

CAPTAIN DINGLEMAN'S GREAT ADVENTURE

By Phillip W. Weiss

**Phillip Weiss
Box 82
149 East 23rd Street
New York, NY 10010
Tel. (212) 388-8690**

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Synopsis of

CAPTAIN DINGLEMAN'S GREAT ADVENTURE

Northern France, June 1944. Captain Dingleman is an officer in the United States Army. He is despised by his commanding officer and by the men in his unit who consider him to be little more than an incompetent buffoon. In a cynical attempt to get him out of the way, Dingleman is ordered to find a soldier who is behind enemy lines. Nobody expects Dingleman to complete this dangerous mission or to even come back alive. While on the mission, Dingleman's men attempt to undercut his authority and even plot to kill him. But Dingleman surprises everybody. Not only does he successfully complete the mission, he takes charge of the situation and, in a dramatic turnabout, gains the admiration and respect of his unit who, in a rousing finale, hail Dingleman as "the finest soldier in the world," proving that even the most hapless misfit can succeed if given the chance.

This play is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events or locales is entirely coincidental.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

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.

CORPORAL LORENZO – Corporal (E-4), United States Army.

COLLETTE DUPRE – French woman

PRIVATE JONES – Private (E-2), United States Army.

PRIVATE SMITH – Private (E-2), United States Army.

Other U.S. Army soldiers.

Voices (offstage)

This is a play in three acts.

THE TIME:

June 1944

THE PLACE:

Northern France

ACT ONE

Scene One: Prologue

Scene Two: Inside Colonel Baum's tent.

Scene Three: Inside Captain Dingleman's tent.

Scene Four: In front of Captain Dingleman's tent.

Scene Five: The same, one hour later.

Scene Six: A field.

Scene Seven: The same, at another location.

Scene Eight: The same.

ACT TWO

Scene One: A meadow.

Scene Two: Ruins of a building.

Scene Three: Another ruined building.

ACT THREE

Scene One: The same as Act Two, Scene Three.

Scene Two: The same.

Scene Three: Woods.

Scene Four: In front of Colonel Baum's tent.

Scene Five: Inside Colonel Baum's tent.

Scene Six: In front of Colonel Baum's tent.

MUSICAL NUMBERS

**"When You Came Into My Unit"
(Act One, Scene One)**

Colonel Baum

**"Oh Captain, Oh Captain
(My Feet Do Really Hurt)"
(Act One, Scene Four)**

Private Dolerman

**"McNabe"
(Act Two, Scene Three)**

Sergeant Wilko

**"Captain Dingleman"
(Act Three, Scene Six)**

**Colonel Baum and
Company**

Act One

SCENE ONE

VOICE

(Off-stage)

It is June 14, 1944. D-Day plus eight. 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 is the case in every army, along with the heroes comes the misfits, the screw-ups and the malcontents for whom goldbricking and complaining are the order of the day. This is the story about one of those men and what the war did for him.

SCENE TWO

(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 behind the desk is a large man, about forty-five years old, with a spit-and-polish appearance. He projects the appearance of one who I used to giving orders and being in charge. He is dressed in 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 eyeglasses, and dressed in rumpled army battle fatigues which seem to be two sizes too large for him. He wears the rank of captain. The name plate on the desk says "COLONEL BAUM.")

BAUM

Dingleman, I've called you into my tent to talk to you about something very important.

DINGLEMAN

(Nervously)

What would that be, colonel?

BAUM

I want to send you on a special mission.

DINGLEMAN

What kind of mission?

BAUM

I want you to find a corporal named Lorenzo. According to information I received from headquarters in Washington, this Lorenzo has a messed up family that's in some kind of crisis and he's needed back home. So the top brass want Lorenzo to be found and sent back to the states pronto to show the public that the army cares. Now it's known that his unit parachuted five miles due east of here, in the vicinity of a village called Marie St. Navarre. All you have to do is find Lorenzo, tell him the good news that he's going back to the states and then bring him back. Shouldn't take you more than a day.

DINGLEMAN

(Terrified)

But colonel, you're sending me behind enemy lines. I might get killed! 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.**

DINGLEMAN

(Alarmed)

But colonel

BAUM

Don't but colonel me! Dingleman, the fact is that I can't stand you. You are the sorriest 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 colonel, I come from a messed up family too. Why can't I go home?

BAUM

(Annoyed)

Don't trifle with me, Dingleman. I'm in no mood for jokes. I don't question orders from upstairs, and neither will you. This guy Lorenzo has to be found, and I've given you an order. So stop lollygagging around and get moving!

DINGLEMAN

(Hysterical)

Colonel, please don't send me out there! I'll never make back alive!

BAUM

Stop your damn whining! 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, knowing you, is not very likely to 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 you assigned me to a bunch of screw-ups!

BAUM

(Standing, glaring down at the prostrate Dingleman)

Says you. Don't think I have forgotten what you put me through in Rome!

DINGLEMAN

(Still kneeling)

It wasn't my fault!

BAUM

Like heck it wasn't! You expect me to believe that you didn't know that your guys were trafficking in stolen goods right in front of your tent?

DINGLEMAN

(Sobbing)

I thought they were giving out supplies to the company!

BAUM

(Contemptuously)

Giving out supplies? Like those five hundred cartons of cigarettes that that guy Wilko managed to steal from the quartermaster? Or the ten box loads of chocolate that were missing from the mess tent? How dumb could you be?

DINGLEMAN

(Still sobbing)

I didn't know.

BAUM

(Incredulous)

You still insist you didn't know? Well your not knowing cost me my promotion to general, because when they IG found out what was going on, it was me who took the heat, not you!

DINGLEMAN

My men misled me. It was an honest mistake.

BAUM

(Scornfully)

Well, you're going to pay for that honest mistake now. Now get up off that floor and for once start acting like an officer, and not like the sniveling fool you actually are.

DINGLEMAN

(Slowly stands up and then takes a handkerchief out of his pocket and wipes his face)

Colonel ...

BAUM

Shut up! If I hear one more complaint out of 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 THREE

(Inside CAPTAIN DINGLEMAN'S tent. The interior is unchanged from the previous scene, except that the name plate on the desk says Captain Dingleman. DINGLEMAN is sitting behind the desk; he appears harried. On the other side of the desk is a smug-looking man, about thirty years old, dressed in battle fatigues and wearing 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 just happens to be the chairman of the Senate Armed Services 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 own a monkey wrench.

BROOKS

The ways of the United State Army are shrouded in mystery.

DINGLEMAN

Well, so what? The fact of the matter is that you're not going on this mission and I am. So where does that leave me?

BROOKS

Exactly where you are now.

DINGLEMAN

(Voice quivering)

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 you stay back and take all the credit.

DINGLEMAN

Gee, Brooks, I never thought of that.

BROOKS

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 accept 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

Go on the mission.

DINGLEMAN

And when I come back without Lorenzo, then what?

BROOKS

You'll be given a medal.

DINGLEMAN

(Surprised)

A medal?

BROOKS

That's right. A big, shiny medal.

DINGLEMAN

For what?

BROOKS

For your gallant exploits in the field.

DINGLEMAN

I'll get a medal?

BROOKS

Yes, Captain, you will.

DINGLEMAN

(Ecstatic)

Wow! This is great! I can hardly wait to get going. Now, who do I take with me?

BROOKS

Why not take Wilko, McNabe and their mercenary gang of thieves?

DINGLEMAN

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

BROOKS

Easily, Captain. Once you're in the field, they'll be at your 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 that for you.

DINGLEMAN

Now I get it. As soon as Wilko, McNabe and the rest of that motley crew make meet up 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 courageously in a heroic effort to complete the mission. You'll be cited for your bravery, perseverance, 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 into formation?

DINGLEMAN

(Smiling)

By all means, please do.

Curtain.

SCENE FOUR

(Eight men are standing in front of CAPTAIN DINGLEMAN'S tent. They appear to be in their early twenties; all are dressed in Army fatigues and all look slovenly. One man is short and fat, swearing profusely and exuding an offensive odor. Another is tall and gangly and appears to be half-asleep. Another has a smirk on his face and repeatedly turns his head to look around. Another has the look of a brawler. The other four men look like tough guys. None of the men are standing at attention. All appear apathetic. CAPTAIN DINGLEMAN and LIEUTENANT BROOKS stand 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 right men have been chosen for an important assignment – to find a corporal named Lorenzo and return him 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. Okay?

WILKO

Whatever you say, Lieutenant.

DINGLEMAN

(Annoyed)

What's your problem, Wilko?

WILKO

Nothing, sir.

DINGLEMAN

All right then. Now, as I was saying, this mission is important and I expect all of you to cooperate fully. We'll be moving out in an hour, so get your gear together.

BROOKS

Okay, men. You heard the Captain. Get your gear together and report back here in an hour.

WILKO

Wait a minute, sir. What are we supposed to take and how long is this mission supposed to last?

DINGLEMAN

(Terse)

You know what you have to take. We're going only five miles, so stop asking stupid questions.

FAT SOLDIER

(Whining voice)

Captain, sir!

DINGLEMAN

(Impatient)

What is it ... and who are you?

FAT SOLDIER

Private Dolerman, sir.

DINGLEMAN

Well ... what do you want?

DOLERMAN

What of it rains? I don't want to get wet.

DINGLEMAN

(Speaking to Brooks:)

Is this guy joking?

BROOKS

I'm afraid not, sir.

DINGLEMAN

(Mimicking DOLERMAN)

What if it rains? What if it rain?

(Speaking to DOLERMAN, angrily)

If it rains, wear your poncho, you fool! Th(is is the army! Weather is no obstacle to us completing this mission! Any more stupid questions?

(All the men raise their hands. DINGLEMAN angrily storms off the stage.)

BROOKS

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

Curtain.

SCENE FIVE

(One hour later. In front of Captain Dingleman's tent. The men are standing in a sloppy formation, with their gear. They appear even more motley than before. CAPTAIN DINGLEMAN and LIEUTENANT BROOKS are facing the men. Nearby 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.

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?

(DOLERMAN 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

(Starring upward)

On my good Lord. Give me the strength to deal with this sorry excuse for a man.

(Speaking to DOLERMAN, angrily:)

Dolerman, one more complaint out of you and

(Beginning to lose his temper)

... oh forget it!

DOLERMAN

(Still whining)

But Captain! My feet really hurt!

(DINGLEMAN, his composure completely gone, moves toward DOLERMAN with clenched fists. He is restrained by LIEUTENANT BROOKS.)

BROOKS

Captain, calm down.

(As DINGLEMAN gradually calms down, BROOKS releases his grip on DINGLEMAN, then speaks to DOLERMAN:)

Dolerman, shut your face!

(Speaks to the entire unit, tersely:)

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, while I'm in the jeep, you'll be in charge of the men.

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

WILKO

(Dejected)

Okay, guys, you heard the man. Let's move out.

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

SCENE SIX

(WILKO and the rest of the men are in the field. The men are resting.)

MAN WHO LOOKS LIKE A BRAWLER

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. Especially without ammo. Who's this guy Lorenzo anyway?

McNABE

Who's this guy Lorenzo anyway?

WILKO

(Incensed)

How should I know?

McNABE

Calm down, pal. Just asking.

WILKO

Forget it.

McNABE

Thanks.

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

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'd do something that low?

WILKO

I wouldn't put it past him.

McNABE

I should have done him in Rome when I had the chance.

(From offstage comes the noise of men marching. The men become silent. WILKO turns carefully in the direction of the noise, slowly pushes aside the branches of a bush, and appears to be peering at something in the distance.)

WILKO

(Tensely)

Everyone keep down! There's a bunch of Jerries about a hundred yards away from us.

McNABE

I wonder what's happening with 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

(With urgency)

Sarge, I have to go!

WILKO

Hold it in, Dolerman, will you?

DOLERMAN

(Panicking)

Sarge, I can't! I'm gonna dirty my pants!

WILKO

Then go in the bushes, but keep it quiet!

(Speaking to McNABE:)

McNabe go with him.

McNABE

What do you want me to? Powder his behind?

WILKO

(Laughs)

I didn't say commit suicide.

(Serious)

Just make sure he's all right.

McNABE

Okay, I'll do it. But I don't like it.

(McNABE moves to where DOLERMAN is sitting. Both exit the stage. Soon, from offstage, come loud grunting sounds followed by an even louder sigh of relief.)

WILKO

(Speaking in the direction of the noise:)

Shsss!!! Keep it down, will you? You'll give away our position.

(A few moments later, McNABE and DOLERMAN re-enter the stage. DOLERMAN is smiling. McNABE has a look of disgust. McNABE leaves DOLERMAN and rejoins WILKO who is still looking through the bushes.)

McNABE

You owe me, pal.

WILKO

Luckily for us, while you were babysitting Dolerman, the Jerries kept marching the other way. *(Laughs)* But I commend you for the service you rendered for your country.

McNABE

Save it for someone else. I could serve my country better if I had some ammunition.

WILKO

Let me try to get Dingleman on the horn again.
(Speaking into the walkie-talkie)
Wilko to Dingleman, Wilko to Dingleman. Come in!

*(Suddenly DINGLEMAN'S voice comes through the radio.
DINGLEMAN sounds frantic.)*

DINGLEMAN'S VOICE

Wilko, I need your help, over.

WILKO

(Speaking into the walkie-talkie:)
Captain, we need the ammo. Over.

DINGLEMAN'S VOICE

Don't talk to me about ammo. I'm in trouble. I'm surrounded by a group of Jerries. Over.

WILKO

What do you want to do, Captain? Over.

DINGLEMAN'S VOICE

Figure out something. Over.

WILKO

Figure out what, Captain? Over.

DINGLEMAN'S VOICE

A way to save me! Over.

WILKO

What's your position, Captain? Over.

DINGLEMAN'S VOICE

I'm in a clump of trees near a blown up bridge. Over.

WILKO

We passed that position twenty minutes ago, Captain. 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 SEVEN

(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, *(serious)* 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, 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 of.

(McNABE joins the discussion.)

McNABE

You know, Captain, we could have used that 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! I want to fight Germans! Is there anything wrong with that?

WILKO

Hold off with 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

Yeah, and we can go down the tubes too! And I'm not about to let that happen, especially out here. Now, sir, what are you going to do?

(Both WILKO and McNABE stare directly at DINGLEMAN who is sweating and fidgety. 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 handing ammunition – bullets and mortar rounds – to the men.)

WILKO

Now we're in business.

(Speaking to DINGLEMAN)

What are your orders now, Captain?

DINGLEMAN

(Irritated)

Orders?

WILKO

Captain, 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. Why are you looking at me like that?

WILKO

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

(Flustered)

What is it?

WILKO

Do you have a map?

DINGLEMAN

Yes! There's a map in the glove compartment.

*(DINGLEMAN opens up the glove compartment and takes out a map.)
Well, there's the map. (DINGLEMAN gives the map to WILKO who unfolds
the map and places it on the hood of the jeep.)*

WILKO

Let's get our bearing.

DINGLEMAN

What's bearing?

WILKO

(Shaking his head in apparent disbelief)

Our location, Captain.

DINGLEMAN

(Indignant)

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

(Pointing at the map)

There?

WILKO

That's right, Captain. Where'd you say Lorenzo's unit was last seen?

DINGLEMAN

Around Marie St. Navarre.

WILKO

According to this map, Marie St. Navarre is about two miles away. 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)

Now don't start putting words in my mouth. I didn't say that at all. All I'm saying is that the mission comes first.

WILKO

(Skeptical)

Whatever you say, Captain.

Curtain.

SCENE EIGHT

(Stage is dark. Spot light on WILKO and McNABE who are conversing.)

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

What are you driving at?

WILKO

We have to do something about the Captain. This guy is going to get us killed.

McNABE

What do you want to do?

WILKO

Get him out of the way.

McNABE

And how would you do that?

WILKO

I'm not sure. Have any ideas?

McNABE

Why don't we take the jeep and leave him here?

WILKO

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

McNABE

Then maybe we can get him so drunk that he'll pass out. I have some hootch right here (*McNABE points to his back pack*).

WILKO

(Laughs)

Always prepared, aren't you?

(Again serious)

But if we get him drunk, he'll just stagger around and the Jerries will find him. And besides, I wouldn't waste good liquor on that guy.

McNABE

Then maybe we can stick him some place where he won't be found.

WILKO

Like where?

McNABE

Like in a ditch or in a tree?

WILKO

In a tree?

McNABE

Yeah. Why not?

WILKO

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.

McNABE

Maybe we should just shoot him.

WILKO

That 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 attract the attention of the Jerries before we could set up to attack.

McNABE

Then how can we get rid of this guy?

WILKO

I know! Let Dingleman continue his reconnoitering. Jerry will see him and blow him away.

McNABE

(Excited)

Yeah! That's a good idea! And if he doesn't get blown away on the way to town, then maybe we can help it happen on the way back to headquarters!

(Spot light widens to include DINGLEMAN who is still sitting in the jeep. WILKO and McNABE approach DINGLEMAN.)

WILKO

Sir, McNabe and I have a suggestion.

DINGLEMAN

Now what?

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 you 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

Because I signed for the jeep, I have to drive it?

WILKO

That's right, sir. That's according to regulations. Isn't that right, McNabe?

McNABE

That's right, Sergeant.

DINGLEMAN

What regulation?

WILKO

Sir, this is no time to argue. Lives are on the line, we're on an important mission, and we just want to do what's right. And besides, you know how the army is when it comes to paperwork. If you sign for it, it's yours.

DINGLEMAN

(Appears to be in deep thought, then speaks:)

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 for a moment, then speaks:)

Just one moment.

WILKO

Sir?

DINGLEMAN

Who's in charge of this mission?

WILKO

Why, you are, sir.

DINGLEMAN

Then why am I taking orders from you?

WILKO

I'm not giving you orders, Captain, I'm giving you advice. If you want to handle things another way, it's your show, but let me state that a good commander always listens to the advice of his senior NCO, who, in this case, is me. Isn't that right, McNabe?

McNABE

That's right, Sergeant. Out here you're the senior NCO.

WILKO

You see, Captain, Corporal McNabe agrees. So what do you want to do?

DINGLEMAN

(Sounding befuddled)

About what?

WILKO

(Laughs)

This is exactly why you need my advice.

(WILKO and MCNABE turn away from DINGLEMAN as the spot light goes out and stage lights go on, revealing the rest of the men.)

WILKO

(Speaking to the men)

Listen up, men! We'll be moving out soon, in the direction of the village called Marie St. Navarre, which is right down that road

(Points to somewhere in the distance.)

Captain Dingleman will reconnoiter in the jeep. Any questions?

DOLERMAN

Is there a place to eat in town?

WILKO

(Laughs)

I don't know, Dolerman, but I guess we'll find out soon.

DOLERMAN

(Whines)

I hope we get there soon because I'm hungry!

WILKO

(Patiently)

When we get in town, we'll see what's there. Any other questions?

TALL GANGLY SOLDIER

Why is Captain Dingleman doing the reconnoitering?

WILKO

(Surprised)

Hey, Calhoun, you're actually awake!

CALHOUN

Guess so.

WILKO

To answer your question, Captain Dingleman is doing the reconnoitering because he's the one who has the jeep.

CALHOUN

No other reasons?

WILKO

No other reasons.

(Speaking to the men)

Any more questions?

(Silence)

Guess not. Then let's move out!

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

End of Act One.

ACT TWO

SCENE ONE

(A meadow. CAPTAIN DINGLEMAN is sitting in the jeep. Enters CALHOUN.)

CALHOUN

Yo, Captain.

DINGLEMAN

Who are you?

CALHOUN

Private Calhoun, sir. 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
(Shocked)

What!?

CALHOUN
It's the truth, 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
(Angry)
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 TWO

(Inside the ruins of a building. One wall has a hole in it. Enter WILKO, followed by the men, except for DINGLEMAN. The men are tired, wet, and covered with dirt.)

WILKO

All right, guys. Let's rest.

(The men remove 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 wimper, but says nothing.)

(Speaking 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; he is hardly noticed.)

WILKO

(Speaking to DINGLEMAN, sarcastic)

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

Easy, Wilko. I know you don't like me, and frankly, I don't care for you either. Disappointed that I'm still alive?

WILKO

What do you mean about that, Captain?

DINGLEMAN

You know exactly what I mean.

WILKO

No, I don't.

DINGLEMAN

I think you do.

(DINGLEMAN gets up and attempts to punch WILKO on the nose, but is restrained by McNABE.)

McNABE

Cool it, Captain.

DINGLEMAN

(Struggling to free himself from McNABE'S grasp)
Let go of me!

WILKO

(Speaking to McNABE:)

Let go of him. *(McNABE releases DINGLEMAN.)*

(Speaking 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

(Calmer, but still angry, speaking to WILKO:)

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)

The audacity! I'm putting you on report!

WILKO

Captain, why don't you calm down.

DINGLEMAN

(Screams)

This is outrageous!

WILKO

Keep your voice down, Captain.

DINGLEMAN

(Still angry but lowers his voice, speaking 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 offstage comes the sound of a tank. The noise is faint, but is gradually becoming louder and louder.)

DINGLEMAN

(Nervous)

What's that?

WILKO

A tank, sir. Heading right for us.

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

(Speaking to DINGLEMAN:)

Have yourself a drink!

DINGLEMAN

But I don't drink!

McNABE

Well, sir, it's about time you started.

(McNABE gives the bottle to DINGLEMAN. DINGLEMAN puts the bottle down, then picks it up, hesitates for a moment, then puts the bottle to his mouth and takes a quick drink. He grimaces, waits a moment, then takes a much longer drink.)

DINGLEMAN

(Calmer)

Not bad.

(McNABE grabs the bottle from DINGLEMAN and gives 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 U.S. soldiers. In the lead is a soldier of medium height and weight 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)

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.
(Speaking to his men:)
Okay ,men, relax.
(GREEN'S men sit wherever they can find a space. GREEN speaks to WILKO:)
By the way, what's your name?

WILKO
I'm Sergeant Wilko.

GREEN
Are you our back up?

WILKO
Afraid not, pal.

GREEN

(Visibly disappointed)

Then what are you doing here?

WILKO

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

GREEN

Yeah. He's 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 to 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 other side of town. Okay?

WILKO

(Dubious)

Okay.

GREEN

What's the problem?

WILKO

Is this how you got split up with Lorenzo?

GREEN

No. The guy just disappeared and we couldn't go looking for him.

(GREEN points to DINGLEMAN who appears to be sleeping.)

By the way, who's the weird looking guy?

WILKO

Believe it or not, that man is our captain.

GREEN

(Incredulous)

He's your captain?

WILKO

That's right.

GREEN

Is he all right?

WILKO

He's all right. He just had a little too much to drink.

(Speaking to DINGLEMAN:)

Hey, Captain! Wake up!

(McNABE goes over to DINGLEMAN and shakes him several times. Finally, DINGLEMAN suddenly wakes up.)

DINGLEMAN

Whaa, whaa ... what!? What do you want?

WILKO

Captain, we're moving out!

DINGLEMAN

(Becoming more alert)

Moving out? To where?

WILKO

Don't worry, sir. Just follow me.

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

SCENE THREE

(Inside another ruined building. As the stage lights go on, enter WILKO and GREEN, followed by the other men. The sounds of rifle fire and explosions can be heard. The men take cover behind a wall. The last man to enter is DINGLEMAN, who is staggering. DINGLEMAN stops, drops his gear, and leans against a wall, exhausted.)

WILKO

Captain, get down!

(DINGLEMAN looks at WILKO, then crouches down behind the wall, as a bullet strikes the place where DINGLEMAN had been standing.)

GREEN

That was close. You saved that guy's life, and I don't think he even knows it.

WILKO

Pure luck. We better set up here.

GREEN

Okay.

(GREEN points to stage right, speaking to his men:)

Set up the mortar over there.

(GREEN points to a soldier:)

And you, set up the machine gun there. *(GREEN points to a hole in the wall, stage right, a few feet away from the mortar.)*

WILKO

How much ammo do you have?

GREEN

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

WILKO

(Speaking to his men:)

Listen up! We're going to stay here. McNabe, set up the machine gun there (*WILKO points to the top of the wall, stage left*) and put the mortar there (*WILKO points to an area behind the wall, center stage.*)

McNABE

(Speaking to the men:)

Okay, you heard the man! Let's get moving!

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

DINGLEMAN

(Speaking to WILKO:)

I can't take very much more of this.

WILKO

(Approaches DINGLEMAN)

Come on, Captain. Pull yourself together. Even Dolerman isn't complaining.

DOLERMAN

(Whines loudly)

Sarge! My back hurts!

WILKO

I guess I spoke too soon.

(Speaking to DOLERMAN:)

Take aspirin.

DOLERMAN

But, Sarge, I don't have any aspirins!

WILKO

Will someone please massage Dolerman's back?

(Derisive laughter comes from the men.)

DINGLEMAN

(Winces)

Oooohhhh, that Dolerman! Everytime he opens up his mouth I want to smash his face!

WILKO

(Speaking to DINGLEMAN:)

Save that fight for the Jerries, Captain.

DINGLEMAN

(Alarmed)

You mean we may have to actually fight the Jerries?

WILKO

It could come to that.

DINGLEMAN

(Moans)

Oh, no!

WILKO

What's the problem, Captain? After all, we're in a war, and in war soldiers do things like fight.

DINGLEMAN

Must you remind me of that?

WILKO

(Sarcastic)

Wilko to Captain! Wilko to Captain! Come in, please! Are we on the same planet or what?

DINGLEMAN

(Sounding confused)

Wha ... what are you talking about?

WILKO

(Annoyed)

Aw, forget it!

(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 and there is silence. All of the men are peeking over the top of the wall.)

WILKO

Maybe the Jerries are taking a rest.

GREEN

Well, probably not for long. They're probably preparing for a final assault.

WILKO

Think we should try to break out?

GREEN

That would be suicide. The place is crawling with Jerries.
(Pauses, then speaks) Hey, do you have a walkie-talkie?

WILKO

Yeah. Why?

GREEN

Maybe we can call in some air support!

WILKO

Not a bad idea!

(Speaking to CALHOUN:)

Hey, Calhoun, bring that walkie-talkie over here!

(CALHOUN, crouching, brings over a walkie-talkie.)

CALHOUN

Here's the squawk box, Sarge!

(Gives the walkie-talkie to WILKO.)

WILKO

(Speaking into the walkie-talkie:)

Wilko to base! Wilko to base!

DINGLEMAN

(Yells to WILKO:)

What are you doing?

(DINGLEMAN runs over to WILKO and GREEN.)

WILKO

I'm trying to contact the base to request air cover.

DINGLEMAN

(Appalled)

Are you crazy? If you call in air cover, they may bomb us by mistake!

WILKO

Maybe you're right, Captain.

(Hands the walkie-talkie back to CALHOUN.)

GREEN

Now what do we do?

WILKO

Well, we might as well try to enjoy our stay.

(WILKO reaches into his shirt pocket and takes out a deck of cards. Speaking to DINGLEMAN and GREEN:)

You play?

DINGLEMAN

(Emphatic)

No, I don't!

(Annoyed)

What a time to play cards!

WILKO

C'mon, Captain. Don't be such a party-pooper.

GREEN

I'll play. What's your game?

WILKO

Polka. Deuces wild.

GREEN

Fine. Let's play.

McNABE

Hey, Wilko, count me in, too.

(WILKO starts dealing cards to GREEN and McNABE while DINGLEMAN and CALHOUN watch.)

VOICE
(From offstage)

Deal me in, too.

(Enters a young man in his early twenties. He is dressed in U.S. Army uniform. He is accompanied by a young woman, thin, shy, wearing a dress and U.S. Army field jacket.)

GREEN
(Shocked)

Lorenzo!

LORENZO
In person. Bet you're surprised to see me again.

GREEN
I sure am. I thought you were definitely a goner. Where've you been? (*GREEN glances at the woman.*) I think I have an idea of what you've been doing.

LORENZO
It's not what you think, Sarge. Her name is Collette Dupre. I found her in some rubble in the other side of town, where I was hiding after we got split up. She's a little shy and doesn't speak much English, so it was hard getting information out of her. But I couldn't leave her alone.

COLLETTE
(*Speaking English with French accent*)
Monsieur, what is to happen to me?

GREEN
I don't know, Ma'am. That's up to the Captain. But don't worry. You're safe with us.

COLLETTE
I know that, Monsieur. You're brave American soldiers who are liberating France. We are allies.

(WILKO and the other men gather around LORENZO, COLLETTE and GREEN.)

WILKO

(Speaking to LORENZO:)

Who are you? And who's the girl?

LORENZO

Corporal Lorenzo. And *(pointing to COLLETTE)* this is Collette.

WILKO

(Speaking to LORENZO:)

So you're the famous Corporal Lorenzo.

(Speaking to DINGLEMAN who is off to the side and appears to be sleeping:)

Hey, Captain! We found Corporal Lorenzo! And he's with a girl!

LORENZO

Hey, what's going on?

WILKO

We were sent out here to find you and bring you back to headquarters.

LORENZO

(Laughs)

Is this for real?

WILKO

It's for real.

LORENZO

Why me?

WILKO

I'll let the Captain explain.

(Speaking to Dingleman:)

Captain! Wake up!

(Speaking to McNABE:)

Wake up the Captain, will you?

(McNABE goes over to DINGLEMAN.)

McNABE

(Standing over DINGLEMAN)

Wake up! Wake up!

DINGLEMAN

(Awakes, startled)

What is it?

McNABE

We found our man, sir.

(McNABE points to where LORENZO and the others are standing.)

(DINGLEMAN gets up and joins McNABE, LORENZO, WILKO and the others.)

WILKO

(Speaking to DINGLEMAN:)

There he is. *(WILKO points his thumb at LORENZO.)*

DINGLEMAN

And who's the girl? And what is she doing here?

WILKO

Well, it's like this ...

DINGLEMAN

(Interrupting WILKO and pointing to LORENZO)

Let him talk!

LORENZO

Her name is Collette, sir. I found her hiding in the rubble. She was scared and so I took her with me.

DINGLEMAN

How did you locate us?

LORENZO

After I got separated from my unit, I wandered around town, taking care to stay out of sight. I wound up spending the night in a warehouse. Then this morning I saw the Germans come into town. I left the warehouse, wanting to get back to the beach. But there were too many Germans around, so I couldn't get out of the town. Instead, I moved around to avoid being captured. Then I came across this house where I found Collette. I couldn't leave her, so I took her with me. Finally, I saw you guys enter the town, decided to follow you and here I am, sir.

DINGLEMAN

Okay, Lorenzo. We've been sent out here to find you and bring you back to headquarters. From there you will be returned to the states.

LORENZO

(Angry)

Returned to the states?

DINGLEMAN

Yes, Corporal. Returned to the states. Do you have a problem with that?

LORENZO

(Bitterly)

I don't want to return to the states, sir. 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 for another week, I would have wound up in jail ... or worse.

DINGLEMAN

(Incredulous)

So you'd rather stay here?

LORENZO

That's right, sir.

WILKO

So we came out here for nothing?

DINGLEMAN

(Beginning to lose his temper, speaking to WILKO:)

You be quiet!

(Speaking tersely to LORENZO:)

You have no choice in this matter, young man. These orders come from Washington. So as soon as we can, we're taking you back to headquarters. Is that clear?

LORENZO

(Pleading)

But sir ...

DINGLEMAN

I'm not here to debate with you!

LORENZO

(Dejected)

Yes sir.

DINGLEMAN

Sergeant Wilko!

WILKO

Yes, Captain.

DINGLEMAN

(Assertively)

If Corporal Lorenzo makes any attempt to resist returning to headquarters, you have my full permission to use whatever means necessary to enforce compliance with my orders. Is that clear?

WILKO

Yes, Captain.

GREEN

Captain, I protest. Lorenzo is still in my unit and I'm still responsible for him.

DINGLEMAN

(Speaking to WILKO:)

Is that true?

WILKO

Could be.

DINGLEMAN

(Flustered)

What should I do?

WILKO

Remember what I told you about paperwork?

DINGLEMAN

Go on!

WILKO

Well, sir, why don't you give Green something in writing?

DINGLEMAN

Can I do that?

WILKO

Of course, sir. You're in command.

DINGLEMAN

(Rhetorically)

Yes, I am, aren't I?

WILKO

Yes you are, sir.

DINGLEMAN

Okay, then! Now, does anyone here have a pen and paper?

WILKO

It just so happens that I have a pen and paper in my pocket.

(WILKO reaches into his pants pocket and takes out a pen and paper and hands it to DINGLEMAN.)

Here you go, Captain.

DINGLEMAN

What are you doing out here with a pen and paper?

WILKO

I used to be a company clerk.

DINGLEMAN

You were a company clerk? I find that hard to believe.

WILKO

(Laughs)

I do too, sir.

DINGLEMAN

Well, so much for that. Now ... what should I write?

WILKO

Write this. Are you ready?

(DINGLEMAN sits on the ground, takes out a pencil and note pad from his pants pocket and starts writing as WILKO dictates:)

I, Captain Dingleman of the United States Army, do hereby assume full authority over Corporal Lorenzo and hereby relieve Sergeant Green of said authority. I take this action pursuant to orders promulgated from higher command. Signed, Captain Dingleman.

DINGLEMAN

(Looking up at WILKO)

Very impressive, Wilko.

McNABE

Hey, Wilko, where'd you pick up all those fancy college words?

WILKO

It's a long story, pal. I'll save it for another day.

McNABE

Sometimes you think you know somebody when you really don't.

WILKO

It works out like that sometimes, doesn't it.

DINGLEMAN

(Interrupts)

Could somebody please help me up?

(WILKO and McNABE grab DINGLEMAN by the arms and pull him up.)

DINGLEMAN

Thank you.

(Hands the letter to GREEN)

Okay, Sergeant, I hereby relieve you of command over Lorenzo.

GREEN

Okay, Captain. You're the boss.

DINGLEMAN

(Giggles)

I certainly am. Isn't it wonderful?

WILKO

(Sarcastic)

Yes, sir, it sure is. And with you in command, everything should work out just fine.

DINGLEMAN

That's right, Wilko. Now, let's get out of here.

WILKO

That might be easier said than done, Captain.

DINGLEMAN

(Alarmed:)

What are you talking about?

WILKO

Captain, have you forgotten that we're behind enemy lines and that we're surrounded by Germans?

DINGLEMAN

(Stroking his chin with his hand)

Mmm... we are. So what are we going to do now?

WILKO

You're in command, Captain. It's up to you.

DINGLEMAN

(Panicking)

It's up to me? I just want to get out of here! What do you suggest?

GREEN

(Incredulous)

Who's in charge here?

WILKO

(Speaking to GREEN:)

Mind your own business, will you? This is company business and no concern of yours.

GREEN

This is my business. First you show up uninvited, then you take away one of my men, and now you're getting on my case! Why don't you just shut your face!

WILKO

Maybe I'll shut your face!

(WILKO and GREEN are glaring at each other as the tension mounts.)

DINGLEMAN

(Yelling at WILKO and GREEN:)

You two guys! Stop it! This is no time for us to be fighting each other. So back off, back down, and back up! Now!

(Looking at the other men:)

And that goes for all you other guys, too!

(WILKO and GREEN slowly back away from each other.)

McNABE

(Speaking to WILKO:)

Take it easy, pal.

LORENZO

(Speaking to GREEN:)

Are you okay, Sarge?

(Both WILKO and GREEN slowly nod their heads as the curtain falls.)

End of Act Two.

ACT THREE

SCENE ONE

(Same as in the previous act. Stage is dark. Then the spotlight shines on DINGLEMAN and WILKO.)

DINGLEMAN

(Speaking to WILKO:)

Listen, Wilko, I want to get out of here. Now, are you going to help me or am I going to have the same problem with you as I had with Lorenzo?

WILKO

What about Green and his guys?

DINGLEMAN

They're not my concern. I didn't come out here to find them. Okay! And besides, you don't seem to be too fond of Green.

WILKO

I'm not, but that still doesn't mean I want to abandon the guy.

DINGLEMAN

(Angrily)

What do you mean abandon?

WILKO

You know what I mean! If we leave these guys, they're not going to make it!

DINGLEMAN

Let me repeat myself!

(Speaking staccato:)

We...came...here...to...find...a...man.

(Normal voice:)

These were my orders. I did not come out here to do battle with the Germans. Do you comprehend that?

WILKO

Hold on, Captain.

DINGLEMAN

Don't you tell me to hold on! In fact, I'm beginning to lose my patience with you! So what I want to know is this: are you going to help me out, or what?

WILKO

Okay, Captain, I'll help you.

DINGLEMAN

Good! Now let's get down to business. How do we get out of here?

WILKO

We have two problems. First, we're surrounded and second, we have a civilian who could slow us up, especially if we have to move fast. Now, regarding the second problem, I want to talk to her, to find out a little more about her.

(WILKO leaves DINGLEMAN and goes over to COLLETTE who is sitting with LORENZO and other soldiers on the other side of the stage.)

Now, young lady, do you speak English?

COLLETTE

Some.

WILKO

Where did you learn English?

COLLETTE

In high school, and from seeing lots of American movies.

WILKO

Okay. Now who exactly are you?

COLLETTE

I do not know what you mean.

WILKO

Don't play games with me! What were you doing in this town?

COLLETTE

This is my home.

WILKO

So where is your family?

COLLETTE

(Starts to cry)

Oh, Monsieur, the Germans took my mother and father away. They were accused of being in the resistance.

WILKO

Were they?

COLLETTE

No, Monsieur, they weren't. But I was. And they refused to give me away when the Gestapo came to interrogate me. I left my home minutes before they arrived.

WILKO

What kind of work did you do for the resistance?

COLLETTE

I infiltrated German headquarters.

WILKO

How did you manage to do that?

COLLETTE

I became, how do you say it, friendly, with the German officers.

WILKO

What do you mean by friendly?

COLLETTE

Must I explain, Monsieur?

WILKO

Yes, you must explain, because we have no idea who you are.

COLLETTE

I became close with them.

WILKO

You were playing a very dangerous game. How do we know you're not playing that game now? How do we know that you're not a spy for the Germans?

COLLETTE

(Hysterical)

Monsieur, I slept with the Germans but I am not a collaborator. I worked for the resistance. They knew what I was doing. They understood. My family and I had to survive somehow. All I had was my looks.

WILKO

How do we know we can trust you?

(Speaking to Lorenzo:)

Did she have any ID? Was she searched?

LORENZO

No to both questions.

WILKO

(Angry)

You didn't search her? You brought a civilian into our camp without searching her?

LORENZO

She had nothing to search?

WILKO

Did you look under her clothing?

LORENZO

Are you joking, Sergeant?

WILKO

No, I am not joking! Search her!

LORENZO

I refuse, and you can court-martial me if you want.

WILKO

Then I'll search her.

(WILKO grabs COLLETTE and starts frisking her.)

COLLETTE

(Screams)

Monsieur, what are you doing? Stop it!

(DINGLEMAN rushes over to investigate the commotion.)

DINGLEMAN

(Speaking to WILKO:)

I heard screaming. What's going on here?

(WILKO stops frisking COLLETTE and faces DINGLEMAN.)

WILKO

Nothing, Captain. Just conducting a body search.

(WILKO resumes frisking COLLETTE, who tries to pull away.)

DINGLEMAN

(Shouting to WILKO:)

Stop it! You've done enough! Leave her alone!

WILKO

(Stops frisking COLLETTE and faces DINGLEMAN):

Search completed, Captain. No contraband found.

DINGLEMAN

(Speaking to LORENZO:)

Take care of the girl, and make sure you treat her right.

LORENZO

Yes, sir.

(LORENZO escorts the now disheveled and distraught COLLETTE to the other side of the stage where LORENZO puts his arm around her and tries to comfort her.)

DINGLEMAN

(Speaking to WILKO:)

Was it really necessary to search that girl?

WILKO

It was, Captain.

DINGLEMAN

Did you have to humiliate her?

WILKO

She humiliated herself by becoming a Nazi slut, sir.

DINGLEMAN

That may be so, but that doesn't mean we have to rough her up. Do you understand?

WILKO

Yes, sir.

DINGLEMAN

Now, what are we going to do about getting out of here?

WILKO

First we have to find out where the Jerries are.

DINGLEMAN

Maybe that Collette girl knows where they are.

WILKO

Want me to ask her, captain? *(Sarcastic)* I promise I'll be nice.

DINGLEMAN

Wilko, you're looking for trouble, aren't you?

WILKO

(Smirking)

I'm just trying to be helpful, Captain.

DINGLEMAN

(Tersely)

Get that silly grin off your face! I'll talk with her. I just hope that she's in the mood to talk.

(DINGLEMAN goes over to COLLETTE who is sitting next to Lorenzo.)

DINGLEMAN

(Still standing, gently speaks to COLLETTE:)

Young lady, one more question.

COLLETTE

(Still whimpering, looks up at DINGLEMAN)

Yes, Monsieur?

DINGLEMAN

Where are the Germans?

COLLETTE

I don't know, Monsieur.

DINGLEMAN

Young lady, we need to know.

COLLETTE

(Adamant)

But I don't know, Monsieur.

DINGLEMAN

(Still calm)

You really don't know?

LORENZO

Captain, please. She is exhausted.

DINGLEMAN

(Speaking to LORENZO:)

We're all exhausted, Corporal.

(More insistent, speaking to COLLETTE:)

Once again, where are the Germans?

COLLETTE

(Starts crying again)

I don't know.

DINGLEMAN

Okay.

(Crosses the stage and rejoins WILKO)

She doesn't know where the Germans are.

WILKO

That's ridiculous, Captain. She slept with them.

DINGLEMAN

What do you want me to do? Force her to talk?

WILKO

Maybe that's what we'll have to do, sir.

DINGLEMAN

(Indignant)

That is absolutely out of the question. Is that clear?

WILKO

Okay, Captain. You're in charge. I guess we'll just have to wait until the Jerries make their move first, and then we'll make our move. It's either that or moving out now and risk being ambushed.

DINGLEMAN

Neither choice is good. But no matter what, we will survive and this mission will not fail. Do you hear me?

WILKO

I hear you, Captain. I just hope you know what you're doing.

DINGLEMAN

And I hope you're giving me good advice, because if you're not, then it's going to be hard on all of us. But in the meantime, stay alert, obey my orders and put away that attitude of yours.

(Curtain falls.)

SCENE TWO

(Scene is unchanged from previous act. Entire stage is lit. DINGLEMAN is at stage left, peering through a hole in the wall. WILKO and McNABE are at center stage. LORENZO is with COLLETTE.)

McNABE

What's gotten into Dingleman?

WILKO

What are you talking about?

McNABE

One moment the guy is a bumbling jerk, the next moment he's barking out orders.

WILKO

I can't figure it either. But to me he's still a noisy jerk.

McNABE

So what do we do now?

WILKO

(Annoyed)

Everybody keeps asking me what to do!

McNABE

What's gotten into you?

WILKO

Hey, McNabe, I'm not in charge.

McNABE

Maybe you're not the captain, but you're the man. Everybody knows it, including Dingleman. He won't do anything without first clearing it with you.

WILKO

Whatever you say, pal. I'm not going to argue with you.

(Suddenly, sounds of explosions and bullets ricocheting. Everybody crouches down, on the ground or behind the wall.)

GREEN

(Speaking to WILKO and MCNABE:)

Here they come!

(WILKO goes to one of the machine guns and starts firing. Soon everyone is firing, except DINGLEMAN.)

DINGLEMAN

(Yells to WILKO:)

I guess we know where the Germans are now!

WILKO

(Excited)

Here comes that tank! Fire that mortar!

(One of the men fire a mortar.)

GREEN

(Peering through the hole in the wall)

It missed!

(Panicking)

They're not stopping! Oh, no!

(DINGLEMAN runs over to GREEN, who, paralyzed with fear, drops his rifle. DINGLEMAN grabs GREEN'S rifle and starts firing. WILKO looks at DINGLEMAN, amazed. As the cacophony of noise becomes louder and louder, the curtain falls.)

SCENE THREE

(Woods. Some of the men, along with DINGLEMAN, WILKO, LRENZO, and COLLETTE, are straggling in. They are exhausted. Other men, including DOLERMAN and GREEN, are missing. WILKO, DOLERMAN, LORENZO and COLLETTE sit on a fallen tree, center stage.)

WILKO

We gotta go back and help Green, and also find McNabe's body.

DINGLEMAN

What happened to McNabe?

WILKO

(Sadly)

McNabe bought it.

DINGLEMAN

(Surprised)

Bought it? When?

WILKO

As we were pulling back. I saw him get it.

LORENZO

(Speaking to WILKO:)

Was he a close pal?

WILKO

(Fighting back tears)

Yes, he was.

(WILKO 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 pal.
McNabe, McNabe,
McNabe.

McNabe, McNabe,
he fought so hard today,
and 'though sometimes
he was a rogue,
he went into 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.

LORENZO

That's tough, Wilko.

WILKO

(Speaking to LORENZO:)

Thanks.

(Speaking to DINGLEMAN:)

So, what do you say, Captain?

DINGLEMAN

The answer is no.

WILKO

C'mon, Captain. It's our duty to help him.

DINGLEMAN

(Pointing to WILKO)

Listen, Wilko, don't tell me about our duty. We we're lucky to get out of there alive. Our orders are to return to headquarters with Lorenzo.

WILKO

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

DINGLEMAN

Fight! With what? We don't have a tank. We don't have artillery. Therefore, if we go back into the town, we'll be committing suicide, and my orders do not include committing suicide!

WILKO

Look, Captain, some of our men are still back there and ...

DINGLEMAN

(Sharply interrupting WILKO)

Be quiet, Sergeant! I've had enough of your back talk! My orders are to bring Lorenzo back to headquarters, and not to be a hero! Do you read me?

WILKO

I read you loud and clear, Captain, but I still think you're wrong.

DINGLEMAN

(Indignant)

Your insolence is boundless! You're not paid to think about what's right or wrong. That's my job!

(Speaking to LORENZO:)

You get that, corporal?

LORENZO

Yes, sir.

WILKO

Well, Captain, I'm going back, whether you like it or not, and there's nothing you can do about it.

(WILKO gets up and begins to walk away.)

DINGLEMAN

(Jumps to his feet and screams:)

Come back here! Now! What you're doing is desertion! You can be shot for that!

WILKO

(Stops, turns around, faces DINGLEMAN, and speaks derisively):
Who's gonna shoot me? You?

DINGLEMAN

(Enraged, shouts:)

Maybe I will!

(DINGLEMAN picks up his rifle. WILKO keeps his rifle slung over his shoulder.)

WILKO

(With contempt) Yeah. Right.

DINGLEMAN

(Trying to regain his composure, but still angry)

Don't test me, Wilko! Now I am ordering you to take Lorenzo back to headquarters.

WILKO

Captain, to tell you the truth, I don't think you're fit to command.

DINGLEMAN

(Enraged, shouts:)

What are you talking about? I'm your captain! How dare you talk to me like that?

WILKO

(Sneering)

You're nothing but a screw up.

DINGLEMAN

(Still enraged, shouts:)

Oh really? Well, you're nothing but a thief, con artist, and a troublemaker! Because of you I'm in hot water with the old man!

WILKO

(Laughs)

Well, just because you're an idiot doesn't mean I have to be one too.

DINGLEMAN

(Indignant)

So now you're calling me an idiot.

WILKO

(With contempt)

That's right. And a coward, too.

DINGLEMAN

Such impertinence! You need to be taught discipline and I'm gonna be your teacher!

(DINGLEMAN places a bullet in the chamber of his rifle.)

WILKO

So you are going to shoot me?

DINGLEMAN

(Shaking his head)

You're hopeless.

WILKO

And you're incompetent.

DINGLEMAN

And you're a fool.

WILKO

Listen Captain. I don't want to argue with you anymore. I just want to fight. If you want to take Lorenzo back to headquarters, then do it yourself. And if you want to shoot me, go right ahead. Shoot me now. Otherwise, I'm leaving.

DINGLEMAN

I'm ordering you one more time to return Lorenzo to headquarters. I repeat, I'm ordering you to do it.

WILKO

And once again, Captain, I refuse. I cannot abandon the men in town. And besides, I couldn't care less about Lorenzo. He's nobody to me and I don't want to risk my life doing something just to make you look good.

(Stage goes dark. Spot light on DINGLEMAN and WILKO, creating the impression that they are having a private conversation.)

DINGLEMAN

(Putting down his rifle)

Wilko, this is not Rome.

WILKO

(Perplexed)

What are you talking about?

DINGLEMAN

I'm talking about Rome, Wilko. Rome! After your thievery was uncovered, I went to the Colonel Baum and begged him not to court martial you.

WILKO

(Unimpressed)

Who asked you to do that?

DINGLEMAN

Nobody. But despite your rotten personality, I thought you had the potential to be a leader if you were given another chance. So I took the blame for you. I guess I was wrong to help you.

WILKO

Guess you were, Captain. After hearing this, I can only conclude that you're a bigger idiot than I thought. If a gullible clown like you can be a captain, then I should be a general.

DINGLEMAN

(Trying to remain calm)

Listen, Wilko. This debate is getting us nowhere. I'm willing to forget that this conversation ever took place if you just obey my orders.

WILKO

I don't care what you say, Captain. I'm going back to that town.

DINGLEMAN

And for the last time I'm ordering you to return Lorenzo to headquarters.

WILKO

No way, Captain.

(Spotlight goes out. Entire stage again in lights revealing COLLETTE and the men.)

DINGLEMAN

Then in that case I'm placing you under arrest.

(With a loud noise DINGLEMAN locks the chamber of his rifle.)

WILKO

(Resigned)

I guess you mean business, Captain.

DINGLEMAN

Yes I do.

WILKO

It's your call, Captain.

DINGLEMAN

(Pauses for a moment, then speaks:)

I'm ordering you to put down your rifle.

WILKO

(Unslings his rifle from his shoulder)

Okay, Captain. Now what?

DINGLEMAN

Put the rifle on the ground!

(WILKO hesitates for a moment, then slowly complies.)

(DINGLEMAN points to two men:)

You and you, come over here.

(The two men get up and go over to DINGLEMAN and salute. One man is tall, the other is short. DINGLEMAN returns their salutes:)

What are your names?

TALL SOLDIER

Private Jones, Sir!

SHORT SOLDIER

Private Smith, Sir!

DINGLEMAN

(Speaking to both men:)

I'm placing Sergeant Wilko under arrest. You will guard him until we get back to headquarters. Is that clear?

PRIVATE JONES

I refuse to obey your order, sir.

DINGLEMAN

(Incensed)

Do what I say! Now!

PRIVATE SMITH

Sir, with all due respect, we want to go back and help out the other guys.

DINGLEMAN

(Angry)

This is unbelievable! Nobody wants to obey my orders!

(Speaking to SMITH and JONES:)

I'll deal with you two when we get back to headquarters.

(JONES is about to say something, but SMITH signals with his hand not to talk. Both men return to where they had been sitting. Meanwhile, DINGLEMAN is pacing back and forth and is fidgeting with his rifle, then speaks:)

DINGLEMAN

(Speaking to SMITH and JONES:)

That's right. Don't say anything.

(Speaking to the entire company:)

So, it looks like all of you are against me. And we're supposed to be fighting on same side. Okay, if that's the way you want it ...

(DINGLEMAN grabs his rifle.)

LORENZO

(Stepping forward, with COLLETTE at his side, speaks to DINGLEMAN:)

Sir, I'll guard Wilko.

DINGLEMAN

(Stops pacing, surprised but skeptical)

Okay, Corporal Lorenzo. You heard my orders.

(LORENZO picks up his rifle and points it at WILKO. WILKO begins walking away.)

LORENZO

Wilko! Halt!

(WILKO keeps walking. LORENZO fires a shot over WILKO'S head. Everyone on the stage cringe. WILKO turns around, puts his hand inside his shirt and pulls out a pistol.)

WILKO

I wouldn't do that again.

LORENZO

Well, don't disobey me again. And put down that gun!

(LORENZO points his rifle directly at WILKO.)

WILKO

You and the captain are a couple of jokers. Nobody can stop me.

DINGLEMAN

(Speaking to WILKO:)

Wilko, put down that gun!

WILKO *(Laughs)*

Who's gonna make me! The dame?

DINGLEMAN

(Picking up his rifle and aiming it directly at WILKO)

I'm going to count to five. If you don't put down that gun, I'll blow you head off. One ... two ... three ... four ...

WILKO

(WILKO drops the pistol)

Okay, captain, you win.

(LORENZO runs over to WILKO, kicks the pistol away and ties WILKO'S hands behind his back with a belt.)

LORENZO

(Speaking to DINGLEMAN:)

Prisoner is secure, Sir.

DINGLEMAN

(Puts down his rifle, speaks to the entire company:)

Okay, men, let's return to base.

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

SCENE FOUR

(In front of COLONEL BAUM'S tent. Enter the men, led by DINGLEMAN and followed by LORENZO, COLLETTE and WILKO. Everyone comes to a halt. COLONEL BAUM comes out of the tent.)

BAUM

What's all this racket?

(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

(Speaking to LORENZO:)

So, you're Corporal Lorenzo?

LORENZO

(Speaking to BAUM:)

Yes, sir!

BAUM

(Speaking to DINGLEMAN)

Excellent job, Dingleman. You are to be complimented. Now, who is the young lady with you?

DINGLEMAN

She is a civilian who requested our protection, sir. I also have a soldier who I had to place under arrest for insubordination and attempting to sabotage the mission.

BAUM

(Impressed)

Really? Who did you arrest?

DINGLEMAN

Sergeant Wilko, sir.

BAUM

(Surprised)

You arrested Sergeant Wilko?

DINGLEMAN

Yes, sir. I wish to turn over the prisoner to you.

(Pauses for a moment, then speaks:)

Oh yes! Also, two other soldiers who had disobeyed orders.

(Speaking to SMITH and JONES:)

Privates Smith and Jones, front and center! *(SMITH and JONES come forward as ordered. DINGLEMAN speaks to Baum:)* Sir, I'm charging these two soldiers with insubordination and conduct disrespectful to an officer.

BAUM

(Speaking to DINGLEMAN:)

These are serious charges.

(Speaking to WILKO:)

What's this all about?

WILKO

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

BAUM

(Sarcastic)

You were arrested for nothing?

WILKO

Looks like it, sir.

BAUM

I'll look into this matter later. In the meantime, I order that the three of you be placed in the stockade.

DINGLEMAN

(Speaking to LORENZO:)

You heard the Colonel! Take these prisoners to the stockade!

LORENZO

Yes, sir!

DINGLEMAN

(Speaking to SMITH and JONES:)

Put down your rifles, now!

(SMITH and JONES obey.)

Now place your hands up in the air!

(SMITH complies; JONES hesitates)

I said, put your hands up, now!

(Speaking to LORENZO:)

Corporal Lorenzo, if this man does not obey in five seconds, shoot him.

(LORENZO points his rifle directly at JONES; DINGLEMAN starts counting) Five ... four ... three JONES puts his hands up in the air.)

LORENZO

(Speaking to BAUM:)

Where is the stockade, sir?

BAUM

(Pointing off stage)

It's down that road, about a half a mile away.

LORENZO

Thank you, sir.

BAUM

By the way, how does 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 the 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 second, respect.

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 admiration.

BAUM

In what way?

LORENZO

Captain Dingleman never backed down. He had a job to do and he did it, and nothing was going to stop him. 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

By what he said, sir.

BAUM

What did he say?

LORENZO

He said he didn't care about me. After hearing that, there was no way I'd want to be on the same battlefield with this guy.

(WILKO smirks.)

BAUM

Well, Lorenzo, you'll be going home.

DINGLEMAN

(Speaking to BAUM:)

Sir, I wish to report that in completing this mission, we lost several men.

(Speaking to WILKO:)

What ever happened to Private 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

Go on.

WILKO

Dolerman started talking to the Jerries in German.

DINGLEMAN

Dolerman spoke German?

WILKO

Apparently he did, sir.

DINGLEMAN

And you knew this?

WILKO

Yes, sir, I knew it but I didn't think it was important.

BAUM

(Speaking to WILKO:)

You fool! We could have used Dolerman for intelligence.

DINGLEMAN

(Speaking to BAUM:)

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.

(Speaking to LORENZO:)

Take your prisoners to the stockade, and take your lady friend to G-3, which is right next to the stockade.

LORENZO

Yes, sir.

(Speaking to the prisoners:)

Left face! Forward march!

(Speaking to COLLETTE:)

Let's go.

(COLLETTE and LORENZO embrace. As LORENZO and the others leave the stage the curtain falls.)

SCENE FIVE

(Inside COLONEL BAUM'S tent. DINGLEMAN and BAUM are sitting, BAUM behind his desk and DINGLEMAN in front of the desk.)

DINGLEMAN

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

(Defensive)

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

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

BAUM

Yes, I knew that that was 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 your ability to command.

DINGLEMAN

Well, I proved you wrong. In fact, I proved everybody wrong. I thought I was a screw up, so I acted like a screw up. But out in the field I couldn't afford to 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, finding Lorenzo wasn't my idea. That came from Washington.

DINGLEMAN

But it was you who put my life on the line, and if I had been killed, 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 put it aside. While I was out in the field I said to myself that I was going to complete 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. Furthermore, I learned something. I don't have to be your doormat, or anyone's doormat.

BAUM

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

DINGLEMAN

I deserved it?

BAUM

You sure did. You were such a screw up. But I gave you a chance to redeem yourself, and you came through. So instead of arguing with me, you ought to be thanking me.

DINGLEMAN

Are you joking, sir, or what? 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

Colonel, you didn't do me any favor. 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 do a number on me again, I'll fix you but good!

BAUM

(*Shocked*)

Are you threatening me?

DINGLEMAN

Not a threat, a promise.

BAUM

(Indignant)

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 quibble with me, sir. It's 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 SIX

(In front of COLONEL BAUM'S tent. Soldiers are standing in formation. In front of the soldiers is COLONEL BAUM who is standing on a pedestal.)

BAUM

(Speaking to the entire company:)

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 a manner that brings credit to the United States Army. Now, without further ado, I present to you Captain Dingleman, American hero!

(Enter DINGLEMAN who comes to a halt 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 award you the U.S. Army's medal of valor and convey to you the hearty congratulations from higher command.

(DINGLEMAN steps forward and BAUM pins the medal on DINGLEMAN'S shirt. DINGLEMAN steps back and salutes. BAUM returns the salute.)

BAUM

And as a further tribute to you ...

(BAUM turns and speaks to the company:)

Men, form up!

(The company forms into a choir and sings:)

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!

ENTIRE COMPANY

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.