursdays, but no one else seems to think that it's necessary.

*(Gunfire. Sounds of evident damage. Shouts. MAJOR ADAMS flinches and mutters to himself.)*

Dammit, Eddie! *(Notices BATES staring at him.)* I guess you're wondering about the shooting?

**BATES.** What the hell else would I be wondering about? Your office hours? What gives here? There's been no announcement that this area was under fire by the enemy.

**ADAMS.** Oh, we're not. Not actually. It's an unusual situation. I don't really understand it at all myself. Eddie and I can—usually, we can sort things out. There are minor disagreements. There are bound to be, aren't there? We are strangers here for all intents and purposes. A foreign culture—there are bound to be misunderstandings, but Eddie and I sort all that out during intermissions.

**BATES.** Intermissions? He takes intermissions?

**ADAMS.** At the Rialto. *(Pause.)* On Saturdays. They take quite a time changing the reels. Not a very technologically advanced society—because of the war. One wonders...well, no good wondering.

**BATES.** Rialto?

**ADAMS.** It's a movie theatre—here in the town. Interesting piece of architecture. It was built by the last Governor. He'd been to the old Paramount in New York.

**BATES.** What the hell are you doing at a movie theatre with the enemy?

**ADAMS.** Enemy? You've got the wrong idea. I know it looks that way, but you don't understand. Eddie's not the enemy—not really. I know that it looks as if he were the enemy, but he's not. He's a fine surgeon and very charming. When he's relaxing. He doesn't get to relax much, that's why we enjoy the movies. I'm sure you'd like him if you met him. Everyone does.

*(Exploding grenades. There is flying glass. MAJOR ADAMS joins BATES on the floor.)*

You see all this is extremely out of character. It's not that he has ever approved of the fighting. I suspect he's a pacifist on some level. He's a doctor after all, but this is very odd. I don't know what's going on, but I intend to find out. After all, friends need to be able to discuss things openly.

**BATES.** This son of a bitch is attacking your command post! He's shooting at you!

**ADAMS.** Well, I like to think that it's not at me personally that he's shooting. It's what I symbolize.

**BATES.** If a bullet rips your chest open you're not gonna be thinking about any bullshit symbols, Major.

**ADAMS.** No. I suppose not. *(Sighs.)* Let's just hope that it doesn't come to that.

*(Gets to his feet and goes to the door with his bullhorn. He smiles back at BATES before beginning to speak again.)*

Eddie! Eddie! This is Ben! *(Pause.)* I wish I knew what the problem was here, Eddie. I know you're upset about something.

*(Gunfire.)*

You know as well as I do, Eddie, that violence never solves anything.

*(There is silence.)*

I think he's listening to me. That part about violence not solving things—that would appeal to Eddie's sense of justice.

**BATES.** What do you mean, "violence never solves anything"? We're in the middle of a war here.

**ADAMS.** Well, I know. That's a bit of a contradiction, but I'm trying to separate the two things in Eddie's mind. *(Into the bullhorn:)* Now, I'm going to be at the Rialto tomorrow, Eddie. Just as usual. I saw they had "Back Street" scheduled for the two o'clock show. I know it's a weekday, Eddie, but I just think, what the hell! I can go to a movie on a weekday. You know how much I like Susan Hayward, Eddie!

**BATES.** I don't fucking believe this.

**ADAMS.** I'd hate to miss it, Eddie!

**BATES.** You can't be serious about this!

**ADAMS.** Well, I know it's a really old movie, but they only show old movies down there. Eddie saved the Manager's wife's leg when she stepped on a land mine. Well, he saved one of them actually. But from then on the Manager will only show old movies because he knows Eddie likes them. And, well, it is hard to get newer ones down here.

*(Into the bullhorn:)* I want to see you there, Eddie. I think we can straighten all this out! You can trust me, Eddie!

*(Burst of gunfire. To Bates:)*

That might have been too much. About trusting me. I mean we are friends, but it was probably still too early to introduce the trust issue. I don't have much clinical background. What do you think?

**BATES.** I think you're out of your friggin' mind! Does Col. Hastings at Central Command know about this?

**ADAMS.** I advised them that we had a few locals disturbing the peace. They told me to handle it.

**BATES.** You've got a nutcase lobbing bombs at you.

**ADAMS.** Grenades actually. He hasn't thrown any bombs that I know of. And no one's been hurt really.

**BATES.** This bastard is dangerous! You've got to get somebody in here to take care of him.

**ADAMS.** Eddie is a surgeon, I told you. He's head of the Allied Base Hospital here. He's also a Colonel in the United Republic's army. By rights he outranks me.

**BATES.** You mean he's a Colonel on our side?

**ADAMS.** He's a decorated hero. You should see him on parade days. That's why it's all such a puzzle. Now, I have always suspected that he was a pacifist. I am myself actually.

*(He looks at his watch and begins to gather himself together.)*

Oh well, perhaps he'll meet me tomorrow and I'll get some answers. Are you staying here on the post? There are some nice hotels in the town, but the officer's quarters here are excellent.

*(He goes to the door and calmly opens it.)*

**BATES.** What the hell are you doing? Get down!

**ADAMS.** It's quite all right now, Captain. It's after 5:30. Eddie has to get back to the hospital for his evening rounds.

**BATES.** You mean he's just going back to work? You're going to just let him go back to work?

**ADAMS.** There are a lot of wounded, Captain. Come on. I'll show you the officer's club. We put in a Jacuzzi last winter; it's really quite soothing after a long day...

*(BATES pauses a moment and then follows MAJOR ADAMS as he cheerfully leads the way out, chatting about the amenities of the officer's club. Lights fade.)*

## Scene 2

*(A chair set behind a railing as in a courtroom. A light is up on CPL. MASON sitting there. Beside him stands the COUNSEL in military dress. At a small table to their left PVT. SMITH sits taking notes. Other characters may be seated elsewhere as spectators. EVIE stands to the rear. She is dressed in military fatigues and watches the events with rigid attention.)*

**SMITH.** *(Standing:)* Excerpt from the informal hearing into the actions of Major Benjamin Adams, whereabouts unknown.

*(She sits.)*

**COUNSEL.** Cpl. Mason, you were Administrative Assistant to Major Adams during the events outlined in this hearing, were you not?

**MASON.** Yes. I was.

**COUNSEL.** And I take it you were familiar with the Major's actions during his tenure as Chief Officer of this base?

**MASON.** Yes.

**COUNSEL.** Did you find the Major a difficult person to work with?

**MASON.** In what way?

**COUNSEL.** Well, for instance, was he a difficult person to work under?

**MASON.** He wasn't difficult at all.

**COUNSEL.** He didn't check your work?

**MASON.** As long as things got done, and nobody bothered him while he was reading, he seemed pretty happy. *(Pause.)* I don't mean that he didn't care. He just had a lot of things on his mind.

**COUNSEL.** Such as?

**MASON.** Like what he would do when he got out of the army. What was going to happen to his father when he got old. When his father got old, that is. What his wife was up to. That sort of thing.

**COUNSEL.** Well, let me ask you this. Did you ever notice any peculiarities in the Major's actions prior to the events under consideration in this hearing.

**MASON.** I don't know if I would call them "peculiarities."

**COUNSEL.** What would you call them, Corporal?

**MASON.** Well, I suppose you could say that he had some funny habits.

**COUNSEL.** And would you describe these "funny habits" to the Board?

**MASON.** He liked old movies. He talked about them all the time.

**COUNSEL.** You call that a peculiarity?

**MASON.** No. I called it a funny habit.

**COUNSEL.** It seems strange that you would think that the Major's taste in movies was a "funny habit."

**MASON.** What I meant to say by that is that he took them very seriously. Whenever something was bothering him or he had a decision to make, he would try remembering what somebody or other did in the same situation in some old movie. Like what would Cary Grant have done in *I Was a Male War Bride*. He used to ask us things like that.

**COUNSEL.** Was he planning to be a male war bride?

**MASON.** The Major was married. I was just using that as an example. He used to talk about all kinds of old movies.

**COUNSEL.** And you found that strange?

**MASON.** Most of the time I hadn't seen the movie.

**COUNSEL.** Were you supposed to follow these suggestions that he made that came from old movies?

**MASON.** They weren't suggestions. They were more like "musings." Yeah, he used to muse about things a lot.

**COUNSEL.** Muse? And did you follow along with these musings, Corporal? Did you use them to perform your job?

**MASON.** Not really. I just did what I thought needed to be done, and the Major seemed pretty happy with that. *(Pause.)* Mostly, he seemed happy.

**COUNSEL.** Mostly? What about the rest of the time?

**MASON.** He thought I should be nicer to people.

**COUNSEL.** Did you follow his instruction to be "nicer" to people?

**MASON.** The Major was asking a lot. I don't think he knew that many people.

*(Blackout.)*

### Scene 3

*(Another part of the stage. MAJOR ADAMS and EDDIE are seen sitting in folding chairs facing front. Flickering light from the movie they are watching reflects on their faces. There is one chair between them. To the rear and in only a dim light stands EVIE at attention. Slides depicting scenes from the movie might be projected on the walls of the theatre.)*

**ADAMS.** This is the part where she misses the plane.

**EDDIE.** Yes.

**ADAMS.** It makes me crazy sometimes thinking how it's always some small circumstance that ruins our lives.

**EDDIE.** It makes you crazy?

**ADAMS.** Like in this movie? I always find myself wondering how things would have gone if she just hadn't missed that plane.

**EDDIE.** She has to miss the plane. That's what the movie is about.

**ADAMS.** But don't you ever think about the other stories—the other ways it could have gone?

**EDDIE.** Then it would be difficult to follow the plot. Then it would be a different movie.

**ADAMS.** But you know this plot. You know this story. What about—

**EDDIE.** There is only one story. Only so many plots. And eventually they all end up the same place. This one I happen to like. Do you think you could let me watch it in peace.

**ADAMS.** Sorry.

*(They watch in silence. MAJOR ADAMS fidgets in his seat, finally speaking.)*

Speaking of letting things be at peace—why are you shooting at us, Eddie?

**EDDIE.** I don't want to talk about it now. I want to watch this movie. I thought you were the one so crazy about Susan Hayward.

**ADAMS.** I am. But it's hard to concentrate right now.

**EDDIE.** I thought you liked this movie.

**ADAMS.** I like Susan Hayward.

**EDDIE.** Oh.

**ADAMS.** I'm not sure if I like this movie all that much.

**EDDIE.** It bothers you that she misses the plane.

**ADAMS.** I suppose that's it.

*(Pause. They watch.)*

Some people might think my wife looks like Susan Hayward. If they're familiar with Susan Hayward.

**EDDIE.** Lucky man.

**ADAMS.** I'm not always sure I see it myself.

*(He is silent until he can't stand it anymore.)*

Damn it Eddie! You've got to talk to me about what's going on with you. We can't find a solution if we don't talk about it.

**EDDIE.** I told you the solution in my letter.

**ADAMS.** That's not a solution! I hope you know that I tore that letter up and threw it in the trash. I don't know what some people might think if they saw that letter. They might think you were crazy—that's what they might think.

**EDDIE.** I'm crazy and your wife looks like Susan Hayward. You should put more credence in what people might think.

**ADAMS.** But you're not crazy, Eddie. You're just being naive about the situation here. Either that or you're being perverse. You know about armies and wars and regulations better than I do. You're a career officer for God's sake. I'm just temporary help.

**EDDIE.** Get them all out. That's what your office is supposed to be doing, isn't it? I'm just suggesting that you speed things up.

**ADAMS.** We're just a processing center, Eddie. We process the incoming troops in and we process the outgoing troops out. It's just a clerical set up. We just do what we're supposed to do.

**EDDIE.** Stop letting them in.

**ADAMS.** It's not up to us to let them in. They're coming in. Somebody else has already let them in. The whole idea is nuts, and you know it! Any other time, and you'd be laughing yourself sick over such an idea.

**EDDIE.** I'm not laughing now. *(Pause.)* Am I?

**ADAMS.** I just don't understand what's going on here. I don't like feeling confused.

**EDDIE.** Confusion is uncomfortable. No one enjoys confusion. It's not painful perhaps, but it is certainly not comfortable.

**ADAMS.** Tell me what happened, Eddie. Let me help.

**EDDIE.** *(For a while he does not speak.)* Do you know what one thing my country is good for?

**ADAMS.** There are many wonderful things about your country, Eddie. It would be hard to choose just one thing. It's a charming country—it

used to be a charming country and it will be again. And it's a very important player in the evolution of world peace and stability. Of course, there's the drug thing...and the bombings—but—trade. There are lots of potential trade opportunities.

**EDDIE.** Bullshit!

*(Pause. MAJOR ADAMS is shocked.)*

Do I have the right word?

**ADAMS.** Bullshit? Eddie! I've never heard you use that kind of language before.

**EDDIE.** Sweet Potatoes.

**ADAMS.** Huh?

**EDDIE.** Sweet Potatoes.

**ADAMS.** Sweet Potatoes? I don't think I understand what—

**EDDIE.** My great-grandfather grew sweet potatoes. And his great-grandfather before him. They raised the most succulent variety. They knew just when to harvest them for exactly the right consistency of pulp.

**ADAMS.** Pulp?

**EDDIE.** My own grandmother could cook them at least a hundred different ways.

**ADAMS.** Well...I certainly had no idea you could do so much with a sweet potato.

**EDDIE.** She could brew a liquor that would immobilize a grown man.

**ADAMS.** Well!

**EDDIE.** If we had that liquor today, we could stop this war with no effort. We could just pass out rations of sweet potato wine to both sides. Everyone would be happy.

**ADAMS.** I don't know about that, Eddie—

**EDDIE.** But my grandmother is dead.

**ADAMS.** I'm sorry.

**EDDIE.** She would have been a hundred and twenty.

**ADAMS.** Well.

**EDDIE.** And the sweet potatoes are all gone.

**ADAMS.** Gone?

**EDDIE.** You can only drop so many bombs on a sweet potato field. It will bear only so many explosions.

*(Silence.)*

Look at that dress she's wearing. My nurse Evie would look nice in a dress like that. Evie! Do you like that dress?

*(EVIE does not move. Blackout.)*

#### **Scene 4**

*(The Enlisted Men's Mess. A long table is set up at which PFC. HAWKINS and CPL. MASON are sitting. A radio loudspeaker is constantly playing pop music behind the action. Every now and then the ANNOUNCER's voice intrudes over the action. CAPTAIN BATES enters with a tray. He hesitates, looking around. MASON spots him.)*

**MASON.** Captain Bates! Over here! Join us. Please.

**BATES.** *(Reluctantly:)* Well.

**MASON.** Come on. Sit down. Not much else you can do with the Officer's Mess closed down.

**BATES.** The sign said to come here.

**MASON.** Too many windows. After last night, nobody wants to go in there. It's a shame isn't it? You spend all that time in officer's training school just so you can have a pleasant atmosphere during breakfast and what happens? Of course you may have attended one of the Academies. Glad to see you got the scrambled eggs. The French toast is appalling.

**BATES.** All that shooting last night? What the hell was going on? I thought this nut closed down at 5:30?

**MASON.** Last night was a new wrinkle for the Doctor. I suspect that he's decided to escalate the hostilities. Maybe the Major said something to upset him.

**BATES.** Your Major was supposed to have it all sorted out.

**MASON.** And I'm sure he will. Give him time. It's not like anyone was getting hurt.

**BATES.** Government property is being destroyed.

**MASON.** *(Cheerfully:)* War sure is hell, ain't it? *(Pause and smile.)* Sir. Sorry I wasn't in the office yesterday. By some brilliant military maneuver I got put in charge of a cleanup detail. Probably that damn Smith's doing. She hates me.

**BATES.** I came back six times.

**MASON.** Hawkins, you should have told the Captain here I'd be out.

**HAWKINS.** I was with you, Ira.

**BATES.** A vital office was closed for an entire day because you were off clearing up rubble caused by that maniac. My time was wasted.

**MASON.** Don't you worry yourself. We'll find those old papers. You can go back to the front with confidence. We'll have you out of here in no time.

**BATES.** I've extended my leave. I've got plenty coming, and I'm not leaving this post until I have those papers in my hand.

**MASON.** I see.

**HAWKINS.** Maybe I can look for them this afternoon.

**ANNOUNCER'S VOICE.** That was Del Shannon, guys. Another blast from the past. You stay tuned in to that dial for all your old favorites, and don't forget we're going to have an update on the Memorial Day Weekend results for you right after these words from your friends at the United Nations.

**MASON.** Got your bet laid, Captain?

**BATES.** Bet?

**HAWKINS.** It's Memorial Day, sir, and we've gotten up a little—well, it's kind of like a lottery.

**BATES.** The only thing I'm betting on is that your Major is going to get himself into a lot of trouble over the way this base is being run.

**MASON.** Oh? Care to explain?

**BATES.** Not to an enlisted man. And speaking of which, you're going to be in some hot water yourself if you don't—

**MASON.** (*He has noticed MAJOR ADAMS entering:*) Major! Major! Over here.

**ADAMS.** (*Shyly joining them:*) Good morning, Ira. Pvt. Hawkins. How are you Captain Bates? Sorry about the inconvenience with the Officer's Mess, but I expect you'll be leaving us today anyway.

**BATES.** No. As a matter of fact, I'm not. I've decided to stay on.

**MASON.** I keep telling him he'd get more sleep upcountry.

**ANNOUNCER'S VOICE.** Well, you "Day of the Dead" lottery maniacs! Are you ready for the latest holiday weekend update? I've got it coming right up after this message from our sponsors.

**HAWKINS.** It sure doesn't seem like a holiday does it?

**MASON.** Since when has Memorial Day ever seemed like a holiday?

**BATES.** You know, I actually went to the 500 with my dad when I was a kid.

**MASON.** No kidding?

**SMITH.** (*Passing their table with a tray:*) Hey Ira? Who you got?

**MASON.** New York by 15.

**HAWKINS.** I've got Montana.

**MASON.** You would.

**SMITH.** Not a prayer. California—you'll see. Those freeways, man—no contest.

**ANNOUNCER'S VOICE.** Only eight hours into the weekend, and Pennsylvania has taken a strong lead.

**MASON.** That's ridiculous! Pennsylvania? You got to be kidding me.

**ADAMS.** I'm from Pennsylvania!

**ANNOUNCER'S VOICE.** With a six car pile up on the Pennsylvania Turnpike, an early report shows eight fatalities putting that state into a clear lead over the other forty-nine.

**HAWKINS.** You know, it's not really fair that they don't include Puerto Rico.

**SMITH.** (*Moving on:*) You crazy? They don't have cars in Puerto Rico.

**HAWKINS.** They do, don't they, Ira?

**MASON.** Well, I'm not worried. New York will catch up. You watch.

**HAWKINS.** There are seat belt laws now, Ira. All over. It's not the same.

**BATES.** This is sick. This is worse than sick.

**MASON.** I agree. Sick is a totally inadequate term for it.

**ADAMS.** It's interesting, actually. The effect that constant association with death can sometimes bring about: a kind of detachment that allows—

**BATES.** May I see you in your office this morning, Major?

**ADAMS.** Why, certainly. I suppose. But if it's anything that Ira can help you with—

**BATES.** I need to speak with you personally, Major.

**ADAMS.** Oh. All right. I'll be gone most of this afternoon, but a little later this morning should be—

**ANNOUNCER'S VOICE.** Hold it, guys! You won't believe this. A hot flash. A school bus has overturned on Interstate Seventy in Ohio. Happy picnickers on their way to—

*(Voice and lights fade.)*

**Scene 5**

*(Inquiry Court again. This time it is CAPTAIN BATES who is seated behind the railing. PVT. SMITH takes notes. COUNSEL stands as before.)*

**COUNSEL.** Captain Bates. You were present during the events under investigation here, were you not?

**BATES.** I was.

**COUNSEL.** Tell us, Captain Bates, was there anything in Major Adams' behavior during this time that struck you as unusual?

**BATES.** There certainly was.

**COUNSEL.** Would you please elaborate on the nature of this unusual behavior?

**BATES.** Major Adams was incompetent. He was not in control of his own men or the situation. He seemed oblivious to everything that was going on in his own command.

**COUNSEL.** You are referring to his attitude toward the attacks on the base?

**BATES.** I'm referring to everything. The attacks were one thing. In a way that wasn't the real problem although he needed to take a stronger stand. I could see that right away. He didn't seem to realize what a volatile situation he had on his hands. But it wasn't just the attacks. It was everything. The processing center was a disgrace.

**COUNSEL.** Please explain that.

**BATES.** Well, take my case. I was due to be sent back home. Ordinarily, I would have had another six months to serve, but there were special circumstances. I was eligible for an early out, and I had applied for one. And that was the trouble—

**COUNSEL.** Could you please just describe the situation you encountered?

**BATES.** They kept losing my papers.

**COUNSEL.** Losing?

**BATES.** Well, that implies that they ever had them to begin with. I had my doubts. I mean, I sent in everything I was supposed to. I had done my part. Those papers had to be there. All they had to do was process them. That's what they were there for—to process my papers.

**COUNSEL.** They must have had more to worry about than just your papers.

**BATES.** I wasn't the only one. I know that for a fact. I've heard things—other complaints. That's why I went down there myself.

**COUNSEL.** The processing center was under attack at this time. Do you think that could have affected their standard of efficiency?

**BATES.** The attacks had nothing to do with it. It was that Corporal. That Mason. He was deliberately holding on to my papers.

*(Lights up suddenly on MASON who has leaped to his feet.)*

**MASON.** That's conjecture!

**COUNSEL.** Please sit down, Corporal, or you will be removed. We are trying to get at the heart of a serious matter here.

*(MASON sits reluctantly.)*

**BATES.** You see, I think that what happened here was part of an overall attitude of laxity and incompetence. It wouldn't have happened at all if the Major had been on the ball—if he'd had any clue at all as to what was going on. That screwball who was shooting at them had to know what a joke he was.

**COUNSEL.** You feel that Major Adams was not in touch with the overall situation?

**BATES.** I don't think the guy was in touch with reality. If you ask me, he was as dangerous as the idiot lobbing grenades.

**COUNSEL.** What makes you say that?

**BATES.** Well, dammit, he went to the damn movies with the guy who was shooting at him! What does that tell you?

**COUNSEL.** Did he offer any explanation as to why he went to the movies with Col. Savat?

**BATES.** He said he was analyzing the situation. “Analyzing the situation,” hah! He was probably in cahoots with him.

**COUNSEL.** You are accusing the Major of treason?

**BATES.** Well. No. I don’t know about treason. I just know he didn’t want the guy to get into trouble.

**COUNSEL.** Was that reasonable?

**BATES.** Reasonable? Does it make sense to go look at movies with a guy who’s shooting at you? What was he going to accomplish doing that?

**COUNSEL.** That’s what we’re trying to understand here.

**BATES.** What’s to understand? The guy was nuts!

**COUNSEL.** Col. Savat?

**BATES.** No. I mean, well maybe Savat was crazy too, but I’m talking about Major Adams. I know crazy when I see it, and the Major was a nutcase.

*(Lights fade.)*

## **Scene 6**

*(The Major’s office. MAJOR ADAMS sits at his desk looking perplexed. He is sorting through piles of official-looking paper. There is a knock on the door. CAPTAIN BATES can be seen knocking from the main office. MASON and HAWKINS sit in shadowy light working at their desks. During the following scene, they will occasionally be seen to eavesdrop on the conversation.)*

**ADAMS.** Yes? Come in.

**BATES.** *(Enters stiffly and salutes.)* Major Adams, sir!

**ADAMS.** Yes? What is it?

**BATES.** Captain Matthew Bates, sir.

**ADAMS.** I know, Captain.

*(Pause as the MAJOR gazes at the Captain expectantly. He notices that BATES is still standing at attention. This at first puzzles him, then realization dawns.)*

At ease, Captain. I'm sorry. I'm never sure with another officer what the exact protocol is.

**BATES.** Thank you sir.

**ADAMS.** *(Smiles encouragingly:)* Yes?

**BATES.** You said I could speak with you, sir.

**ADAMS.** I remember. Have a seat, Captain. Let me clear those journals away. Things get so cluttered around here. Not enough filing cabinets for everything. There we are. Sit. How can I help you?

**BATES.** *(Remains standing somewhat stiffly:)* It's my papers, sir.

**ADAMS.** Yes?

**BATES.** I want you to order that Corporal of yours to stop holding them up.

**ADAMS.** I'm not sure I understand.

**BATES.** That Corporal out there in the office. Mason. He has all the necessary paperwork done. I know he does. He just has to stamp it completed and issue my orders.

**ADAMS.** And what orders are these?

**BATES.** I've applied for a transfer out of here, sir, an early reassignment to civilian duty. If you have a good reason, and you've served the right amount of time—well, you must be familiar with all that.

**ADAMS.** You'd think so, wouldn't you? I don't think I've ever heard of civilian duty.

**BATES.** It means that I get out of the army, sir.

**ADAMS.** Oh. *(It dawns on him.)* Oh! Of course, I see. Is this a hardship case?

**BATES.** Well, it's not exactly a hardship case. You don't need to be a hardship case. You just need to prove that you have to get back to your

job or you've got another commitment someplace. And that you've put in enough time overseas.

**ADAMS.** And the army just lets you out? Isn't that something?

**BATES.** Well. They don't just "let you out." You have to have served enough time. You have to have a real commitment.

**ADAMS.** Just not to the army?

**BATES.** Uh. No.

**ADAMS.** So you just want to go home?

**BATES.** Uh...yes. And I can't do that without my orders.

**ADAMS.** Well, the Corporal should issue them.

**BATES.** (*Petulantly:*) But he won't. He's holding them up.

**ADAMS.** Has he told you why? The regulations are complicated.

**BATES.** He doesn't like me.

**ADAMS.** He doesn't? Why not?

**BATES.** It doesn't matter why not—he's not allowed to hold up my orders because he doesn't like me.

**ADAMS.** He isn't?

**BATES.** Of course not! I've served my basic time. I want to go home.

**ADAMS.** How long have you been here?

**BATES.** Eighteen months and three weeks.

**ADAMS.** That's a long time.

**BATES.** I've done my share. I'm three weeks overdue.

**ADAMS.** Of course you are. (*Pause.*) And now, you want to go home.

**BATES.** That's what I'm saying, sir.

**ADAMS.** Well, I'll certainly try talking to the Corporal.

**BATES.** Try? Just order him to do it.

**ADAMS.** It might not be that simple.

**BATES.** You're the Command Officer here. Just tell him what to do.

**ADAMS.** You see. *(Pause.)* He doesn't seem to like me much either. I don't know why. I've been trying to analyze the difficulty. It seems that I've done something to annoy him—or perhaps not done something that has annoyed him just as much. Or perhaps I stand for some kind of authority issue that he—

**BATES.** Hold on, Major. You're not making any sense.

**ADAMS.** Oh, you're absolutely right. Most people do like me. I pride myself on being helpful and understanding. I'm nice. My behavior is almost always uniformly "nice." My wife says I'm too nice, but—

**BATES.** You're in command here, sir. You don't have to be nice. You just have to go in there and tell him what to do.

**ADAMS.** Well, yes. Technically that's true. But I don't know how that would help much in solving the basic underlying behavior here. Nor would it help me to modify my own behavior in the future. You really have to understand the elements of—

**BATES.** You don't have to understand the elements of shit, if you don't mind my saying so, sir. You just have to tell him what to do, and then if he doesn't do it, you can have his ass court-martialed for disobeying orders. *(Pause.)* Sir.

**ADAMS.** But what real good would that accomplish? It wouldn't help me to understand my part in the situation or what I could do differently next time. What if I get a new Corporal and he's just as difficult. I wouldn't have learned anything about human nature. It wouldn't help—

**BATES.** It would force that lousy little weasel to get my papers processed! It would get me home!

**ADAMS.** Home. It keeps coming back to home, doesn't it?

**BATES.** It keeps coming back to people doing what they are supposed to be doing. It keeps coming back to the fact that we've got a war on here, Major, and somebody's got to be in charge. Or—or...or fuck it! I'm sorry. But you go on like this and things just fall apart.

**ADAMS.** It's the center that has to hold, isn't it Captain?

**BATES.** That's what I'm saying.

**ADAMS.** The center. The home. The heart of the difficulty. Are you aware that the sweet potato industry has been wiped out here? Sweet potatoes might never grow again.

**BATES.** Excuse me, sir?

**ADAMS.** That's what Eddie told me, and Eddie is in a position to know.

**BATES.** Eddie? That's the guy from the hospital, isn't it? The Doctor who's shooting at us? Doctor my ass! Some Doctor! He should be shot!

**ADAMS.** He just wants all this to be over with. He wants to go home. He's gotten it into his head that we're the ones keeping it going. If we left, the killing would stop. It's rather like the victim of a crime resenting the policeman who's trying to protect him. That's what they said at the last military symposium I attended. *(Pause.)* They want us to humanize our presence here. *(Shorter pause.)* That was a while ago.

**BATES.** He's firing on your post! Something has to be done.

**ADAMS.** He just wants us all to go home. You of all people should sympathize with that.

**BATES.** This is not a rational conversation we are having here.

**ADAMS.** No. I don't suppose it is. On the surface. Yet, you know, I think I am beginning to see a pattern here. I am beginning to understand a few things.

**BATES.** Well, I'm glad you are because I don't understand shit. *(Pause.)* Sorry, sir.

**ADAMS.** Quite all right. I was just thinking. You and Eddie have a lot in common.

**BATES.** What!

**ADAMS.** Your goals are quite similar in a number of ways.

**BATES.** What the hell are you saying?

**ADAMS.** The Corporal stands for the governmental bureaucracy that keeps this war going. You want to go home and Eddie wants his sweet potatoes back.

**BATES.** There is nothing similar in our situation whatsoever.

**ADAMS.** Eddie opens fire on his perceived enemy. You want the Corporal shot. I think there's an interesting parallel there, don't you?

**BATES.** I didn't say I wanted the Corporal shot!

**ADAMS.** Oh?

**BATES.** I want him court-martialed. There's a big difference.

**ADAMS.** I don't know—disobeying orders in wartime. They might shoot him.

**BATES.** I don't believe this! I don't believe this whole thing. I feel that I should warn you right now that I have every intention of going over your head on this.

**ADAMS.** There you see? That's what Eddie wants too. He wants a confrontation with those who are responsible. Do you think that this is another parallel? That might be stretching it a bit.

*(The shooting starts up in the distance. In the outer office, HAWKINS moves his typewriter under the desk and continues working. MASON checks his watch and crawls across the floor to get a cup of coffee. The MAJOR and BATES seem unaware of what is going on.)*

**BATES.** I give up. This is too nuts to even consider. But let me make this one thing clear. I am giving you one chance to get that snot nosed Corporal in line, and if you don't, I'm reporting this back to headquarters. All of it! The Corporal...the Doctor...you! Do I make myself clear?

**ADAMS.** That's what's so comforting about you, Captain. You seem so clear about things. Is there anything else?

**BATES.** Well—uh, no.

**ADAMS.** You've helped me enormously, you know. In your own—

*(Window glass shatters, a grenade bounces into the room. BATES dives for it, grabs it and heaves it back out the window. Explosion off. Plaster falls. BATES and the MAJOR have taken cover. HAWKINS and MASON have thrown themselves flat. They will only gradually return to near normal.)*

**BATES.** Jesus H. Christ!

**ADAMS.** (*Shaken:*) That was good work, Captain. Thank you.

**BATES.** I thought this son of a bitch was your pal?

*(They cautiously edge out from under whatever shelter they have taken. There is gunfire in the distance.)*

**ADAMS.** I don't know if "pal" is the right word. But we are friends. This just tells me how serious he is about his demands. And he might not have expected me to be at my desk working. I'm often out at this time of day. I like to take a stroll around the base sometimes.

**BATES.** Stroll?

**ADAMS.** I don't deal very well with administrative duties. I would be much better off in a lab somewhere. I tried to make them understand that.

**BATES.** You've got a lot to contend with here, sir. You need help.

**ADAMS.** That's very kind of you, Captain, but you know, I really think I can deal with this problem of Eddie. I'm a behavioralist you know.

**BATES.** A shrink?

**ADAMS.** Oh no. Nothing like that. I always worked best analyzing behavioral data. And, here, I just don't have enough. There are variables which I don't have at the moment. I'm sure that this escalation of negative behavior on Eddie's part can be understood and corrected, but not without the data. I have to get the data.

**BATES.** You don't need a lot of data, Major. This guy is bananas.

**ADAMS.** But even if he is "bananas," as you say, there should be some way to predict his behavior.

*(More gunfire—an explosion or two, followed by silence.)*

To a certain extent. But then that's the problem isn't it? Predicting behavior.

*(He stands and surveys the damage. Then turns and helps BATES to his feet.)*

Take the Corporal. Perhaps if we tell him he's going to be shot if he doesn't process your orders, that will do the trick. Then again, it might just make him more...difficult. Getting you home is our goal here. Maybe I should just sneak in this evening and process those orders myself.

**BATES.** Major Adams. This whole situation is screwy. You know that don't you?

**ADAMS.** *(Preparing to leave the office:)* Oh yes, Captain. I know it very well.

**CAPTAIN.** Where are you going?

**ADAMS.** Data, Captain. I am going in search of more data.

*(BATES watches as the MAJOR exits. Gunfire in distance. Lights fade)*

### Scene 7

*(At the Rialto. There are four folding chairs. Two in front; two in back. The MAJOR is sitting behind and to the right of EDDIE. He leans forward and folds his arms on the chair in front of him.)*

**ADAMS.** I can't let things continue like this, Eddie. I'm going to have to do something.

**EDDIE.** I told you what to do.

**ADAMS.** Eddie! You know that I can't—

**EDDIE.** Shhh. You make too much noise. You'll be asked to leave.

**ADAMS.** Who's going to ask me to leave, Eddie? Who? We're the only ones here. We're always the only ones here.

**EDDIE.** I'll ask you to leave. I can't hear a thing William Holden is saying.

**ADAMS.** You can't hear him because the sound projector isn't working.

**EDDIE.** I like to think I could hear him if it did.

**ADAMS.** You threw a grenade at me.

**EDDIE.** I did no such thing.

**ADAMS.** Somebody threw a grenade at me, Eddie. If it wasn't you it was one of your people.

**EDDIE.** What were you doing there? You should have been somewhere else. I didn't think you would be there.

**ADAMS.** But I could have been there—for gosh sakes I was there!

**EDDIE.** You should just leave. You should go away altogether and take your army with you.

**ADAMS.** It's not *my* army, Eddie. I'm not even supposed to be here. I'm supposed to be at an army research center watching rats die from poisonous gas. That's where they told me I'd be going.

**EDDIE.** Then it's their fault if I threw a grenade at you.

**ADAMS.** You said you didn't throw it.

**EDDIE.** "They" said you'd get to kill rats. Strange world. No one can be trusted.

*(There is a long pause.)*

**ADAMS.** I don't think my wife loves me any more.

**EDDIE.** Because you don't kill rats or because you can't be trusted.

**ADAMS.** Because I'm not there.

**EDDIE.** So stop this war, and you can go home to her.

**ADAMS.** I'm getting very upset with you Eddie. I don't think you're taking all this very seriously.

**EDDIE.** I always take love seriously.

**ADAMS.** Sooner or later, someone is going to get hurt.

**EDDIE.** So, don't make me have to go on.

**ADAMS.** Oh no! Oh no, you don't. You can't blame me for all this. You know darn good and well that I can't just process the army out of your country. I don't have that kind of power.

**EDDIE.** No one would even know you were doing it.

**ADAMS.** They would notice a thing like that, Eddie! You think they wouldn't notice me demobilizing an entire army. You think the

Congress wouldn't wonder why the forces they deployed weren't here anymore?

**EDDIE.** Perhaps they would be glad.

**ADAMS.** If they caught me doing something like that, they'd court-martial me. Me and Cpl. Mason. We'd go down together.

**EDDIE.** Who is Cpl. Mason?

**ADAMS.** He's this kid in my command. He has no respect for authority. He won't even process people out when they're supposed to go.

**EDDIE.** Kill him. Then process your whole damn army out of my country.

**ADAMS.** Jeez, Eddie. They'd probably kill me for doing something like that.

**EDDIE.** I might kill you if you don't, and I would hate that very much.

**ADAMS.** You're putting me in a position where I am going to have to do something. I'm going to have to tell someone what you are doing. The next time you start shooting at us, I'm going to have to shoot back.

**EDDIE.** Now you are talking like a military man. I'm proud of you.

**ADAMS.** I have more men. More guns. Hell, half the time you're just riding around on the hood of your jeep. One man could pick you off.

**EDDIE.** Yes.

**ADAMS.** Damn it! You ought to be more careful.

**EDDIE.** Yes.

**ADAMS.** More organized.

**EDDIE.** Yes! You are definitely right. How should I go about organizing?

**ADAMS.** Well...you should have a plan. And you ought to be more circumspect. I mean everyone in the compound knows it's you shooting at us. If they weren't taking bets on traffic fatalities in Pennsylvania, they'd probably be taking bets on how long it takes the army to get

---

around to killing you. If you want to accomplish something, you should go about it more professionally.

**EDDIE.** Just as you would with the rats?

*(Pause.)*

**ADAMS.** How'd we end up here, Eddie? How did we end up having this conversation.

**EDDIE.** You think this is a conversation?

**ADAMS.** I'm a fucking psychologist for Chrissakes! You're a surgeon. What the hell are we doing here?

**EDDIE.** Perhaps we just ran out of time. *(Pause.)* Do you know how long this war has been going on?

**ADAMS.** Well, I know that our involvement started about three years ago, when the United Nations—

**EDDIE.** Nine hundred years.

**ADAMS.** Huh?

**EDDIE.** This war began 900 years ago. The tribes to the north of here had famine. They lusted after the sweet potatoes of the south.

**ADAMS.** Here we go with the sweet potatoes again! I know all about the sweet potatoes, Eddie.

**EDDIE.** You know nothing about sweet potatoes. You know nothing about this war.

**ADAMS.** So, why don't you tell me about it, Eddie. Instead of making cryptic remarks.

**EDDIE.** You want me to tell you the whole story?

**ADAMS.** If it would help me understand what you're doing. Yes. I'd like to hear the whole story.

**EDDIE.** It would take too long. Look! They're letting Alec Guinness out of the cage. I have always admired this part.

**ADAMS.** Tell me the story, Eddie!

**EDDIE.** You won't stop will you?

**ADAMS.** Should I move up there beside you?

**EDDIE.** No. Stay where you are. Watch the movie screen. Watch Alec Guinness define the British Empire. He does an excellent job. *(Takes a deep breath:)* As I said, we have been at war for nine hundred years, give or take a few decades. This time they are calling it a *civil* war. But it is the same damn war. Rebels. Outlaws. Warlords. Whatever. This time, they say the rebels started it. They're very tricky those rebels and blood thirsty.

**ADAMS.** I suppose if you're a rebel, you have to be.

**EDDIE.** We know that they are tricky and blood thirsty, because that is why the government has to kill every last one of them. The government is very tricky too. In fact, this war is very good fun for everyone concerned. The rebels get to be heroes and martyrs, and the government gets to use all these new weapons that your government keeps giving them. They all tell themselves it is all for honor—like the Japanese officer in this film. But I think that really everyone's just having a very good time.

**ADAMS.** I can't believe that, Eddie.

**EDDIE.** You should, Ben. You should believe every word of it. We say that war is hell, but until you are blown apart, it always seems like a very good time. You make up patriotic songs about it. That's why wars don't stop. The ones who don't get killed or maimed, or see the ones they love get killed or maimed—they never quite get what is going on. Even those who see. They don't always know.

**ADAMS.** You haven't been killed or maimed, Eddie.

**EDDIE.** And I didn't understand. Not four years ago. Not even last week. Terrible things happened, but I still didn't understand.

**ADAMS.** What happened, Eddie?

**EDDIE.** Another time, my friend. I refuse to talk any more. I have to watch this movie.

**ADAMS.** Eddie!

*(He starts to move up beside EDDIE but sees the look on his friend's face and stops. He rests his arms on the back of the chair in front of him and watches the movie.)*

Do you think he'll build the bridge?

**EDDIE.** He always does.

*(Lights fade.)*

### Scene 8

*(Downstage left. MASON and HAWKINS stand a little apart from one another. They are dressed in battle fatigues. MASON holds a gun in front of him. HAWKINS stands aiming a camera at him.)*

**MASON.** I look stupid holding a gun.

**HAWKINS.** Hold still! *(Snaps picture.)* O.K. Now hold it as if you were getting ready to shoot it.

**MASON.** No.

**HAWKINS.** Come on. You can send it to your wife. It will impress her.

**MASON.** She won't believe it's me. She'll think I superimposed my face onto someone else.

**HAWKINS.** Maybe she'll write to you when she sees it. Maybe she'll think you're somebody else.

**MASON.** Thanks a whole hell of a lot, Hawkins. You are improving my morale just no end. I don't know how you ever fooled everyone into believing you're just this sweet fresh faced kid from the country.

**HAWKINS.** I am a sweet fresh faced kid from the country.

**MASON.** Yeah?

**HAWKINS.** And that's why I think you should get these pictures developed and send them to your wife. And send her a present too. If you send her a nice scarf or one of those dress things the girls in town wear, I bet she would break her arm writing to you. Maybe we should take some pictures of you and your gun with some of the girls in town.

**MASON.** If you weren't flesh and blood, Hawkins, someone would have to make you up.

**HAWKINS.** Major Adams sends his wife presents all the time. Smith always wraps them up for him.

**MASON.** His wife doesn't write to him either.

**HAWKINS.** But I bet she likes the presents. Here, give me the gun and you take my picture. I want to send it to my mother.

*(They exchange gun for camera.)*

**MASON.** I can't believe they mean for us to stand guard.

**HAWKINS.** You heard the Major's orders. Everyone does double duty till the Doctor stops shooting at us.

**MASON.** It's that goddamn Bates' fault. Getting the Major all worried. If he didn't keep sticking his nose in—hey! Don't look like you're enjoying yourself so much! Stick your chin out. You're here to kill a bunch of foreigners not some goddamn gray squirrel. Stop grinning!

**HAWKINS.** Did I ever tell you about the time my uncle and I went—

**MASON.** Shut up!

**HAWKINS.** Anyhow, I hope I don't have to shoot at anybody. Major Adams said we weren't supposed to shoot at anybody. He just said we should look like we "might" shoot at somebody, but not just anybody.

**MASON.** What part of "shut up" don't you understand? *(Snaps picture.)* There! And if we're not supposed to shoot at anyone why the fuck are we standing guard?

**HAWKINS.** So Captain Bates won't make a report.

**MASON.** So, it's Bates again!

**HAWKINS.** I hope nobody shoots at me. I'd hate it if somebody started shooting at me.

**MASON.** They aren't very good shots. Except for Evie. I bet she's good. Can't you just see her opening fire on you with a machine gun? Hell, I wouldn't mind dying if that was the last thing I saw.

**HAWKINS.** It must be awful to be at the front. To really be shooting people all the time. You ought to let Captain Bates go home before he gets us all into trouble.

**MASON.** I will.

**HAWKINS.** You will?

**MASON.** (*Snapping another picture:*) When I'm damn good and ready.

*(Lights fade.)*

### Scene 9

*(At the Rialto. The MAJOR and EDDIE are sitting side by side again on the front row.)*

**ADAMS.** This was Grace Kelly's first movie role. Did you know?

**EDDIE.** I think it was her second.

**ADAMS.** Oh?

**EDDIE.** She isn't very good.

**ADAMS.** No. *(Pause.)* She's not. I think she was seventeen maybe.

**EDDIE.** Maybe you're not ready to be good yet when you are seventeen.

**ADAMS.** Gary Cooper's too old for her.

**EDDIE.** She's too young for him. That's why she doesn't understand anything.

**ADAMS.** Like me?

**EDDIE.** You're not all that young.

*(Pause.)*

**ADAMS.** I've been thinking, Eddie. What good will it do getting rid of us? From what you said the war will just go on the same way for another nine hundred years.

**EDDIE.** I'd feel better about things. After so many years of doing nothing, I will have done something.

**ADAMS.** You've done a lot Eddie. You've saved lives. You've sacrificed for your country.

**EDDIE.** I want to watch this movie.

**ADAMS.** We saw it just last month.

**EDDIE.** Not today, we didn't.

*(Pause.)*

**ADAMS.** You said that terrible things happened, Eddie. Would you like to talk about it?

**EDDIE.** No. *(He pauses. He eats more popcorn.)* This is very good today. They got it fresh for once. You should try some.

**ADAMS.** The kernels stick in my teeth. I'm afraid I'll lose a filling.

**EDDIE.** It's very good. Some things are worth the risk. Learn from Gary Cooper.

**ADAMS.** Tell me about the terrible things.

**EDDIE.** I would rather watch Grace Kelly succeed at being beautiful. Perhaps that's all that's important when you are seventeen.

**ADAMS.** Do you have children?

**EDDIE.** A son. I had a son.

**ADAMS.** My Corporal is only twenty.

**EDDIE.** What Corporal?

**ADAMS.** The one in my office. Captain Bates wants me to shoot him.

**EDDIE.** Shall I do it for you?

*(Lights fade.)*

### **Scene 10**

*(The Courtroom. The nurse named EVIE is seated behind the railing. COUNSEL and HAWKINS are in their usual places.)*

**COUNSEL.** You had a long-standing relationship with Colonel Savat, did you not, ma'am?

**EVIE.** "Lieutenant."

**COUNSEL.** Excuse me?

**EVIE.** My rank is Lieutenant. You may address me as Lieutenant.

**COUNSEL.** Uh. Sorry. Right. Lieutenant. Would you answer the question?

**EVIE.** You mean the question or the innuendo?

**COUNSEL.** Please. I was just asking whether or not it was true that you had known the Colonel for a long time?

**EVIE.** Colonel Savat was my friend and my commanding officer since I have been in the army. He was my father's friend. It was because of him that I became a nurse. If you are implying that there was anything else between us, you are mistaken.

**COUNSEL.** I assure you that I—

**EVIE.** That's enough! What is it you really wish to know?

**COUNSEL.** As you know we are attempting here to determine exactly what happened during the incident in question.

**EVIE.** You mean the assassination of Dr. Savat?

**COUNSEL.** Dr. Savat's unfortunate fate in this situation is one of the questions under consideration.

**EVIE.** And what do you expect from me?

**COUNSEL.** I want you to stop asking me questions and start answering mine. Were you a part of the attacks on the processing center?

**EVIE.** I was present.

**COUNSEL.** In what capacity?

**EVIE.** I was there to look after my patients.

**COUNSEL.** Your patients?

**EVIE.** Some of them went with the Doctor. They believed in him. They believed in what he was doing?

**COUNSEL.** They believed in him?

**EVIE.** They believed he was a good man. They believed he could stop the war.

**COUNSEL.** And you?

**EVIE.** I believed he was a saint. I did not believe he could stop the war.

**COUNSEL.** Can you tell us anything more about him? Why do you call him a saint?

**EVIE.** I exaggerate, I suppose. He was a very good man. He had suffered much. He did not complain. But there were no miracles.

**COUNSEL.** Did you share Dr. Savat's political beliefs?

**EVIE.** If you knew Dr. Savat, you would know what a stupid question that is. Dr. Savat had no political beliefs. He believed in saving lives.

**COUNSEL.** He was a Colonel in the Republican Army.

**EVIE.** That is where the most lives were being lost.

*(A pause.)*

**COUNSEL.** You were educated abroad?

**EVIE.** What does that have to do with anything? What have your questions to do with me? Or with Dr. Savat? I will not speak to you any further.

**COUNSEL.** I could force you to talk, Lieutenant. There are still charges that could be brought against you.

**EVIE.** Bring them!

**COUNSEL.** And posthumously against Col. Savat.

**EVIE.** Prosecuting a dead man seems to be in order here.

**COUNSEL.** No one is prosecuting anyone! This is an inquiry. Wouldn't it be better to clear Dr. Savat's name? *(She doesn't answer.)* Please. Can you help us understand?

*(EVIE glares at COUNSEL. As she speaks the general lights on the courtroom scene go down except for one on her. She stands.)*

**EVIE.** Three years ago. A little more than three years ago, we were working in the capital city. It's a beautiful city, you know. It was. It was my first assignment. Dr. Savat was very kind to us all. We were in the best hospital in the country. This was not saying a great deal. There weren't that many surgeons or nurses in the army. Those of us that there were worked long hours. This was just about the time that the civil war was starting. There were shootings and bombing incidents here and there. The government blamed the terrorists. The terrorists blamed the government. The casualties were the same in any case. *(Pause.)* One day a bomb exploded in a cafe.

*(Lights go out completely, there is a sudden flash of light, the sound of an explosion then blackout. The lights come up first on EDDIE, dressed in surgical garb then on EVIE. He is reviewing a chart in his hand. At first EVIE stands apart as a witness and still speaks to the court.)*

**EVIE.** Twenty-three people were brought to the hospital emergency room. Some were dead already—they had died on the way. Others were merely in the process of dying. It was terrible. And it was hot. But it was the third cafe that week. We were getting used to it.

*(Pause.)*

Some were pensioners, but mostly they were young. They had all been sitting there in the Cafe Blanc in the summer sun, reading, talking, laughing and calling out to their friends passing on the street. There was to be a demonstration in the evening. Then. A flash of fire against the sun...and the screams began...and the sirens. We stood by at the hospital with tubes and glucose and saline and morphine. It was the best that we could do.

*(Abruptly EDDIE turns to her and she moves to meet him.)*

**EDDIE.** Evie! That one they just brought in. Get an IV running. She's in shock, and the old man—get him into number seven!

*(To the Court as EDDIE goes over chart in his hand:)*

**EVIE.** Dr. Savat's first job was to pass from one to the next. There were more than we were equipped to handle all at one time. He had to determine who got treated first. Who had the best chance of surviving. Some were salvageable. Some were not. Like auto parts.

*(She turns to him:)*

What about the one on the gurney?

**EDDIE.** What?

**EVIE.** The boy on the gurney by the doors.

*(To the Court:)*

I called it a boy. It was not yet a body, but the face had been blown away by the blast. The top of the head was smashed. One arm hung by a sliver of skin. The legs were completely crushed, but—it was breathing. *He* was breathing. Somehow he was breathing. We might

have saved him. It was not likely, of course, and, if we had, what kind of life would be possible for him?

**EDDIE.** We can't do anything for him—not with those kinds of injuries. We aren't equipped. Damn it's hot! (*Shouts as if to someone nearby.*) Can't we do anything about these Goddamn flies? (*To Evie:*) Try to get the flies off him and give him 450 mg of morphine although where he's gone I doubt he needs it. (*Shouting again as he moves right into shadows:*) Don't put her there! Those idiots will trample her there!

**EVIE.** (*To the Court:*) We didn't even know the boy's name. I gave him the injection and pushed the gurney to one side and moved on. There were twenty-three people dying. We did what we could. Later, when the worst of the crisis had passed, I sat down with Dr. Savat to do the paperwork. We went over the list that the police had compiled. They even had supplied us with a diagram—the couple by the terrace, the group nearest the kitchen, the boy of twenty who had been sitting by the front window, whose skull was crushed, whose legs were broken in a thousand pieces, whose arm hung by a thread—his name was Thomas Savat. He was Dr. Savat's son.

*(The lights return to normal. EVIE takes her seat again. COUNSEL is obviously moved.)*

**COUNSEL.** There was nothing Dr. Savat could have done to save his son, was there?

**EVIE.** No.

**COUNSEL.** But did he question his judgment?

**EVIE.** He left his only son to die. Would you have questioned yours?

**COUNSEL.** How did he react? Did he grieve? Do you think that what happened here was due to delayed stress?

**EVIE.** I remember that he wondered whether he would have taken more time with the victims of an automobile accident—a bus disaster. I don't think he blamed himself because the boy died. I think he felt...pain. I think he felt pain that the boy died alone.

**COUNSEL.** And do you think that had a bearing on the events that led up to Dr. Savat's death?

**EVIE.** No. The Doctor went back to work. There were more bodies and more injured. The next day and the next.

**COUNSEL.** So, you don't think the two events were related? That the boy's death contributed to Doctor Savat's breakdown.

**EVIE.** Dr. Savat did not break down. Dr. Savat was murdered. That man murdered him!

**COUNSEL.** What man?

**EVIE.** Please. I cannot talk about this anymore!

**HAWKINS.** *(Interrupting:)* Uh, excuse me. I think she means Colonel Hastings, sir. The one that Captain Bates brought in.

*(Lights fade.)*

### Scene 11

*(The office. MASON and HAWKINS are at work. They are both still dressed in fatigues.)*

**MASON.** Damn! I can't type in these boots.

**HAWKINS.** I don't understand why your boots have anything to do with your typing.

**MASON.** My boots have everything to do with my typing. The idea that I have on military boots as if I was expected to stomp all over someone instead of just typing up reports on enemy flow. I should be wearing the appropriate standard issue dress shoes.

*(The door opens and CAPTAIN BATES enters. He is followed by a very official-looking older man in the uniform of a colonel. This is COLONEL HASTINGS. HAWKINS starts to send a friendly wave to BATES when he notices the senior officer. He leaps to attention. MASON will reluctantly join him.)*

**HAWKINS.** 'Tension!

**BATES.** *(Muttering:)* They've never saluted me.

**HASTINGS.** You don't know how to command respect, Captain. You can't just expect your men to give it to you. You've got to earn it. *(Pause as he admires the young men's rigidity.)* At ease, men.

**HAWKINS.** Thank you, sir!

*(He is still standing rather rigidly until MASON prods him to sit down.)*

**MASON.** How can we help you...Colonel...sir?

**HASTINGS.** I want to talk with Major Adams.

**MASON.** He's not here. *(Pause.)* Sir.

**HASTINGS.** Not here? I informed him that I was coming. Where is he?

**HAWKINS.** He's talking to Doctor Savat, sir.

**HASTINGS.** Savat? Savat? *(To Bates:)* He's the one you called me about? The one supposed to be shooting up the place?

**BATES.** Yes, sir!

**HASTINGS.** Well, now, it would seem that the Major is right on top of things. From what you said—well, never mind. Just as well to check these things out. Where are they negotiating, Private? At the stockade?

**HAWKINS.** No, sir.

**HASTINGS.** No?

**HAWKINS.** We don't have a stockade—not really.

**MASON.** They're at the Rialto. *(Pause.)* Sir.

**HASTINGS.** Where?

**MASON.** The Rialto. It's a theatre in town. It's an interesting piece of retro—

**BATES.** It's what I said, sir! What I was telling you about. They're at the movies. He's gone to the movies with the bastard again.

**HASTINGS.** What the hell are they doing at the movies?

**HAWKINS.** That's where the Doctor goes every afternoon—at least since the shooting began. If there aren't any new wounded. He doesn't want to go anywhere else, and the Major can always find him there.

**MASON.** It's a really old picture today. They play old pictures all the time, but this one is really old. The Marx Brothers in something or other. The Doctor really likes the Marx Brothers.

**HAWKINS.** I'm going tonight if the shooting stops. I've never seen the Marx Brothers.

**MASON.** How can you have never seen the Marx Brothers. Everyone in the world has—

**HASTINGS.** Will you both shut up and answer my question!

**MASON.** What question was that? *(Pause.)* Sir.

**HASTINGS.** What the hell is Major Adams doing negotiating with the enemy at a movie theatre?

**HAWKINS.** I don't think they're negotiating. Not actually. The Doctor doesn't seem to want to negotiate.

**HASTINGS.** Who are you, boy? Are you the one holding all the papers up?

**HAWKINS.** Me, sir? I would never—

**HASTINGS.** Never mind. Where is this movie theatre?

**MASON.** It's in the town, sir. I could drive you.

**HAWKINS.** Only I don't think Evie will let you in. The feature's already started by now, and Evie won't let anybody in once the feature's started.

**HASTINGS.** I'll go anywhere I damn well please, boy!

**MASON.** He's trying to tell you. Evie won't let you. She won't let anybody get in to see the Doctor. She's got a machine gun and she'll just mow anybody down who tries.

**HAWKINS.** It's an automatic assault rifle, I think. I don't think it's a machine gun. Smith would know. You should ask Smith.

**HASTINGS.** Smith? Who the hell's Smith?

**BATES.** That's what they do, Colonel. They think they can confuse the issue, but we know what's going on here. The Major and Dr. Savat are in this together. So's this Evie?

**HASTINGS.** Who's Evie?

**HAWKINS.** She's Dr. Savat's Head Nurse. She won't let anybody get in to see the Doctor except for Major Adams.

**BATES.** I tell you he's collaborating with them.

**HASTINGS.** I don't like the sound of this.

**MASON.** She's got red hair.

**HASTINGS.** What?

**MASON.** Evie. She's got red hair. Just look for the nurse with the red hair.

**HAWKINS.** And the assault rifle.

**MASON.** She might not be there if one of her patients at the hospital needs her, but then one of the other orderlies or maybe somebody from the town will be there. They all look after the Doctor.

**HASTINGS.** We'll see who looks after who around here. Come on, Captain. Let's get to the bottom of this.

*(HASTINGS and BATES exit.)*

**MASON.** I hope Evie blows his balls off.

**HAWKINS.** She's really pretty, don't you think?

**MASON.** Am I a dead man? Have my senses gone numb? I talk about that woman in my sleep.

**HAWKINS.** Maybe it's a good thing your wife can't hear you.

**MASON.** Do not mention that bitch to me again!

**HAWKINS.** Maybe there'll be a letter today.

**MASON.** She can't write letters. She doesn't have time. She's too busy spending all my money on sofas and sling back sandals.

**HAWKINS.** I know about the sofa but I don't—

**MASON.** She's got the tiniest feet you ever saw.

**HAWKINS.** She must look nice in sling back sandals. I don't know if I ever saw anyone in sling back sandals.

**MASON.** *(Sulkily returning to his typing:)* HMMMMMPH!

**HAWKINS.** I'm not real sure I know what sling back sandals look like.

*(Wandering to the window. Hint of distant gunfire.)*

I hope the Major's all right. I don't think the Colonel's going to be very nice.

**MASON.** She paints her toenails too.

**HAWKINS.** *(Without turning:)* Write her.

*(Faint sound of gunfire continues. The light fades on HAWKINS still looking out the window.)*

## Scene 12

*(Courtroom. COLONEL HASTINGS is behind the railing. COUNSEL and SMITH as usual.)*

**COUNSEL.** Colonel Hastings, in your opinion, was Major Adams guilty of any dereliction of duty?

**HASTINGS.** I don't know what else you'd call it.

**COUNSEL.** Would you elaborate on that for us, please?

**HASTINGS.** The man was an idiot! He had no business being in the army.

**COUNSEL.** There are no idiots in the army?

**HASTINGS.** Oh, hell yes! As many idiots in as out, I imagine.

**COUNSEL.** But you are saying that Major Adams had no business being in the army because he was an idiot.

**COUNSEL.** Yes. That's true. I did say that. I'm also saying that while in the best of all possible worlds there would be no idiots in the army, as it is, we're stuck with the ones we got. But you have to contain them, don't you see?

**COUNSEL.** Contain them?

**HASTINGS.** Keep them where they can't do any damage. This is far from the best of all possible worlds.

**COUNSEL.** Um...yes. Could we return to the problem of this hearing?

**HASTINGS.** No problem about this hearing. The man is an idiot. Should be chucked out or transferred—if we can find him.

**COUNSEL.** What would you say was the Major's particular problem?

**HASTINGS.** Didn't know him myself, but from what I've been able to gather, the fool was an idealist and an intellectual. Now that's just deadly. You get the wrong combination of events, and idealism is a dangerous thing. An intellectual idiot with ideals? Damn dangerous!

**COUNSEL.** When was the last time you spoke with the Major?

**HASTINGS.** It was the only goddamned time I spoke with the Major. Strike the goddamned part, Private. No sense in offending anyone.

*(SMITH smiles at him and continues taking dictation.)*

**COUNSEL.** And this was when?

**HASTINGS.** In the lobby of that trumped up whorehouse they call a theatre.

**COUNSEL.** At the Rialto?

**HASTINGS.** Whatever. I'd sent in after him. Had this redhead standing at the door. Like an Amazon. Didn't like to shoot her. They were supposed to be on our side after all. She would have shot me, I expect. Nice looking woman though. Shapely.

**COUNSEL.** You sent her in for the Major?

**HASTINGS.** Well, she sent one of the other ones in. She wasn't about to leave her post. Good training that.

**COUNSEL.** And the Major came out?

**HASTINGS.** He came to the door. I ordered him to come back to the post with me so we could sort all this out. Told him I was willing to believe that he'd been acting in good faith.

**COUNSEL.** And what was the Major's reaction to that?

**HASTINGS.** He didn't have a reaction really. He just smiled. Sappy kind of smile like Jimmy Stewart. That was the idiot's problem, you know. Seen too damn many Jimmy Stewart movies.

**COUNSEL.** I believe they were watching the Marx Brothers at the time.

**HASTINGS.** Are you calling me a liar, Counsel?

**COUNSEL.** No, sir! Nothing like that. I'm just trying to keep things straight for the record. So there's no confusion.

**HASTINGS.** Well, for the record, Major Adams ignored my orders and went back inside that theatre. Then that redhead raises her rifle and tells us to get out of there or she'd shoot us.

**COUNSEL.** And you went?

**HASTINGS.** Damn right, I went. I went right back and ordered out the troops—what there were of them. Pretty puny lot when it came down to it. Clerks! Anyway, we were ready for the bastard the next time he came shooting at us.

**COUNSEL.** Which bastard—uh, which one are you referring to? Dr. Savat or the Major?

**HASTINGS.** I mean that crazy asshole, Savat. Strike that, Private.

**COUNSEL.** And Major Adams?

**HASTINGS.** What about him?

**COUNSEL.** What became of Major Adams?

**HASTINGS.** No idea. Never saw the son-of-a—er...man again.

*(Lights fade.)*

### **Scene 13**

*(At the Rialto. MAJOR ADAMS and EDDIE are once more sitting side by side.)*

**ADAMS.** I suppose they'll court-martial me now. I suppose I'll be court-martialed and shot. Like Corporal Mason.

**EDDIE.** Didn't you always wonder whether Harpo could actually speak or not?

**ADAMS.** Of course he could speak. He was a very articulate man. He just never spoke in front of anyone.

**EDDIE.** Why not?

**ADAMS.** Well. It would have disappointed his fans, I suppose. It would have ruined things.

**EDDIE.** If he never spoke in front of anyone, how do you know he could speak?

**ADAMS.** I read it somewhere. *(Pause.)* Are you listening, Eddie? Do you even care? Even if they don't shoot me, Princeton would never hire someone who'd been thrown out of the army. My life is ostensibly over.

**EDDIE.** Did I ask you to stay? Run after them. Say you were confused. Better yet, take along a bicycle horn and beep it at them. Pretend that you can't speak at all. They'll take you for an idiot.

**ADAMS.** I am an idiot. Ask anyone who knows me.

**EDDIE.** It would be hard to find a bicycle horn.

**ADAMS.** My wife will probably leave me. Of course she very probably would have left me anyway. I haven't been all that great as a husband.

**EDDIE.** Has she been all that great a wife?

**ADAMS.** Even when she was in love with me, I always had the feeling she was in love with someone else.

**EDDIE.** Do you see that fat lady on the screen? I would marry her in a minute if she'd have me. *(Pause.)* I used to do a very good Groucho Marx, you know.

**ADAMS.** There are a lot of things about you that I don't know.

**EDDIE.** And I know just as little about you. Go run after the Colonel. Catch him and become like Harpo. All the girls will love you, even your wife.

**ADAMS.** Tell me about your son, Eddie, and your wife. Where's your wife, Eddie? I've never heard you mention your wife.

**EDDIE.** They are both dead. Is that enough to know? My son died and she didn't stay long after. She didn't like to stay on here without him, I think. That's what I tell myself. She was a remarkable woman. I think that if it had been her lot to grow sweet potatoes, she would have done it gladly. I found it difficult to cry when she died.

**ADAMS.** I'm glad my wife and I never had children.

**EDDIE.** What a thing to say.

**ADAMS.** If we had children maybe something would have happened to them—or else my wife would never let me see them again after the court-martial.

**EDDIE.** You do not have to join me in this. It is a hopeless cause. Why throw your life away on a hopeless cause?

**ADAMS.** If I don't find a way to understand this—I'll go crazy.

**EDDIE.** Like me?

**ADAMS.** Was it your son's death? Did he die in the war? Why wait this long?

**EDDIE.** My son died in a stupid senseless act of violence. It tortured me. It did not make me crazy.

**ADAMS.** What is it then? I'm confused. I want things to make sense.

**EDDIE.** You might as well wait for Harpo to speak.

*(Lights fade.)*

#### **Scene 14**

*(A wall. HAWKINS and MASON stand side by side, their guns in hand.)*

**HAWKINS.** He didn't really mean it, did he?

**MASON.** Of course he meant it. It was an order, wasn't it? You think Colonels in the army go around giving suggestions?

**HAWKINS.** We can't just shoot the Doctor. What will Major Adams say?

**MASON.** We're supposed to shoot him too.

**HAWKINS.** I don't want to shoot anybody.

**MASON.** You shouldn't have joined the army.

**HAWKINS.** They said they would train me in electronics.

**MASON.** Well, I'd say that they lied to you Hawkins.

**HAWKINS.** Yeah. I guess they did.

**MASON.** Anyway, I wouldn't worry about shooting the Doctor. How would you know it was you who hit him. Everyone will start shooting at once. You'd never know. It's like a firing squad. I read once that only some of the bullets are real. That way no one knows if he's the one who did the killing.

**HAWKINS.** What's the good of that? What if the ones with real bullets miss? Do they let the guy go free?

**MASON.** I don't know. It seems reasonable. Like it was an act of God.

**HAWKINS.** Maybe everyone'll miss the Doctor.

**MASON.** Not very fucking likely.

**HAWKINS.** Anyway, people on a firing squad are there because they want to be, aren't they? Don't they have to be volunteers? What would you be doing on a firing squad if you cared whether or not you killed someone?

**MASON.** What are you doing in the army if you care so much?

**HAWKINS.** What's that movie with Kirk Douglas in it? He plays some French guy?

**MASON.** You sound like the Major.

**HAWKINS.** I won't shoot them, Ira. How are they gonna know if I shot the gun? I can shoot it in the air.

**MASON.** If you don't shoot them, someone else will.

**HAWKINS.** I don't care.

**MASON.** At least your heart would be in the right place.

**HAWKINS.** What good would that be to them?

**MASON.** Will you shut up, Hawkins. I don't want to think about it, all right?

**HAWKINS.** I can't help thinking about it, Ira.

**MASON.** That's you! Keep your thinking to yourself. I'm sick of it, do you understand? Shut the fuck up!

**HAWKINS.** Just seems like there ought to be something we could do.

**MASON.** Shut up, Hawkins! Please?

*(Lights fade.)*

### **Scene 15**

*(At the Rialto. The MAJOR and EDDIE as before.)*

**ADAMS.** This is just an idea, Eddie, but even though you didn't react to your son's death at the time, maybe you've been walking around with it. Things build up. If a person doesn't express grief, he can't let go of it.

**EDDIE.** You really are a psychologist, aren't you?

**ADAMS.** Well, not a very good one but...

**EDDIE.** But maybe not so bad. The problem is that you are assuming that it was my son's death that pushed me over the brink. That like a time bomb I've been walking around waiting to explode.

**ADAMS.** Something like that.

**EDDIE.** I am not a stupid man. My son died because he was sitting in the wrong place at the wrong time. The irony is that he might have had a better chance if I had let him join the army instead of making him stay on at University. That bothered me. Sometimes. But no. It is not my son's death that made me decide to act. I believe that I have operated very well inside my grief. Of course, after my wife's death it was easier, I did not have to talk to anyone. It helped coming here. I had Evie to handle outsiders, and I was always so very busy you see.

**ADAMS.** You get the heaviest influx of casualties here.

**EDDIE.** Is that what you call it? An influx? I just know they keep coming. And if I save them once, they came back again, and if I save them twice—well, it just goes on and on. Your soldiers—sometimes we sent them home, but ours? They are home, aren't they? What are we to do?

*(He looks at the MAJOR who shrugs.)*

Anyway, there was an *incident*—last week.

**ADAMS.** Something did happen!

**EDDIE.** Congratulate yourself, my friend. Something did happen. Your theories of behavior are all sound. The law of cause and effect still rules the universe or at least we can tell ourselves it does.

**ADAMS.** What? What happened?

**EDDIE.** Only a little thing really. A small thing. The fighting had struck closer to us than ever before. You remember? For a while there was some talk, we might have to move farther south. You sent a messenger to say you would help us if that happened.

**ADAMS.** Corporal Mason.

**EDDIE.** Did you shoot him yet?

**ADAMS.** No. Now he's very likely to shoot me.

**EDDIE.** Look up there at that uniform Groucho is wearing. I always wanted a coat like that. I think that if a man is in the army, he deserves to have a coat like that. Are you old enough to remember Idi Amin? Now, there was a man who knew how to dress.

**ADAMS.** Tell me what happened.

**EDDIE.** Oh. Yes. *(Pause.)* You wanted to know. *(Pause.)* I got tired. All morning I had fought my usual battle—more losses than wins. About midday I went out into the sunlight and had a cigarette.

**ADAMS.** I never saw you smoke a cigarette.

**EDDIE.** Sometimes I do. I buy them from the orderlies. One at a time. It had been a very long morning. I was sitting on a bench beside the outside wall. I thought I saw someone coming down the road. The sun's glare made it difficult to see distances. I stood and shaded my eyes. There was someone walking toward me from the direction of the main road. It was a woman and I could just make out that she was carrying a child. She headed directly for me. She had no choice, I suppose. I was the only one there. I ran to meet her and she handed me her tiny, almost weightless burden and started smiling and bowing to me. The child had been hit by shrapnel.

**ADAMS.** How did they get there? The fighting was still sixty miles away.

**EDDIE.** I don't know. She must have begged for rides—walked when she had to. Her feet were bleeding. She had no shoes.

**ADAMS.** Poor woman!

**EDDIE.** Yes. Poor woman. I took the little girl into the tent and started working on her.

**ADAMS.** A little girl. It might be nice to have a little girl.

**EDDIE.** The nurses just stood by and watched me. You should have seen their eyes on me. They were afraid. Of what? Of me? Of saintly Dr. Savat. Even Evie backed away—at first. Then when I screamed at her to bring me blood, she came closer. She tried to pull me away. I struck her then. I struck my Evie and she fell. Then I looked down at the child and at the mother still standing by the door, still smiling at me. *(He smiles.)* She was waiting for me to do something. What? Can you tell me what I was supposed to do? The child was dead! She'd been dead from the moment the shell fragment hit her. Three days or more, I suppose. But that woman had carried her sixty miles to me. What was I supposed to do?

**ADAMS.** Jesus, Eddie.

**EDDIE.** Jesus might have helped, but I couldn't. So now, it's over for me, do you hear? This whole damn thing is over. Nine hundred years? I spit in its face. Do you hear me? You get your goddamned army out of here, Ben. Just get them all the hell out!

*(Silence.)*

**ADAMS.** I don't think they'll go, Eddie.

**EDDIE.** No? Oh well. Perhaps we should just watch the end of the movie.

*(Lights fade.)*

**Scene 16**

*(Behind the railing again. This time PVT. SMITH is testifying. HAWKINS has taken her place as recorder.)*

**COUNSEL.** Pvt. Smith, what happened in the hours following Col. Savat's last attack on the compound?

**SMITH.** Not very much. Mostly, we just were standing around. None of us knew exactly what to do. I mean we had to do something with the bodies, but Col. Hastings didn't want us contacting the hospital or anyone until he had gotten clearance from headquarters. It wasn't like they didn't know what was going on over here. Half of them were with the Doctor when things started happening. Some of them were hit. We took 'em to the mail room. That was the only place with enough floor space except for the mess hall, and it didn't seem like such a good idea to put them in there.

**COUNSEL.** Had you seen the attack itself?

**SMITH.** Oh, sure. I was there. Only it wasn't really an attack because our men started firing on Dr. Savat. He didn't start first this time, but I guess you couldn't really say he had started first any of the times since we hadn't shot back before. Major Adams wouldn't let us shoot back. If there's not a second, there can't be a first can there?

**COUNSEL.** *(Interrupting:)* Did you see Major Adams during the shooting?

**SMITH.** No, sir. It wasn't until afterwards.

**COUNSEL.** While you were standing around?

**SMITH.** Yes, sir. Somebody had said how we ought to at least cover them up—get body bags or something only we didn't have any. We never needed any. That's when Evie showed up.

**COUNSEL.** The nurse who testified earlier?

**SMITH.** Yes, sir. The Lieutenant, Dr. Savat's nurse. When she showed up, she just kind of shoved us out of the way. She had brought some body bags with her. She showed us what to do. We just had to—

**COUNSEL.** By "us" you are referring to whom?

**SMITH.** Me and Hawkins, mostly. Mason was there, but he didn't help much. He'd gotten a letter and was reading it. Then Colonel Hastings came and took him away.

**COUNSEL.** And you are sure that Col. Savat's body was there with the others?

**SMITH.** Yes, sir. I recognized him because once I had a boil here on the back of my neck and—

**COUNSEL.** Uh, yes. Thank you, Private, that—

**SMITH.** He was really nice about it. They're not really supposed to look after us over there, but he said that he would put in for a Purple Heart for me if I wanted one.

**COUNSEL.** A Purple Heart for a boil?

**SMITH.** He was just kidding around sir. He was like that.

**COUNSEL.** And what happened to Col. Savat's body then? Did you bag it up with the others.

**SMITH.** Oh, no. Evie bagged him up herself. She wouldn't let any of us touch him. Said she'd kill us if we came near him. I think they'd taken away her gun by then, but I think she would have found a way.

**COUNSEL.** You said "bodies" earlier, Private. How many were there?

**SMITH.** Four besides the Doctor. One was a nurse, I think. The other three were guys from the hospital. They were wearing pajamas and one of them had a bandage on his head.

**COUNSEL.** Patients? Dr. Savat brought his patients on these raids?

**SMITH.** I think he thought it was good for them to get out and around. Some of them get no exercise at all—

**COUNSEL.** I see, but—

**SMITH.** Sort of like physical therapy. I broke my leg once when I—

**COUNSEL.** Never mind, Private.

**SMITH.** Sorry.

**COUNSEL.** You say that Major Adams wasn't with the assault party?

**SMITH.** I don't think so. I didn't see him. I didn't see him at all until later when he came for the Doctor.

**COUNSEL.** Yes. Would you tell us about that?

**SMITH.** He came after a couple of hours. In a jeep.

**COUNSEL.** Were you told to expect him? Had you been told what to do if he showed up? Had you been told that he was to be taken into custody?

**SMITH.** Sort of—I don't know. All that Captain Bates said was that he was dangerous, and we might have to shoot him, but when he came up in the jeep, he was just quiet—kind of. He didn't seem dangerous. He did push me out of the way when I asked him to stop, but he said he was sorry. He didn't seem to be mad at me. He just wanted to go into the mail room.

**COUNSEL.** What did he do there?

**SMITH.** He went over to where Evie was sitting with the Doctor and the two of them just sat there together for a while. Then he asked me where Colonel Hastings was, and I figured he was going to turn himself in so I told him that he had taken Corporal Mason over to the processing office to get things straightened out. He started laughing when I told him that. Then he stood up all of a sudden, pulling the Doctor up with him and kind of hoisting him over his shoulder. I told him he hadn't ought to do that, but he just walked past me out the door. I started after him, but I tripped over something. I think it was Evie's foot. I don't know for sure, but by the time I got outside the Major was propping the Doctor up in the passenger seat of the jeep. It was kind of awkward because the Doctor was starting to stiffen up in places.

**COUNSEL.** Did you try to stop him?

**SMITH.** I told him he couldn't take the Doctor anyplace and that I had orders to shoot him—the Major, not the Doctor, 'cause somebody had already shot the doctor. He just smiled and told me it was okay if I had to shoot him. He'd understand only he had to take the Doctor some place first. He said he'd be back, and I could shoot him then. Then he got in on the other side and drove off. He didn't have his uniform on—I mean he wasn't naked or anything, but he was in civilian clothes. He

waved at us, and I didn't even think about shooting him right then, and he said he'd be back only he didn't come back so I guess he lied to me.

**COUNSEL.** I understand, Private.

**SMITH.** Am I in trouble?

*(Lights fade.)*

### Scene 17

*(The Office. HAWKINS and MASON are at their desks. All the damage has been more or less put to rights. MASON is on the phone. He inspects his nails while talking.)*

**MASON.** Spell that for me, please? G.O.O.D.M.A.N. Just like it sounds? How about that? Well, I'll certainly be on the lookout for them, Lt. Goodman. *(Pause.)* Sir. It should only be a few days now. Yes. Yes. I'm sure you will. Goodbye now.

**HAWKINS.** Captain Bates said he would send us a postcard and let us know how he was doing.

**MASON.** What a sweetheart.

**HAWKINS.** It was nice of you to process his papers so quick.

**MASON.** What else could I do? That goddamn Hastings was standing over me threatening to shoot me. He'd of done it too.

**HAWKINS.** He shot the Doctor.

**MASON.** Nobody knows who shot the Doctor.

**HAWKINS.** Captain Bates said he was gonna get out of the army. I think that what happened upset him.

**MASON.** *(Has busied himself writing a letter.)* Yeah, right. Pretty late for him to be developing a conscience, isn't it?

**HAWKINS.** What did your wife say?

**MASON.** Huh?

**HAWKINS.** What did your wife say in her letter?

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