

CAPTAIN DINGLEMAN'S GREAT ADVENTURE

by Phillip W. Weiss

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This is a work of fiction.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Narrator (off-stage).

Colonel Baum - Colonel, United States Army.

Captain Dingleman - Captain, United States Army.

Lieutenant Brooks - First Lieutenant, United States Army.

Sergeant Wilko - Sergeant (E-5), United States Army.

Private Dolerman - Private (E-2), United States Army.

Corporal McNabe - Corporal (E-4), United States Army.

Private Calhoun - Private (E-2), United States Army.

Sergeant Green - Sergeant (E-5), United States Army.

A voice (off-stage).

Corporal Lorenzo - Corporal (E-4), United States Army.

Two U.S. Army soldiers.

Other U.S. Army soldiers.

Act One

Narrator (off-stage): It's June 12, 1944. D-Day plus six. The American army has landed in Europe. Thousands of men are pouring onto the continent in a mighty effort to destroy the Nazi enemy and end the war. Acts of valor are already commonplace occurrences, but not all soldiers welcome the opportunity for glory. Because, as in the case with every army, along with the heroes come the misfits, the screw-ups and the malcontents for whom goldbricking and complaining are the order of the day. This is a story about one of those men and what the war did for him.

Scene 1

(Inside a U.S. Army tent. In the tent are two men, one sitting behind a desk, the other standing. Both men are U.S. Army officers. The man sitting behind the desk is a large man, about forty-five years old, looking spit-and-polish, with a crew cut and the appearance of one who is used to giving orders. He is wearing army battle fatigues and wears the rank of colonel. The man who is standing is in his late thirties, about five feet seven inches tall, thin, nervous-looking, balding, wearing horn-rimmed glasses and army battle fatigues which seem to be two sizes too big for him. He wears the rank of captain. The name plate on the desk says Colonel Baum.)

Baum: Dingleman, I have a special mission for you.

Dingleman (nervously): What would that be, colonel?

Baum: I want you to find a corporal named Lorenzo.

According to Washington, this Lorenzo comes from a messed up

family and the brass in Washington want Lorenzo to be found and sent home pronto because his family is in some kind of crisis and he's needed at home. It is known that his unit parachuted five miles due east of here.

Dingleman (alarmed): But Colonel! That's behind enemy lines! (Whining) Why me?

Baum (sings):

When you came into my unit,
I thought you were really swell,
and then you really screwed up
and made my unit smell.

So then I thought it over
about getting even with you
and then I received these orders
and then I knew what to do.

I knew you would not be happy
about what you'd be told to do,
but this is the U.S. Army
where you have to obey or you'll be doomed.

The mission,
the mission,
the mission
always comes first.

The mission,
the mission,
remember that when you're
in the dirt.

You'll be tramping through fields,
which will not be ideal,
for your comfort or safety
or looks.

But you'll be happy to know,
while being GI Joe,
back here
I'll be reading a book.

The mission,
the mission,
the mission always
comes first.

The mission,
the mission,
remember that when you're
in the dirt.

Baum: Dingleman, the fact is that I can't stand you.
You are the sorryest excuse for an officer I've ever had the
misfortune to command and the sooner you're out of my hair,

the better and (laughing) this is a great way to get rid of you once and for all.

Dingleman: But sir, I come from a messed up family too. Why can't I go home?

Baum (again serious): Listen, you fool. I don't question orders from upstairs. This guy Lorenzo has to be found. So you just go and get Lorenzo.

Dingleman (in abject terror): Colonel, please don't send me out there! I'll never make it.

Baum: Stop your whining, Dingleman. You got your orders. So get out of here. I don't want to see your ugly face again, unless, of course, you make it back with Lorenzo, which I doubt will happen.

Dingleman (on his knees, pleading): Colonel, don't do this to me! I'm just a two-bit paper-pusher, not a fighter. I went through ROTC, not basic training. I've never even fired a rifle. It's not my fault that my men are screw-ups!

Baum (standing, glaring down at the prostrate Dingleman): Says you! Don't think I haven't forgotten what you put me through in Rome!

Dingleman (still prostrate): It wasn't my fault!

Baum: Yeah, right. I'm supposed to believe that you didn't know that your guys were trafficking in stolen goods right in front of your tent?

Dingleman (still prostrate, crying): I thought they were giving out supplies to the company!

Baum: What kind of idiot are you? When the IG found out

about it, I got the heat, not you! It cost me my promotion to General, and all because of you. How could you mistake mink coats and Nylon stockings for military supplies?

Dingleman: It was a honest mistake!

Baum (scornfully): An honest mistake. Well, you're going to pay for that honest mistake now. Now, get up off the floor and for once act like an officer, and not the sniveling fool you are actually are.

Dingleman (slowly gets up and then takes a handkerchief out of his pocket and wipes his face): Colonel...

Baum: Shut up! If I hear one more complaint from you I'm going to kick your butt so hard that you'll be flying back to the states without a plane. So get out of here NOW!

(Dingleman turns around, shrugs his stooped shoulders and shuffles out of the tent.)

Curtain

Scene 2

(Inside another U.S. Army tent. The decor is identical to that in the previous scene except that the name plate on the desk says Captain Dingleman. Dingleman is sitting behind the desk looking harried. Sitting on the other side of the desk is a snug-looking man, about thirty years old, wearing battle fatigues and the rank of first lieutenant.)

Dingleman: Brooks, what am I going to do?

Brooks: I guess you'll have to go. Orders are orders.

Dingleman (whining, leans forward): But why me? I never

did anyone any harm.

Brooks: Sir, it's not for me to reason why...

Dingleman: Oh shut up, Brooks. You're not helping at all. You wouldn't be so smug if you were the one going.

Brooks: Well, I'd go. But somebody has to run the company while you're gone, and Colonel Baum picked me for the job.

Dingleman: Why you?

Brooks: Well, sir, I guess when you got it, you got it.

Dingleman: Oh, come on now, Brooks. I know why you're not going. It's because your father-in-law happens to be the chairman of the Senate Armed Service Committee. It helps to have a friend in high places.

Brooks: I certainly won't deny that, but I never asked for any special favors.

Dingleman: You don't have to. The favors just come your way. I'm here because I was the last one left in my ROTC unit and so they stuck me here, to command a motor pool company, and I don't even know how to drive.

Brooks: The ways of the United States Army are shrouded in mystery.

Dingleman: Anyway, you're not going and I am. So where does that leave me?

Brooks: Exactly where you are now.

Dingleman (with a trace of terror): Then I'm a dead duck.

Brooks: Maybe your situation is not as bleak as you think.

Dingleman (sounding hopeful): It isn't?

Brooks: That's right.

Dingleman: Well, go on, Brooks. Tell me more.

Brooks: This is finally your chance to show the Army what kind of great commander you really are.

Dingleman: But, Brooks, how can I do that if I'm dead?

Brooks: Because, sir, you won't be going alone. You'll have other guys who will be doing the dirty work while stay back and take all the credit.

Dingleman: Gee, Brooks, I never thought of that.

Brooks: Well, somebody has to do the thinking here.

Dingleman: What do you mean by that?

Brooks (unruffled): Nothing sir. Just stating a fact.

Dingleman: Well, okay. What am I supposed to do now?

Brooks: Pick some men from the company to go with you.

Dingleman: But what if I don't find Lorenzo?

Brooks: Just say that he couldn't be found.

Dingleman: But Colonel Baum won't like that. Baum said that I have to find this Corporal Lorenzo.

Brooks: Don't worry about what Baum says. He expects you to fail. So don't disappoint him.

Dingleman: Then what am I supposed to do?

Brooks: Do the mission.

Dingleman: And when I come back without Lorenzo, then what?

Brooks: You'll be given a medal.

Dingleman: A medal?

Brooks: That's right. A big, shiny medal.

Dingleman: For what?

Brooks: For your gallant exploits in the field which

resulted in the heroic deaths of your entire command.

Dingleman (incredulous): I'll get a medal for that!

Brooks: Yes, Captain, you will. Commanders are expected to lose men in battle, and the more they lose the greater the glory of their command. Robert E. Lee lost ten thousand men at Gettysburg and today he's considered one of our greatest generals in history. George Washington led his army into the wilderness called Valley Forge where two thousand men died of starvation. Yet today George Washington is revered as the father of our country. The same standard of leadership will be applied to you too. So enjoy it while you can.

Dingleman (impressed): Wow! I can hardly wait to get going. Now, who do I take with me?

Brooks: Why not Wilko, McNabe and their mercenary gang of cutthroats?

Dingleman: Hey, not a bad idea. But how will I deal with them in the field?

Brooks: Easy, Captain. Once you're in the field, they'll be at your total mercy. You'll be able to do whatever you want with them.

Dingleman: How will I be able to do that?

Brooks: Because their weapons won't be loaded while you take all the ammo with you in your jeep.

Dingleman: Are you crazy, Brooks?

Brooks: No, I'm not crazy at all. It makes total sense. You don't like these guys. In fact, you want to get rid of them. So this is your chance. Hey, war is war, even between

guys in the same outfit.

Dingleman: But I can't shoot anybody.

Brooks: You won't have to. The Germans will do it for you.

Dingleman: Now I get it. As soon as Wilko, McNabe and the rest of that motley crew make contact with the Germans, they'll become instant dead heroes.

Brooks: That's right, Captain. And when those guys are history, you'll return to headquarters, report to Colonel Baum, and tell him how the men died courageous deaths in a heroic effort to complete the mission. You'll be cited for your bravery, perserverance and dedication to duty, and you will also prove to Baum that you're a real team player who will take on any assignment, no matter how dangerous or distasteful.

Dingleman: Lieutenant Brooks, you've been a real help, a real friend. I can't wait to get going.

Brooks: Should I call the men to formation?

Dingleman (smiling): By all means, please do.

Curtain

Scene 3

(In front of Captain Dingleman's tent. There are eight men standing. They appear to be in their early twenties; all are dressed in Army fatigues and present a slovenly-looking group. One soldier is short and fat, sweating profusely, and is exuding an offensive odor. Another is tall and gangly and appears to be half-asleep. Another has a smirk on his face

and is constantly turning his head to look around. Another has the look of a grizzled professional boxer. The other four men look like tough guys who are members of a street gang. None of the men are standing at attention; they all have their hands in their pockets. All appear apathetic. Captain Dingleman and Lieutenant Brooks are standing in front of the men.)

Brooks: At ease, men. (The men do not move.) Captain Dingleman has something to say.

Dingleman: Thank you, Lieutenant Brooks. You eight men have been chosen for an important assignment, to find a corporal named Lorenzo and bring him back to headquarters. According to intelligence, Lorenzo was last seen five miles due east of here, behind enemy lines. I will personally be leading this mission.

Smirking man: Now we're really in trouble.

Brooks: That's enough out of you, Wilko?^{get?} ~~it?~~ *What's the deal?*

Dingleman: We'll be moving out in one hour, so get your gear together. *Yeah, that's cool*

Brooks: Okay, men. You heard the Captain. Get your gear together and report back here in one hour. *SIR!*

Wilko: Wait a moment, sir. What are we supposed to take and how long is this mission supposed to last? *What's the deal?*

Dingleman (annoyed): You know what you have to take. We're only going five miles, so stop asking stupid questions. *What's the deal?*

Fat Soldier (whining): Captain, sir!

Dingleman (more annoyed): Oh what is it, Dolerman? *What's the deal?*

Dolerman: What if it raining? I'll get all wet. *What do you want?*

1 - Who the fuck is that guy?
Brooks - Dolerman
and I should have a like you ever get into a
Dingleman (mimicking Dolerman): What if it rains? What
happens - it wasn't easy, our
if it rains? (Then yells) If it rains, wear your poncho, you
1 - I bet it wasn't. How what would you write,
fool. This is the army! Weather is no obstacle. Any more
1 - What if it rains?
stupid questions?

(All the men raise their hands. Dingleman, obviously angry, storms off the stage.)

Brooks: Okay, you misfits. You have your orders. Report back here in one hour.

Curtain

Scene 4

(One hour later. In front of Captain Dingleman's tent. The men are assembled in formation, this time with their gear. They look even more shabby than before. Captain Dingleman and Lieutenant Brooks are looking at the troops. Near Dingleman and Brooks is a jeep with gear piled up on the back seat.)

Wilko: Captain, when will we get ammunition?

Dingleman: Don't worry about that, Wilko.

Wilko: Captain, with all due respect, why do you need the jeep?

Dingleman: To reconnoiter the area for you, Wilko.

Wilko: So we're going to walk while you ride.

Dingleman (annoyed): Such impertinence! (Pointing at Wilko) When we get back, Wilko, I'll take care of you! (Wilko smirks but remains silent.)

Dolerman: Captain, my feet hurt. Can't I ride in the jeep with you? (Sings)

Oh Captain,
oh Captain,
my feet
do really hurt.

Oh Captain,
oh Captain,
please don't treat me
like dirt.

I joined the army to fight a war,
but look what happened to me,
I gained this weight like a fish
eating bait,
and now I'm very large indeed.

Oh Captain,
oh Captain,
my feet do
really hurt.

Oh Captain,
oh Captain,
please don't treat me
like dirt.

You look at me

and all you see
what a strange-looking
man am I.

But you should say
in a friendly way,
"Hey Dolerman, you're
really quite a guy."

Oh Captain,
oh Captain,
my feet do
really hurt.

Oh Captain,
oh Captain,
please don't treat me
like dirt.

Dingleman (annoyed): You can't ride in the jeep, Dolerman.

Dolerman (whining): But Captain...

Dingleman (looks up at the sky): Oh my good Lord. Give me the strength to deal with this sorry excuse for a man. (To Dolerman, angrily) Dolerman, one more complaint out of you and (totally frustrated), oh, forget it!

Dolerman (still whining): But Captain! My feet hurt!

(Dingleman, his composure completely lost, moves toward Dolerman with clenched fists. He is restrained by Lieutenant

Brooks.)

Brooks: Captain, calm down. (Dingleman calms down, Brooks releases his grip on Dingleman, then speaks to Dolerman) Dolerman, shut your face! (To the rest of the men) No one is riding with the Captain and nobody is getting out of this mission. Is that clear? (Silence) So no more stupid remarks. Prepare to move out.

Dingleman: Wilko, you'll be in charge of the men.

(Dingleman gets into the jeep and drives off the stage.)

Wilko (dejected): Okay, guys, you heard Dingleman. Lets move out.

(The men march off the stage as the curtain falls.)

Scene 5

(Wilko and the rest of the men are in a field. Captain Dingleman is no where to be found. The men stop and rest.)

Man who looks like a boxer: Where the heck is Dingleman?

Wilko: Who knows, McNabe.

McNabe: Did you try to get him on the radio?

Wilko: I did, but no answer. I don't like it.

McNabe: I don't like it, either. If we come across the Jerries, we'll be in a lot of trouble.

Wilko: I know. Who's this guy Lorenzo anyway?

McNabe: How should I know? All I know that we're in the middle of enemy territory without any ammunition and the guy with the ammunition is not around.

Wilko: I just thought of something.

McNabe: What?

Wilko: Maybe this is some kind of set up. Knowing Dingleman, I wouldn't put it past him.

McNabe: What makes you think this is a set up?

Wilko: Well, remember what happened in Rome?

McNabe (laughing): Yeah, it was pretty funny. Dingleman was such an idiot.

Wilko: Maybe Dingleman sent us out here to get us killed by the Germans.

McNabe (stops laughing): You think he would do something that low?

Wilko: I wouldn't put it past him.

McNabe: I should have done in Dingleman in Rome when I had the chance.

(Noise comes from off stage. The men become silent. Wilko turns carefully and quietly in the direction of the noise, carefully pushes aside the branches of a bush, and appears to be peering at something in the distance.)

Wilko (tensely): Everybody keep down! There's a bunch of Jerries about a hundred yards away from us.

McNabe: Where's the Captain?

Wilko: If he's captured, then we're cooked. He'll squawk like a baby as soon as they grab him. Plus they'll get the jeep and the ammunition.

McNabe: Oh, man.

Dolerman (in distress): Sarge, I have to go!

Wilko: Hold it in, Dolerman, will you?

Dolerman (panicking): Sarge, I can't! I'm gonna wet my pants!

Wilko: McNabe, take care of Dolerman, will you?

McNabe: Hey, Wilko, what do you think I am? Dolerman's babysitter?

Wilko: Look, McNabe, if Dolerman freaks out he'll give our position away. And, besides, Dolerman likes you. So, please, help the guy out.

McNabe: Okay, Wilko. But you owe me.

(McNabe moves to where Dolerman is sitting. Soon, both disappear into the bushes where grunting sounds are soon heard. A few moments later, McNabe and Dolerman emerge from the bushes. Dolerman has a look of relief on his face. McNabe has a look of disgust. McNabe leaves Dolerman and rejoins Wilko who is still looking through the bushes.)

McNabe: That Dolerman is a pig. He's so fat that he couldn't even unzip his pants to pee. Watching him pee was bad enough, but then he decided to take a dump, and that almost made me pass out. Next time we go to the field, Dolerman will have to wear diapers.

Wilko (laughs): Well, pal, you have served your country well.

McNabe: I'd serve it better if we had some ammunition. Try to get Dingleman on the horn again.

Wilko: Okay.

(Suddenly Dingleman's voice come in through the radio.)

Dingleman sounds frantic.)

Dingleman's voice: Wilko, I need your help. Over.

Wilko (speaking into the radio): We're wondering the same thing about you. Over.

Dingleman's voice: Listen. I'm in trouble. I'm surrounded by a bunch of Jerries. Over.

Wilko: Well, what do you want us to do, Captain? You have the ammo. Over.

Dingleman's voice: Well, figure out something. Over.

Wilko: Figure out what? Over.

Dingleman's voice: A way to save me! Over.

Wilko: What's your position, Captain? Over.

Dingleman's voice: I'm at that clump of trees near that blown up bridge. Over.

Wilko: We passed that position twenty minutes ago. What are you doing there? Over.

Dingleman's voice: Stop quibbling with me, Wilko. Just get over here fast. Over and out.

(Wilko and McNabe look at each other as the curtain falls.)

Scene 6

(Captain Dingleman is sitting in the jeep which is parked under a tree. The tree is surrounded by shrubbery. Enter Wilko and the rest of the men.)

Dingleman (startled): Wilko, you made it!

Wilko (sarcastically): That's right, Captain. We made it, (seriously) but it wasn't easy. (Approaches Dingleman while

the other men are resting.) Where are the Jerries?

Dingleman: I think they're gone.

Wilko: You're not sure?

Dingleman: They left a few minutes ago. I don't think they saw me.

Wilko: If they had seen you, you'd know it. By the way, Captain, something's been bothering me.

Dingleman (guarded): What is it?

Wilko: If you're supposed to be reconnoitering the area, how come you wound up behind us?

Dingleman: I guess I just got lost.

Wilko: You know, Captain, that we're not at headquarters right now, so you can level with me. What's this mission really all about?

Dingleman: To find this Corporal Lorenzo and bring him back to headquarters. That's all I know.

Wilko (skeptical): Nothing more?

Dingleman (coyly): Not that I know.

(McNabe joins the discussion.)

McNabe: You know, Captain, we could have used the ammo before.

Dingleman: But if you had had the ammunition, you would have started shooting at the Germans and jeopardize our mission.

McNabe (angry): Screw the mission! What do I care about this guy Lorenzo? I want to fight the Germans. Is there anything wrong with that?

Wilko: Hold off on that hero talk. I'm in no rush to die

for my country. Then again, since we're out here, and since we got split up once already, I think that this would be a good time to give out the ammunition.

Dingleman: But if I do that the mission could go down the tubes and I'll be in trouble.

Wilko: Captain, this is no time to quibble. I don't care what your problems are, but don't make your problems mine, especially out here. Now, sir, what are you going to do?

(Both Wilko and McNabe look directly at Dingleman who is sweating and in obvious discomfort. Soon the other men gather around the jeep, all looking at Dingleman.)

Dingleman (exasperated): Oh, all right. Take the ammunition.

(Dingleman gives Wilko the keys to the trunk of the jeep. Wilko opens up the trunk and starts giving the ammunition - bullets, grenades, and mortar rounds - to the men.)

Wilko: Now we're in business. (To Dingleman) What are your orders now, Captain?

Dingleman (irritated): Orders?

Wilko: Well, aren't we supposed to find this guy Lorenzo?

Dingleman: Yes. So?

Wilko: So what do we do now?

Dingleman: I guess we go looking for Lorenzo.

Wilko: Where?

Dingleman: I don't know. What are looking at me for?

Wilko: Well, you're supposed to be leading us, Captain.

So, lead!

Dingleman: But I have no idea where we are.

Wilko: May I make a suggestion, sir?

Dingleman: Oh, what is it?

Wilko: Do you have a map?

Dingleman: Yes! There is a map in the glove compartment.

(Dingleman opens up the glove compartment and takes out map.)

Well, what do you know. The map was there. (Dingleman gives the map to Wilko. Wilko unfolds the map and places it on the hood of the jeep.)

Wilko: Maybe we should look at the map to get our bearing.

Dingleman: What's bearing?

Wilko (shaking his head in apparent disbelief): Location, Captain.

Dingleman: Well, why didn't you say that in the first place?

Wilko (pointing to a spot on the map): That's our position. There.

Dingleman: Where?

Wilko: Right there. (Wilko picks up the map and shows Dingleman where he is pointing.)

Dingleman: It is?

Wilko: It is, Captain. The nearest village is Marie St. Navarre, about two miles away from here. Where'd you say Lorenzo's unit was last seen?

Dingleman: Around Marie St. Navarre.

Wilko: Well, maybe we should go there, then.

Dingleman: How'll we get there?

Wilko: There's a road nearby that leads right into town.

Dingleman: Okay, Wilko. We'll go there. But I don't want you and your men to forget why we're out here. Let's not get sidetracked by getting into a fight with the Germans.

Wilko: Captain, with all due respect, that is one of the dumbest things I've ever heard. Are you saying that we should not fight the enemy?

Dingleman (defensively): I didn't say anything of the sort. All I am saying is that the mission comes first.

Wilko: Whatever you say, Captain.

(Wilko leaves Dingleman and goes over to McNabe and have what is intended to be a private conversation.)

Wilko: We're in a lot of trouble.

McNabe: I know that already.

Wilko: No you don't. I just spoke with Dingleman. He's dumber than I thought. And this guy is in command. It's a good thing we got the ammunition.

McNabe: So what are you driving at?

Wilko: We got to do something about the Captain. This guy will get us killed.

McNabe: So what do you want to do?

Wilko: Get him out of the way.

McNabe: And how would we do that?

Wilko: Why don't we take the jeep and leave him here.

McNabe: I don't think so, Wilko. He'll start yelling and attract attention.

Wilko: Maybe we can get him so drunk that he'll pass out. You have that hootch with you, right?

McNabe (smiles): I never go into battle without a bottle.
(Again serious) But if we leave him here the Jerries will find him.

Wilko: Maybe we can stick him someplace where he won't be found.

McNabe: Like where?

Wilko: Like in a ditch or up a tree?

McNabe: Up a tree?

Wilko: Yeah. Why not?

McNabe: He'd probably fall out of the tree. That leaves putting him in a ditch, but who wants to dig a ditch? I think even an idiot like Dingleman would get somewhat suspicious. Why not just shoot him?

Wilko: It would make too much noise.

McNabe: What about hanging him?

Wilko: He'd make too much of a fuss.

McNabe: Stabbing?

Wilko: Too messy. Plus he'd make too much noise and the Jerries are definitely close by.

McNabe: Then how can we get rid of this guy?

Wilko: I know! Why don't we continue to have Dingleman reconnoiter? Maybe Jerry will see him and blow him away.

McNabe (excited): Yeah! Let's try that! And if he doesn't get blown away on the way to town, maybe it'll happen on the way back to headquarters!

(Wilko and McNabe go over to Captain Dingleman who is still sitting in the jeep.)

Wilko: Sir, McNabe and I have a suggestion.

Dingleman: What is it?

Wilko: Since you are driving the jeep, we figured that it might be a good idea if you went on ahead of us to reconnoiter the approach to town.

Dingleman (indignant): Why should I do it? Can't one of your men drive the jeep?

Wilko: I can have one of the men drive the jeep, sir, but you signed for the jeep, so the jeep is your responsibility.

Dingleman: Oh, all right. But you better be right behind me.

Wilko: Don't worry, sir, we'll be right behind you. Just get on the horn if you see anything suspicious.

Dingleman (hesitates, then speaks): Just one moment.

Wilko: Sir?

Dingleman: Who's in command of this mission?

Wilko: You are, sir.

Dingleman: Then why am I taking orders from you?

Wilko: Sir, a good commander always listens to the advice of his senior NCO, Isn't that right, McNabe?

McNabe: It's in the regulations, sir.

Wilko: So, sir, as the senior NCO in this unit, I'm giving you advice. If you want to handle things another way, it's your show.

Dingleman: What other way?

Wilko: Exactly my point, sir.

(Wilko and McNabe turn away from Dingleman to speak to

the rest of the men who, during the scene, have been sitting in groups of twos and threes.)

Wilko: Listen up, men! We'll be moving out soon. We'll be marching down the road which leads to a village called Marie St. Navarre, which is about two miles away. Captain Dingleman will reconnoiter in the jeep. Any questions?

Dolerman: Is there a place to eat in town?

Wilko: I don't know, Dolerman.

Dolerman (whines): I'm hungry!

Wilko (patiently): When we get in town, we'll see what's there. Anymore questions?

Tall, gangly soldier: Why is Captain Dingleman reconnoitering?

Wilko (surprised): Hey, Calhoun, you're actually awake. But to answer your question, it's because the Captain has the jeep.

Calhoun: No other reasons?

Wilko: No other reasons. Anymore questions? (Silence)
Good. Let's move out.

(As the men prepare to move out, the curtain falls.)

End of Act One

Act Two

Scene 1

(A meadow. Captain Dingleman is sitting in the jeep.
Enters Calhoun.)

Calhoun: Yo, Captain.

Dingleman: Who are you?

Calhoun: Private Calhoun. I'm in your unit.

Dingleman: What are you doing here?

Calhoun: I went on ahead to warn you.

Dingleman: Warn me of what?

Calhoun: I overheard Wilko and McNabe talking about you.

Dingleman: Oh really? What did they say?

Calhoun: They want to get you killed.

Dingleman: What!

Calhoun: It's true, Captain. I heard them myself. They were figuring out different ways to do it and then decided that the best way to get rid of you was for the Jerries to do the job.

Dingleman: Why those rotten bums. Anyway, thank you, Calhoun. Get back with the rest of the men, and don't tell anyone that you spoke with me.

Calhoun: Yes, sir.

(As Calhoun exits the curtain falls.)

Scene 2

(Inside the ruins of a building. One wall has a hole in it. Enter Wilko, followed by the men without Dingleman. The men are tired, wet, and covered with dirt.)

Wilko: Alright guys, let's rest.

(The men put down their gear and find places to sit.)

McNabe: That was one lousy walk. Nobody told us about that stream.

Dolerman (whines): Sarge, I'm sick!

(Wilko is about to speak but is interrupted by McNabe.)

McNabe: Shut up, Dolerman. Nobody wants to hear from you right now. (Dolerman continues to whimper but otherwise remains silent.) (To Wilko) Where's Dingleman?

Wilko: He should be here any minute.

(Enters Dingleman. He is covered with dirt, carrying all his gear, and is completely exhausted. Dingleman drops his gear on the ground and finds a place to sit. Nobody stands up to salute him. In fact, he is hardly noticed.)

Wilko (mocking): Glad you finally made it, sir. It's too bad about the jeep.

Dingleman (scowling): Oh stop it! You were gloating when you found me in that ditch. I saw it in your face. Don't try to deny it!

Wilko: Captain. How can you say that?

Dingleman: Easily, Wilko. I know you don't like me, and frankly, I don't care about you either. Disappointed that I'm still alive?

Wilko: What do you mean by that, Captain?

Dingleman: You know exactly what I mean.

Wilko: No I don't.

Dingleman: I think you do. (Dingleman walks over to Wilko)

and attempts to punch him on the nose, but is caught by McNabe.)

McNabe: Cool it, Captain.

Dingleman: Let go of me!

Wilko (to McNabe): Let go of him. (McNabe let's go of Dingleman) (To Dingleman) If I wanted to get rid of you I could have done it a long time ago. So, Captain, I suggest that we drop this conversation now.

Dingleman: Mister, I'll drop it for now, but later on we'll be talking some more.

McNabe: Hey, Captain! You want some hootch?

Dingleman: Some what?

McNabe: You know. Booze.

Dingleman (shocked): You guys are drinking? Now? Are you out of your minds?

McNabe (smugly): Yes, Captain, I'm drinking.

Dingleman (outraged): That's against regulations!

McNabe: Big deal!

Dingleman (almost hysterical): I'm going to put you on report!

Wilko: Captain, why don't you cool it.

Dingleman (screams): This is outrageous!

Wilko: Keep it down, Captain.

Dingleman (lowers his voice, but still agitated, to McNabe): When we get back to base, you'll be hearing from me!

Wilko: That's if we get back. Look over there, sir. (Wilko points through the hole in the wall. Dingleman looks.) You see what's coming our way, sir?

(From off stage comes the sound of a tank. The noise is faint, but definitely discernible.)

Dingleman (nervous): What's that?

Wilko: A tank, sir, moving our way.

Dingleman (alarmed): A tank! What do we do now?

Wilko: McNabe, what do you think we should do?

McNabe: I think we better get out of here before that tank sees us.

Dingleman (beginning to panic): Good idea! Let's get out of here now!

Wilko (sharply): Get a hold of yourself, Captain!

McNabe (to Dingleman): Have yourself a drink!

Dingleman: But I don't drink!

McNabe: Well, it's about time you started! (McNabe hands Dingleman the bottle. Dingleman hesitates at first, then takes the bottle, hesitates again, then puts the bottle to his mouth and takes a quick drink. He grimaces, then takes a much longer drink.)

Dingleman (calmer): Not bad.

(McNabe grabs the bottle from Dingleman and hands it to Wilko, who takes a quick gulp and hands the bottle back to McNabe.)

McNabe (laughing): It never fails to work. I think it's time to move.

(Enter five soldiers. In the lead is a soldier wearing sergeant's stripes. Wilko and the rest of the men point their rifles at the newcomers, ready to fire.)

Sergeant (hands in the air): Woh! Don't shoot!

Wilko: Who the heck are you?

Sergeant: Sergeant Green, second airborne battalion We saw you from that building over there (points through the hole in the wall) and thought we'd pay you a visit. Been here long?

Wilko: We just got here. How long have you been here?

Green: Two days. (To his men) Okay men, relax. (Green's men sit wherever they can find a space.) By the way, what's your name?

Wilko: Wilko.

Green: Are you our relief?

Wilko: Sorry, pal, we're not.

Green (visibly disappointed): Then what are you doing here?

Wilko: Looking for a guy named Lorenzo. Do you know this guy?

Green: Yeah. He was in my outfit. I last saw him two days ago. We got split up.

(The sound of the tank is becoming louder.)

Wilko (with urgency): Listen, Green, we got move, now.

Green: Okay. Let's split up. I'll go to the left and you go to the right and we'll meet at the church at the far side of town. Okay?

Wilko: Okay.

Green (pointing to Dingleman who has fallen asleep): Who's that guy over there?

Wilko: Oh, that's our Captain. (Green is amazed.) Don't ask. (To Dingleman) Hey, Captain, wake up! (McNabe goes over

and shakes Dingleman awake.)

Dingleman (awakes with a start): Whaa, whaa, what?

Wilko: Captain, we're moving out now.

Dingleman: Moving out? To where?

Wilko: Don't worry, sir. Just follow me.

(As the men prepare to leave the building, the curtain falls.)

Scene 3

(Inside another ruined building. As the stage lights go on, enter Wilko and Green, followed by their men. The sounds of rifle fire and exploding bombs can be heard in the background. The men take cover behind the wall. The last man to enter is Captain Dingleman, who staggers to a halt, drops his gear, and leans against the wall.)

Wilko (out of breath): Captain, get down! (Dingleman crouches down.) (To Green) That was close.

Green (catching his breath): You got that right.

Wilko: We better set up here.

Green: Okay. (To his men) Hey, Mac, set up the mortar over there (points to stage right). Dolan, set the machine gun there (points to the top of the wall, stage right.)

Wilko: How much ammo do you have?

Green: Not very much. About twenty mortar rounds and a few machine gun belts.

Wilko (to his men): Listen up! We're going to stay here. McNabe, set up the machine gun there (points to the top of the

wall, stage right and the mortar there (points to stage left.)

McNabe (to the rest of the men): Okay, you heard the man!
Let's get moving!

(Everyone, except Dingleman, is busy setting up equipment.)

Dingleman (to Wilko): I can't take this much longer.

Wilko (approached Dingleman): Come on, Captain. Pull yourself together. Even Dolerman isn't complaining.

Dolerman: Sarge! My back hurts!

Wilko: I guess I spoke too soon. (To Dolerman) Take aspirin.

Dolerman (whines): But, Sarge, I don't have aspirins.

Wilko: Will somebody rub Dolerman's back?

(Derisive laughter come from the men. Dolerman stops complaining.)

Dingleman (winces): Ooo, that Dolerman! Every time he opens up his mouth I want to smash his face.

Wilko (facing Dingleman again): Save that for the Jerries, Captain.

Dingleman (alarmed): You mean we may actually have to fight the Jerries!?

Wilko: It could come to that.

Dingleman (moans): Oh, no!

Wilko: Try to stay cool, Captain. (Wilko leaves Dingleman and returns to center stage where he joins Green.)

Green: How's your Captain?

Wilko: Don't ask. Set up yet?

Green: Just about.

(Suddenly the shooting stops. There is silence. All the men are peering over the top of the wall.)

Wilko: It looks like the Jerries are taking a rest.

Green: Well, probably not for long. They're probably regrouping for a final assault.

Wilko: You think we should try to break out?

Green: It would be suicide. The place is crawling with Jerries. We're lucky that we even made it to here.

Wilko: Well, we might as well try to enjoy our stay. (Wilko sticks his hand inside his shirt and takes out a deck of cards. To Green) You play?

Green: What's your game?

Wilko: Polka. Deuces wild. (To the rest of the men) Anybody else in? (All the men gather around except for Dingleman who is totally despondent.)

Green: What do we use for chips.

Wilko (scoops up a handful of pebbles): How about using these?

Green: Okay.

Wilko: Each pebble is worth a dollar.

Green: Fine.

McNabe: Deal me in, too.

Voice off-stage: Deal me in, too.

(Enters a soldier wearing the rank of corporal. He's a man in his early twenties.)

Green: Lorenzo!

Lorenzo: Bet you're surprised to see me again.

Green: I sure am. I thought you were definitely a goner. Where'd you stay?

Lorenzo: After we got split up, I wandered outside of town where I found this small cottage. The people were friendly and took me in, but I couldn't stay for long because the Germans were approaching. But I stayed the night and in the morning hid in the field. I saw the Germans come into town. I tried to make it back to the beach but there were too many Germans. So I thought I'd come back here and wait until some more of our troops showed up, and lo-and-behold, there you are. Anybody want a roll? (Lorenzo takes some rolls out of his back pack. The rolls are passed around.)

Wilko: You're Corporal Lorenzo?

Lorenzo: At your beck and call. Do I know you?

Wilko: I'm Wilko. Captain Dingleman, over there (points to Dingleman) was sent out here to find you and bring you back to headquarters where they'll send you back to the states.

Lorenzo (laughs): Is this for real?

Wilko (completely serious): It's for real.

Lorenzo (bitter): Why me? I don't want to go back to the states. I joined the army to get as far away from home as possible. I had no job, no prospects, no nothing! If I had stayed at home another week, I would have wound up in jail. Whose brainstorm was this anyway?

Wilko: Maybe Captain Dingleman there can explain it to you. (To Dingleman) Captain. (No response. Wilko goes over to Dingleman who is sleeping, and shakes Dingleman.)

Dingleman (awakes): What is it?

Wilko: Guess what.

Dingleman (annoyed): What is it, Wilko?

Wilko: Lorenzo is here (points to Lorenzo).

Dingleman: So that's Lorenzo? Where'd we find him?

Wilko: It's more like he found us.

Dingleman (again annoyed): Oh, who cares. Well, let's take him back to headquarters.

Wilko: There's a couple of problems, Captain.

Dingleman: What problems?

Wilko: First the Jerries have us surrounded and second, Lorenzo doesn't want to leave.

Dingleman (incensed): What do you mean Lorenzo doesn't want to leave?

Wilko: Exactly what I said, sir.

Dingleman (more alert): Corporal Lorenzo! (Dingleman goes to center stage where Lorenzo is sitting and sits next to Lorenzo.) I'm Captain Dingleman. Now what is all this talk about you not wanting to go back to headquarters?

Lorenzo: I'd rather stay here, sir.

Dingleman (beginning to lose his temper): You have no choice in this matter. As soon as we can, we're taking you back to headquarters. Wilko!

Wilko: Yes, sir.

Dingleman (assertive): If Lorenzo makes any effort to resist returning to headquarters, you have my full permission to use whatever means necessary to enforce compliance with the orders

which (facing Lorenzo) came from Washington, D.C.

Lorenzo: But sir...

Dingleman (insistent): I'm not here to debate with you, soldier. (To Wilko): Now, what's the plan here?

Wilko: Well, sir, we figured that since we can't break out, we're gonna have to fight it out.

Dingleman: Are we set up for that?

Wilko: Yes we are.

Dingleman: Okay. Well, you take charge. Shooting guns is not exactly my strong point. But at first chance, we're getting out of here.

Wilko: What about helping out Green and his guys?

Dingleman: Listen, Wilko, I want to get out of here. We weren't sent here to help out any other guys, or am I going to have the same problem with you as I have with this snotty kid Lorenzo?

Wilko: Hold on, Captain. I was just asking.

Dingleman: Listen. I'm beginning to lose my patience with you. I'm the Captain, not you. So don't you argue with me!

(Dingleman goes back to where he was before and appears to be sulking. McNabe joins Wilko.)

McNabe: What's gotten into Dingleman?

Wilko: What are you talking about?

McNabe: What do you mean, what am I talking about? One moment the guy's a bumbling jerk, the next moment he's barking out orders.

Wilko: I don't know about that. To me, he's now just a

noisy jerk.

McNabe: So what do we do now?

Wilko: I guess we wait.

(Sounds of bombs exploding and bullets ricocheting start again. Everyone instinctively duck, even though they are all crouching behind the wall.)

Green: Here they come.

(Wilko goes to the machine gun and starts firing. Then everyone, except Dingleman, is firing.)

Wilko: Here comes that tank! Fire the mortar!

(The mortar is fired.)

Green: It missed! (Panicky) They're not stopping!

Oh, no!

(Dingleman runs over to Green, who is paralyzed with fear. Dingleman grabs Green's rifle and starts firing. Wilko looks at Dingleman, amazed. Dingleman keeps firing. As the cacophony of noise becomes louder and louder, the curtain falls.)

Scene 4

(Woods. Men are straggling in. They are completely exhausted. Some of the men, including Dolerman, are missing. Soon Wilko, Dingleman and Lorenzo appear and sit down on a fallen tree trunk, center stage.)

Wilko: We gotta go back and help Green, and do it for McNabe.

Dingleman: What do you mean "do it for McNabe"?

Wilko: Don't you know, Captain?

Dingleman: Know what?

Wilko (grim): McNabe bought it. (Sings)

McNabe was the finest man I know;
so good,
so gentle;
a man I called a friend.

He drank and he caroused
but was always a real good pal.

McNabe,

McNabe,

McNabe.

McNabe,

McNabe,

he fought so hard today,
and 'though sometimes he was
a rogue,
he went into the battle and
became a hero.

McNabe,

McNabe,

what will I do today?

I need you for my polka game;

I need you to wile the time away.

McNabe,

McNabe,

McNabe.

Dingleman: That's tough about Wilko but the answer is still no.

Wilko: Sir, it's our duty to help them.

Dingleman (pointing at Wilko): Listen, Wilko, don't tell me what our duty is. We're lucky we got out of there. According to my orders, Lorenzo is to return to headquarters.

Wilko: Captain, our primary mission is to fight if we encounter the enemy, and we have encountered the enemy.

Dingleman: Fight! With what? Do we have a tank? We go back into town and we'll be committing suicide. The only reason why we got out of there was because that tank was right on top of us, so couldn't see us. Now you want to go back there?

Wilko: Look, Captain. Some of our men are still there too.

Lorenzo: I want to...

Dingleman (sharply to Lorenzo): Shut up! (To Wilko) I know some of our men are there. But my orders are to bring Lorenzo back, not to be a hero. Okay? Do you read me?

Wilko: Captain, I read you loud and clear. But I think you're wrong.

Dingleman (angry): You think I'm wrong! You're not paid to think about what's right or wrong. That's my job! You just

listen to me, mister! (Looking at Lorenzo) And that goes for you, too!

Wilko: Captain, I'm going back. And there's nothing you can do about it.

Dingleman (screams): Are you mad?! That's insubordination! You can be shot for that!

Wilko (derisively): Who's gonna shoot me? You!

Dingleman (almost beside himself with rage): Maybe I will!

Wilko: Yeah. Right.

Dingleman: I am ordering you to take Lorenzo back to headquarters.

Wilko: Captain, I don't think you're fit to command.

Dingleman (angry and indignant): What are you talking about?! I'm your Captain! How dare you talk to me like that!

Wilko: You're nothing but a screw up!

Dingleman: Oh, really! Well, you're nothing but a thief, con artist, and a disobedient troublemaker.

Wilko: Just because you're a coward, doesn't mean I have to be one too.

Dingleman: Oh, so now you're calling me a coward? I don't care what you think of me. Your job is to obey my orders!

Wilko: Not when I think your orders stink.

Dingleman: The audacity!

Wilko: Listen, Captain. I don't want to argue with you. I want to fight. I don't give a hoot about Lorenzo. (To Lorenzo) No offense. (Lorenzo doesn't answer.)

Dingleman: I don't care what you think about Lorenzo.

Your job is to take Lorenzo in that direction (points) right to Colonel Baum's tent.

Wilko: Why don't you do it yourself?

Dingleman: Because I'm ordering you to do it!

Wilko: And once again, sir, I refuse. We can't abandon the men in town.

Dingleman (exasperated): Here we go again. Wilko, you don't hear right. This is not Rome.

Wilko: What does Rome have to do with this?

Dingleman (bitterly): You showed real contempt for me in Rome. I was new at the time, so I did not know how to handle the situation. I trusted you guys. Now I know better.

Wilko: I can't help the fact that you're a jerk.

Dingleman: You still have contempt for me, don't you?

Wilko: As a matter of fact, I do. If a clown like you is a captain, then I should be a general.

Dingleman: You may think its cute to have that kind of attitude, but you're way off base, mister. In fact, you don't even know what you're talking about. But I'm not here to debate you. Look, if you obey my order, I forget that this conversation ever took place, (to Lorenzo) and you will too.

Wilko: Listen, Captain, I don't care what you say. Maybe I've done some dishonest things, but I'm not yellow,

Dingleman: I'm ordering you one more time. Return Lorenzo to base.

Wilko: No way, Captain.

Dingleman: Then I'm placing you under arrest.

Wilko (laughs): Really? (Turns around to leave) Take care, Captain.

Dingleman (pointing to two men): You and you. Come over here. (The two men get up and go over to Dingleman.) I'm placing this men under arrest. You are to guard him until we get back to headquarters.

One of the men: Sir, you're not the commander of our unit.

Dingleman: While we're out here, I'm in command. Do what I say! Now!

The other man: Sir, we want to go back to help out our guys.

Dingleman: This is unbelievable! Nobody wants to obey my orders!

Lorenzo: Sir, I'll guard Wilko.

Dingleman: Finally, somebody is obeying my order. Well, Lorenzo, do it.

(Lorenzo picks up his rifle and points it at Wilko.)

Lorenzo: Wilko! Halt!

(Wilko keeps walking. Lorenzo fires a shot over Wilko's head. Everyone on the stage cringes. Wilko turns around, a pistol in his hand.)

Wilko (calmly): I wouldn't to that again.

Lorenzo: Well, don't walk away from me again. Put that gun down. (Lorenzo points his rifle directly at Wilko.)

Wilko: I don't think so.

Dingleman: I'm ordering you to put that gun down.

Wilko (laughs and drops the gun): Both of you guys are

jerks.

(Lorenzo runs over to Wilko and ties Wilko's hands behind his back.)

Dingleman: Okay, men. Let's return to base.

(As the men leave the stage the curtain falls.)

Scene 5

(Outside of Colonel Baum's tent. Enter the men, led by Dingleman and followed by Lorenzo who is guarding Wilko. The men halt. Colonel Baum comes out of the tent.)

Baum: What's all this racket? (Then surprised) Dingleman!

Dingleman (salutes Baum): Mission accomplished, sir.
Corporal Lorenzo, front and center.

(Lorenzo leaves Wilko, stands next to Dingleman and comes to attention.)

Lorenzo: Sir!

Baum: So, you're Corporal Lorenzo?

Lorenzo: Yes, sir!

Baum (to Dingleman): Excellent job, Dingleman. You are to be complimented.

Dingleman: Colonel, I also have a soldier who I've placed under arrest for insubordination and attempting to sabotage the mission.

Baum: Who did you arrest?

Dingleman: Sergeant Wilko.

Baum (amazed): You arrested Sergeant Wilko?

Dingleman: Yes, sir. I wish to turn the prisoner over

to you. (To Lorenzo) Bring the prisoner here.

Lorenzo: Yes, sir. (Lorenzo leaves Dingleman and Baum, returns to where Wilko is standing with the other men, and then, pushing Wilko, returns with Wilko to Dingleman and Baum.)

Baum: Wilko, what's this about?

Wilko: I don't know, sir. I didn't do anything wrong.

Baum: You were arrested for nothing?

Wilko: Look's like it, sir.

Baum: Well, I'll look into this matter later. In the meantime, you're off to the stockade.

Dingleman (to Lorenzo): You heard the Colonel. Take this man to the stockade.

Lorenzo: Sir, where's the stockade?

Baum (pointing): It's down that path, about a half a mile.

Lorenzo: Thank you, sir.

Baum: By the way, how does it feel to be going home?

Lorenzo: I don't know, sir. At first I wasn't happy about it. I wanted to stay with my unit and fight Jerries, but Captain Dingleman taught me something.

Baum: And what was that?

Lorenzo: First, that you shouldn't judge a book by its cover, and two, humility.

Baum: Could you explain further?

Lorenzo: Yes, sir, I will. When I first saw Captain Dingleman, he did not impress me. But Captain Dingleman soon earned my gratitude and my respect.

Baum: In what way?

Lorenzo: Captain Dingleman never backed down. He had a job to do and he did it. At first I didn't want to cooperate, but this guy here (pointing his thumb at Wilko) changed my mind real fast.

Baum: And how did Wilko change your mind?

Lorenzo: He said he didn't care about me. After hearing that, there'd be no way I'd be following this guy into battle, or anywhere. (Wilko smirks).

Baum: Well, Lorenzo, you'll be going home.

Dingleman: Sir, I wish to report that in completing this mission, we lost several men. (To Wilko) What ever happened to Dolerman?

Wilko: He was taken prisoner, Captain.

Dingleman: How do you know that?

Wilko: He ran right into a group of Jerries who were so amazed by what they saw that they couldn't stop laughing.

Dingleman: Now I've heard it all.

Wilko: There's more, Captain.

Dingleman: And what was that?

Wilko: Dolerman started talking to the Jerries in German.

Dingleman: You mean, Dolerman knew German?

Wilko: Apparently he did, sir.

Dingleman: And you didn't know this?

Wilko: I knew it, but I didn't think it was important.

Baum (to Wilko): You fool! We could have used Dolerman for intelligence.

Dingleman: Sir, I'm not a fan of Sergeant Wilko, but it's

not his fault. Dolerman was a complete screw up, and if he was a screw up in the field, he would have been just as useless in G-3.

Baum: All this will be investigated later. (To Lorenzo)
Take your prisoner to the stockade.

Lorenzo: Yes, sir. (To Wilko) Let's go.

(As Lorenzo and Wilko exit the stage, the curtain falls.)

Scene 6

(Inside Colonel Baum's tent. Dingleman and Baum are sitting, Baum behind his desk and Dingleman on the other side of the desk.)

Dingleman: So what do you think about me now, sir?

Baum: What do you mean?

Dingleman (chiding): I bet you thought I'd never come back, especially with Lorenzo.

Baum: That's not so, Dingleman.

Dingleman: May I speak frankly?

Baum: By all means.

Dingleman: You thought I'd screw up again, didn't you.

Baum (expansive): Not really. I had all the confidence in the world that you would find Lorenzo.

Dingleman: Am I supposed to believe that?

Baum: Are you doubting me?

Dingleman: When you sent me out on this mission, sir, I had the distinct impression that you expected me to fail.

Baum: Yes, I knew that that was always a possibility.
But what are you driving at?

Dingleman: I wanted to show you that you were all wrong about me.

Baum: Well, you certainly did surprise me.

Dingleman (becoming angry): But why did you doubt me to begin with, sir?

Baum: I don't know what happened to you on this mission, but before you went on this mission, you definitely had problems in the area of command.

Dingleman: Well, I proved you wrong. In fact, I proved everybody wrong. I know how I come off. But nobody knows the real me. In fact, until I went on this mission, I wasn't sure who the real me was either. I thought I was a screw up, and so I acted like a screw up. But out in the field I couldn't afford keep acting like a screw up, so I had to change.

Baum (patronizing): And you did just fine.

Dingleman: No thanks to you, sir. You put me in a pretty tough spot.

Baum: Look, Dingleman, it wasn't my idea to find Lorenzo. That came from Washington.

Dingleman: But it was you who put my life on the line, and if I had died, you wouldn't have given it a second thought.

Baum: This is war, Dingleman, and in war, people are ordered into dangerous situations. We are part of a huge army that has invaded Europe. We can all be killed.

Dingleman: That's true, sir. But this was a lot more

personal.

Baum: Look, Dingleman, I won't deny that I wasn't upset with you, but that's in the past.

Dingleman: Well, sir, I can't look at it like that. While I was out in the field, I said to myself that I was going to get through this mission and see the expression on your face when I get back. And I must say that it was worth it. You didn't let me down.

Baum (laughing): It must have been pretty funny.

Dingleman: Your face, yes. But I didn't find what you did to me funny at all.

Baum (stops laughing): I don't like the tone of your voice.

Dingleman: Frankly, sir, I don't care what you like or don't like about me. I learned something. I don't have to be your doormat, or anyone's doormat.

Baum: Dingleman, you made yourself a doormat through your own behavior, okay? So don't blame me if I treated with a certain amount of disdain, because you deserved it.

Dingleman: I deserved it?

Baum: You sure did. Nobody respected you. But I gave you a chance to redeem yourself, and you came through. So instead of arguing with me, you ought to thank me.

Dingleman: I have nothing to thank you for. You sent me on that mission with the full belief that I would fail, which meant that I'd either be dead or if I lived, become your fool.

Baum: But you didn't fail. That's the point.

Dingleman: Look, Colonel Baum, you didn't do me any favors.

Okay?

Baum: I'm sorry you feel that way, Dingleman.

Dingleman: Well, that's the way I feel, sir.

Baum: So, what do you want me to do?

Dingleman: Treat me with respect.

Baum: Aren't I doing that now?

Dingleman: Not really, Colonel. You're still patronizing me.

Baum: I am not.

Dingleman: Yes, you are, sir. You still have a smirk on your face.

Baum: I don't know what you're talking about.

Dingleman: I am not the same Dingleman that you knew before the Lorenzo mission.

Baum: Meaning what?

Dingleman: Meaning that (points at Baum) if you ever try to dump on me again, I'll fix you but good.

Baum (shocked): Are you threatening me, Dingleman?

Dingleman: Not a threat, a promise.

Baum: Who do you think you are?

Dingleman: A hero.

Baum: Hold on, Dingleman!

Dingleman: Hold on, sir? You hold on! I've taken enough of your guff. Now what do I get for putting my life on the line for you?

Baum: For me or for your country?

Dingleman: Don't mince words with me, sir. It's very

unbecoming of you.

Baum: Okay, Dingleman. What do you want?

Dingleman: Public praise.

Baum: Anything else?

Dingleman: That's all.

Baum: You got it!

(Both men shake hands as the curtain falls.)

Scene 7

(Soldiers are standing in formation. Standing on a pedestal is Colonel Baum.)

Baum: Men, we are here to honor a courageous soldier and great American, Captain Dingleman. With total disregard for his own safety, Captain Dingleman went behind enemy lines to rescue a soldier who had been ordered home by the highest military authority. Captain Dingleman accepted this important assignment without hesitation, and fulfilled his duty in manner that brings credit to the United States Army. Now, without further ado, I present to you Captain Dingleman, American hero.

(Enters Dingleman who stops in front of Colonel Baum and salutes. Baum returns Dingleman's salute.)

Baum: Captain Dingleman. For actions above and beyond the call of duty, I present to you a letter of commendation from me and convey to you the hearty congratulations from higher command.

(Dingleman steps forward and Baum hands Dingleman the letter of commendation. Dingleman then steps back and salutes. Baum

salutes back.)

Baum: And as a further tribute to you...

(The men form into a choir and sing.)

Captain Dingleman,
Captain Dingleman,
he's the greatest soldier
in the world.

Captain Dingleman,
Captain Dingleman,
he's the best and finest
soldier in the world.

He seems so mild
he seems so meek
he seems like a
little puppy dog.

He'll make you think
that all he does is sleep
and just lean up
against the wall.

Captain Dingleman,
Captain Dingleman,
he's the best and finest
soldier in the world.

Captain Dingleman,
Captain Dingleman,
if you mess with him
he'll put you in a whirl.

So let's give three cheers
and buy him root beer
because he always
gives his all.

And tell him hello
for putting on a show
that we all do
actually adore.

Captain Dingleman,
Captain Dingleman,
he's the finest soldier
in the world.

Captain Dingleman,
Captain Dingleman,
we wish you the best
because you're really swell.

Captain Dingleman!

All: Hip, hip, hooray! Hip, hip, hooray! Hip, hip, hooray!
Yay!!!!

Dingleman: You guys are the greatest! I love you all!

(The men surge around Dingleman, pick him up and carry him around the stage, cheering, as the curtain falls.)

The End