



# CROWS BY DAY JACKALS BY NIGHT

By Maureen Alcorn

*Kilburn, London NW and Burma 1942- 45.  
Donegal man Tommy couldn't wait to join the  
British army to fight Nazi fascism. But can his  
high ideals survive service in the Far East? And  
how will his young Irish wife in London cope with  
separation?*

Green Curtain Theatre

# CAST :

**Tommy McBride** - barely 20 years old, recently married and for the past three weeks living in London. He has volunteered for the RAF.

**Bridget McBride** - his new wife, 18 years old

**Martha Curran** - Bridget's cousin. 25. She has been living in London for the past three years and secured a room in her mother's house for Tommy and Bridie

**Patrick Dulveney** - a plasterer from Dublin. 37. He has signed up to fight as the work for builders in Eire dried up very quickly almost as soon as war was declared.

The play is set in London, in a training camp in Calcutta and an RAF Field camp in Burma. It opens in 1943 and closes in 1945 not long after VJ Day.

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## SCENE 1

*(The scene opens in the small kitchen of a cramped first floor flat in Kilburn, London. There is a small trestle table centre stage with two wooden chairs at each end and a small casement window at the back of the stage with bright gingham curtains which brighten up the dingy room. Blackout curtains hang loosely to the side. Bridget rushes into the kitchen, laughing delightedly, holding the door open for Tommy, who is carrying a large cardboard box, which he places carefully on the table.)*

**Bridget:** Quick - quick - come on now Tommy - get it open will you.

**Tommy:** Have patience woman! Will you not just give me a minute...

*(He carefully opens the top of the box, smiles at Bridget then delicately lifts up a large wooden cased radio and places it on the table. He passes the box and paper wrapping to his wife.)*

**Tommy:** Here - this might come in useful - you can save it for -

**Bridget:** Whisht - not now! Let me take a good look.... a Pye radio...Tommy would you believe it! We have a Pye radio...our very own Pye radio. If they could see us now in Ballyheirin...

**Tommy:** Aye - only the gombeen man has one there!

(Bridget laughs then smooths the top of the radio while Tommy inserts the batteries and fiddles with the tuning. He makes various indecipherable noises as he tries to get the radio to work.)

**Bridget:** Come on now, hurry it up....come on....

**Tommy:** I think that'll do it - *(He makes one final adjustment and the radio springs to life. The song 'Run, rabbit, run, rabbit, run, run, run' blares out)*  
Would you hear that Bridget!

*(Bridget claps her hands delightedly then laughs with pleasure as Tommy whirls her into an impromptu dance around the kitchen table. They both sing along to the song, circling the table two or three times. Tommy then stops, holds Bridget closely and kisses her passionately. He holds her head between his hands and stares into her eyes.)*

**Tommy:** You're a rare one Bridget Gallagher - a rare one indeed...

**Bridget:** Bridget McBride now - and don't you ever forget it - husband!

**Tommy:** Now, I'm not likely to do that, am I? A married man! Look at us - a fine, fine couple. Sure, we have a lot to thank them for in Letterkenny - that dance hall, that music and my fine, beautiful woman...

**Bridget:** (*embarrassed - mock pushing him away*) Whisht - away with you....

*(The upbeat music on the radio switches to announcements about troop deployments and reminders about blackout routines.)*

**Bridget:** (*Trying to force Tommy's attention away from the announcements*) You know, just as well we met that night -

**Tommy:** Why? Did you have your eye on someone else?

**Bridget:** Get away with you... Martha was just after telling me about how they are trying to ban the dance halls in Donegal - getting so agitated about them being immoral and all -

**Tommy:** All that Catholic nonsense again - how can it possibly be a sin to do the foxtrot with the woman of me dreams?

**Bridget:** Oh not all that again Tommy.....anyway, some eejit judge said he would only be handing out licences for dances in the afternoon, before dark, and if we all watched traditional Irish dancing!

**Tommy:** God help us...

**Bridget:** No more of that touching (she pokes Tommy playfully) and, lord love us, definitely none of that shameless kissing!

**Bridget:** Better get something on for dinner then - would it be corned beef and mash or powdered eggs with mash?

**Tommy:** Well now, I believe it had better be your special corned beef with -

*(There is the sound of an envelope being pushed under the door. Tommy and Bridget stare at one another for a moment before Bridget speaks.)*

**Bridget:** Oh no- not so soon - it must be...

*(She rushes to the door and picks up the envelope, which she stares at then hands wordlessly to Tommy. He slides his finger into the flap and pulls out a single sheet of typewritten paper which he reads then passes back to Bridget.)*

**Tommy:** It's my call up -

**Bridget:** Oh God...Sunday, April the 5<sup>th</sup> - two days away - Tommy we won't even be able to spend Easter together - I thought we would have more time -

**Tommy:** This is really it, Bridget....

**Bridget:** We've been married for only six weeks Tommy - six weeks - and here in London for less than a month...

**Tommy:** I know, I know...

**Bridget:** It says you must report to the RAF Recruitment Centre in Duke's Road, St Pancras at 9 am - they'll issue you with a railway pass to RAF Padgate...wherever that is.... Tommy this is too soon, too real...

**Tommy:** You're upsetting yourself now...

**Bridget:** ...it says you have to come prepared for immediate service...immediate service Tommy! And to pack clothing for two or three days...

**Tommy:** Bridget - my darling girl - it doesn't matter anymore if I have to go in two days or ten - this was always the plan. You know that...

**Bridget:** Yes, I know what you said. I know fine well, but, well - part of me thought it was just a grand adventure, getting married, leaving Donegal, sitting on that aul bone shaker bus all the way over to Belfast so you could sign up, then the ferry, then all the way to London - that's adventure enough for the pair of us, isn't it? Tommy?

*(Bridget marches over to the radio which is on low, churning out more information about casualties and*



*troop movements. She turns it off and throws a towel over it.)*

**Tommy:** Come back over here, darling girl.

**Bridget:** You won't get round me that way -

**Tommy:** What would you have me do, Bridget?

**Bridget:** It's not too late to go back - the ferry's still running. They won't be able to touch you back home. You could even join the Irish Defence Force -

**Tommy:** That bunch of useless eejits. We're shaking hands with murder Bridget. Ireland is neutral - and it's got blood on its hands. It's not right - and you know it.

**Bridget:** De Valera is right! Neutral is safe. I want us to be safe! I want us to live, have kids, grow old together - is that too much to ask?

**Tommy:** Don't bury your head in the sand, please Bridget. No one is safe anymore. I'm sure Holland and Denmark thought they were safe, being neutral. But they came for the Dutch - and they came for the Danes. Believe you me, they'll be marching on Irish soil soon.

**Bridget:** Please don't go Tommy - I'm frightened. Suppose -

**Tommy:** I don't want to leave you Bridget, but I have to do this. It's the right thing to do. You've your cousin Martha and Aunty Kathleen downstairs looking out for you -

**Bridget:** I know, but -

**Tommy:** You have to pick a side now. Just like my uncle Tommy did in the Great War, God rest his soul.....We have to stop these monsters. If they win, they'd make slaves of all of us...

**Bridget:** I don't believe that Tommy. Why would they care about what we're up to in Donegal? It's the back of beyond....

**Tommy:** Sure, isn't Lough Swilly just up the road from the farm? One of the precious ports we refused to let the British use. The Nazis would just love to get their filthy stinking hands on that!

**Bridget:** Listen Tommy - the Americans are part of it now - there's thousands of them coming over and fighting. You don't have to go - for God's sake, what difference will one more Irish man make? Please Tommy - let's head back home tomorrow. We can -

**Tommy:** Enough Bridget! Enough! Did I tell you about the time I was collecting dulce on the bay? Just after we met.

**Bridget:** No - I don't think so

**Tommy:** The fishermen were bringing in bodies after a German U Boat blew up a ship - bloated and burnt. You couldn't even recognise them as human beings.

**Bridget:** That's just awful -

**Tommy:** They laid down their lives to fight this evil. And these were the same fishermen - the same ones Bridget, that were selling their fish to the U Boat captains.....the shame of it.....

**Bridget:** I know, but -

**Tommy:** Bridget - I want to be able to tell our children that when it really mattered, I did what was right.

**Bridie:** I love you so much Tommy - I just wish -

*(Martha bursts into the room, holding a newspaper under her arm and a plate with raw steak on it. Bridget moves across to the window, turning her back on them both)*

**Tommy:** Martha! Would you not knock before you come in? We were -

**Martha:** You were what? All over each other again? Isn't love a grand thing..

**Tommy:** Martha -

**Martha:** Would you look at what one of me customers brought in today? A big chunk of real beef - I can't wait to cook this up - prime steak! Just smell that Tommy! Oooh - real meat. Not that rations shite!

**Tommy:** Martha! Will you watch your mouth!

**Martha:** Oh, Tommy will you just get over yourself! We're in London, not some feekin' village in Bally-go-nowhere.

**Martha:** Bridget - will you look at this now?

*(Martha moves over to Bridget, who is still standing rigidly at the window. She begins to hold up the plate then notices Bridget hastily wiping away a tear.)*

**Martha:** What's wrong? *(She glares at Tommy, puts the plate and newspaper down on the table then quickly moves back to put her arms round Bridget's shoulders)* What have you done? What have you said to the poor girl?

**Bridget:** Tommy's call up papers just arrived - he leaves in two days.....

**Martha:** Oh - I wondered if that's what it was when I asked Mrs Ryan to slip it under your door. What an awful shame - and you two just starting married life...

**Bridget:** I suggested we go back to Donegal, but -

**Martha:** You don't want to be doing that - what'll you do over there? Don't fret yourself Bridget - he'll be back here with you soon enough - and in one piece - sure, hasn't he got the luck of the Irish?

**Bridget:** You think he'll be all right?

**Martha:** For sure! Wait till I show you this - (**She picks up the newspaper, opens it with a flourish and points to the front page**) Your man Paddy Finucane - 'ace pilot' it calls him here - shot down another two planes over France yesterday - got more direct hits than any other pilot - Luck of the Irish! Didn't I tell you?

**Tommy:** Aye, he's a good man, right enough

**Martha:** Look at his picture too - isn't he handsome? I'd have his boots at the bottom of me bed anytime...

**Tommy:** For pity's sake Martha - you're too loose with that mouth of yours!

**Martha:)** Argh come on Tommy - Bridget knows I'm just having a wee joke....

**Bridget:** He's a fine man, all right...

**Martha:** You know what? Why don't I leave this lovely bit of steak for you both? You don't want that corned beef shite - we've got to build you up, Tommy, before you go.

**Bridget:** Thanks - but won't you -

**Martha:** Aargh - I'm sure I can persuade little Jimmy Ryan to get some more for his favourite bar maid. He's a brother who works on a farm in Kent. He got me half a dozen eggs last week - the taste of the yolks - just gorgeous....

**Tommy:** You'll always land on your feet, Martha.

**Martha:** You do what you must to survive - (spotting the radio under the towel and lifting it away). Will, you look at this? A radio! And it's a Pye - very nice, Tommy.

*(Martha switches on the radio. 'Run Rabbit' blasts out again. Martha dances round the table while Tommy goes over to Bridget, holds her by the shoulders and rests his head against hers as they both look out of the window.)*

**Martha:** I'll be going now - don't you forget that steak!

**Tommy:** We won't.....and look after Bridget while I'm away.

**Martha:** Oh, I'll do that all right - don't you worry...  
(exits)

*(Lights fade. Music continues for a few seconds then fades.)*

## SCENE 2

*(The same - four days later. Bridget is standing by the window, looking out. 'Chatanooga Choo Choo' is playing low on the radio. As the scene progresses, the song changes to 'I've got a Gal in Kalamazoo'. Martha comes into the room again, without knocking.)*

**Martha:** Come on now Bridget - you'll not be changing anything by staring out of that window all day.

**Bridget:** I know. You're right. I just can't seem to lift myself up. Seeing Tommy's train leaving .... packed full of young men...I don't know if I will ever see him again. I can't bear it...I just can't bear it...

**Martha:** Oh, he'll be all right - you'll see.

**Bridget:** How can you possibly know that? He could be wounded - even killed in the first week! What'll I do if - Tommy...

**Martha:** He'll be coming back before you know it - anyway he'll be training for ages, so he'll be safe, for sure. Tell you what - let's see what the stars have to say - you're a Gemini aren't you? (she flicks through the newspaper on the table)

**Bridget:** Yes, but what -



**Martha:** Aaargh - interesting - some aul nonsense about Venus ascending then it says : "After some dark days missing your husband, you will soon hear something to your advantage!"

**Bridget:** It does not! (*She moves to snatch the paper but Martha swiftly sits on it*)

**Martha:** Argh - before I forget, let me tell you about the letter Ma just got from Mrs O'Reilly back home. You'll never guess who got caught trying to take a load of butter and eggs across the border into Strabane.

**Bridget:** No - go on, tell me...

**Martha:** Aul Seamus Macadoo - you know him - got that farm the other side of Mulroy Bay.

**Bridget:** Argh! I might have known -

**Martha:** Well, the Guardi heard his aul mule wheezing away up the road at four in the morning when every good man and woman should be in their beds -

**Bridget:** What happened?

**Martha:** Confiscated his goods and told him he ought to be ashamed of himself, giving away precious food to the North. Seamus was bawling fit to burst about how they paid him three times as much across the border!

**Bridget:** Three times?

**Martha:** Aye - and he was still screaming about how unfair it was that the Guardi refused to support free enterprise at Maloney's the next day! Free enterprise! Would you believe the nerve of him? He was lucky they didn't throw him in jail!

**Bridget:** ...and throw away the key. Anyway, how is Aunty Kathleen now?

**Martha:** Oh, she still won't get out of bed after that last air raid. She keeps going on about her poor nerves, how her knees are killing her and all that craic. Mind, it doesn't stop her eating her way through a barrow load of food every day... Good thing I have other sources....couldn't be relying on that aul ration book.

**Bridget:** Tell her I'll be down to see her later on...  
(*Pause*) I'll need to be getting myself some work soon - and I want to do something that will help - you know - men like Tommy

**Martha:** You sure you don't want a job down the pub? We need another barmaid

**Bridget:** No - it wouldn't feel right to me - not with so many men away fighting...

**Martha:** Well, all right then. Er - Oh I know - what's your sewing like?

**Bridget:** You've got to be joking - growing up with three brothers? I was mending clothes every day. Sewing on buttons. Patching shirts. Fixing seams. Why?

**Martha:** There's a chance you could get something sewing parachutes. One of my regulars works at the factory in Mile End - why don't you come with me tonight and I'll introduce you.

**Bridget:** That simple? Martha - you're a right one, with all your contacts.

**Martha:** You can come with me when I leave for my shift. London's not safe in the dark - too many wild looters about - they just put on Wardens' helmets and get away with murder! I promised I'd look after you...

**Bridget:** Thanks.

**Martha:** So why don't we fix you up a little bit? - can't have you going out looking like you just stepped off the ferry. Wait a minute - I'll just get my comb and lipstick.

*(Martha exits. Bridget smiles, picks up a small mirror from the table, looks at herself intently and brushes*

*her fingers through her hair. Martha returns, carrying a make up bag, comb and hairbrush).*

**Martha:** Come and sit over by the window - it's lighter over there

**She begins to brush Bridget's hair.**

**Martha:** You've lovely hair - so shiny and thick

**Bridget:** Tommy says it was the first thing he noticed about me when we met -

**Martha:** - at that aul dance hall in Letterkenny?

**Bridget:** That's the one. I noticed him staring at me as soon as I walked through the door, but he didn't come over till just before the last dance

**Martha:** That's Irish men for you

**Bridget:** (laughs) His friends were elbowing him onto the dance floor, shoving him in my direction. He was so shy at first, you know...but as soon as he held me in his arms and we started to dance....

**Martha:** That was it eh? Now what do you think of your hair? D'you like it? It suits you like this...less of the country girl - more of the London woman!

*(Bridget inspects her reflection in the mirror, patting the bottom of her hair approvingly.)*

**Bridget:** That's good - I like it.

**Martha:** Now stand on your chair and hold your skirt up over your knees.

**Bridget:** Why? What are you going to do?

**Martha:** Well, we've no silk stockings for you to wear just now, but this trick will work grand!

*(Bridget stands on the chair. Martha adjusts her position as required then begins to draw a seam line onto the back of her legs).*

**Martha:** Now hold still will you - I need to get this just right or you'll be looking like mad Annie from the village shop...

**Bridget:** ...and after that, we'd meet up as often as we could at the dance hall or the pictures - but we had to be careful - you know what my da and brothers are like..

**Martha:** I do! Mmmm - almost done, then we'll do your make up.

**Bridget:** He was lovely to me, just lovely....

**Martha:** A whirlwind romance - you were engaged for what - three months?

**Bridget:** Yes, we had to get married quickly because of coming over here - no big wedding, no engagement ring - we hadn't the money ....

**Martha:** Sorry, couldn't get back home for it -

**Bridget:** Don't worry - anyway, Tommy says we can have a special day when he gets back -

**Martha:** Ach - that's it - looks great. Let me help you down off the chair. Sit yourself down and I'll put the lipstick and powder on you - well, to be honest with you, it's just made from beetroot - **(Martha applies the red lipstick and pale powder to Bridget's face).**

**Bridget:** Mnnn

**Martha:** Hold still now, don't speak - this is the tricky bit - That's it - you look gorgeous. Just gorgeous - what d'you think?

**Bridget:** **(Picking up the mirror)** Oh no - that's too much - it's too red. What'll they think of me down the pub? **(Bridget picks up a towel, ready to wipe the lipstick off her mouth. Martha whisks it away.)**

**Martha:** No leave it! You look great! Like you belong here in London.

**Bridget:** Are you sure?

***Lights fade***

### SCENE 3

*(An RAF training camp in Calcutta. The scenery should suggest the men are under canvas with the sound of the rain bucketing down outside. The table remains but with the tablecloth removed. There are two camp chairs/stools by the table. There are two rifles on the table which the men are cleaning during the dialogue. As Tommy and Patrick enter, they grab jerry cans, drink deeply and slump onto the stools, clearly hot and exhausted.)*

**Tommy:** Thought I was going to pass out there on the parade ground - and - would you believe it - it's raining again

**Patrick:** Monsoon rain - never feckin' stops. Stand out there long enough and you'll have a massive tree growing out your arse! Even worse in Burma - mud up to your balls, leeches the size of marrows, running shits day and night - so they tell me...where you from anyway?

**Tommy:** Donegal - little farm near Muneagh, just on Mulroy Bay. You?

**Patrick:** Dublin man me - born and bred. And you know what, neither of us need to be here at all, sweating the piss out of our armpits, but here we are! The name's Patrick - Patrick Dulveney

**Tommy:** Tommy McBride...



**Patrick:** So would that be a Catholic McBride or a bastard Proddy McBride?

**Tommy:** Awe, come on, Patrick....Thought we were all on the same side here.....and just so ye know, I'm no Catholic

**Patrick:** Ach - bastard Proddy it is then....

**Tommy:** Hey - less of the bastard will ye?

**Patrick:** Don't worry yourself Tommy. Just pulling your leg. Nothing else to laugh at in this fucking place...

**Tommy:** All right then...

**Patrick:** So what brings you here anyway, to this God forsaken shithole?

**Tommy:** No man, you'll only laugh again-

**Patrick:** No son, promise I won't - go on...

**Tommy:** Well... it was a lot of things coming together, you know... I was named after my uncle Tommy who volunteered for the Great War - died at Wipers

**Patrick:** Huh - more Irish cannon fodder...go on...

Tommy: No comments, all right -

**Patrick:** ...all right son...

**Tommy:** ...and as an Irishman, being a Proddy, as you call it makes me no less Irish - I hate the way De Valera refuses to let the British use the ports. I'm not neutral and I'm not a stinking coward -

**Patrick:** Steady on son -

**Tommy:** Well you asked - So I have to do what I can to put that right - I have to fight against these - these sick monsters - no safe place in the world if the Nazis win at the end of all this -

**Patrick:** And yet here you are, marching your arse off in Calcutta...you'll be fighting the Japs soon, defending the grand aul British Empire. Think they're going to thank you when all this is over? Like fuck they will...You're a fool, son

**Tommy:** Well, that's why I signed up - why are you here anyway? You're here defending the Empire too aren't you?

**Patrick:** Simple - the money's good - and we need every penny - since this pig shitting war started..

**Tommy:** So what did you do before?

**Patrick:** Back in Dublin, I was a plasterer, wasn't I - fucking good one too. Any plastering that needed doing, I was your man.... (**Patrick takes out a pack of cigarettes, offers one to Tommy, who declines, then lights one up**). Used to work nine, maybe ten hours a day - big jobs, one after the other.

**Tommy:** So, what happened?

**Patrick:** Fucking war happened - supplies dried up and no one was building anything anymore. I've a wife and five kids - couldn't see them starve...

**Tommy:** Sounds bad - what about signing up with the Irish Defence Force instead?

**Patrick:** Pay is shit - and I'm too old for them - I'll be fifty in a couple of years.

**Tommy:** You're right there! You want a tot?

**Patrick:** You calling me old! Watch yourself son!

**Tommy:** Meant the pay - but you are a bit old for all this! Anyway, tot?

**Patrick:** Yes, go on then... anyway, way I hear it, they're not taking men on - no money for it Besides, didn't you know, we're neutral!

**Tommy:** Here (Hands him the drink).

**Patrick:** Anyways, hundreds of Defence Force men are deserting - signing up with the enemy -

**Tommy:** Enemy?

**Patrick:** The British - the colonial pricks - we had to swim in their shit for over 800 years....

**Tommy:** I don't see it that way....

**Patrick:** Course not - your arse is parked on a fence halfway across the Irish Sea....

**Tommy:** While you're just talking out of yours... ) So - it's bad in Dublin now?

**Patrick:** It's all right for you farmers - you'll always have food, but it's fucking heart-breaking in Dublin. Children crying with the hunger, mothers desperate to put something in their children's bellies...

**Tommy:** I didn't know -

**Patrick:** And I swear De Valera's glad for us men to leave - he won't be wanting thousands of unemployed, hungry men roaming around ..... Aaaargh shite - you can't trust anyone. Specially not a politician. Every man for himself, now. Law of survival, son.

**Tommy:** Got to be more to it than that, surely?

**Patrick:** Right - tell that to the Japs next time you meet one with a bayonet pointing right at your belly....

**Tommy:** I'm fighting for what's right, Patrick...

**Patrick:** What? The British way of life? Cricket on the fucking green? Tea with cucumber sandwiches? King and country?

**Tommy:** No - I suppose what it comes down to is I want me and Bridget to have a chance at a decent life - have kids - live where we want, go where we want - get a good job - make our own plans - be part of something that's worth fighting for, not just survive...

**Patrick:** Well...maybe you're right, Tommy. Don't listen to me - just ranting away, as usual. You finished with that? We'll need to pick up our malaria pills before we go to the mess tent - more shitting bully beef, I'll bet....

**Tommy:** Those tablets - are they safe? I heard -

**Patrick:** They turn your skin yellow and make you shoot blanks?

**Tommy:** I've not long been married! I can't be turned infertile!

**Patrick:** Calm down son. It's true they make you go yellow! Should see the faces of the men who got here last month...like egg yolks already...

**Patrick:** Now don't you be worrying - it was just one big lie - put about by the eejits who wanted to laze about in a hospital bed, fighting the malaria instead of the Japs. You'll be all right. Your manhood's safe here - you can have as many kids as you like with your new wee wife when you get home...

**Tommy:** You've no shame at all, Patrick....

*(They both leave the stage, carrying their rifles).*

**LIGHTS FADE**

#### **SCENE 4**

*(Tommy and Bridget's room, London. The tablecloth is back on the table. 'Don't sit under the apple tree' by the Andrews Sisters is playing on the radio, followed by 'Deep in the Heart of Texas' by Alveno Ray. Bridget is standing holding up the teapot, while Martha is swaying and singing along to the music.)*

**Bridget:** Ready for some tea? Hot and wet, if nothing else...

**Martha:** Ach, go on then. Tastes like bog water but what the hell -

**Bridget:** Don't be forcing yourself to drink it now!

**Martha:** I love this one. Makes me feel like dancing all night...

**Bridget:** Yes, takes your mind off things, that's for sure.....How's Aunty Kathleen this morning?

**Martha:** Ach - wailing like a banshee as usual about her arthritis "Oooh, me back, me back! I'll have to stay sitting here for a while longer Martha - could you do me a little something for breakfast, just....Ooooh Martha, I'm parched, Martha, Martha!"

**Bridget:** You shouldn't talk like that about your own Ma, you know. Wish I had one to look after just now.....

**Martha:** Such a shame about Aunty Mary- Ellen, losing her when you were so young... tell me, how's it going at the factory?

**Bridget:** Oh, it's frantic. Working our fingers to the bone...soon as one lot of orders go out, they're shouting about us being late for the next shipment.

**Martha:** Believe me, it's like that at the pub sometimes...

**Bridget:** Got the needle trapped in my finger yesterday - hurt like bejayzus - me own fault for rushing I suppose...

**Martha:** You're all right now though?

**Bridget:** Yes - bit of iodine on it - can't complain about a little thing like that when our men are...

**Martha:** Right....so....Have you heard from Tommy this week?

**Bridget:** A letter came this morning. Training's going well, he said. Rear gunner they want him for...the heat's killing him still, but the monsoon's passed, thank God.

**Martha:** Any news on where he's going after the training?

**Bridget:** He's not allowed to say....but probably Burma. He made me laugh out loud...told me about these things called para-jutes

**Martha:** And what might they be?



**Bridget:** They can't get our proper parachutes out there - needed for the fighting in Europe apparently.....so this General came up with the idea of making them out of string!

**Martha:** String? No!

**Bridget:** Would you believe it? Anyway, they tried out a few designs which just dropped like a stone. Everything exploded - raining grains of rice it was - they got it right in the end though.

**Martha:** That's good to hear...

**Bridget:** They only use them for dropping supplies though - none of the men are going to be jumping out of a plane using one...

**Martha:** I should hope not! Bridget - while we're on the subject of parachutes...

**Bridget:** Yes?

**Martha:** ... any chance you could get a bit more silk? I promised Colleen I'd be getting some for a dress she wants to make - she'll be needing about ten yards...

**Bridget:** Sounds more like a tent than a dress!

**Martha:** So...can you get it this week for me?

**Bridget:** Oh I don't know - that's an awful lot - I might have trouble sneaking that out...

**Martha:** No one will suspect you

**Bridget:** It's easy if it's just the off cuts, you know, like I got you before...they just turn a blind eye... but

**Martha:** No, it has to be one long piece...for the pattern, you know...

**Bridget:** Why does she need that much anyway? Really, I don't like to take it...

**Martha:** Will you just try? You're so busy, they won't notice....

**Bridget:** I'm not sure...I...

**Martha:** You know, Ma's thinking of putting up all the rents ...two shillings a week, she was thinking...

**Bridget:** Oh no - that would make it so hard to manage if...

**Martha:** I know, I know... I've told her it's too much in one go, but -

**Bridget:** What if I talk to her - try to explain...

**Martha:** Bridget - no. Don't mention it - she'd have a fit (imitating) "Ooooh, me nerves, me nerves - little madam...who does she think she is...?" Leave it all to me - you hear?

**Bridget:** Thanks - but try as hard as you can...

**Martha:** By the way, don't forget that material - I'll be needing it this week.

*(Bridget bows her head. The relentlessly cheerful music fades.)*

**(LIGHTS FADE)**

## SCENE 5

*(An RAF camp in Burma. The scenery will be the same as that in Calcutta, with a camouflage backdrop, table and canvas chairs/stools. There will be the noise of camp activity in the background. Tommy runs in, panting and laughing, followed closely by Patrick, who slaps him vigorously on the back a couple of times.)*

**Patrick:** Aaargh Tommy - thought he had you there for a minute.....he nearly got you...see the way he reared up!

**Tommy:** Must have been nearly five foot long!

**Patrick:** He had his beady eyes on you, all right -

**Tommy:** When he started spitting - that was something!

**Patrick:** Yes, opened his great fucking hood too...wait'll I get you a tot of rum - you've earned it today, son!

**Patrick leaves. Tommy sinks down onto a stool and puts his head down on the table. Patrick returns shortly, carrying a bottle of rum and two glasses. Tommy gets up from the table slowly, while Patrick pours two generous helpings and hands one to Tommy.**

**Patrick:** Brought the whole bottle - thought you'd be needing it....

**Tommy:** Thanking you kindly.

**Patrick:** So what the fuck was it - d'you know?

**Tommy:** Spitting cobra, one of the Gurkhas said...

**Patrick:** Poisonous then?

**Tommy:** Aye - kill you in fifteen minutes, they say...and that spit blinds you if they catch you in the eye...

**Patrick:** Are you completely mad Tommy? You with just a fucking little stick against one of those monsters!

**Tommy:** All you need...

**Patrick:** Why did you volunteer to get it out of the Officers' tent anyway? Tell them to go to hell...they can deal with their own fucking snakes...they're all a bunch of fucking snakes anyway

**Tommy:** Think that's the problem - they couldn't deal with it

**Patrick:** Yes, not like fox hunting is it?

**Tommy:** Oh, come on Patrick - they're all right...

**Patrick:** All right? Marching us up and down in this heat every day, inspecting every little bit of our uniforms - as if that matters once the bullets start flying..

**Tommy:** Ach, give it a rest will you Patrick. Anyway, it was no harder than trapping a rabbit - back home

**Patrick:** And when was the last time you caught a huge fucking rabbit that could kill you with its teeth? You're an eejit! Fucking amadon!

**Tommy:** It was you looked the eejit standing there with that big net!

**Patrick:** Well, leave me out of it next time, son - rather be fighting Japs than any of those monsters....

*(Patrick offers Tommy another shot of rum. Tommy shakes for no, Patrick has another hefty shot.)*

**Patrick:** That went down all right! Must try some of that Indian gin next time...how's that beautiful young lass of yours?

**Tommy:** She's all right - but you know, I'm worried about her being in London just now -

**Patrick:** Thought the worst of the bombing was over?

**Tommy:** No, she says there are still raids - she'd be safer at home, but there's no ferries

**Patrick:** That's a bad idea anyway. Things are just desperate. The wife wrote to say our neighbour just died of the TB. It's killing a lot of us now. She's worried sick about the kids...

**Tommy:** They'll be all right won't they - with what you're sending?

**Patrick:** Sure hope so son - my eldest, Padraig, he's sixteen later this year - was planning on getting him into the building trade..... Just don't know now.

**Tommy:** It'll get better, it's got to-

**Patrick:** This pig shitting war... when will it end? It's going to be the finish of us all...

**Tommy:** Come on man - it'll be over soon - we're pushing the Japs back every day - we smashed them at Kohima, Imphal - just a few more weeks, months maybe...

**Patrick:** Jesus, Mary and Joseph - you sound like a fucking boy scout! You're talking nonsense again - no one even knows about what we're doing - we're the forgotten army, for Christ's sake.

**Tommy:** Churchill was on the radio the other day - he was saying -

**Patrick:** When was the last time your man Churchill mentioned us in Burma? All he can do is go on and on about the Irish and the ports - as if we wouldn't get the fuck bombed out of us if we let that happen... Sure haven't they bombed Dublin already? If that wasn't a warning, I don't know what is!

**Tommy:** Steady on there - we're flying our first mission tomorrow - you'll be needing a clear head...

**Patrick:** Fuck that - look at this hand - **(Hand is steady)** you see it shaking, Tommy? Unfortunately, I shoot with this hand! **(The other hand is shaking rapidly as it emerges from under the table)**

**Tommy:** ...You think I'll be all right tomorrow? I'm worried I'm going to freeze up - let everyone down -

**Patrick:** You'll be all right son. You won't have time to think - you'll be too busy looking out for Jap zeros on your arse, aiming, firing, reloading -

**Tommy:** You sure?

**Patrick:** Sure I'm sure - why don't we drink to it...Slainte!

**(Patrick takes another tot of rum).**

**(LIGHTS FADE).**



## SCENE 6

*(Tommy and Bridget's room, London. A few months later. The table is covered by the same tablecloth. There is a small loaf of bread on it and the Pye radio which is playing 'Oh what a Beautiful Morning' by Bing Crosby followed by 'For me and my Gal' by Gene Kelly and Judy Garland. Bridget is cutting the loaf into fine slices. Martha is painting her nails a vivid red and inspecting them closely).*

**Martha:** You like this colour? Got this from Colleen after that last lot of parachute silk you got. She is so grateful - and she says she can use whatever you can get so -

**Bridget:** Ach - again? It's really hard - they're doing random searches now -

**Martha:** I'm sure you can think of a way round that... flash those eyelashes....

**Bridget:** Look, I can't make any promises, all right? Want a slice?

**Martha:** Got anything to put on it?

**Bridget:** Something that calls itself jam at the bottom of a jar - want to try it?

**Martha:** That'll have to do, I suppose...

*(Bridget uses the knife to scrape out a tiny bit of "jam" from a jar she gets down from a shelf. She smears it on the bread, hands it to Martha on a small plate and has a plain slice herself).*

**Martha:** That stuff they call margarine turns my stomach - still - Ma likes it. Thanks for giving her your ration.

**Bridget:** That's all right - can't get used to the taste myself after eating butter all my life...

**Martha:** Aaahh...butter...could you just imagine it on this slice (waving it around) so thick, creamy, deep deep yellow - gorgeous - what wouldn't I give for a pound of it...butter heaven....

**Bridget:** Don't any of your customers at the pub have any?

**Martha:** Them? Ach, no...you know, it's harder to get those little treats now - price is so high on the black market, they forget all about their friendly barmaid who makes them laugh and forget their troubles....

**Bridget:** Poor Aunty Kathleen - she must be missing her fried eggs every morning!

**Martha:** She is too - "OOOhhh - can't be doing with those powdery eggs Martha - can ye not get me some of the real ones?"

**Bridget:** Well, she'll have to get over it like the rest of us...

**Martha:** ....By the way, Alec was asking after you the other day....

**Bridget:** Which one was he?

**Martha:** You know, the good looking one with the dark hair - wears a blue suit - you must remember him? He had the eye for you when you came in last week...

**Bridget:** Did he now?

**Martha:** He did - and he asked when you were coming back...

**Bridget:** He had no right - sure he knows I'm married....

**Martha:** Oh come on, you work hard in that factory all week - you deserve a bit of the old craic -

**Bridget:** He's to know there's nothing in it...

**Martha:** For sure - come on, have a bit of fun - what do you say?

**Bridget:** I don't know - maybe later in the week. I've to write to Tommy tonight - he loves getting my letters....

**Martha:** So, how's he getting on?

**Bridget:** Good - really good. Been in a few fights this past month - thinks he scored a direct hit on one of those Japanese zeros - got a lot of back slapping for that, he says.

**Martha:** Good for him - what did I tell you about the luck of the Irish?

**Bridget:** And that rumour - the one about the Japs having bad eyesight - definitely not true! Tommy says some General started that one so the men wouldn't be afraid of them (laughs)

**Martha:** Nothing wrong with a little bit of a useful lie. Didn't do any harm, did it?

**Bridget:** Well, I think it wasn't fair on the men - shouldn't they know what they're facing?

**Martha:** So what shall I tell Alec? What night you coming down?

**Bridget:** You're like a dog with a bone! All right then - tell him Friday - but just a drink. Nothing else. I don't want him to think -

**Martha:** I know, why don't you wear that green dress you finished last week? You look grand in that one...

**Bridget:** You don't think it's too tight?

**Martha:** Not at all...(pause) .... did I tell you Alec works at that Jo Lyons on the Strand?

**Bridget:** So he's not doing listed work? Why's he not off fighting then?

**Martha:** Ach, flat feet or some such thing....

**Bridget:** Wouldn't think that would be enough to stop him doing his duty..

**Martha:** Listen to you - you on Churchill's pay roll now?

**Bridget:** Of course, not - I was just saying -

**Martha:** Tell you what - why don't we go and see that new bridge at Waterloo on Saturday? We can go into Lyons after for a proper cup of tea - you can ask Alec on Friday if he's at work then.

**Bridget:** Why not - I'd like to see the bridge - make me feel like a real Londoner at last!

**Martha:** Right enough

**Bridget:** Will you have another slice? (indicating loaf)

**Martha:** Well ...

*(Siren warns of impending air raid)*

**Martha:** Oh shite - not again...

**Bridget:** - Quick, come on...

**Martha:** - Will you help me bring Ma down to the shelter?

*(The sound of the warning klaxton gets louder as the lights fade).*

## SCENE 7

*(The RAF camp in Burma. Patrick is sitting at the table, polishing his boots. There are the sounds of the camp in the background: men talking and laughing,*

*the occasional announcement etc. Tommy enters a few moments later, looking shaken).*

**Patrick:** What's up son? Looks like you've seen a ghost -

**Tommy:** Just killed a Jap -

**Patrick:** What? What you talking about Tommy?

**Tommy:** ...a Jap soldier - shot him -

**Patrick:** Where? Tell me what happened -

**Tommy:** ... just past the perimeter line

**Patrick:** For fuck's sake what were you doing there?

**Tommy:** Hunting...

**Patrick:** Hunting what?

**Tommy:** One of those red serows -

**Patrick:** What's that?

**Tommy:** ...kind of antelope...

**Patrick:** What the fuck for -

**Tommy:** So we could all have some real meat for a change -

**Patrick:** You fucking gobshite - you know it's not safe out there -

**Tommy:** Everyone was complaining about the k rations -

**Patrick:** Very nice of you Tommy - k rations are shite - but what happened out there?

**Tommy:** Heard a rustling through the lanterna - thought it was a serow - so I crept up on it -

**Patrick:** And what was it?

**Tommy:** Jap soldier - had his khakis unzipped - taking a quick piss, you know...

**Patrick:** Go on son -

**Tommy:** He heard me coming, then went straight for his rifle -

**Patrick:** And then?

**Tommy:** I shot him - right in the chest - here



**Patrick:** You sure you killed him?

**Tommy:** He was dead all right -

**Patrick:** Good shot, son...

**Tommy:** I could have taken him prisoner -

**Patrick:** Never do that, Tommy - fucking Japs take the pin out of their grenade and blow you both up... You did the right thing...

**Tommy:** Two seconds later and he could've taken me prisoner...

**Patrick:** And that would be a fucking nightmare -

**Tommy:** What?

**Patrick:** Favourite trick is to stick a bayonet through your gullet then hang you from a tree. Crows'll peck your eyes out in the day, jackals'll finish you off in the night.....

**Tommy:** Jesus - Thought that was just talk - keep us alert...

**Patrick:** No son - I've met men who've seen it with their own eyes. Killing him was the only way....

**Tommy:** I suppose you're right

**Patrick:** You had no choice son - it was him or you

**Tommy:** I know - neither of us had a choice -

**Patrick:** Jesus, Tommy! What about his patrol?

**Tommy:** I know - they might have heard the shot - so I grabbed his rifle and ran like hell back here...

**Patrick:** Well, son, you got your fresh meat all right

**Tommy:** He was all flesh and bones -

**Patrick:** Well - we've stopped their supply lines

**Tommy:** He was starving, by the looks of him.

**Patrick:** Sooner we starve those fuckers out, sooner we'll be on our way back home.....Will I get you some rum?

**Tommy:** In a minute - you know, we're up in the air, every other day, hunting Japs - different though when you kill them face to face

**Patrick:** First rule of survival son - kill or be killed.

**Tommy:** You going to get that rum or not?

**Patrick:** Coming up - (*Patrick exits*)

*(Tommy puts his head in his hands for a few seconds, shudders, wipes the sweat from his forehead then sits down on one of the stools. As Tommy is staring into the distance, Patrick re-enters, balancing two large glasses of rum).*

**Patrick:** Get that down you! Heard some news...

**Tommy:** What's happened?

**Patrick:** Nazis are surrendering on the Eastern front - and that prick Mussolini's dead....

**Tommy:** Anything about the Japs?

**Patrick:** Those fuckers? They'll carry on fighting till there's not one man left standing -

**Tommy:** Surely it'll be over by the end of the year though?

**Patrick:** Don't hold your breath!

**Tommy:** Oh come on Patrick - even you can see the light at the end of the tunnel?

**Patrick:** Aye - be really good to get back home - see Colleen and the kids again - she's been getting a bit of jip

**Tommy:** What do you mean?

**Patrick:** Ach, she's had a couple of remarks about me being away - you know what they're like...

**Tommy:** Ach, they'll be all right, you've been sending them plenty of money to live on

**Patrick:** My kids'll be all grown up - and I've missed it all

**Tommy:** They're doing grand!

**Patrick:** (Mock outrage) Better off without me you mean? (laughs) Aye - tell you one thing, not looking forward to Colleen going at me about my aul fondness for the bottle...

**Tommy:** (laughs) She'll be glad to have you back

**Patrick:** And you'll be glad to see your lovely wife again -

**Tommy:** I will that -

**Patrick:** What'll you do? Go back to Donegal?

**Tommy:** Farm's not really big enough for us as well as my brother and his wife - just a few head of cattle and ten acres of potatoes - we'll probably stay on in London...

**Patrick:** Aye, that's the way of it..

**Tommy:** We'll go over soon though - help on the farm - and my brother wants to build a new cottage, get a tractor - we'll help out with the money, like.

**Patrick:** Good to have big plans, son

**Tommy:** Bridget - she loves Mulroy Bay - says it's the most beautiful place in the world. She loves looking at the green fields and feeling the sea breeze in her hair..

**Patrick:** All right son - you've convinced me. Must take Colleen and the kids up there sometime, when I get the chance

**Tommy:** Aye, you should

**Patrick:** Maybe I could bring my tools up there if your brother's building -

**Tommy:** That'd be grand

**Patrick:** Be good to get my hands covered in muck again  
- hope I'm still as quick on the job...

**Tommy:** Ach - it'll come back to you soon as start  
throwing it on...

**Patrick:** That it will. Talking about quick on the  
job, you met that new nurse? Mary MacNamara - think  
she has the eye for me!

**Tommy:** Be looking for a father figure is she now?

**Patrick:** Cheeky bastard -

**Tommy:** Well, straighten yourself up - she's coming this  
way right now

**Patrick:** Ach (straightens his uniform up)

**Tommy:** Oh...wait just a minute ...no. It's just ....  
Doctor Lawson....

**Patrick:** I'll get you for that - (

**LIGHTS FADE**

## SCENE 8

*Tommy and Bridget's room in London. Bridget and Martha enter, put bags of shopping down on the table and hang their coats on the backs of the chairs. Martha puts the radio on and 'Rum and Coca - cola' by the Andrews Sisters blares out, followed by, Ac-cent-tchu-Ate the Positive' by Johnny Mercer. They sort the shopping into piles. Bridget begins putting away her shopping leaving the rest for Martha to repack into her shopping bag).*

**Martha:** *(Holding up a tin of spam)* Would you look at this! Spam! They've a nerve to call this meat! Pure lard - put some under the grill last night and it melted to nothing!

**Bridget:** Ach - we've food anyway. That's the main thing

**Martha:** Ma won't touch it - "Throw it straight in the bin!" she'll say

**Bridget:** She shouldn't be wasting it - there's many would -

**Martha:** Ach - would you listen to yourself? Shouldn't, wouldn't, couldn't - honestly Bridget...

**Bridget:** Look, I'm tired out - didn't sleep too well last night.

**Martha:** Why? What's wrong?

**Bridget:** I was thinking about Tommy - going over and over it in my head... On the radio it was saying the war will be over soon - but not where he is. And the longer he's out there, the more I worry....

**Martha:** You've got nothing to worry about - didn't I tell you he'll be all right?

**Bridget:** Mmmmn.....

**Martha:** He's got the luck of -

**Bridget:** Don't say it! I'm sick of it - even Finucane's luck ran out in the end..

**Martha:** Such a crying shame about him..

**Bridget:** Such a good man... all the papers are full of it..

**Martha:** ...so handsome too. There'll be plenty of women's tears flowing in Rathmines, that's for sure..

**Bridget:** For pity's sake, Martha - is that all you can think of?

**Martha:** Everything else is too depressing for me...



**Bridget:** As soon as I heard about him going down, I couldn't stop thinking about Tommy - they say being a rear gunner's the most dangerous job of all...

**Martha:** You won't change anything by worrying, that's for sure

**Bridget:** You've a point - I don't want him to see how worried I am - he'll pick it up straight away when I write to him

**Martha:** Where will I put these potatoes?

**Bridget:** There's a box under the sink...

**Martha:** This one?

**Bridget:** Here - I'll take them... ach...they're going soft already...

**Martha:** Looks like they've cut off the sprouting bits... I'm still waiting to hear how it went with Alec yesterday.

**Bridget:** I don't want to talk about it

**Martha:** Why? What happened?

**Bridget:** Doesn't matter...

**Martha:** No, go on...

**Bridget:** I really don't want to -

**Martha:** It can't have been that bad - where did you go?

**Bridget:** Wish I hadn't gone anywhere with him - the Joe Lyons on Trafalgar Square. He gets special staff rates...

**Martha:** So, what went wrong?

**Bridget:** He was a real gentleman at first...told him all about Donegal, meeting Tommy, Burma...all that...

**Martha:** Then what?

**Bridget:** We ate some sandwiches, had some cake -

**Martha:** Sounds all right...

**Bridget:** Then I asked him about if he could get the silk stockings from his brother, like you asked...

**Martha:** Then what happened?

**Bridget:** He started getting really...nasty

**Martha:** Nasty? What d'you mean?

**Bridget:** I don't want to say...

**Martha:** For God's sake...Would you just spit it out  
Bridget!

**Bridget:** His voice really changed...not the kind  
gentleman any more

**Martha:** And so...

**Bridget:** He said if I wanted a favour from him - he'd  
be needing one back

**Martha:** What did he mean?

**Bridget:** I think you know what he meant - he even  
reached out to grab my hand!

**Martha:** So... What did you do?

**Bridget:** I pulled my hand away and ran out - that's  
what - it was awful...

**Martha:** And did he come after you?

**Bridget:** No - must have been embarrassed -

**Martha:** That's a pity...

**Bridget:** I never want to see him again, as long as I live

**Martha:** ... He's a good looking man Bridget..

**Bridget:** What are you saying?

**Martha:** You could do a lot worse!

**Bridget:** For God's sake, what are you suggesting?

**Martha:** He's got an awful lot of contacts..

**Bridget:** I don't care! What's that to me?

**Martha:** I'll have a lot of explaining to do..

**Bridget:** Explain what to who?

**Martha:** Well...I might have let him think he was in with a chance..

**Bridget:** You had no right! Why?

**Martha:** Why? Because it costs a lot of money to survive -

**Bridget:** I'm married - why would you ever think -

**Martha:** Tommy's not here - he'll never know...

**Bridget:** I'd never do that -

**Martha:** Don't be a fool...You don't have to tell him - why in the world would you do anything so stupid?

**Bridget:** I'll have nothing more to do with Alec - and I won't be coming down to that filthy pub anymore

**Martha:** We'll see

**Bridget:** I won't do it.

**Martha:** Anyway - how do you know what Tommy's up to in Burma? He's probably got some beautiful Burmese woman in his arms right now...

**Bridget:** No - he wouldn't

**Martha:** He's a man - trust me - they're all the same. Only one thing on their minds.

**Bridget:** Why are you saying these terrible things? You're my cousin, for God's sake...

**Martha:** Don't be so naïve! I look around me and I see looters, taking what they want! And the men - seeing what they like and taking it - you think I had it easy over here? I had to fight to survive!

**Bridget:** What happened to you Martha? You were never like this back home...

**Martha:** I grew up - started seeing the world for what it is -

**Bridget:** You're wrong - that's not why Tommy's over there risking his life -

**Martha:** Yes, I've been good to you and Tommy, letting you stay here, persuading Ma not to put up the rent -

**Bridget:** That's not the point -

**Martha...**if Alec comes to the pub tonight, what'll I tell him?

**Bridget:** Tell him - he's disgusting

**Martha:** ...Or I could say you'll be seeing him next week...

***(Bridget glares briefly at Martha, then smacks her across the face).***

**Martha:** You little - after all I've done for you!

**Bridget:** I'll not be selling myself for you - I won't stay in this house a minute longer

*(Bridget pulls out a battered suitcase and throws a few possessions into it).*

**Martha:** Where do you think you're going? You need me - you won't survive out here on your own -

**Bridget:** Not that it's any of your business, but one of the women at work has a spare room. I'll go there - move out of my way

*(Bridget turns to pick up the Pye radio. Martha stands over it, her hand firmly resting on the top).*

**Martha:** Not this - I'm keeping it for wear and tear on the room

**Bridget:** Suit yourself - I'll not be back - give Aunty Kathleen my love

*(The volume increases on the radio for a few seconds, then slowly fades).* LIGHTS FADE.





## SCENE 9

*(The RAF Camp in Burma. Tommy is sitting slumped in his chair wiping sweat from his forehead. His hands are shaking as he swallows the last of a glassful of water. He is clearly unwell. Patrick enters, in an excited mood. He does not notice Tommy's illness, which at first Tommy is trying to mask).*

**Patrick:** Wait till you fucking hear this Tommy!

**Tommy:** What's going on?

**Patrick:** You'll not believe it! You will not fucking believe it Tommy!

**Tommy:** Go on then -

**Patrick:** One of the pilots was telling me about a drop he made a couple of months ago near some wee village out in the middle of nowhere - Kaboing or some such shit...

**Tommy:** What about it?

**Patrick:** It was a special drop - seven thousand silver rupees to pay some local tribes for spying on the Japs - pure silver rupees Tommy -

**Tommy:** So what happened?

**Patrick:** They found the drop zone all right - big pits they dug in clearing - and they dropped the bags full of silver right in there!

**Tommy:** All right, so.....

**Patrick:** Well, your man found out when he was on leave they never picked up the silver...

**Tommy:** Why not?

**Patrick:** Turns out the Japs set up camp near the pits and they didn't want to draw attention to the drop, so they had to leave all those bags there...

**Tommy:** It'll not be there now

**Patrick:** It will - no one else knows it's there - hidden in the jungle

**Tommy:** No use to us...so

**Patrick:** Don't you get it Tommy? After we're demobbed, we can go and find it - go home with bagfuls of silver! Just waiting for us in the jungle - think what we could do with that!

**Tommy:** Away with you Patrick...

**Patrick:** No come on son - you're good at finding your way in the jungle - me I got enough details from your man - what do you think?

**Tommy:** I think....I think you've had too much rum...

**Patrick:** No, come on son - it's our chance - say you'll think about it!

**Tommy:** Ach -

**Patrick:** Just think about what it would mean, son... No more worries for me and Colleen, it'd give Padraig a great start - and the rest of the kids - You're not telling me Bridget'd turn it down - come on Tommy -

**Tommy:** (*Picks up the empty glass and tries to get up*)  
Nnnn...Need some more... (*half collapses*)

**Patrick:** What's the matter son? What's wrong?

**Tommy:** The sweat's pouring off me....aching everywhere.....

**Patrick:** You been taking your tablets?

**Tommy:** Every day, yes...

**Patrick:** What does the Doctor say?

**Tommy:** Not been .... yet ... supposed to be on duty tomorrow ...

**Patrick:** You can't fly in that state, son. Here let me get you some water...

**Tommy:** No rum, mind - head's spinning already...

**Patrick:** *(Returns with water)* There you go son - let's get you over to the Med tent

**Tommy:** No - leave it - I'll be all right by the morning - once I get into the turret -

**Patrick:** Don't be a fucking eejit Tommy - you're no use to anyone the way you are now - you sure about the tablets?

**Tommy:** Ach - said so didn't I?

**Patrick:** Probably dengue fever - season for it

**Tommy:** Pass me that bin - feel as if I'm going to throw up

**Patrick:** Don't be getting it all over me, son. Got a reputation to protect....

**Tommy:** Mnnnn

**Patrick:** (Dengue's like your worst flu - won't kill you, but you'll feel like shit right enough.....One good thing - you'll be at the tender mercies of Nurse MacNamara for the next few days

**Tommy:** For God's sake Patrick -

**Patrick:** Just saying son... and while she's giving you the aul bed baths, you be thinking about those rupees - just waiting for us....

**Tommy:** You're out of your head - soon as we're finished here, I'm heading straight home - London anyways - see my Bridget

**Patrick:** Aye, me too - Colleen would be cutting me bollocks off if she heard I'd been rooting around in the jungle before heading back to Dublin.....good to have dreams though, eh Tommy?

**Tommy:** Sure enough -

**Patrick:** Aye, won't be long now - word is the Americans are heading for Okinawa - then we can all get out of this stinking, muddy shithole.... Good aul freezing Irish rain, that's what we want, eh, Tommy?

**Tommy:** Aye, can't wait for that...

**Patrick:** Was a grand notion though - the bastard Proddy and the Catholic hero finding all that treasure!

**Tommy:** (**laughing**) Less of the bastard, Patrick

**Patrick:** Let's get you over to the Med tent - and the healing hands of Nurse MacNamara... eh, Tommy?

*(Patrick moves to help Tommy off his seat and has his arm round his shoulder as he assists Tommy off stage).*

**LIGHTS FADE**

## SCENE 10

*(The RAF camp in Burma. There is a single chair centre stage, lit by a spotlight on Tommy. He is clearly distraught. He stares out then lowers his face to his hands and weeps silently. Patrick is standing at the front of the stage, to one side, his back to the audience. Spotlight is on Tommy throughout the scene).*

**Tommy:** Damn it all to hell...

**Patrick:** .....we were just heading back from the Drop Zone..... spotted a Jap zero on our tail.....lined up the sights...aimed.....fired.....sure we got him Tommy... last sight was a trail of thick smoke.....then we hit the cumin clouds...got caught in the updraft.....went from 8,000 feet to fourteen in seconds.....monsoon storm was throwing the Lancaster about like a toy.....no one panicked...pilot did everything he could to keep the wings level.....thought we had a fighting chance, Tommy.....we'd even out for a few seconds then we'd dive down spinning.....the noise was terrible.....plane juddering and screaming all the while.....pilot managed to climb again...trying to lift us past the clouds.....then there was this awful noise of tearing metal.....only seconds but it felt like a lifetime.....being tossed about like bits of straw.....couldn't reach the parachutes.....felt so alone.....knew we weren't going to make it...screaming, screaming...not sure in the end if it was me or the plane breaking up.....the air's so cold up there Tommy.....coldest I've been since we got here.....you take care of yourself son.....make one promise to me.....you'll survive.....promise me you'll survive...

**Tommy:** What was the fucking point, Patrick? Why did you have to come here? Why? To this stinking hell hole. What was it all for eh? Just a few more weeks - you would have made it home... Home...what a sick fucking joke eh, Patrick - you're never going home now - you'll lie in some jungle forever - bones turning to dust. Never seeing your Colleen again - your Padraig - your kids. Why, Patrick, did you have to sacrifice yourself to survive? Damn it all to hell - a man shouldn't have to die so his family can live... where's the sense in that? This fucking war- this fucking, stupid, senseless war... it was never your war Patrick - you didn't have to come .... you could have stayed in Dublin..... safe...neutral.... Better to live hungry than be blown to bits in some foreign sky..... Why didn't I promise to help you find that money - why couldn't I have done that eh? Least you could have gone down with that dream in your head.....

**(Pause)**

Yes, I'll do my best to survive Patrick. You were a good man - Glad I got to know you. Hero of the forgotten army. So. These words are for you:  
(reciting) "In this supreme hour, the Irish nation must, by its valour and discipline, and by the readiness of its children to sacrifice themselves for the common good, prove itself worthy of the august destiny to which it is called."

**LIGHTS FADE.**



## SCENE 11

*(Scene takes places in darkness. An announcement comes over the tannoy)*

"On Easter Sunday, American troops made a successful landing on Okinawa. This marks the beginning of the end of the war against the Imperial Army of Japan. This is a great victory and make no mistake that the allied forces will win this war. Your country is proud of your great achievements in the face of a formidable enemy. Each one of you has made a valiant contribution - but make no mistake, there are still pockets of resistance here. Be determined to carry out to the letter every task given to you, whether on patrol, in attack or defence. Plan for all eventualities after anticipating every reaction. Plans cannot be too thorough. Remain observant and suspicious. We end with a message from General Slim: (change of voice) "There comes a moment in every battle against a stubborn enemy when the result hangs in the balance. The issue rests with men's courage, hardihood, their refusal to be beaten either by the cruel hazards of nature or by the fierce strength of their human enemy. That moment has come here in Burma. Only discipline and faith will steel you to carry on. To you belongs the true glory of achievement. You have turned defeat into victory". (back to previous speaker) Next bulletin will be at 0800.

## Scene 12

(A small room in Hounslow. There are two chairs centre stage. Bridget is holding a shaking Tommy in her arms. She starts smoothing his hair away from his face with her fingers.

**Bridget:** Calm yourself Tommy...you're safe now...you're safe home with me... It was just another nightmare...

**Tommy:** I'm afraid to shut my eyes...afraid to go to sleep

**Bridget:** Shhhh - the nightmares will soon pass...

**Tommy:** Dream I'm back in the jungle.....so hot.....terrified...

**Bridget:** It's over Tommy .... you'll never have to go back there again.....

**Tommy:** It's in my head Bridget - I can't get it out of my head

**Bridget:** It'll take time - you'll forget it soon enough

**Tommy:** I can feel the bullets tearing through me

**Bridget:** They can't touch you now

**Tommy:** I can't stand much more of it

**Bridget:** Hush now, why don't you go and lie back down?

**Tommy:** I can't sleep, I can't think -

**Bridget:** Listen, why don't I make you a cup of tea?  
Or something stronger...

**Tommy:** No - I don't want a drink.....Just hold me...keep  
holding me tight...

**Bridget:** Course I will...

**Tommy:** Sorry - I'm so sorry

**Bridget:** You've nothing to apologise for - Tommy love

**Tommy:** What?

**Bridget:** I was thinking...

**Tommy:** Yes?

**Bridget:** Why don't we go back home soon...next month maybe...

**Tommy:** But your job?

**Bridget:** Ach, I'm sure I could get some holiday leave - what d'you think Tommy?

**Tommy:** No, no - I'm not up for it

**Bridget:** Ach think about it - your brother would love to see you

**Tommy:** I'm just not ready yet, Bridget...

**Bridget:** Why's that?

**Tommy:** Look at me, I'm a wreck of a man

**Bridget:** You can stop that talk, Tommy McBride. You're no wreck -

**Tommy:** I'm so ashamed

**Bridget:** What do you mean?

**Tommy:** Hands shaking, nightmares, I can't go anywhere like this...

**Bridget:** You've nothing to be ashamed of - your brother knows what you've been through

**Tommy:** Everyone should know what I've been through - but I can never talk about it - like it's some dirty secret

**Bridget:** I know Tommy love, but it's complicated -

**Tommy:** Not complicated at all - there's a right and a wrong -

**Bridget:** It's too easy to judge now Tommy, now it's all over and we know what the Nazis did

**Tommy:** Too easy to pretend we didn't know what they were up to - For God's sake, De Valera sent his condolences to the Germans when Hitler committed suicide!

**Bridget:** Try not to upset yourself, my love

**Tommy:** Yet I could never even go back to Ireland wearing my uniform

**Bridget:** I know - you're right - but try and put it behind you now - the war's over

**Tommy:** And no thanks to de Valera the right side won....

**Bridget:** In the end....you were gone so long Tommy - I was afraid I would never see you again - that you'd not be able to get back to me

**Tommy:** As long as there was breath in my body, I was coming back to you Bridget - I know it was hard for you here too

**Bridget:** Whssht - it's all right now - let's put it all behind us Tommy - what shall I do - shall I book these tickets? I want to go home Tommy -

**Tommy:** Not yet ....I can't be helping on the farm like this

**Bridget:** They won't be expecting that

**Tommy:** I've no job, I've no money to help out

**Bridget:** We've got some savings to take over -

**Tommy:** I'm not taking your money Bridget

**Bridget:** It's ours - Tommy, our money ....let's do it, let's go home for a while - I'm sure you'll feel better once you're back there

**Tommy:** Let me think about it - don't rush me now

**Bridget:** I won't rush you Tommy - but you know what - I'm going to look at the prices for the ferry from Holyhead - so when you're ready

**Tommy:** You're a rare one Mrs McBride - I'm a lucky man

**Bridget:** Ach, away with you

**Tommy:** But one thing Bridget...

Bridget: What's that?

**Tommy:** When we go over, I'll be wanting to pay a visit to Colleen and the kids in Dublin

**Bridget:** Patrick's wife?

**Tommy:** Yes - I want to pay my respects - help out if I can....

**Bridget:** I'd love to meet them -

**Tommy:** And Bridget?

**Bridget:** Yes

**Tommy:** Thank you

**Bridget:** You're a prize eejit Tommy Mc Bride! You've nothing to thank me for at all...

**Tommy:** Thank you for that first dance back in Letterkenny - and all the dancing we'll be doing in the future

**Bridget:** You get yourself back to bed Tommy - try and get some sleep - we've survived worse than this

**Tommy:** All right - but remember, we'll make that visit - soon, I promise - but London's our home now...

*(Tommy hugs Bridget before heading offstage. Bridget stares at his retreating figure then busies herself with some darning).*

**(LIGHTS FADE)**

**THE END**