

# **IN THE MOUTH OF THE WOLF**

by Michael Morpurgo (2018)

adapted by Simon Reade (2025)

based on a true story

Rehearsal Draft – January 27<sup>th</sup> 2025

Commissioned by Barn Theatre, Cirencester, GL7 1BN

Berlin Associates, 7 Tyers Gate, London SE1 3HX

*In the Mouth of the Wolf* is based on Michael Morpurgo's true World War Two story about his uncles Francis and Pieter Cammaerts. Additionally, it also incorporates Francis's own words. Any additional material is imagined in good faith by the playwright.

The staging can be simple, not least so that scenes can transform seamlessly in the blink of an eye. (Scene numbers and divisions are largely there for rehearsal ease only.) A bare stage without furniture creates an infinity of possibilities. Travelling in cars, aeroplanes, or on a motorbike can be achieved with a spotlight face, a flapping scarf, helmet and goggles, sound. Expressionist shafts of lighting, haze, moonlight and an atmospheric soundscape will create the shifting moods, the changing landscapes – all set beneath a star-cloth, against a shifting sky cyclorama, on a bomb-blasted floorcloth. It could be that the design channels the black-and-white style of French *film noir* or British World War Two feature films. Above all, the character-driven play will be performed in such a way to maximise our experience of bearing witness to the motion of history, and to the emotion of the story.

SR January 2025

With thanks to: Christopher Bianchi, Jonathan Broadbent; Aioffe Kennan; Anthony Houghton, Iwan Lewis, Liam McMullan; Jay Cammaerts; Michael & Clare Morpurgo; Marc Berlin & Julia Wyatt; Alison Reid; Philip Wilson.

*In the Mouth of the Wolf* can be performed by up to thirty actors – or by as few as three:

- FRANCIS CAMMAERTS, codename 'Roger', a.k.a. 'Big Feet'/'Grands Pieds'
- NAN, Francis's wife Nancy Cammaerts
- PIETER CAMMAERTS, Francis's brother, actor then RAF navigator

Between them, the Nan and Pieter actors can also play:

- EAMONN ANDREWS, the Irish television presenter and personality
- KIPPE, Pieter's and Francis's sister (and mother of Michael Morpurgo)
- EMILE CAMMAERTS, Francis's and Pieter's Belgian father, professor, poet
- ALAN WHITEHORN, schoolmaster
- LEWIS, a schoolboy
- HARRY RÉE, Francis's friend and mentor
- INTELLIGENCE OFFICER
- HEADMASTER
- TRIBUNAL CHAIR
- TRADE UNIONIST
- FARMHAND, a conscientious objector
- MR. POTTER, codename for Major Selwyn Jepson, Military Intelligence Officer (and writer of thrillers)
- SERGEANT, SOE training
- INSTRUCTOR, SOE training
- PILOT
- AUGUSTE FLORIAS, codename 'Albert', a.k.a. 'Le Pianiste', radio operator
- GERMAN SOLDIER
- SS OFFICER

- SOE BUREAUCRAT
- CHRISTINE GRANVILLE, the alias of SOE agent codename 'Pauline', the Polish Countess (by marriage) Krystyna Skarbeck
- MILICE, an unrepentant collaborator
- MONSIEUR DUMAS, farmer
- PAUL HÉRAUD, codename 'Dumont', freedom fighter *extraordinaire*
- CLAUDE RENOIR, grandson of the painter, nephew of the film-maker
- ANOTHER GERMAN SOLDIER
- ANOTHER MILICE
- SCHENK, a Gestapo prison officer
- GENERAL BUTLER, United States Army
- MADAME FLORIAS, Auguste's wife
- ANOTHER INTELLIGENCE OFFICER
- JURY FOREMAN
- MICHAEL MORPURGO

The suggested 'doubling' is as follows:

PIETER

EAMONN ANDREWS  
ALAN WHITEHORN  
(INTELLIGENCE OFFICER)  
(TRIBUNAL CHAIR)  
FARMHAND  
MR. POTTER  
(INSTRUCTOR)  
AUGUSTE  
(SOE BUREAUCRAT)  
MILICE  
MONSIEUR DUMAS  
CLAUDE RENOIR  
SCHENK  
GENERAL BUTLER  
(MICHAEL MORPURGO)

NAN

KIPPE  
EMILE CAMMAERTS  
LEWIS  
HARRY RÉE  
HEADMASTER  
(TRADE UNIONIST)  
SERGEANT  
PILOT  
GERMAN SOLDIER  
(SS OFFICER)  
CHRISTINE  
PAUL HÉRAUD  
(ANOTHER GERMAN SOLDIER)  
(ANOTHER MILICE)  
MADAME FLORIAS  
(ANOTHER INTELLIGENCE OFFICER)  
(JURY FOREMAN)

CHARACTERS in (brackets) may be pre-recorded voices in the shadows.

Other roles are played by the Nan and Pieter actors.

Joanna (Jay) Cammaerts, Nan's and Francis's daughter, writes:

"To catch Francis's voice, it is important to understand that at heart, Francis was not an Englishman, he was a European. His first and most powerful influence was his Belgian father – Francis and his five siblings were home-schooled until they were eight years old. Francis didn't do much small talk. Speech had always to be purposeful to be of interest to him. He didn't use English slang words or phrases either, probably because his father wouldn't have been familiar with them. Francis had a powerful physical presence, even when he was silent. Being 6'3" wasn't a bad thing either, as Nan was known to say when the subject came up."

## IN THE MOUTH OF THE WOLF

### Part One

[A medley of the songs we will hear in the show plays before the curtain rises, including the 1956 Miles Davis version of "Bye 'Bye Blackbird", the Louis Armstrong version of 'Frankie & Johnny' etc.]

#### Scene 1: THIS IS YOUR LIFE

[BBC Television Theatre, Shepherds Bush. 1958. A sparse 'Green Room' backstage – a suspended black box with cut-out letters illuminated from within by a red light-bulb:]

['RECORDING IN PROGRESS'.]

[We hear, off, the climax of the 1958 transmission of BBC Television's *This is Your Life* (though we'll be fluid with time and years throughout.) Hosted by the amiable, Dubliner EAMONN ANDREWS:]

EAMONN ANDREWS: [off] *Francis Cammaerts – D.S.O., Officier de la Légion d'Honneur – husband, father, headmaster and war hero of the French Resistance – This – Is – Your – Life!*

[The familiar 'waaah-wah-wah- WAH!' theme tune plays out to applause. Brief silence. After a few moments an electric bell blasts, the red-lit box switches off, and 6'3" FRANCIS CAMMAERTS bursts through the door – Nordic-looking, moustache, early 40s – holding his red leather-bound *This is Your Life* folder. Followed swiftly by his wife NANCY 'NAN' CAMMAERTS – well presented, similar age.]

NAN: What's wrong, Francis?

[Francis says nothing, hands her the folder.]

[Eamonn Andrews swans in (as if with entourage in tow), grinning, mid-30s:]

EAMONN ANDREWS: Mr Cammaerts: I hope we did you proud, sir.

FRANCIS: Well, I wasn't expecting that.

EAMONN ANDREWS: Nobody does. That's the secret of *This is Your Life* – you take your subject by surprise. But then you'd know all about that.

FRANCIS: [shaking head] You skirted over all my important work in education since the War.

EAMONN ANDREWS: Less is more!

FRANCIS: Why me? I'm not rich and famous.

EAMONN ANDREWS: [confidentially] Talking of which, I'll let you in on another little secret: we've got Richard Burton lined up soon –

NAN: The movie star?

EAMONN ANDREWS: [nodding] – if Liz Taylor agrees.

FRANCIS: You turned all the attention onto me.

EAMONN ANDREWS: That's the nature of television stardom. And you have a very telegenic personality, Mr. Cammaerts, if I may say so.

FRANCIS: But I'm no 'star'.

EAMONN ANDREWS: Try telling that to the executives! You'll be gobbled up by all the publicity, I'd like to bet.

FRANCIS: [to himself] *In bocca al lupo*.

EAMONN ANDREWS: I beg your pardon?

NAN: [translating] Into the mouth of the wolf.

EAMONN ANDREWS: Yes. I suppose it is a bit like that. [shaking Francis's hand:] Good to know you, sir. [shaking Nan's hand:] Mrs Cammaerts.

[And Eamonn Andrews flashes them his dazzling, lopsided grin one more time before he sashays off as smoothly as he appeared.]

FRANCIS: I'm not the hero. I'm anything but. It's those who aren't here who were the true heroes.

NAN: I'm here.

FRANCIS: I'm sorry, Nan, of course you are. And you've held my hand, guided me in all things, as ever.

NAN: Through thick and thin.

FRANCIS: Yes. But I want to try to honour every one of them. Now more than ever.

NAN: I can help you.

FRANCIS: They are all dead, Nan.

NAN: Tell me about them.

FRANCIS: Backstage in the Green Room of the BBC Television Theatre? Anyway, you know all about them.

NAN: Do I? Until tonight, you've hardly spoken about the War.

FRANCIS: You won't know them if you can't see them.

NAN: I'll see them.

FRANCIS: How?

NAN: In my mind's eye.

[A cacophonous soundscape of Francis's life, of what we're about to see: School children, marching, radio broadcasts of Churchill, Hitler, air raid sirens, alarm bells, aeroplanes, firestorms, radio interference, bombing raids and so on, to a climax, then suddenly –]

[Silence.]

[Then an owl hoots.]



Scene 2: DARK NIGHT

[An owl hoots.]

[Cammaerts's home, Radlett, Herts. c.1924.]

[In the dark, Francis (age 8) sleeps, with a blanket]

[His younger brother PIETER (6) creeps into Francis's bedroom. Outside stars twinkle.]

PIETER: [whispers] Francis?

FRANCIS: Hm?

PIETER: You awake?

FRANCIS: Fast asleep.

PIETER: Oh.

[Pieter starts to retreat, then realises he's being mocked:]

If you're asleep, then how are you awake enough to say that you're asleep?

[Francis has been rumbled.]

FRANCIS: *Touché*.

[Pieter snuggles up with Francis beneath the blanket. Francis pulls himself up on one elbow.]

What's all this then, little brother?

PIETER: I don't like the dark.

FRANCIS: You not afraid, are you, Piet?

PIETER: Might be. Why, aren't you?

FRANCIS: Me? 'Course not!

[He is. They both are.]

Listen.

PIETER: Can't hear anything.

FRANCIS: Listen harder.

[The wind in the trees; the snaffle of hedgehogs in the leaves; the owl.]

Peaceful, isn't it?

PIETER: It's as loud as day!

FRANCIS: It's a deep silence out here in Hertfordshire, in the countryside.

PIETER: Like Papa's forests of the Ardennes. Alive and kicking.

FRANCIS: The world never sleeps, Piet. The universe is wide awake. Look at the stars.

[The sky twinkles with galaxies.]

PIETER: Beautiful.

FRANCIS: Millions of suns – light-years away. And probably all burnt out by now. Dead.

PIETER: No! Really?

FRANCIS: Look – that bright one, larger than the others? That's Sirius: the Dog Star.

PIETER: Woof!

FRANCIS: I'm not joking ... it's Sirius!

PIETER: Very funny. Why's it so bright?

FRANCIS: I suppose because it's one of the closest. It belongs to Orion, the Great Hunter. Look! There he is.

PIETER: Where?

FRANCIS: Can you see those three stars close together?

PIETER: Oh, yes!

FRANCIS: That's his belt.

PIETER: What about those fainter stars behind?

FRANCIS: His sword.

PIETER: What's that other bright star called?

FRANCIS: That's the Pole Star. Sailors navigate the oceans by it because it's always above the North Pole. Know that one, Piet, and you'll never get lost.

PIETER: How do you know all this?

FRANCIS: I'm a genius.

PIETER: No, really, how?

FRANCIS: Papa taught me.

[Pieter yawns.]

PIETER: Nighty, night, Francis.

FRANCIS: Night, night, Pieter.

FRANCIS/PIETER: Hope the bedbugs don't bite ...

[Lights fade. Dawn chorus ...]

Scene 3. DREAM DAYS

[... Dawn chorus, the next day. In the garden.]

[The laughter and excitement of children – Francis, Pieter and their sister KIPPE.]

[They sing a quick burst of ‘You spotted snakes with double tongue’ from Mendelssohn’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream.*]

[Francis stands tall, arms outstretched, a ‘tree’.]

FRANCIS: Why am I always the ‘tree’?

KIPPE: Because the play’s set in a wood outside Athens and you’re the tallest.

PIETER: I can be Bottom – and let me play the lion, too!

KIPPE: No, Pieter, you can play the log – that Bottom sits on.

PIETER: That your fat bottom sits on!

FRANCIS: Pieter’s the best actor, better than any of us.

KIPPE: But he’s the youngest. And we need something to sit on.

FRANCIS: [peacemaker] You’ll make a fine log, Pieter.

PIETER: And you will make a fine tree.

KIPPE: [as Theseus]

*“Now, fair Hippolyta, our nuptial hour  
Draws on apace. Four happy days bring in  
Another moon ...”*

[An owl hoots ...]

Scene 4. ARDENNE FOREST

[... an owl hoots. The dappled, moonlit Forest of Ardennes; some weeks later.]

EMILE: [almost quoting *As You Like It*] Well, this is the Forest of Ardennes ...

FRANCIS: I love the holidays we spend here, Papa.

EMILE: It's where I grew up, Francis. Here. In Belgium. At the heart of Europe.

FRANCIS: We're Europeans, aren't we, Papa?

EMILE: We are.

FRANCIS: And we're British.

EMILE: We are. English.

FRANCIS: I love being here with you Papa, just me and you, all to myself –

[Pieter, off, shrieks '*En garde!*']

EMILE: And Pieter.

[Pieter dashes on with a stick, using it as a sword, fighting off imaginary foes:]

Who are you fighting this time, Pieter?

PIETER: Wolves.

FRANCIS: Wolves? No need to fight them. Just face them head on, look brave, and clap your hands. They'll soon lose interest.

PIETER: [wary of the imaginary wolves] I don't think so. They're coming up close, they're baring their teeth, they want to eat me up, tear the whole family to pieces! I have to fight them.

FRANCIS: No, you don't.

PIETER: Yes, I do.

EMILE: [intervening] Francis, Pieter; you are both right.

FRANCIS: How can we both be right?

EMILE: Think of the Great War –

FRANCIS: The Great War was fought because no one turned the other cheek, Papa –

PIETER: Exactly; they fought eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.

EMILE: No. It was ignorance that brought about the Great War. And ancient hatreds. And power politics that dragged Europe into the horrors.

[He lights a pipe.]

And there were no winners – there never are winners in wars, only sufferers.

PIETER: But people will always fight to protect themselves against an enemy who threatens them. It's in their nature.

EMILE: It isn't. It's not in the nature of children.

FRANCIS: But Pieter and I are always fighting!

EMILE: That's just playing. An upturned table becomes a ship; a stick, an arrow; chairs are harnessed like prancing horses. And if you do play at fighting it's not because you want to fight but because you want to tell stories, with your imaginations. Within the child lies not the warrior, but the poet! Now, come along, or your mother will be wondering where we've all got to.

[A burst of the Elgar/Emile Cammaerts's 1915 song 'Sing, Belgians, Sing!']

Scene 5. SANDPIT

[Back to the BBC Theatre Green Room, 1958:]

FRANCIS: I always wanted to be like my father: smoke a pipe; write fine poetry; be a great professor.

NAN: He was a wise man.

FRANCIS: He'd been an anarchist in his youth! It was the First World War, fought on the battlefields of his homeland, that turned him into a proud patriot. But he wasn't wise about everything; for a start, he had too many children!

NAN: We have four!

FRANCIS: I know, but my parents had six! Four daughters; two sons – me and Pieter – children tumbling everywhere, crowding me out of the sandpit.

NAN: Your mother was amazing.

FRANCIS: All mothers are amazing.

NAN: Your mother gave up being a Shakespearean actress to bring you all up.

FRANCIS: She did. The daughter of a German opera diva, too. Mama was a leading light in the revolt against massive scenery and costume-led productions!

[They both take in the bare stage. Mama vindicated.]

I learned to read and write and calculate with Mama – I didn't go to school until I was eight. And when father was home, every meal was [impersonating:] a seminar against tyranny!

NAN: But then they sent you off to boarding school.

[He segues to the dim-lit loneliness of his dorm. at night:]

FRANCIS: I never was so miserable; I lay in the dormitory each night raging against the very mama and papa I so loved. Home was a foreign land to me now. But in the words of Coriolanus: "*There is a world elsewhere.*" In Italy, Mussolini's fascists ruled by force. In Germany, Hitler's Nazis had established a dictatorship. Europe was resounding to the march of jack boots –

[We hear them.]

– and the drums of yet another war were already beating.

[The marching reaches an echoing climax as it is cut off by the loud ring of a school bell ...]

Scene 6. MILL HILL SCHOOL

[... The school bell is drowned out by the slamming of desks. Mill Hill School 1933. ALAN WHITEHORN, the schoolmaster (maybe in an academic gown.)]

ALAN WHITEHORN: Right, settle down 6B Modern 1. Now, listen, boys: the Oxford Union, no less, with alumni from this very school, Old Mill Hill-ians –

[A cheer from the BOYS –]

– well, the undergraduates have shocked the Establishment by voting two-to-one in favour of the proposition: ‘This House believes that it would, under no circumstances, fight for King and Country.’

[A gasp.]

Well, what do you think of that, boys?

[Francis (now age 16) raises his hand.]

Yes, Cammaerts.

FRANCIS: I’m a pacifist, so I agree.

ALAN WHITEHORN: Yes. But why do you agree?

FRANCIS: Simple. We may be young men about to go up to university ourselves, but we’re still children all the same. We were born during the Great War – I was born slap bang in the middle of it – June 1916, at the start of the Battle of the Somme. Ever since then we have all been brought up under the shadow of poison gas, and absent uncles, and one-legged lovers in the park.

[Sniggers.]

So, as I’ve grown older, like many of us, I have decided that that’s never going to happen again. Not ever.

[Whitehorn is impressed. Another BOY raises his hand:]

Yes, Lewis.

LEWIS: I disagree.

WHITEHORN: Go on.



LEWIS: However much Cammaerts is opposed to war – or any of us are, come to that – I think there will always be circumstances in which we'd chuck it all in and fight to protect our family and home and the country we love.

WHITEHORN: Good, Lewis.

LEWIS: Thank you, sir.

WHITEHORN: You, Lewis, will write an essay in defence of pacifism –

LEWIS: [protesting] But, sir!

WHITEHORN: And you, Cammaerts, will write an essay saying why you would fight for your country.

[Francis nods, impressed by this good teaching.]

FRANCIS: Very good, sir.

[A scratchy recording of The Sam Lanin Orchestra playing "Bye 'Bye Blackbird" or Louis Armstrong singing 'I Can't Give You Anything But Love' from the 1930s.]

[Or it may be that a bright piece of Cambridge Chorister-sung Handel takes us to ...]

Scene 7. CATS CAMBRIDGE

[... the song continues to play as Francis dons Cambridge undergraduate sub fusc, none too happy about it.]

[The ting-a-ling of passing bikes and 'What-ho!' PASSERSBY male banter. Francis is greeted by fellow undergraduate HARRY RÉE, two years Francis's senior:]

HARRY: Francis!

FRANCIS: [moody-gloomy] Hello, Harry.

HARRY: You seem down in the dumps.

FRANCIS: So would you be if you'd just flunked your Part Ones.

HARRY: Come and have a pint and tell me all about it.

[The Eagle, Cambridge 1936. Music fades and street hullabaloo is replaced by pub banter.]

[Harry brings them a couple of pint glasses to the table in the snug.]

A third's not the end of the world, you know.

FRANCIS: What did you get in your Part Ones?

HARRY: That's beside the point. I'm studying Modern Languages.

FRANCIS: That would be too close to home for me.

HARRY: Well, I don't get to study my father's Danish; and Mother's American is just about incomprehensible.

FRANCIS: Very funny. Here's to first generation Englishmen!

[They clink glasses.]

HARRY: *Skål!*

FRANCIS: *Santé!*

HARRY: *Na zdrowie*, as our comrades might say.

FRANCIS: Oh, let's not talk politics!

HARRY: Can't avoid it, sunshine, not with Stalin and Hitler and Mussolini looming on the horizon – and Oswald Mosley agitating closer to home. Besides, I know how much you love your theatre –

FRANCIS: What's that got to do with it?

HARRY: Well, all theatre is political, isn't it?

FRANCIS: Not with the kind of drawing-room dramas that are currently playing in the West End, it's not. Not the [best Noël Coward voice:] frightfully, awfully, Cowardly comedies. They're opiate to the masses!

HARRY: There you go!

FRANCIS: I'm not a Communist!

HARRY: No, but we like Auden and Isherwood, don't we?

FRANCIS: We do. For their poetic dramas, [he gesticulates wildly as if in an Auden production:] their avant-garde ideas, their revolutionary art.

HARRY: I loved *The Dog Beneath The Skin*!

FRANCIS: Subtitled *Where is Francis?*

HARRY: Sir Francis goes off incognito on the Continent, romping through our revolutionary times –

FRANCIS: Well, that's not me, if that's what you mean.

HARRY: Of course not. But here we are in Cambridge, where the vast majority of the population will never even get to sample one iota of the privilege that we enjoy.

FRANCIS: We are an oasis of haves in an ocean of have nots.

HARRY: To mix our watery metaphors. What would you do to change it?

FRANCIS: Is this a trick question?

HARRY: No. I'm serious. Interested.

FRANCIS: What about you?

HARRY: Me? Well, you know that I'm a pacifist, too?

FRANCIS: Yes.

HARRY: But who knows, when the time comes ...

FRANCIS: Let's not spoil a beautiful friendship.

HARRY: Another pint?

[Francis doesn't look too sure.]

As my fellow Dane once said: *"We'll teach you to drink deep ere you depart."*

FRANCIS: Oh, go on, then, Hamlet!

[Laughter. Harry rises.]

Cambridge really is just a lot of laughter and beer, isn't it?

HARRY: If ever you have second thoughts –

FRANCIS: About what?

HARRY: Oh, I don't know. Anything. Nothing. Life.

FRANCIS: What do you mean? Why?

HARRY: [gnomically] "Ours is not to reason why, ours is but to do and die ..."

FRANCIS: As Tennyson almost said.

HARRY: And best to forget we ever had this conversation.

FRANCIS: [genuinely confused] Which conversation haven't we had?

[Harry smiles at Francis as he heads to the bar.]

HARRY: [over his shoulder] Why don't you try history?

FRANCIS: Pardon?

HARRY: Shift to History for your Part Twos. It will give you more of a perspective on life than Eng. Lit. ever can.

FRANCIS: History? It's just raking over the past.

HARRY: Funnily enough, I think history is the future. And that we are all masters of our own destiny.

FRANCIS: *“Men at some time are masters of their fates.  
The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars  
But in ourselves, that we are underlings ...”*

[The words echo as if in a theatre ... applause ...]

Scene 8. A STAR IN THE MAKING

[The last lines of a performance of *Julius Caesar* echoing in the auditorium at Stratford-upon-Avon c. 1939:]

PIETER: [as OCTAVIUS]  
*“So call the field to rest, and let’s away  
To part the glories of this happy day.”*

[Fanfare ... Applause.]

[Francis meets his brother Pieter at the Stage Door.]

FRANCIS: Darling, you were marvellous!

PIETER: Give over, big brother, I’m little more than a spear carrier!

FRANCIS: Well, you have to start somewhere.

PIETER: [bristling] It’s not my first acting job –

FRANCIS: I can’t believe you’re my little brother.

PIETER: I’m not little anymore.

FRANCIS: You’ve come a long way from playing a log. You’re a star!

PIETER: One of a trillion in *“this brave, o’erhanging firmament ...”*

FRANCIS: Very good: *“What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason, how infinite in faculties! –”*

PIETER: *“... And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust?”*

FRANCIS: Hamlet!

PIETER: You could be an actor yourself, Francis!

FRANCIS: Me? No. [thinking, maybe:] No. [like an actor:] No.

[Francis considers their idyllic surroundings:]

*“Let us sit upon this ground  
And tell sad stories of the death of kings ...”*

[They lay their jackets on the riverbank, pop open their bottles of beer. The ripple of the water. Birdsong. Summer buzz.]

This willow tree, the Avon – it's bucolic.

PIETER: *"There is a willow grows askant the brook  
That shows his hoar leaves in the glassy stream ..."*

FRANCIS: Very poetic. If a little morbid –

PIETER: Oh, yes. Gertrude's ode to Ophelia, after she drowned.

FRANCIS: You should play Hamlet.

PIETER: Should. Could. Would.

FRANCIS: Will do one day, I'm certain. After all, what's the point of training at RADA if you don't conquer the world!

PIETER: Same could be said for Cambridge.

FRANCIS: Yes, well, like a European dictator I'm doing my conquering one step at a time.

PIETER: And how is the schoolmaster's life treating you?

FRANCIS: Oh, you know ... Joining Harry on the staff has been good.

PIETER: Harry Rée? From Cambridge?

[Francis nods.]

FRANCIS: I stand in front of all those children – forty expectant, gazing faces – and I need to know what makes each one of them tick. And to do that I have to listen and learn from them. To understand them. Their intellects waiting to be stimulated, their hearts willing to be moved to laughter or tears, or tears of laughter – through stories and poems and plays. Just how Papa inspired us when we were young.

PIETER: Sounds like a regular matinée audience.

FRANCIS: Yes, it is, I suppose. I do put on a performance. Except my reviews won't be as good as yours.

PIETER: Don't underestimate yourself.

FRANCIS: I observe you don't deny you've received good notices.

PIETER: If I can't brag to you, Francis, then who?

FRANCIS: Last term, the headmaster took me aside, said he'd taken a look at what I was doing in the classroom ...

PIETER: And?

FRANCIS: Said it was awful! But that everything I did outside the classroom – running four or five societies – was miraculous.

PIETER: Bingo!

FRANCIS: Teach well, I thought, give the children the opportunities they deserve. Make the world a better, more peaceful place.

PIETER: And what do the children say?

FRANCIS: 'Form a scab and drop off, Big Feet!'

PIETER: No! Really?

FRANCIS: Well, not to my face. But I do hear them whispering when I'm approaching the classroom – 'Here he comes – fe-fi-fo-fum!'

PIETER: That's what they called you when we were schoolboys. Big Feet.

FRANCIS: Curse of my life.

PIETER: I used to get upset on your behalf.

FRANCIS: I might have been a giant on the rugby field – but you were the one who always looked like a god in the playground:

*"Why, man, he doth bstride the narrow world  
Like a Colossus ..."*

PIETER: And now here we both are, standing on our own two feet.

FRANCIS: [mock schoolmaster] Put your best foot forward, Cammaerts Minor!

PIETER: [likewise] So long as you don't put your foot in it, Cammaerts Major!

FRANCIS: Up there on the Front Line –

PIETER: [mocking] The Front Line!

FRANCIS: You know, at the front of the classroom. It's the only place I want to be. It's where I feel alive!

PIETER: Steady on, it's only school, after all.



FRANCIS: Oh, but Pieter, I love it. It is my vocation. Teaching is my life.

PIETER: But classrooms, blackboards? Bo-ring!

FRANCIS: It doesn't have to be.

[Simmering tension. Pieter sips his beer.]

When we were young, we used to do everything together.

PIETER: Swimming.

FRANCIS: 'Cycling.

PIETER: Climbing trees.

FRANCIS: Before we both went to school –

PIETER: Where you ignored me.

FRANCIS: You were the new boy –

PIETER: A squirt. You turned your back on me.

FRANCIS: Forgive me.

[The tension is palpable. Pieter sips his beer.]

Later we even learnt to drive together.

PIETER: Learnt about girls together, too.

FRANCIS: Learning to drive was a whole lot easier.

[They laugh together.]

You know, I think I have come up with a new way of learning –

PIETER: Ah! An educational revolutionary!

FRANCIS: Take them out of the classroom – like Papa taught us, in the Forest of Ardennes. Walk the riverbanks with them, like here: look for otters and herons and kingfishers. Explore the wildwoods when the bluebells are out, discover foxholes, watch larks rising over the fields.

PIETER: Hitler will change all that.

FRANCIS: What do you mean?

PIETER: Well, we'll have to fight to protect it all – that's if he doesn't blast it all to smithereens first.

[Tensions come to the boil.]

FRANCIS: There's a futility about war –

PIETER: Please, Francis. Don't. I'm sorry. I should have known better than to bring it up /

FRANCIS: [ploughing on] It's such a waste of human lives! Shattering all our futures –

PIETER: No, Francis, we're fighting for our futures.

FRANCIS: It's barbaric.

PIETER: I agree! The horror of it all haunts me. But we have to defend ourselves, stand up for what we believe. Don't we?

FRANCIS: Not by descending to the level of fascists, we don't. It makes no sense.

PIETER: War doesn't make sense. But it's the only way to fight our way out of the chaos. It's the last resort.

FRANCIS: If we all join in another conflict it will only kill millions more, like the last war. Pacifism is the only way forward for humanity.

PIETER: Listen, Francis. I have always respected your views. But you're wrong.

[Francis protests –]

No – listen. Pacifism will not stop Adolf Hitler. The cruelty of fascism has to be confronted head on. I'm going to join up.

FRANCIS: Please don't.

PIETER: Why not?

FRANCIS: Because once you've accepted the discipline of an armed force you are bound to accept the possibility of receiving stupid and ridiculous orders which you will only have to obey.

PIETER: [shaking his head] The freedom of Europe – of the whole world – is under threat, Francis! I must fight. I love acting – as much as you do teaching; a thousand times more, probably. [ever the actor, rehearsing until it's true:] I *love* acting – I love *acting*. I love acting.

But I can't go on making make-believe when the survival of everyone and everything I hold so dear is at stake. It would be wrong wrong wrong.

FRANCIS: [quietly] I'll tell you what's wrong, Piet: killing another human being, no matter how worthy the cause; that's wrong. As wicked as any evil; as morally corrupt as any tyrant you might fight. Wars don't solve a thing.

PIETER: We must do what we must do, Francis. That's my Front Line. Bottom line. *Pax?*

[*Pax*. They stop fighting. Look out across the river.]

[A distant church bell chimes. Pieter makes a move, gathers his jacket.]

And what I must do, Francis, is get back to the theatre or I'll miss tonight's performance.

FRANCIS: "*Cry 'Havoc!' And let slip the dogs of war!*"

PIETER: Precisely.

FRANCIS: Break a leg.

PIETER: Thanks.

[They walk back, both deep in thought.]

You know what they say for 'good luck' in the theatres in Rome, in Italy, don't you?

FRANCIS: No. But you're going to tell me.

PIETER: '*In bocca al lupo.*'

FRANCIS: 'In the mouth of the wolf.'

PIETER: As in: 'You're heading into the mouth of the wolf, good luck to you!'

FRANCIS: *Bocca al lupo.*

PIETER: *Crepi il lupo* – 'death to the wolf!' That's the response.

FRANCIS: 'May it die!'

PIETER: I'll slay it.

FRANCIS: I've no doubt you will!

[The sounds of Hitler speeches, marching troops, air raid sirens ...]

Scene 9. FOREIGNERS

[... the rant of Hitler, news reports on the airwaves.]

[split-stage:]

[Cammaerts's home, 1940:]

EMILE: I have been reported to the British government – as a German spy!

[Whitehall, 1940:]

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER: 'On the twenty-third of July 1940, an informant called Room 055 with information concerning Emile Cammaerts, the Belgian Poet Laureate. It was alleged that he and his German wife, a former actress, employ a German maid; and that all the other German maids in the district are frequently invited to the house – for parties!'

[Cammaerts's home:]

EMILE: We are bloody foreigners, I suppose. Send us back to where we came from! Well, our hearts are here, body and soul. And now we come from Radlett, Herts. And my verse has been set to music by none other than Edward Elgar!

[Another brief rendition of the Elgar/Cammaerts 1915 song 'Sing, Belgians, Sing!']

[Pieter dresses in a blue RAF jacket.]

FRANCIS: You look perfect in your new role, Pieter: Sergeant Pieter Cammaerts, Navigator, RAF ...

PIETER: I know the stars better than you now, Francis, better even than Papa.

FRANCIS: But will you get the same notices? "A tour de force" – 'The Stage' – "Pieter Cammaerts is a star in the making ..."

PIETER: [smiling] Between you and me and the bed-post, I'm scared stiff. It's a dirty job and you may well ask if we'll ever get clean again. But the air is clean up there in the sky, and the job must be done.

[The roar of an aeroplane, taking off.]

FRANCIS: [to self/us] And that was that. The show was over.

[The sound of Schoolboys running around playing aeroplanes ...]

Scene 10. RESIGNATION

[... Schoolboys run around outside, playing aeroplanes ... School in Kent. 1940.]

[Francis knocks at the headmaster's door. He's in a schoolmaster's gown; the HEADMASTER likewise.]

HEADMASTER: Enter!

[Francis does.]

Yes, Mr. Cammaerts, to what do I owe the pleasure? Fourth form playing up again?

[Francis smiles weakly.]

FRANCIS: Headmaster. I am a schoolteacher, and bloody good at my job.

HEADMASTER: You are, though I wouldn't have quite put it like that myself.

FRANCIS: No, Headmaster. Sorry.

[The Headmaster waves Francis's apology away.]

But you would agree that the school must have the confidence and the trust of its parents?

HEADMASTER: Where's this all leading, Cammaerts?

FRANCIS: The Battle of Britain is being fought over our heads. Before that, the evacuation from Dunkirk – all those trains laden with survivors. Well, with all that going on, Headmaster, those parents are not going to feel too good about one of their teachers being a pacifist, are they?

HEADMASTER: No, Cammaerts.

FRANCIS: So. I resign.

[Pause.]

HEADMASTER: I see. I'm disappointed, Cammaerts. But I can't say I'm terribly surprised. You know I have no choice in the matter and can only accept your decision. You do realise that when you're no longer a teacher you will be called up, don't you?

FRANCIS: Yes.

HEADMASTER: What will you do?

FRANCIS: I am already registered as a conscientious objector. And I have volunteered to work on a farm of likeminded souls up in Lincolnshire.

HEADMASTER: Well, good luck, Francis Cammaerts, M.A. – Master of Arts.

FRANCIS: Thank you, sir.

HEADMASTER: Because you'll bloody well need it.

TRIBUNAL CHAIR: [off] *Next!*

[Snap to:]

Scene 11. TRIBUNAL

[Francis appears before the Board of the Tribunal. London 1940.]

TRIBUNAL CHAIR: Name?

FRANCIS: Cammaerts, sir. Francis Cammaerts. I am a conscientious objector.

TRIBUNAL CHAIR: Well, Francis Cammaerts, what is your testimony?

[Francis coughs awkwardly but soon gets into his stride:]

FRANCIS: Human beings cannot solve their problems by war. We are not going to prevent fascism by fighting it with aircraft and guns. We have to find other ways of opposing an undesirable political situation.

[The Board look at him as if they're expecting more.]

That's it.

[The Tribunal Chair considers for a moment.]

TRIBUNAL CHAIR: Well, Francis Cammaerts, M.A. Cantab. You are not moved by a religious obligation. You have clearly thought it all through very carefully and you have come to a reasoned and sound conclusion. We accept your conviction and the fact that you are sincere.

[Francis looks relieved – even pleased with himself, a privileged person speaking to compassionate, privileged people. But:]

However, conviction based on reason is not the same thing as having an absolute compulsion – which is what the legislation is designed for. You are a democrat, not a religious objector and, if you're a democrat, you believe in the vote and you believe that the majority of votes makes the decision. The democrat is obliged to follow the vast majority. Application denied.

[About to rubber-stamp, when:]

TRADE UNIONIST: [down-to-earth] Hold your horses! We don't want to put this fella' in prison, now, do we? That's going to solve nowt and involve the whole country in the wasteful expense of his incarceration. The people are hungry. The nation needs food. Permit this man to continue to work on the farm, in Lincolnshire.

[Beat. Then nods of murmured agreement.]

[The bleating of sheep and goats ...]

Scene 12. EAT NO MORE CABBAGE

[Collow Abbey Farm, East Torrington, Lincolnshire. 1940]

[... The grunt of pigs, cluck of chickens, braying of donkeys, lowing of cattle, bleating of sheep and goats. A horse neighs, snorts.]

[Francis mucks out a stable. 'Delivers' a letter:]

FRANCIS:

'Dear Pieter,

If only you could see your big brother now! I dig turnips, sow potatoes. And shovel ... But I do get to drive the tractor! I've learnt more in these past few months than we were ever taught at school, Pieter – more than I even learned at Cambridge. Wherever you are, Piet, send me a postcard – what can't be expressed on a postcard isn't worth considering. Stay safe, little brother.

Your Francis.'

[A fellow conscientious objector FARMHAND interrupts:]

FARMHAND: I say, Francis! Are you going to kill the goose, or what?

FRANCIS: Well, if I don't, then none of you will, will you?

FARMHAND: Oh, no, not likely. I'll pray for the goose – then eat it, and enjoy it, too. But I couldn't abide killing it.

[The Farmhand departs.]

FRANCIS: [to himself] Sometimes I wonder if you lot think that all you need to make a plant grow is to kneel down and pray! I till the soil, muck out the stables, even slaughter the sheep for you because you're all too squeamish. Not squeamish enough to be vegetarian, though.

[Francis turns upstage –]

Now, come on goosey, this won't hurt –

[There's the flap and screech of a goose, the crick of a neck, feathers and blood.]

[Then silence.]

[Francis turns, splattered in blood, the corpse of the garrotted goose dangling by its limp neck from his hand. He lays it on a surface to rest.]

Just lie there, for a mo'!



[Francis pulls out a tin bath, pours warm, steaming water from a jug; strips, plunges in. Bliss.]

[As he soaps, legs and feet hanging over the edge, he sings to himself, heartily.]

[Then a door is opened, off, and he's hit by a cold blast of air. Shivers:]

For pity's sake, shut the bloody door!

NAN: [off] Just as soon as I bloody can!

FRANCIS: [to himself] Charming.

[Then Nan bursts in, 20s (eighteen years younger than when we first saw her) – nonsense, practical, a force of nature – as unperturbed by the young man caught naked in the tin bath as that same man is perturbed by her sudden nonchalant appearance.]

[covering his privates:] I'm in the bath!

NAN: I can see that. You've got very big ... feet, haven't you?

FRANCIS: That's what they call me – Big Feet. Those who don't call me Francis. [lifting one of his dripping wet hands to shake:] How d'you do?

NAN: [reciprocating] And I'm Nancy – Nan to my friends.

FRANCIS: Do you always talk to nude men in the bath, Nan?

NAN: Only when they're washing in the middle of my aunt and uncle's kitchen.

[She chucks him a towel and he catches it as best he can, covering his modesty.]

[hands over her eyes:] I won't look – [peeping through her fingers:] Promise!

[Francis stands up, rubs himself dry.]

You've missed a bit.

[He's not sure if she's teasing, flirting.]

[looking him up and down, admiringly:] How did you get so tall?

FRANCIS: Cabbage.

NAN: [dead pan] Cabbage.

[Francis nods.]

Well, eat no more cabbage, master Francis – [laughing:] you're quite big enough as it is!  
Now, come along; we've got a Christmas goose to cook.

[They sing together:]

NAN/FRANCIS: *Christmas is coming, the goose is getting fat  
Please put a penny in the old man's hat  
If you haven't got a penny, a ha'penny will do  
If you haven't got a ha'penny, then God bless you!*

[And they kiss ...]

Scene 13. MARRIAGE

[Registry Office. Market town of Caister, Lincolnshire, 1941.]

[A hail of rice and they pose for a wedding photograph – flash! And a quick burst of Mendelssohn’s wedding march from *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (on the wireless?)]

FRANCIS: Sorry it’s only a registry office, Nan.

NAN: I’m sorry we’ve got married in secret.

FRANCIS: Let’s make babies!

NAN: Steady on!

[A piercing vagitus – then the gurgle and coo of a new-born babe – snuggled in its blanket by Nan.]

FRANCIS: Where there’s new life, there’s hope!

NAN: We shall call her Niki.

FRANCIS: Niki.

[Francis dotes on her, until he’s distracted by the news on the wireless:]

WIRELESS: *‘This is the midday news and here are today’s main events: one hundred and seventy-five aircraft have been destroyed in air-raids over Europe ...’*

[Francis is glued to the wireless which mumbles on with the news.]

FRANCIS: The war won’t leave us alone, Nan. Families, homes and towns are being destroyed. Hitler is on the march. The whole world is now at war!

NAN: [unmoved by mansplaining] Yes, I listen to the wireless, too.

FRANCIS: Lose in Europe, and the enemy will come across the Channel, occupy our villages, our cities – just as they have in Belgium, in France, taking all that they want, burning what they don’t want.

NAN: What are you trying to say, Francis?

FRANCIS: To take the life of another human being is wrong.

NAN: Yes.

FRANCIS: We should fight only with words, with education, never with hate in our hearts.

NAN: Do you truly believe that?

[While Francis contemplates, a telephone rings and rings. It is finally answered.]

[Split-stage:]

[Flashback: the cockpit of an aircraft in flame, the noise of the stuttering engine:]

PIETER: [over his shoulder, speaking above the noise to his colleagues as he attempts to steer the 'plane to safety] We've been hit by flak. When we see the coast of Cornwall, you're all going to have to jump. Bail out. Jim's gone, I'm afraid. So, I'll hold her steady while you do, and try to land her. I may only be a Navigator, but I'll be all right.

[The aeroplane chugs on in flames – then the engine whines, falters – dead silence –]

[Explosion.]

[The roar of fire. End flashback.]

FRANCIS: You reached for the stars, Piet! Just 21 years-old. You won the argument, damn you!

NAN: Francis?

FRANCIS: I'll be honest, Nan. I am at war already – with myself. To fight or not to fight.

*“To suffer  
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune  
Or take up arms against a sea of troubles  
And by opposing end them –”*

NAN: Not everything can be solved by quoting Shakespeare, Francis!

FRANCIS: To join up and play my part or let others do my fighting for me. I look at Niki and I know I cannot *not* act.

NAN: If you're thinking like that, then you aren't really a conscientious objector, not in the total sense.

FRANCIS: But it's what I've always believed.

NAN: It isn't a question of compromising a lifetime's belief; it's the current conviction that you can no longer remain a pacifist – not that pacifism is fundamentally wrong.

FRANCIS: Is that what you believe?

NAN: I'm not going to fight a war. I have a daughter to raise.

FRANCIS: I think my mind's made up, Nan.

NAN: Yes, I think it is.

FRANCIS: I'll speak to Harry Rée. He'll have an in, somewhere.

NAN: You must do what you must do, Francis.

FRANCIS: That's what Pieter said.

NAN: Just don't get yourself killed, you hear? Whatever happens, when it's over, Niki and I will be waiting for you, and then we can pick up where we left off. Can't we?

[Rat-a-tat-tat – it sounds like machine-gun fire, but ...]

Scene 14. MADNESS

[... The rat-a-tat-tat of typewriters, off – surges as Francis enters; muffles as Francis closes the door. A bare office. 64, Baker Street, London. 1942.]

POTTER: *Asseyez-vous.*

FRANCIS: *Merci, monsieur.*

POTTER: *Au fait* with French, then, are you?

FRANCIS: *Oui, je parle bien français. Très bien, en fait.*

POTTER: [making a note] Hm. Belgian accent. Well, nothing that can't be ironed out with a bit of army discipline.

FRANCIS: Discipline isn't really my thing.

POTTER: Maybe not. But that's what makes you useful to us. Even though you're a touch on the tall side. And I understand you're a pacifist?

FRANCIS: Yes. Though I've had a change of heart.

POTTER: Strange. Interesting. Why?

FRANCIS: Anything I can do to help Belgium and France – and, well, the world – to free itself from the tyranny of the Nazis, I will do.

POTTER: I see. Your father's a famous Belgian, isn't he?

FRANCIS: If you say so.

POTTER: He's not Belgian?

FRANCIS: I wouldn't describe him as famous, sir.

POTTER: Mother a German?

FRANCIS: By birth.

POTTER: But you were at school at Mill Hill – First XV and First XI – and St Catherine's College, Cambridge. [appreciative:] 'Cats.' Hockey Blue. I was at St Paul's myself; and then the Sorbonne.

FRANCIS: [prickling] How interesting.

POTTER: All right. I think we've got a job for you. *Un travail. Une aventure.*

FRANCIS: Who's 'we'?

POTTER: [confidentially] Special Operations Executive – France branch. SOE-F, for short. We're a secret, paramilitary, multi-national organisation – funded by government, but answerable to no one. Churchill has given us *carte blanche* to "set Europe ablaze." Guerrilla warfare, assisting the exiled General de Gaulle and the French Résistance, but independent of them both.

[Potter is enthusiastic, almost acting it out:]

Deploying sabotage on an industrial scale – destroying bus axles, engine pistons, tramlines, railway points, telephone junction boxes, electricity substations – you name it.

You will coordinate, control and assist the occupied nationals. We need a certain fanatical enthusiasm and a willingness to work with different people of different nationalities. And complete political reliability.

FRANCIS: And that's me?

POTTER: It is, Second Lieutenant Cammaerts. You start your training Monday morning, ten o'clock sharp.

FRANCIS: [to self/us?] Enter stage left a conchie. Exit stage right an army officer.

[Snap to:]

Scene 15: MUD

[Training ground. Wanborough Manor, Guildford. 1942.]

SERGEANT: [screams] Stand still, stomach in, chest out!

FRANCIS: [to self, but loud enough for the Sergeant to hear him] And there was I not wanting to receive foolish orders.

SERGEANT: Crawl through that mud, son, if you know what's good for you!

[Francis drops to the ground.]

You will slog up hill and down dale in the dark, in all weathers – like you will out there in the field. You shall not gossip amongst yourselves. You will never speak of what you've been through to anyone. Not to your nearest and dearest. Not even to your lover ... especially not to your bleedin' lover, if you ugly lot are lucky enough to have one.

Right, that's enough assault courses for one morning. Now, it's back to school:

Lesson One – Radios and Codes.

Lesson Two – booby traps and unarmed combat.

FRANCIS: What about guns, Sergeant?

SERGEANT: 'Guns,' son? I'll give you 'guns.'

[The Sergeant demonstrates:]

Knees bent, two-hand grip, shoot from the waist –

[He is quick on the draw with a pistol, cowboy style –]

Shanghai-style.

[More rat-a-tat-tat of typewriters:]

INSTRUCTOR: [reports] 'Second Lieutenant Cammaerts has worked extraordinarily hard and has shown great keenness in all branches of the training. He should make a first-class leader and organiser. He is well above average in all subjects, and probably one of the best we have had. Quiet and unimposing, he may not strike one on first encounter as being particularly outstanding. But after a short acquaintance, he proves himself to be a top-notch!'



Scene 16. MIRROR

[Francis's and Nan's home, Harrow, 1942.]

FRANCIS: Just my luck to fall ill and be sent home. Sorry, Nan.

NAN: People with jaundice cannot be lived with!

[She hands him a towel and shaving-mug with razor etc.]

[Francis looks at himself in the mirror while he shaves:]

FRANCIS: Jaundice. *Jaune*. Yellow ... You're a secret agent, Francis Cammaerts. A *secret agent*. How can you be doing this – you, a pacifist? How can this be right? I know how to kill a man – with a knife, with a pistol. With my bare hands. Will I do it, though? Should I? This is how you must have felt before going on stage, Piet – not stage fright. Adrenaline. Well, you were magnificent, but it was your job. Now it is my job. Playing a part. I will do it as I have seen you do it. But I will not act. I will live the part. Become the part, become a secret agent – leave the rest of me behind – husband, father, pacifist, teacher – leave it all behind.

NAN: Who are you talking to, Francis?

FRANCIS: No one. Myself.

NAN: You're not no one, Francis Cammaerts.

[The 'phone rings.]

FRANCIS: [answers] Hello? ... [sombre:] Yes, sir ... No, sir –

NAN: Three bags full, sir.

[Francis replaces the receiver.]

FRANCIS: You know I can't say anything about it, Nan. But this is it.

[They hug.]

[The sound of an aeroplane chugging through the sky ...]

[INTERVAL.]

## Part Two

### Scene 17. VIVE LA FRANCE

[... A single-engine Lysander flies low over France, 1942. Francis a touch queasy; the GOGGLED PILOT all tally-ho:]

PILOT: All right there, code-name 'Roger'? Roger-the-Lodger. The Artful Dodger.

FRANCIS: It's [French pronunciation] *Ro-ger*.

PILOT: [very English accent] *Pardonnez-moi*, [exaggerated French pronunciation:] *Ro-ger*. Got your cover story all sorted, then, have you, 'Roger'?

FRANCIS: I'm a school-master seeking the warmer climes of Provence so I can recuperate from jaundice.

PILOT: Genius!

FRANCIS: It's actually not so far from the truth.

PILOT: Well, keep that under your hat, sonny-Jim.

[The 'plane flies on. Francis's adrenalin kicks in:]

FRANCIS: These single-engine 'planes, Lysanders –

PILOT: Or 'Lizzies', as we like to call them –

FRANCIS: – named after the Spartan General who destroyed the Athenian fleet.

PILOT: Is that a fact?

FRANCIS: Also, Lysander is one of the lovers in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Also set in Athens.

[The Pilot gives him a little look; Francis grins.]

[The 'plane chugs on.]

PILOT: Full moon. We're in luck.

FRANCIS: *La lune*. Derivation of the word Lu-natic. Lunatic.

PILOT: Wolves howl at the moon.

[The aeroplane banks steeply.]

Hold on tight – landing off-piste can be a bit on the bumpy side.

[A bumpy landing.]

[The Drop Zone in full moonlight.]

Well, good luck, *Roger* –

FRANCIS: *In bocca al lupo. Crepi il lupo.*

PILOT: If you say so. And make sure you have a newspaper with you at all times.

FRANCIS: That's contrary to our training –

PILOT: Bog roll's rather scarce in France, these days! Cheerio!

[The 'plane takes off, Francis left standing there, alone, in the moonlight – which now seems more shadowy, darker. In the silence/not silence.]

[Suddenly, a torch beam illuminates his face.]

[Then, out of the shadows (Francis still in the torchlight) a gun is pointed straight at him. Francis draws his own revolver – Shanghai-style, just as he was taught. A stand-off. But:]

FRANCIS: I think we might both be on the same side.

AUGUSTE: *Bon soir, monsieur. Je m'appelle 'Albert.'*

FRANCIS: *Ah, oui. 'Roger.'*

[They shake hands. Auguste clutches a battered leather attaché case.]

AUGUSTE: *Nous sommes exposés. On descend au village –*

FRANCIS: Yes, don't want to stick our necks above the skyline.

AUGUSTE: *Vite. Allons-y.*

[Radio interference ...]

Scene 18. LE PIANISTE

[Francis and Auguste head to a safe house in town, France, 1942.]

[Safely inside, Auguste opens his attaché case – which contains a radio set, headphones, long wire aerial that he attaches up high.]

[Auguste twiddles knobs, taps out a message, listens intently to decipher the radio interference.]

AUGUSTE: They call me '*Le Pianiste.*'

FRANCIS: The Pianist. [Mimes piano-playing.] I can see why. They call me '*Grands Pieds.*'

AUGUSTE: Big Feet. I can see why.

FRANCIS: Do you think I'll stand out in a crowd?

AUGUSTE: You'll soon discover that the south of France is full of refugees of all shapes and sizes – the German police have no idea who's who. From the front you look like a Swede – a Scandinavian, not the root vegetable. And from behind you could pass for de Gaulle himself.

FRANCIS: Well, that's hardly reassuring.

[Auguste smiles.]

AUGUSTE: Word to the wise: beware of the Milice – the French Nazi police. They're thugs, hooligans. Up in the Alps, they don't know much more than the Germans – but down in Marseille? They'll know what train you came in on, how many *café au laits* you've had. They're local, know everyone, eyes everywhere. They are the worst of the worst – despised and dangerous. Frenchmen who have joined the occupier and betrayed their own. As I should know –

FRANCIS: Please, don't tell me.

AUGUSTE: *Oui.* Best to keep ourselves to ourselves ... And if you want to stay safe, you have to keep on the move. Never stay in the same place more than a couple of nights.

FRANCIS: Yes. So. Rules.

AUGUSTE: *Les règles.*

FRANCIS: I don't like them, as a rule. But if we're to make this work, we must abide by them.

AUGUSTE: *D'accord.*

FRANCIS: Telephone? Forbidden. And no written messages.

AUGUSTE: *Bien sûr.*

FRANCIS: And anyone who covers for me, they must know I'm English.

AUGUSTE: *Vraiment?* The penalty if you show *hospitalité* to an Englishman is that you and your family will end up being executed.

FRANCIS: Which is why they must choose for themselves whether to hide me or not. They need to know who I am before they agree to take that risk.

AUGUSTE: [nodding] The more of us they kill, the more reprisals for our sabotage, the more determined we will be to fight for our freedom. These people – these Nazis – they are callous and brutal occupiers. We must drive them out. To win, to free France, we must be as ruthless as they are, and more cunning with it. Like Renard, the fox.

FRANCIS: *Avant le loup.*

AUGUSTE: Yes, against the wolf.

FRANCIS: We'll keep one step ahead of them, I promise.

AUGUSTE: The Gestapo already know who we are.

FRANCIS: Yes.

AUGUSTE: Before long, there will be a price on your head.

[*Bang bang bang bang!* at the door – Auguste rapidly hides his radio equipment back in the attaché case.]

[A GERMAN SOLDIER bursts in.]

GERMAN SOLDIER: Your papers. *Schnell!*

[Auguste and Francis oblige – Auguste starts coughing.]

*Was ist los?*

[Auguste now appears to cough up blood.]

AUGUSTE: *Je m'excuse ...*

GERMAN SOLDIER: *Scheisse! Tuberkulose? Raus!*

[Francis and Auguste make a quick exit.]

[They walk on, trying to keep a low profile.]

FRANCIS: [*sotto voce*] I'm sorry you have TB.

AUGUSTE: [*sotto voce*] I haven't.

FRANCIS: But back there, the blood?

AUGUSTE: If you bite the inside of your cheek and spit blood it scares the *merde* out of the Germans!

[Francis chuckles grimly.]

FRANCIS: It's too dangerous to stay here.

AUGUSTE: Well, we can't head up into the mountains above Cannes – useless for a radio signal. But the people along the Côte D'Azur? The sun's got to them; they are infected with money, no sense of politics. We should move up the Rhône valley – to Montélimar.

FRANCIS: How?

[The cranking up of a motor car.]

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[Francis and Auguste trundle along in the car. Then slow down to a stop.]

FRANCIS: What now?

AUGUSTE: Roadblock.

FRANCIS: What about our rifles?

[An SS OFFICER approaches the vehicle.]

SS OFFICER: *Aussteigen!*

[They get out of the car.]

Papers. I want to see your papers.

[They hand them over. The SS Officer inspects them, then starts prodding the car seat with the bayonet of his rifle.]

AUGUSTE: *Was machen Sie?*

SS OFFICER: Ah, *Sie sprechen Deutsch?* An American bomber has been shot down – we are looking for the Yankee crew.

AUGUSTE: [insolent] And you think we've sewn them into the upholstery? Why not check the boot?

[Terrible pause while the SS man looks daggers. Then:]

SS OFFICER: [laughing] Okay, Monsieur Wise Guy. Get back into the car. *Auf wiedersehen.*

AUGUSTE: [to himself] Not if I see you first.

[They drive away, the SS Officer waving them off.]

[In the car:]

FRANCIS: We were lucky he didn't check the boot.

AUGUSTE: Sometimes it's best to hide in plain sight.

FRANCIS: *Danke. Danke sehr.*

AUGUSTE: That's enough German for one day, Roger.

[Francis smiles.]

FRANCIS: You know, when I left England, my wife was pregnant with our second child. She is due around now. But I have heard nothing.

[Auguste nods. A moment of trust. And he knows what anxiety is. Appreciates the moment of emotional honesty.]

AUGUSTE: What I said before. About the Milice. My wife and daughter? Ravensbrück.

FRANCIS: [nodding] Concentration camp.

[Auguste nods.]

AUGUSTE: And my sons? They're on the run.

FRANCIS: You're all brave people, Albert.

AUGUSTE: Not brave. Practical.

FRANCIS: I've been thinking; what we need to do is to set up a network of people who only know the immediate set of people around them – so no one can be turned when under duress.

AUGUSTE: *La vérité n'est pas toujours bonne à dire.*

FRANCIS: What you don't know won't kill you.

AUGUSTE: *Exactement.*

FRANCIS: We will set up small cells.

AUGUSTE: Les équipes.

FRANCIS: Yes. Teams.

[An accordion plays ...]



## Scene 19. RECRUITMENT

[... An accordion plays under:]

[Francis recruits a PAIR OF FRENCHMEN in overcoats, collars turned up and berets worn low, at a café, South of France, 1942. (Smoking Gauloises?) Furtive:]

FRANCIS: *Bon soir, messieurs*. You have been recommended to me – it doesn't matter by whom – and you, in turn, may wish to recommend others. Those you can vouch for, those who are reliable – only those in whom you have an absolute trust. Your life – my life – the lives of all Frenchmen depend upon it.

[The men nod.]

You shouldn't look to have more than a dozen in your group – all able and willing to go on the attack, and then to disappear back from whence they came.

[The men nod some more.]

We want to disrupt bauxite production. The Germans have no copper, so they have to use aluminium to power electricity, and bauxite is vital to aluminium production, essential to the German war economy. It's currently shipped from the south of France all the way up to Norway. *Vous comprenez?*

FRENCHMEN: We understand. *Vive la France!*

[They depart.]

FRANCIS: [to himself] *In bocca al lupo*.

[More rat-a-tat-tat of typewriters ...]

Scene 20. BAKER STREET

[... The rat-a-tat-tat of typewriters.]

[Back at 64 Baker Street, c. 1943 an SOE BUREAUCRAT reads Francis's communiqué from the depths of southern France:]

SOE BUREACRAT/FRANCIS: 'An army needs weapons and food – above all for morale. They are all patriotic, but patriotism is not enough. Courage is not enough. Starve them of what they need, and they cannot, will not fight. And another thing: I need a courier, a good one, to be my eyes and ears among the ever-growing army of Résistance fighters. A woman would be best – she can do things and go places a young man can't, arouses less suspicion. And she has to be the best of the best. Someone I can absolutely rely on. *Au revoir*. Roger.'

[The chug of an aeroplane overhead ...]

Scene 21. CHRISTINE

[An stuttering aeroplane overhead. South of France. 1943. In a gale.]

[CHRISTINE – 30s, formidable, charismatic, like an athletic arts student – lands dramatically by parachute (dangling on ropes or mimed with loose limbs on floor.)]

[Auguste and Francis guide her in by torch beam. Auguste with his attaché case, Francis with a haversack, both bowed against the wind.]

[Christine rolls up her chute. She also has a haversack.]

CHRISTINE: Looks like I've kicked up a storm! [shaking both their hands] 'Pauline.'

AUGUSTE: *Enchanté.*

CHRISTINE: Cut the crap, monsieur.

AUGUSTE: *Je m'excuse ... Je suis 'Albert.'*

[Christine nods, turns to Francis:]

CHRISTINE: And I know who you are.

FRANCIS: You do?

CHRISTINE: '*Grand Pieds.*' What they say is true: you are rather tall, like a giraffe.

FRANCIS: 'Roger.'

CHRISTINE: I've seen the posters: '*Roger, terroriste. Deux millions de francs de récompense.*'

FRANCIS: Two million Francs? That's a higher price than the War Office would put on my head!

AUGUSTE: Maybe I should turn you in? With money like that I could keep my village in *vin rouge* for a lifetime!

CHRISTINE: [toasts] *Les Trois Mousquetaires!*

FRANCIS: *Un pour tous, tous pour un!*

AUGUSTE: So, where's D'Artagnan?

CHRISTINE: [to Francis] You sound Belgian.

FRANCIS: You don't sound quite French yourself.

[Christine smiles with an enigmatic twinkle.]

CHRISTINE: I have a message for you, Roger, from London HQ: you have another daughter. Joanna.

AUGUSTE: Bravo!

[Francis allows himself a tender smile.]

FRANCIS: Joanna. Jay.

[They shelter from the wind.]

CHRISTINE: So, here's my idea: we tear down their telephone lines, creep into the railway yard at night, change the destination on the train wagons –

AUGUSTE: Cunning. Like a fox.

FRANCIS: Sow confusion, make mayhem –

CHRISTINE: Then fade away into the night.

FRANCIS: A mosquito bite.

CHRISTINE: Sting like an angry wasp – then buzz off.

FRANCIS: From whom do you take your orders?

CHRISTINE: I am answerable to no one but myself.

FRANCIS: I can believe that.

CHRISTINE: What's in your haversack, Roger Big Feet?

FRANCIS: Bread and cheese.

CHRISTINE: Thank heavens, I'm starving.

FRANCIS: Why, what's in yours?

CHRISTINE: Hand grenades. Now, let's give 'em hell!

[She heads off singing Frankie & Johnny:]

*Frankie & Johnny were sweethearts,  
Oh, how they could love!*

*They swore to be true to each other  
Just as true as the stars above ...*

[Bunny Berigan & His Orchestra scratchy 1932 recording of 'Frankie & Johnny' plays over ...]

Scene 22. MILICE

[... the clank of railway wagons being shunted about the station yard.]

[Christine, headscarf pulled over her face, carries out the ambush (to the continuing 'Frankie & Johnny' soundtrack) changing the destination labels on the train wagons.]

[Then a cry goes up – 'Hey!' – Francis grabs the ASSAILANT, bundles him away, followed by Christine.]

[When they've escaped from the scene of the crime, Christine binds the man's hands. Francis stares at him. The silence of cicadas.]

[Decision: Francis interrogates him (it must be clear that he is not Auguste):]

FRANCIS: Are you a member of the Milice?

[No response.]

Did you join the Milice of your own accord?

[The man nods.]

How old are you?

MILICE: Twenty.

FRANCIS: You know what this means.

[No response.]

[Francis takes out his revolver – and shoots him in the back of the head.]

[Silence.]

CHRISTINE: You had no choice.

FRANCIS: [toying with his conscience] I had to do it. I couldn't ask you to do it, nor Albert. We had nowhere to hold him. We couldn't release him because that would tell the Milice immediately where we are. De Gaulle's orders are to execute traitorous Milice on capture. So, there was nothing except execution ... But to kill a man without trial? ... What could I have done otherwise?

[Silence.]

[A baby cries off ...]

Scene 23. HOME LEAVE

[Harrow home. 1944. The cry of a baby – and a toddler chirruping away.]

NAN: [off] Francis? Francis! Please come and help.

[Francis just stares at the floor. Nan comes in with a baby wrapped in a blanket.]

Francis?

[He still doesn't respond.]

What's happened to you while you've been away?

FRANCIS: Shall I go shopping? I could take the girls.

NAN: Niki's quite happy playing in the bedroom. And Jay's finally asleep, in case you hadn't noticed.

[*Froideur* between them.]

FRANCIS: There's still a war going on, Nan. I need to catch the tube to Baker Street. You know ... debriefings. Before I go back. And I've been promoted.

NAN: Oh, really?

FRANCIS: Captain Cammaerts.

NAN: [salutes – ironically?] Ay, ay, Captain!

[Francis doesn't respond.]

When are you going back? To wherever it is you're going back to.

FRANCIS: You know I can't tell you.

NAN: I know, but when?

FRANCIS: End of the month, weather permitting.

NAN: January's always atrocious.

FRANCIS: February, probably.

[The roar and rumble of a 'plane ...]

Scene 24. SNOW

[... The roar and rumble of a single-engine Lysander monoplane. France. 1944.]

[Francis is precariously preparing to jump; the Pilot not so sure of himself this time:]

PILOT: We can't make a drop, we'll have to turn back. Too much snow. Mission aborted.

FRANCIS: Hell's bells.

[There's a burst of fire and the Lysander's engine stutters and conks out. There's a whine and whistle.]

PILOT: Ah. Spot of engine trouble. Change of plan! You'll have to jump after all.

FRANCIS: Into the cloud? I won't be able to see where to touch down. I won't be able to see a thing!

PILOT: Look on the bright side: the Germans won't be able to see you either.

[Francis prepares –]

Cheerio!

[Then Francis jumps – and the Lysander crashes in an explosion muffled by the snow on the hillside.]

[Francis floats in his parachute (dangling on ropes or mimed with loose limbs on floor.)  
Eerily silent.]

[He's slightly delirious, starved of oxygen:]

FRANCIS: [to himself] Feels like I'm floating upwards – falling slower than the clouds. London smog is nothing compared to this! ...

I will either land in a field and be shot out in the open – or land high up in the mountains where I'll freeze to death ... Knowing my luck, I'll plummet into the middle of rush-hour in Lyon! ... Still, could be worse: might smash into some German barracks and be mowed down by machine-guns ...

Oh, Nan! Don't know that I'll ever see you again – or Niki, Jay ...

[The sky suddenly clears.]

What the –? Where are the clouds? Ground's rushing towards me! –

[He hits the ground with an 'oomph!' and collapses. Silence. He doesn't move.]



So, my 'plane crashes and I live. Your 'plane crashes, Piet, and you ...

[He stirs, feels around him:]

Potatoes? ... A farm!

[He gathers his chute and equipment and heads for the farmhouse.]

[Risking everything, he knocks on the door. He stamps his feet, rubs his hands together in the freezing cold.]

[The farmer, MONSIEUR DUMAS, pokes his head out of an upstairs window:]

DUMAS: *Sacre bleu*, it's two in the morning! What the hell do you want, *monsieur*?

FRANCIS: I've had an accident –

DUMAS: You've what? The road's five kilometres away!

FRANCIS: Didn't you hear the aircraft?

[Beat.]

DUMAS: Wake up! Wake up everybody! We've got a pilot! Fetch a bottle of wine – and make an omelette!

[Cows low ...]

Scene 25. ALMOST THE END

[Mountains above Vercors, South of France. 1944. Cows low.]

FRANCIS: We must continue to disrupt the enemy. We've blown up bridges, railway lines – even a hydro-electric dam. We'll block more roads with fallen trees, pour more sand into petrol tanks, ambush more German patrols. But the reprisals are terrible, Albert; entire villages burnt alive.

AUGUSTE: As I said before, Roger, the more the Nazis try to destroy us, the more determined we are to be rid of them.

FRANCIS: But all those lives not lived, all the grieving.

CHRISTINE: We have to be as ruthless as they are.

FRANCIS: There are thousands of Résistance fighters now, Pauline, and they all need providing for.

AUGUSTE: The Americans are dropping more supplies at night –

FRANCIS: But not all the consignments are useful. We need extra detonators, more limpet mines, batteries – not just socks and vests.

[The long roar of Flying Fortresses overhead.]

AUGUSTE: And now the Yankees are so confident of imminent victory they unleash their load in broad daylight!

[The roar of more 'planes.]

More 'planes? Are they making a second drop?

FRANCIS: No. Damnation! Those are swastikas on the undercarriages. Get down! Everybody, get down!

[Francis and Auguste and Christine hit the deck as German bomber 'planes strafe the mountainside.]

[When the 'planes have flown past and the bombing stopped, silence. The cows low again.]

[Then:]

FRANCIS: [still flat on the ground] Albert?

CHRISTINE: Roger?

AUGUSTE: Pauline?

[They get up – and stare at all the dead people all around them.]

CHRISTINE: We live to fight another day. Come; the German bombers may return.

FRANCIS: All these dead people. We must stay.

CHRISTINE: [forceful] Oh, really? So we can die, too? Or worse, captured? The Germans will swarm the mountains, hunt us down! I hope you've got your cyanide tablet!

FRANCIS: I certainly have no intention of taking it.

CHRISTINE: So, yes, we could stay and be killed. But I prefer to live.

FRANCIS: But all these good people –

CHRISTINE: We shouldn't blame ourselves – what we have just witnessed is not our fault, but a tragedy of war.

FRANCIS: Total war.

CHRISTINE: Our day will come.

FRANCIS: I hope so.

CHRISTINE: I know so. My mother was Jewish. I am Polish.

FRANCIS: Yes.

CHRISTINE: I was born in Warsaw. They have made a concentration camp of my country. There is nothing I would not do to defeat the Nazis.

FRANCIS: I know.

[He admires her fierce courage. And, likewise, she admires him. The chemistry between them strong, profound, unspoken. Tender, too, in the midst of war.]

AUGUSTE: Freedom must come for France.

CHRISTINE: Freedom will come for us all.

[The Italian 'Red Flag' Communist anthem 'Bandiera Rossa' ...]

Scene 26. PAUL

[Safe House, South of France, 1944.]

[Auguste with his open attaché case, listening to the whines and radio chatter:]

AUGUSTE: [decoding, reporting to Francis] The D-Day landings are being planned in Normandy ... the Allied assault on the south coast of France is also under preparation ... The Résistance is to be instrumental in making that happen.

FRANCIS: We need one man in particular to be central to the operation: Paul Héraud.

AUGUSTE: Codename 'Dumont'.

[A motorbike roars up – bearing PAUL HÉRAUD as described hereafter:]

FRANCIS: A goatherd up in the Alps where he is a mountaineer and a cabinet-maker. Yet possessing a knowledge of worldwide religions greater than any university don. But above all else, he is a freedom fighter *extraordinaire*. He's moulded an army out of the clay of the Maquis who have fled to the hills, the Maquis scrubland from which they proudly take their name.

AUGUSTE: And socialists, communists, Gaullists – and the Italian partisans. Sorting all their squabbles, gathering them all into one army of Résistance.

[Silence. Paul sniffs the air.]

PAUL: The end is coming. But not everyone will live to see it ... Listen.

[They listen intently. Just the wind.]

FRANCIS: American 'planes?

[Paul shakes his head.]

German fighters?

[Paul shakes his head. They listen harder. Then:]

PAUL: An owl.

[Hoot.]

I must go.

FRANCIS: *In bocca al lupo.*

PAUL: *Crepi il lupo!*

[The rasp of a motorbike being driven off full throttle into the distance.]

[Then the motorbike screeches to a halt.]

GERMAN SOLDIER: [off] *Achtung! Halt!*

[Paul runs off – machine-gun fire.]

[Silence.]

FRANCIS: He was a loner. Yet adored by everyone. I thought he was immortal.

[Beat.]

[The rev. of a car engine ...]

Scene 27. ROGER, TERRORISTE, 2,000,000 FRANCS

[... a car door squeaks open, engine chugging. Francis introduces himself to the DRIVER:]

FRANCIS: Roger.

RENOIR: Charles. Charles Renoir.

FRANCIS: Renoir. Like the painter.

RENOIR: *Oui. Il est mon grandpère.*

FRANCIS: Renoir is not a codename?

RENOIR: With a name like Renoir, there's no disguising who I am. *Mon oncle est le cinéaste.*

FRANCIS: The film maker?

RENOIR: [nodding] *La Règle de Jeu.*

FRANCIS: [wry] *The Rules of the Game.* Good title. Great film.

[Francis divvies up a pile of banknotes into two wedges:]

Here, funds for the Résistance groups. I'm splitting the money between us so that if we're searched it will look less suspicious. Guard it with your life.

RENOIR: It is a risk, *non?*

FRANCIS: Just a regular trip. Nothing to worry about. Everything's in order. Papers, labour permits. If we're stopped, we're strangers. I just hitched a ride. All right?

RENOIR: *D'accord.*

[They get into the car and drive off – singing as they do, letting their guard down. The song is interrupted by another GERMAN SOLDIER who stops the car.]

GERMAN SOLDIER: *Aussteigen. Sortez tous de la voiture.*

[They both get out of the car.]

Your papers.

[They show them.]

*Sehr gut. Auf wiedersehen.*

[They get back in the car, the German Soldier waves them on, and they drive off.]

RENOIR: Well, that was a lucky escape.

[Then another car, claxons blaring, siren wailing, pulls up in front of them. They stop.]

FRANCIS: Milice.

RENOIR: *Merde*.

[The MILICE, almost invisible behind the glare of a strong torchlight, is threatening:]

MILICE: *Papiers*.

[They oblige.]

You are related?

RENOIR: [shielding his eyes from the bright light] Monsieur? This man is a total stranger to me. I've only just met him.

FRANCIS: I hitched a lift. You know how it is.

MILICE: Pockets.

RENOIR: *Quoi?*

MILICE: *Videz vos poches*.

[They empty their pockets – revealing the money.]

That's a lot of money. *Donnez-le-moi*.

[They hand it over.]

[examining the banknotes] You say you are strangers. But the serial numbers on the banknotes, they are in sequence – F7855 – F7856 – 857, *et comme ça*.

[The clunch-clitch of a rifle being cocked:]

Turn around! Hands above your head! [to Renoir:] Not you, you can go.

[Renoir reluctantly goes.]

*Bonjour, Roger*.

[Francis is marched off ...]

Scene 28. 'BYE 'BYE BLACKBIRD

[Francis is marched along a dark, echoing corridor to a prison cell, the slam-clang of the cell door, the strafed light through the small, high barred windows the only source of dim light. The drip, drip of water into a foul bucket.]

MILICE: Sleep soundly, monsieur.

[The cell door slams. Just starlight. Then darkness.]

\*\*\*

[Time passes. A cock crows. Francis stares up at the dawn light shining through the bars of the high window.]

[Then Christine cycles on, urgently whistling of a popular song – 'Frankie & Johnny' – to see if she gets a response from the prison.]

[Francis's ears prick up – he whistles back. Then Christine determinedly starts to sing:]

CHRISTINE:

*Frankie & Johnny were lovers,  
Oh, what a couple in love!*

[Francis sings back, excited:]

FRANCIS:

*They swore to be true to each other,  
Just like the stars above!*

[to himself:] She may be no angel, but she certainly sings like one! Crazy, crazy woman! Wonderful woman!

[Christine flings down her bicycle and heads to the prison gates:]

CHRISTINE: I demand to speak with the officer in charge!

[Christine marches into the prison and audaciously accosts SCHENK, the prison officer in charge:]

I am a British agent. Pauline. Field Marshal Montgomery's niece. [She's not] You are holding my husband here, Roger – also a British agent, working with the Résistance. I am here to tell you that if you shoot my husband, I will be in direct contact with Supreme Allied Command. The Americans have already landed and are just a few days away. I will make sure that their absolute priority is to track you down and execute you. Or maybe the Résistance will find you first and hand you to the mob? In which case they will very probably tear you limb from limb.



SCHENK: Are you threatening me, madam?

CHRISTINE: No. I am telling you what you already know: that your war is lost. I am helping you to save your own skin.

SCHENK: All right. I agree to your demands. But I have earned my reward for the capture of Roger, terroriste. You must pay me the two million francs. By tomorrow morning. And give me your utmost assurance that I will be protected and treated as a prisoner-of-war.

CHRISTINE: So. I will not return for forty-eight hours – but I will have the money you ask for. Unless you go back on your word, monsieur, and execute my husband in the meantime. If you do, I can *assure* you that the Résistance will wreak the most terrible revenge on you and your family. *À bientôt.*

[‘Frankie & Johnny’ resumes on a wind-up gramophone – the 1929 Jimmie Rogers recording.]

[The lights dim and rise and dim – like Francis’s hope.]

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[48 hours later. Christine has not returned.]

[Schenk opens the cell door, ushers Francis out into the cold light of dawn. A faint heartbeat, a drum to the scaffold.]

[They march across the crunch of gravel, Francis knowing it’s to his execution by firing squad.]

FRANCIS: [almost to himself, stiff upper lip understatement] What a pity.

[But:]

SCHENK: *Halt!* Get in the car.

FRANCIS: Pardon?

SCHENK: *Schnell.* In the car, quickly.

[Schenk bundles Francis into the car and they zoom off, taking corners at speed.]

[Then they pull up. It’s Christine. She hands Schenk the money. He hands her his revolver.]

So, now I am in your custody, madam.

CHRISTINE: Two million francs the richer.

SCHENK: [to Francis] What a wonderful wife you have, monsieur.

FRANCIS: [confused] Nan?

SCHENK: No, not your nanny, your wife.

FRANCIS: [twiggling] Yes, yes, sorry, Pauline! Yes.

[Schenk goes.]

CHRISTINE: I am not your wife.

FRANCIS: No.

CHRISTINE: And my real name is Christine.

FRANCIS: Thank you, Christine. You have achieved the impossible. Again.

[They hug. Spontaneously kiss.]

[Self-conscious, they pull away from each other, laughing.]

You have saved me from the mouth of the wolf.

[The screech and rumble of tanks ...]

Scene 29. TANKS

[South of France. 1944.]

[... The screech and rumble of tanks.]

FRANCIS: The Americans have landed! They're powering up through France, liberating village by village, town after town.

CHRISTINE: [toasts] To freedom!

[A burst of La Marseillaise.]

FRANCIS: I'll offer our services to the American General in charge –

GENERAL BUTLER: Get your ass outta here, limey! I don't want anything to do with bandits and private armies! Now, git!

FRANCIS: Of course. What do I know?

[The Star-Spangled Banner plays ... ironic.]

Scene 30. HOMECOMING

[... God Save the King plays. Then silence.]

[Harrow. 1944.]

NAN: Welcome home.

[Francis nods.]

It's complicated, isn't it?

FRANCIS: Yes.

NAN: You're not the same person who left us behind, are you? We have lived separate lives for far too long.

FRANCIS: Not too long, Nan. We can make it work. Somehow.

NAN: We will. I will.

FRANCIS: So much has happened to me, Nan.

NAN: And to me, Francis! You may have been out there on the Front Line but don't forget the suffering and trauma of those left back home in a time of war.

FRANCIS: No.

NAN: All our roots need to be regrafted.

FRANCIS: And you'll tend our family like a beloved garden, Nan – weed it – look after all the little flowers.

NAN: Niki. Jay.

FRANCIS: I have two girls I must get to know. That's new, and different. I've missed out on their first words, first play, grabbed fingers.

NAN: And then, later, Christine was born. And then Paul.

FRANCIS: Yes. Christine and Paul. We named them after them both.

NAN: Yes. We did.

FRANCIS: I loved them both.

[The solemn Bach Aria 'Erbarme Dich, Mein Gott' from *St Matthew Passion* plays ...]

Scene 31. AFTERMATH

[... The solemn Bach Aria 'Erbarme Dich, Mein Gott' plays softly under:]

[Francis puts on an army officer's jacket:]

FRANCIS: I have been promoted again, to Lieutenant Colonel. They are sending me to Germany to monitor the victory – the defeat.

[Germany. 1945. The following delivered like a letter home – postcards:]

[Bleak light:]

First to Belsen, to ensure there are no last-minute massacres in the concentration camp. But we get there too late, and it's therefore pointless.

[Jagged shadows:]

The crushed city of Hamburg. It's the smell that hits me, strong as anything. The smell of rotting buildings, people –

It's still very strong when we get to Berlin. A sense of shame creeps up on me.

[Barbed wire fencing:]

I take Auguste to Ravensbrück, in the Russian zone – he needs to find his wife and daughter. His wife we find –

[Auguste touches his wife – Francis looks away.]

AUGUSTE: And our daughter?

MADAME FLORIAS: She's at a work centre, away from the camp. She's been better off there.

FRANCIS: Those few who have survived, those who can, just walk out of those concentration camps and into their damaged lives, bewildered, displaced people. Refugees. Like in all wars.

But then more stories come. Everyone who has survived the dark days of war has a colourful story to tell. Ordinary people who have lived through an extraordinary experience. It isn't heroic. It is just ordinariness.

[The rat-a-tat-tat of typewriters ...]

Scene 32. WHITEHALL FARCE

[Whitehall. 1945. The rat-a-tat-tat of typewriters under:]

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER:

'From: AD/E To: V/CD – Copy to: A/CD, F. 7<sup>th</sup> March 1945

Re: LIEUTENANT COLONEL CAMMAERTS

- Colonel Buckmaster has tried to obtain employment for Lieutenant Colonel Cammaerts. It was considered he would do well in the Foreign Office, but he was turned down because his father is a BELGIAN.
- He was then offered the appointment as Ministry of Information Press Officer in Southeast France, but the Foreign Office is again standing out against the appointment for the same reason.
- In view of Cammaerts's record, this objection ought to be overruled.'

ANOTHER INTELLIGENCE OFFICER:

'From: AD/B To: CD ADB – Copy to: A/CD. 9<sup>th</sup> March '45

Re: LIEUTENANT COLONEL F.C.A. CAMMAERTS

- This officer's father – Professor Emile Cammaerts, an elderly and distinguished Anglophile – is a Belgian. Lieutenant Colonel Cammaerts therefore cannot be accepted for the suggested employment by M. of I.
- Cammaerts, a British subject by birth, has already applied for employment in H.M. Foreign Service and has been turned down. He had a rather regrettable interview when he was told the proposed work was of a confidential nature and no foreigner could be employed.
- The Foreign Office Personnel Branch tells me that it is unlikely that Foreign Secretary Antony Eden can be persuaded to over-ride this ruling and I attach in amplification of this attitude a copy of a letter received by A/CD.'

FRANCIS: Oh, I was made *Un Officier de la Légion d'Honneur Croix de Guerre 1939-1945*; and the British government awarded me a D.S.O.

You know, until my father died, I met him regularly when he was in town, at the Atheneum.

[Emile could make an appearance, and this could be enacted in dumbshow:]

We didn't talk about what I'd done. I think he knew it wasn't something to ask about. He regarded medals as being as idiotic as I do.

So, what next? I picked up where I'd left off.

[A school bell. Slamming of desks and the schoolboy chant of '*Fi-fi-fo-fum – It's Big Feet!*']

Scene 33. BACK TO SCHOOL

[Alleyne’s School. Stevenage. c. 1952.]

[School Assembly mumble. Francis in Headmaster’s academic gown, at a lectern.]

FRANCIS: All right! Settle down!

[Hush.]

Let’s listen to a story ... Once upon a time the Education Act of 1944 paved the way to comprehensive, egalitarian teaching: “education for all.” I have taken on the Headmastership of Alleyne’s School, here in Stevenage – one of the pioneering ‘New Towns’ – because I intend to steer us from a grammar school to being a comp.

[A polite ripple of applause.]

We can create change, turn that Act of Parliament into a reality. This is a period of genuine excitement after all the horrors of war. We will wage our own kind of war on the absurdity of the 11-plus, mould a new form of education – in fact, we will create a new form of society!

[The school applauds wholeheartedly.]

I have come to believe that to run a school you have to be a good teacher, on the Front Line – which is why I will also teach seventeen hours a week on top of my duties as Headmaster.

[Groans. Laughter.]

I will try to give you all the knowledge and understanding and – yes – love –

[Some bright spark wolf whistles. More laughter.]

The love that you need – that we all need to make this a kinder, fairer, more peaceful world.

[Cheers to the rafter!]

Scene 34. THE END

[BBC TV Theatre. Green Room. 1958.]

NAN: In our own ways, we never stopped being pacifists.

FRANCIS: No. We both took part in a war and we both knew that the idiot ugliness of great parts of it were profoundly repulsive. And we didn't want to talk about them.

NAN: Well, you didn't.

FRANCIS: No.

NAN: I've been angry with you most of your life, Francis; I've been angry with *men* most of my life!

FRANCIS: I know.

NAN: You knew? If you've known, then you're an even braver man than everybody thought!

[Francis smiles.]

FRANCIS: I wasn't brave. I simply trained myself not to feel fear, not to give myself away. I must have been frightened at some point – but I never peed my pants.

NAN: Charming!

FRANCIS: The families who sheltered us, especially the women: bravest of the brave. There were no medals for them. They are the unknown, unsung heroes. They showed real courage. Without them there would have been no Résistance.

If I sound modest then it's to achieve a balance of truths. It's the modest attitude to happenings, particularly exciting events, that tends to be neglected in the glare of so-called 'publicity.' In that sense truth is distorted ... Résistance wasn't the work of just a few heroes and heroines. It never is. They've tried to make me a hero whereas the most important thing was the heroism of all the people who we were living with. My role has been exaggerated. There were no heroics. Just brave ordinariness.

NAN: I think it's time to go home, Francis.

FRANCIS: Yes, let's go home, Nan.

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AUGUSTE (ACTOR): Auguste 'Albert' Florias, 'Le Pianiste,' lived to the ripe old age of 95 and remained a close friend of Francis all his life.



FRANCIS: You don't talk about a great friendship. It just is.

CHRISTINE (ACTOR): After the war, Christine 'Pauline' Granville tried to settle in England, but her life was troubled. In 1952 she was murdered in the lobby of a London hotel by a deranged jilted lover.

FRANCIS (ACTOR): Francis, amongst other friends and those who loved her, attended Christine's funeral.

Francis 'Roger' Cammaerts went on to lead the Teacher Training College in Exmouth, was head-hunted for the new post of Professor of Education at the University of East Africa, Nairobi, and became a principal of the new College of Education in Botswana.

He was also a witness for the defence in the notorious obscenity trial against Penguin Books and their publication of DH Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*:

FRANCIS: My pupils read it without it damaging them – I'd even let my ten-year-old son read it!

JURY FOREMAN: Not guilty!

[The hammer of the JUDGE's gavel.]

FRANCIS (ACTOR): Francis retired to the Languedoc, southwest France with Nan and their family.

NAN (ACTOR): Nan died in 2001.

FRANCIS (ACTOR): Francis died in 2006, shortly after celebrating his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. At the time, his nephew, Michael Morpurgo, wrote:

MORPURGO: The great oak tree in our family has fallen.

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[As Nan and Francis leave the Green Room, *This is Your Life* plays out on screen/off:]

EAMONN ANDREWS: [off] '... *Wherever you are, whoever you are, today is your day. Tonight, your night. This – is – your – life!*'

[Closing theme tune. Fade to black.]

[The end.]

[The 1956 Miles Davis recording of "Bye 'Bye Blackbird" plays us out of the auditorium.]

From 'My family fought for peace, not for Brexit' – Michael Morpurgo, *Guardian*, 7/5/2018

It came to me as I was trying to weave the story of my two uncles, that in all the bitter bickering about Europe, few if any were talking about why the EU was there, how it came to be. My uncles had done what they had done to defeat tyranny, to bring peace and reconciliation. They knew, we all know, that for hundreds of years, thousands even, European states had fought one another. Trade wars, religious wars, power grabs, land grabs, disputes between kings and emperors – our continent has been almost constantly at war over the centuries.

In the last century, the inclination of the great European powers towards belligerence and self-destruction led us into the two most destructive wars the world has ever known. Then, out of the rubble, out of all the grieving and misery, France and Germany, the two great nations at the heart of these titanic struggles, decided that the only way to ensure peace was through trade; that if they created close, mutually beneficial links, there would never be any need or wish to fight, that prosperity, security and peace would be interlocked.

Soon, six nations gathered together to create this trading bloc. Europe's peoples could see the sense of this. More wanted to join. So, the new Europe, changing its name and much else besides, grew in numbers, grew closer, and did help to bring lasting peace. But it became bureaucratic, less democratic, put ever more stars on its flag, and created a new currency. The mutual benefits of prosperity and stability were evident but were not shared equitably. We were a member of a club in which we felt we were losing control over our destiny, where the rules were being changed, which alarmed many. We argued, all the countries argued. But it was still jaw-jaw, not war-war.

In this febrile atmosphere came the referendum. I was sure the people would vote to stay in because I thought British people valued peace above all else, and the prosperity most had enjoyed for so long. Yes, there was plenty we did not like about Europe, but we would stay and put that right. I was wrong. But I am sure, too, that the country was wrong, deluded by lies and statistics, by absurd promises. I feel we are now travelling down a path that takes us away from our friends and neighbours [...]

My uncles' lives taught me that peace must come first, before prosperity. They helped make Europe a place of peace at last, of free peoples. That's the Europe, with all its faults, I believe we belong to. That Channel of ours has saved us in the past, often. Now it threatens to separate us. Holding hands across the sea is the only way. It always was. My uncles knew that.