

ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT

written by

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Based on the novel

by Erich Maria Remarque

1 EXT. WOODS, FRANCE 1917 - DAWN 1

Softly LAPPING WATER. A creek running over roots, grass swaying in the stream. Ferns softly RUSTLE in the wind.

THUMP. A pine cone falls on the ground. Another one. And another one

A peaceful, mild spring morning. Peaceful. LOW RUMBLE OF THUNDER in the distance. It's very quiet. Too quiet.

INTERCUT WITH:

2 INT. FOX DEN - DAY 2

A narrow shaft of light falls into the fox den, from the entrance of the tunnel. The dirt is damp. And a soft noise.

SCRATCHING. SMACKING. SOFT WHIMPERS.

The vixen feeds her young, who greedily suckle at her teats. The twigs and berries beside them.

Then, we hear it again. A distant RUMBLE OF THUNDER, followed by a noticeable TREMOR. A little dirt trickles from the ceiling. Light falls on the young family, like a painting of the Madonna.

The vixen ignores it, wholly absorbed by her litter. She licks their fur and lets them suckle. It's soft and fuzzy and full of love...

... when suddenly: A SHORT, SHARP, SHRILL tone.

BOOOOM! The world explodes. Everything goes BLACK. The fox den has ceased to exist.

3 EXT. LATIERRE / TRENCH - DAY 3

A trench -- about 8 feet deep. Walls of earth and clay. The bottom is mud and dirt.

THUMP. THUMP. THUMP. THUMP. THUMP.

Deafening NOISE. A hellish barrage of gunfire. Metal shrapnel perforates the wood posts like butter.

Hundreds of shells explode around the GERMAN SOLDIERS, hurling piles of dirt into the air. Ruthless. Destructive. Random.

We pan over dozens of bodies: Young SOLDIERS lying in the dirt, hugging the walls of the trench.

They hope against hope they will survive the next seconds. That's all it's ever about: Surviving the next seconds.

(CONTINUED)

BOOM! A DIRECT HIT.

The trench explodes in a cloud of dirt, smoke and death.

Bodies fly through the air, landing in the reeking water. Over the SCREAMS of the wounded -- amid a crescendo of noise and chaos -- we hear barked orders across the front lines:

SERGEANT (O.S.)
ATTACK... ATTACK!

ANGLE ON the frightened face of a SOLDIER: HEINRICH GERBER -- no older than 18. His hands clutch a rifle, his knuckles stand out white as a ghost, his bayonet is mounted.

The SERGEANT appears, drags Gerber to the ladder.

SERGEANT (CONT'D)
Come on, Heinrich!!! Let's go!

BOOM! A shell hits the trench. Soldiers hurry by.

SERGEANT (CONT'D)
On my orders. Charge!!!

A shrill WHISTLE and WAR CRY arises along the front line. A young 16-YEAR-OLD RECRUIT, looks at him, trembling... Heinrich nods at him.

HEINRICH GERBER
It'll be OK!

Before we can catch our breath, HEINRICH climbs up the ladder behind the RECRUIT, out of the German trench, right into the MG barrage whipping at them from the French lines.

RAT TAT TAT TAT TAT!

The RECRUIT and a dozen other men are hit and hurled back into the trench like dominos.

Heinrich stands at the top of the ladder. Trembling, he turns around to see the young RECRUIT bleeding to death in the mud, shot in the head.

SOLDIERS (O.S.)
Keep going!

SERGEANT
Go on, Gerber. Go!

The next wave of Soldiers throngs up from below, forcing Heinrich up the ladder, onto the the roiling battlefield. The Sergeant drives him onward.

SERGEANT (CONT'D)
Go, go, go!

(CONTINUED)

Heinrich fights his way through the heavy mud which sucks at his boots and slows him down. Past the tentacles of barbed wire, in which disfigured bodies hang.

BOOM! A shell hits a few yards off, hurling dirt and mud over us. Heinrich keeps on running.

He staggers and runs, bowing low, shitting bricks. He fights against overwhelming nausea as shells blow new craters around us. A No Man's Land of death and madness, pocked with craters like the moon.

Heinrich runs, ducking low, his bayonet in his hand, searching for cover where there is none, as his FELLOW SOLDIERS are fall in a hail of bullets.

He ducks behind a blasted tree stump, tries to catch his breath.

SERGEANT (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Gerber... Gerber!

The Sergeant's voice reaches us weakly through the BATTLE NOISES... The NCO lies in the mud, hit, reaching his arms out toward us, imploringly.

Heinrich crawls back toward him.

He reaches his hand out to him and drags him along, but then MG FIRE riddles the ground, first the tree stump and then hits the wounded Sergeant in the cheek.

Blood spatters in Heinrich's face. He fights back his panic, while there's a WHISTLE behind him, as the second wave of GERMAN SOLDIERS charges out of the trench.

BANG. BANG. BANG. CLICK. Heinrich empties his clip and drops his bayonet. He desperately grabs a trench shovel, summoning all his courage.

He charges at the enemy trench, SCREAMING, from where HUNDREDS OF FRENCHMEN charge at us with bayonets out.

Heinrich raises his shovel, PANTING. Unleashes a primeval WAR CRY. Like a wild animal.

The enemy comes closer and closer. Then Heinrich STRIKES. Right at his enemy's neck.

WHACK!

SMASH TO BLACK:

ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT

- 4 EXT. BEHIND GERMAN LINES / MASS GRAVE - DUSK 4
- An open-bed truck on the edge of a makeshift cemetery, SOLDIERS are unloading the bodies of German recruits. One of them is Heinrich Gerber, a bloody wound in his chest.
- They unbutton his uniform jacket and toss his uniform onto the pile. The boots land on another pile.
- Coffins of a mass grave piled up in BG.
- 5 EXT. BEHIND GERMAN LINES / TRAIN TRACKS - DAY 5
- A freight train along a railroad embankment. The dead men's uniforms in bundles in a boxcar. WOUNDED SOLDIERS are loaded on beside them.
- 6 EXT. TEXTILE FACTORY, GERMANY - DAY 6
- An open-bed truck, piled high with military uniforms, pulls up outside a factory. Bundles of dirty uniforms are tossed on a hand cart.
- 7 INT. TEXTILE FACTORY WASH ROOM, GERMANY - DAY 7
- A load of uniforms is dumped into a huge trough full of hot soapy water. The suds turn red. A strong WOMAN stirs the vat.
- 8 INT. TEXTILE FACTORY DRYING ROOM, GERMANY - DAY 8
- A pile of half-dry, washed uniforms hang from a drying line.
- Water drips into puddles beneath them. A WASHERWOMAN comes and collects the uniforms.
- 9 INT. TEXTILE FACTORY HALL, GERMANY - DAY 9
- ...which are wheeled down the hall in a hand cart.
- 10 INT. TEXTILE FACTORY, GERMANY - DAY 10
- ...into a room with SEAMSTRESSES at sewing machines.
- A young SEAMSTRESS (14) takes a pile of clothes and returns to her sewing machine. She examines a uniform jacket: A narrow slit stabbed into the chest.
- She starts sewing. WHIRRRR. The sewing machine RATTLES.
- CLOSE ON: The collar name tag reads HEINRICH GERBER.

11 EXT. COUNTRY ROAD, GERMANY - DAY 11

A bicyclist pedals along the road: PAUL BÄUMER, 18 years old. A skinny young man with a sincere face and a school book bag on his bicycle cargo rack.

The textile factory truck roars up from behind, HONKS briefly, swerves and passes the young man.

Uniforms piled up on the back of the truck -- laundered and neatly folded. A VETERAN with a cigarette beside them, missing an arm and half his face.

Paul Bäumer watches him go, a shadow of doubt on his face seeing the broken man. He gets a grip on himself and keeps pedaling.

12 EXT. SMALL TOWN / ALLEY - DAY 12

Paul rides his bike through town.

13 EXT. SCHOOL - DAY 13

Paul pedals down an alley and parks his bike against a wall. With lowered gaze, he takes his school bag and follows the throng of STUDENTS to the auditorium.

A few of his FRIENDS call to him among the hullabaloo.

KROPP

Paul...? Paul!

ALBERT KROPP (19), a farmer's son who made it to the college-track Gymnasium prep school. He may be a little thick, but he's full of verve for life. Strong, tough, down to earth, with rough milking hands. He's very traditional.

FRANZ MÜLLER (19) is more oriented toward the future. He likes progress and the finer things in life. He's well-spoken and a Ladies' man, always has a comb in his pocket.

Then there's LUDWIG BEHM (18), the runt of the gang. A pale, skinny, somewhat fearful guy. A dreamer with glasses.

KROPP (CONT'D)

Well?

Paul shakes his head in resignation. Kropp and Müller GROAN.

KROPP (CONT'D)

Now what? Does he know we're all going?

PAUL

Sure.

(CONTINUED)

BEHM

Are you staying home?

KROPP

For Christ's sake, are you supposed to stay here hugging your mommy's apron?

MÜLLER

Gimme that.

Müller sticks his hand out for the school bag. Paul is shaken by what Kropp said. He's a lot of things, but definitely no mama's boy.

MÜLLER (CONT'D)

Give it to me. I'll sign it.

BEHM

His parents have to sign.

MÜLLER

But they didn't, so gimme that.

BEHM

You can't. They'll notice.

KROPP

How? Is your daddy their pen pal?

Paul seems to hesitate for a moment. He finally opens his book bag. CLACK.

He gets out a pen and paper -- his Army volunteer form. He places the form on the book bag and starts to sign... nothing. Out of ink.

He turns to his friends, cursing.

PAUL

Gimme your pen.

Kropp doesn't have one. Neither does Müller. Behm eyes him skeptically.

BEHM

You're gonna be in hot water. He'll give you a thrashing.

KROPP

Oh, shut up, Ludwig.

PAUL

You got a better idea? I'm not gonna be the only one to stay behind!

(CONTINUED)

Behm SIGHS and hands him a pen. Paul quickly kneels and scribbles a signature on the piece of paper.

He stands up again quickly. A weight falls off his shoulders. Kropp puts an arm around him.

KROPP

Congratulations, Private Bäumer.
You're headed to the front.

PAUL

(mumbles)
I'm a dead man.

The gang of friends heads for the staircase, where the truck is parked at the cargo ramp. The veteran is unloading the uniforms with two other soldiers.

A big staircase. The STUDENTS crowd the steps, Paul and his three buddies among them, holding their marching orders to the front lines, a sense of grand adventure on their faces. They can't wait to become soldiers.

The teachers stand at the back in the hall, looking proud. The PRINCIPAL (61) stands on the top flight, a short, wiry guy with a big handlebar mustache, giving a fiery speech.

PRINCIPAL

You stand on the threshold to becoming men. This is a moment you will always remember. It's a great moment, by which you will be judged for the rest of your life, what you have dared to become today... the Iron Youth of Germany!

The Principal scans the young men's faces. From the corner of his eye, he sees two pupils shoving each other around.

PRINCIPAL (CONT'D)

My dear boys! We're fortunate to life in such a great time. Your deeds will form the ground water for a strong new root to grow, carrying the flowers and fruits of a glorious future.

(to the two quarreling kids)

Stand still and listen, Leinemann!
The Kaiser needs soldiers, not children.

The two pupils snap to attention. The Principal's authority is beyond doubt. He continues with his speech -- the little interruption fills him with even more verve.

(CONTINUED)

14 CONTINUED:

14

PRINCIPAL (CONT'D)

I'm sure I will see most of you
again soon, your sword returned to
its scabbard with honor, an Iron
Cross on your pride-filled chest.

Paul Bäumer. Albert Kropp. Franz Müller. Ludwig Behm... The
friends stand side by side. They all listen to their
Principal with bated breath.

15 INT. SCHOOL / HALLS - DAY

15

The Principal's voice echoes down the halls.

PRINCIPAL

But have no doubt: In the darkest
hours before an attack, you may
also be haunted by doubt.

16 INT. SCHOOL / CLASSROOM - DAY

16

Through empty classrooms, where open books wait for eager
students.

PRINCIPAL

But this is no time for weakness of
character! Any doubt, any
hesitation is treason to your
homeland.

17 INT. SCHOOL / CELLAR - DAY

17

...through a bare cellar, where the tired veteran with the
smashed face SMOKES his cigarette.

PRINCIPAL

Absolute obedience is the most
important thing of all in modern
warfare, which is like a game of
chess, which is never about the
individual, always about the whole.

18 INT. SCHOOL / STAIRS - DAY

18

BACK TO STAIRS: The Principal wraps up his speech.

PRINCIPAL

You will prove yourselves worthy of
wearing this uniform and break
through the enemy front in
Flanders. And within a few weeks,
you will finally be marching on
Paris!

(CONTINUED)

18

CONTINUED:

18

The boys can't hide a proud smile. The Principal looks them in the eye.

PRINCIPAL (CONT'D)

Our future -- the future of Germany
-- lies in the hands of its
Greatest Generation... My dear
boys: That's you! Off to battle you
go! For our Kaiser. Our God. And
our Fatherland.

ROARS OF APPLAUSE from the pupils and teachers -- it was a *good speech*. The young men toss their caps and leaflets in the air, which sail down the stairwell. Paul and his friends hug in joy.

19

INT. SCHOOL / AUDITORIUM - DAY

19

OFFICERS sit at a row of desks. Long lines of students in underwear, volunteering for war. The piles of uniforms in BG.

ARMY RECRUITER (O.S.)

Next!

The line of pupils advances. Paul has a hard time hiding his excitement, while Franz Müller and Albert Kropp are already proudly carrying off their uniforms. Then the line finally advances.

ARMY RECRUITER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Next!

Then it's Paul's turn. Excited, he presents his draft notice to an OFFICER, who reads it without looking up.

ARMY RECRUITER (CONT'D)

(without looking up)

Bäumer, Paul. Meadow Vale 53, born
18.11.98. Is that right?

PAUL

Yessir, Officer Sir!

The Officer flips over the form and checks the parents' signature. He takes an ink stamp. WHAP. All good.

ARMY RECRUITER

Chest size?

Paul gapes at him, dumbstruck. The officer shrugs, hands him a uniform off the pile and notes the size in a list.

ARMY RECRUITER (CONT'D)

Here. Your father can be proud of
you.

(CONTINUED)

PAUL

Yes, he can.

ARMY RECRUITER

Are you okay?

PAUL

Mhm. I just wanna get going.

Paul takes his uniform and is just leaving, when he sees the name tag sewn into the collar.

He quickly returns to the desk, where the recruiter is already busy with the next RECRUIT.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Excuse me, Sir, this uniform already belongs to someone.

The officer takes the uniform jacket from Paul and tears off the name tag. Then he hands it back.

ARMY RECRUITER

Didn't fit him right. Happens all the time.

PAUL

Thank you, Sir.

Paul heads off, relieved. The name tag remains behind on the floor: HEINRICH GERBER.

Paul enters a storeroom off the hall, carrying the new uniform.

He puts on his uniform: It fits, even if it's a little big. Ludwig Behm stands beside him, with his bare, scrawny chest. He can't entirely hide his doubts.

CHURCH BELLS RING in the distance.

DING DONG. DING DONG. DING DONG. The church bells ring in the belfry... a grand send-off.

The church square of the small town. It's empty, except for a few PASSERS-BY, mostly WOMEN and CHILDREN with a few OLD MEN. We spot the young RECRUITS in the distance, in a crack between two houses.

23 EXT. SMALL TOWN / STREET - DAY 23

They march out of town in lockstep, rifles slung over their shoulders. The CHURCH BELLS drown out their MARCHING SONG.

RECRUITS

*Tomorrow we march
To the farmers night quarters. A
cup of tea, sugar and coffee, A cup
of tea, sugar and coffee, and a
glass of wine, and a glass of wine!*

Franz Müller looks at a few GIRLS, waving among the onlookers by the side of the road. He grins and dances out of line, full of excitement, adventure and joy.

MÜLLER

*A cup of tea, sugar and coffee,
sugar and coffee...*

Paul, Müller, Kropp and Behm -- ruddy-cheeked, booming voices. Everyone sings along with their fellows. They all march off to war together... *what an adventure.*

24 EXT. POPLAR-LINED AVENUE, GERMANY - DAY 24

A poplar-lined avenue along the road, their tips swaying in the wind. The recruits march down the road.

RECRUITS

*Tomorrow we march
To the farmers night quarters. And
when I leave, my girl will grieve,
And when I leave, my girl will
grieve and will cry, and will cry.*

The young men march into the distance. Their song wafts over the fields.

CUT TO:

25 EXT. TROOP VAN, WESTERN FRONT - DAY 25

Behind the lines of the Western Front, Northern France.

An open troop transport truck rumbles down the muddy road to the front. Paul and his friends sit in the back, with their rifles and knapsacks, amid two dozen new recruits. Expectation is written all over the young men's faces. The bright spring sun pierces the clouds.

KA-CHACK. LIEUTENANT HOPPE (37) has planted himself before them, a Prussian officer with a dirty mouth, a tough guy with a heart of gold.

(CONTINUED)

He pushes his way through the recruits and inspects one rifle after the other. Müller's rifle is spotless. He hands it back wordlessly.

Albert Kropp is next. The Lieutenant pulls back the bolt -- KA-CHAK... He stares. Dirty. He holds it under Kropp's nose.

LIEUTENANT HOPPE

What's your name, Private?

KROPP

Kropp. Albert Kropp, Lieutenant, Sir.

LIEUTENANT HOPPE

Do you like dirty girls, Kropp?

KROPP

...? No, Sir, Lieutenant, Sir.

LIEUTENANT HOPPE

(indicates the bolt)

So why do you sleep with one...?
Report for guard duty at 3 a.m.!

The Lieutenant tosses the rifle to Kropp, who only barely catches it. Ludwig Behm is next. KA-CHAK.

LIEUTENANT HOPPE (CONT'D)

Gentlemen! You are fighting in a God-forsaken pile of shit, so you better do it with a clean Mauser!

Paul digs out a handkerchief and cleans his barrel quickly. The Lieutenant stands before him already.

LIEUTENANT HOPPE (CONT'D)

Your life as you knew it is over. Your rifle is your girl now. You are married to your rifle. You will pamper your rifle. You will love your rifle. And God damn it, you will keep it spotless as the thighs of the Holy Virgin! You got it?

RECRUITS ON TRUCK

Yes, Sir!

LIEUTENANT HOPPE

Welcome to the 78th Infantry Reserve Regiment. You are now on the Western Front.

RECRUITS ON TRUCK

Welcome to Paris!

(CONTINUED)

Albert Kropp clutches his rifle in his arms, grinning. He licks it... The soldiers are brimming with enthusiasm. They laugh and nudge each other.

Hoppe lets them and hands his Mauser back to Paul. Clean. KA-CHAK.

A temporary field hospital set up behind the front in a bombed-out farm house. SOLDIERS are unloaded from individual trucks, bloody and mutilated: Ambulances, horse carriages, cars.

NURSES and MEDICS place the wounded in rows in the mud. The hospital is overcrowded. The only ray of light are a few FEMALE NURSES.

An ARMY DOCTOR (50) comes out of the gate with his ASSISTANT to the street, looking exhausted. He flags down the arriving truck and waves it toward --

THE YARD.

The truck pulls up. The ARMY DOCTOR marches back toward the Lieutenant in charge.

LIEUTENANT HOPPE

What's up? My orders are to deliver this company to the front by 6 pm.

ARMY DOCTOR

Which you will, but on foot. We need this vehicle, Lieutenant!

LIEUTENANT HOPPE

I'm sorry, but my orders are --

ARMY DOCTOR

You can shove your orders where the sun don't shine. I've got forty men here dying in the mud. Get off that Goddamn truck!

The Lieutenant stops objecting and turns to his recruits.

LIEUTENANT HOPPE

Dismount! Double time! Let's go! You heard the Doctor.

ARMY DOCTOR

Thank you, Lieutenant. You're saving people's lives. We'll take the wounded back to Laon.

Lt. Hoppe jumps off the truck and nods. He goes to the back of the truck, where the men are climbing off.

(CONTINUED)

They clutch their hands to their mouth and nose, against the smell of carbolic and gangrene. Behm stares at the injured. Paul drags him off.

PAUL

Come on, Ludwig.

He looks around for reassurance from a NURSE, kneeling among the wounded soldiers.

Lt. Hoppe grabs a dismounting recruits's bayonet -- the blade is saw-toothed on the blunt side.

LIEUTENANT HOPPE

What the hell is this, Soldier?

RECRUIT FIELD HOSPITAL

A bayonet, Lieutenant, Sir.

LIEUTENANT HOPPE

Are you shitting me? What are you gonna do with this?

RECRUIT FIELD HOSPITAL

Stab the enemy, Lieutenant, Sir?

The Lieutenant loses his patience and hisses at the man.

LIEUTENANT HOPPE

This is a saw blade, Soldier. If the enemy catches you with one of these, they will mutilate you. First they will saw your nose off. Then they will gouge your eyes out. And they they will stuff your throat with sawdust, so you slowly suffocate.

The recruit stares at him in shock. Hoppe gives the bayonet back to him and indicates his own bayonet -- with a smooth blade.

LIEUTENANT HOPPE (CONT'D)

Trade it in for one of these as soon as you can. Guarantees a quick end. For both sides.

The Lieutenant turns to the whole company again.

LIEUTENANT HOPPE (CONT'D)

Take a leak, grab your backpacks, we leave in five minutes. Dismissed!

The recruits shoulder their backpacks and pair off. Paul takes his eyes off the nurse with an effort. Franz Müller combs his hair.

27 EXT. MUDDY ROAD TO FRONT - DAY

27

The sky is overcast. It looks like rain. An ammo supply convoy passes them on the road. The soldiers march toward the front. Clay sticks to their boots, a dead dog lies in their path.

Lt. Hoppe eggs them on.

LIEUTENANT HOPPE
Step lively, Soldier! Don't fall
asleep!

He marches along beside Müller for a beat.

LIEUTENANT HOPPE (CONT'D)
You, Müller! The commander in chief
expects you to survive at least six
weeks. Do you want to be alive in
six weeks?

MÜLLER
Yes, Sir, Lieutenant, Sir.

LIEUTENANT HOPPE
Then get a move on! March!

Müller staggers on, a little faster.

Suddenly: a WHISTLE and HOWL. BOOM! BOOM! Two shells land in the distance, hurling up a gush of mud. Most of the recruits hit the dirt. Hoppe SCREAMS at them.

LIEUTENANT HOPPE (CONT'D)
Gas! Gas! Gas!

The recruits frantically get up and dig out their gas masks. While most of them are still struggling with their satchels, Hoppe already has his mask on and fastened.

The Lieutenant marches along his squad, his voice muffled by his gas mask. He's using the forced march for a drill.

LIEUTENANT HOPPE (CONT'D)
Gentlemen, that was what you call a
"Fat pig". If the Frogs could aim,
they'd be scratching us off the
road with a spatula and burying us
in a mess kit. But one thing is as
sure as hell: "Fat pigs" don't
carry poison gas.

Paul helps Behm, who dropped his mask in the mud, so he's the last to put it on.

Hoppe continues his speech stoically.

(CONTINUED)

LIEUTENANT HOPPE (CONT'D)
Poison gas shells come in groups of three and land with a dull thud. So if you see someone putting on their mask, put on yours. You've got six seconds before you start spitting clots of blood the size of beets back home on the farm.

Lt. Hoppe stops before Paul. Very calmly, he watches the young recruit still struggling with his gas mask.

LIEUTENANT HOPPE (CONT'D)
Eyes front!

The recruits snap to and look straight ahead -- except Paul, who frantically wedges his gas mask between his knees, trying to adjust the leather straps.

Hoppe's glasses fog up, a first drop of rain falls on them. His ominous breathing behind the mask. In. Out. In. Out. A bit like Darth Vader.

Paul finally got it on. He puts the mask on and looks straight ahead.

LIEUTENANT HOPPE (CONT'D)
Are you deaf, man?

PAUL
No, Lieutenant, Sir. I was just trying to put my mask on.

Hoppe eyes him for a beat. Then:

LIEUTENANT HOPPE
You're almost certainly gonna be dead by dawn, boy. You better have something to eat.

Paul swallows the insult. Hoppe takes his mask off and turns to the squad.

LIEUTENANT HOPPE (CONT'D)
Attention! Masks off! Two abreast, forward march!
(to Paul)
Not you. You leave it on until your guard duty tonight.
(turns to Kropp)
With that shithead there.

PAUL
Yes Sir, Lieutenant.

The recruits stow their masks and march to the front. Paul has a hard time breathing and can hardly keep up.

(CONTINUED)

27 CONTINUED: (2)

27

The weight of his knapsack is crushing... Artillery RUMBLES in the distance.

28 EXT. LATIERRE HILL / ACCESS TRENCH - DAY

28

Rain beats down. Lt. Hoppe leads the exhausted recruits down an access trench to the front.

Shells WHIZZ by. A DRONE drowns everything out. BOOM! The shell explodes.

The young recruits duck. Clumps of dirt pelt down on their backs. Hoppe waves them onward.

LIEUTENANT HOPPE

Go. Go!

Bullets ZING over their heads. MG FIRE RATTLES in the distance. WOUNDED MEN come toward them, two SOLDIERS drag an empty soup cauldron back from the front.

Paul is in the back along with Müller. He has a hard time keeping up, hardly able to breath under his mask.

MÜLLER

Give me your backpack, Paul... You can take mine next time.

Paul knocks his hand away and staggers down the trench.

29 EXT. LATIERRE HILL / TRENCH - DAY

29

Rain keeps beating down, as SOLDIERS fire an MG. RAT TAT TAT TAT TAT. Beyond, the squad turns onto a wide trench. Water is backed up knee-high on the ground -- the RECRUITS wade through it.

They finally reach their unit at the front: Gaunt, ragged, hollow-eyed SOLDIERS, mainly trying to keep dry. Some try to sleep. They all look miserable.

LIEUTENANT HOPPE

Congratulations, Soldiers. Welcome to your new home.

(to all)

Helmets off!

The veterans GROAN. They know what this means. Groaning, they pick up buckets and start bailing out clay muddy water from the trench. Some of them have tied sandbags to the tops of their boots to keep the water from running in.

SERGEANT STEINBERGER appears to greet the Lieutenant.

(CONTINUED)

LIEUTENANT HOPPE (CONT'D)

I see the men have been enjoying my absence, Steinberger.

SGT. STEINBERGER

We've been under MG barrage all night. Their nerves are bare.

LIEUTENANT HOPPE

Dry boots are a good remedy for that.

(to recruits)

Everyone pitch in, bail out the trench!

The young recruits follow the veterans' example and use their helmets and food pails as bailing buckets. You can see the shock in their faces, the gleam in their eyes is gone. Tiredly, they bail water out of the trench. Constant COUGHING.

Lt. Hoppe turns on his heel and disappears in his bunker. In passing, he yanks the gas mask off Paul's face and presses it hard against his chest.

LIEUTENANT HOPPE (CONT'D)

What are you waiting for?

He leaves him standing there, disappears inside.

Paul WHEEZES and gasps for air. Even if it's raining, the fresh air is good for him.

Suddenly, a figure emerges from a shelter and offers him an open canteen. Paul looks up, SNORTING, staring straight at... STANISLAUS KATCZINSKY.

KAT is 40 and still a Private, which says a lot about him. Tough, sly, smart, with a dirty face, with blue eyes, drooping shoulders and a good nose for danger and good food, where there usually isn't. He's a shoemaker in real life. In which he has a sixth sense. He's the secret commander of the company.

KAT

Give a dog a piece of meat, and it will always snap at it. Give a person power...

He shrugs, chewing tobacco in his mouth.

KAT (CONT'D)

Man is a beast... drink.

Paul gratefully accepts the canteen. He drinks. Finally, he wipes his mouth off.

(CONTINUED)

PAUL

Thanks.

A silent nod, then Kat screws his canteen shut. BOOM. A fountain of mud shoots up nearby. Kat looks up at the sky, longingly.

KAT

There's gonna be a blanket tonight.

He turns and goes over to his comrades to help them bail. Paul gets up and goes out. Kropp, Müller and Behm are in the middle of it. Behm is plagued by guilt over the gas mask.

BEHM

I'm sorry.

PAUL

Forget it.

BEHM

This isn't what I expected.

KROPP

Oh, shut up.

In a row, the men bail the cold muddy water out of the trench, occasionally GAGGING as they find feces in it. A VETERAN straightens up a support beam and presses it back into the wall of the trench. Another SOLDIER pulls off his boots, revealing his gangrenous feet.

Behm starts bailing like crazy to make up for his mistake. Paul tries to calm him down.

PAUL

Ludwig... Ludwig! It's okay.

Behm suddenly pauses, exhausted. His fingers are red and frozen.

BEHM

My hands... I can't feel my hands.

KAT

Stick 'em in your drawers. That's what I do.

Behm wipes his hands off and sticks them in his underpants. Paul, Müller, Kropp -- they all do the same thing: It gets better after a few seconds. Their expressions are relieved.

KAT (CONT'D)

Like I said.

They resume bailing. Only Behm is still standing there with his hands in his pants. Kropp turns his nose up in disgust.

(CONTINUED)

KROPP

The water stinks.

TJADEN

That's the innards. Of the dead.
Fermentation agents, you know. Like
Bavarian beer. Only that it tastes
like death.

TJADEN STACKFLEET (20) is an old hand despite his youth. The biggest eater of the company, but skinny, a peat digger by trade.

Paul and Kropp stare at him blankly. Tjaden reaches for a clump in the water beside them. He lifts it up: A soldier's rotting CORPSE. A last SIGH of gas escapes from the corpse's lungs, forming a bubble in the water.

Tjaden wordlessly drops the body and lets it sink into the maw of the mud. Kat turns to Paul and indicates the folding trench shovel on his belt.

KAT

Hey. Gimme that.

PAUL

What? My shovel?

KAT

Quick.

Paul hands him the trench shovel. Kat wades a few steps into the water, then rams it into the ground in a flash. And again.

He digs in the mud for a beat, then drags a dead rat out by the tail. He flings it out of the trench unmoved and starts looking for the next cadaver.

He finally hands the shovel back to Paul.

KAT (CONT'D)

You can split someone's chest with
one of these, but you really have
to hit him hard, between the
shoulder and the neck... right
here.

Kat places the edge of his hand on Paul's neck. Paul GULPS. he looks at the shovel in his hand, unsure of himself. Albert Kropp whispers to them.

KROPP

Like a butcher.

30 EXT. LATIERRE HILL / TRENCH - NIGHT

30

The middle of the night. It's still raining. It's cold, wet, and dirty. A flare illuminates the battlefield, strewn with corpses.

Paul and Kropp huddle in the trench, their uniform collars closed tight around their necks, pulling guard duty.

Kropp's head sinks to his chest. He has a carving knife and a piece of wood on his lap -- he's fallen asleep over his carving.

Paul is polishing his rifle again, then he listens up and looks out at the deep darkness -- a RUSTLE in the dark. He nudges his friend.

PAUL
Albert... Albert!

Albert Kropp wakes up again.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Soldiers who fall asleep on guard
duty are court-martialed and shot.

KROPP
Leave me alone.

Kropp straightens up tiredly and watches Paul cleaning his rifle.

KROPP (CONT'D)
You think it will shoot better that
way?

Paul listens up. There it is again: The RUSTLE in the dark.

PAUL
Did you hear that?

KROPP
What?

PAUL
That noise. Listen.

KROPP
It's nothing.

PAUL
Psst --

Albert keeps carving his block of wood, delicate work for his rough hands. Paul listens to the dark and raises his rifle, excitedly.

(CONTINUED)

PAUL (CONT'D)
Our first Frenchman.

KROPP
Settle down.

There it is again. A soft RUSTLE, not even ten yards away. Paul and Kropp exchange looks. They both pale.

KROPP (CONT'D)
Now I heard it too.

PAUL
(loud whisper)
Who's there?

No answer. The RUSTLING suddenly stops, then resumes a few seconds later. Paul aims his rifle into the dark.

A shadow flits by in the dark, looking like a man.

PAUL (CONT'D)
(louder)
Halt, who goes there?
(in broken French)
Montrez-vous!

Nothing. The shadow crawls toward them...

Paul SHOOTS. The muzzle flash illuminates the night:

Two rats, the size of a loaf of bread, skitter a few steps to the side. Their faces are bloody; one of them has human entrails dangling from its mouth.

Suddenly -- CLANG! A bullet hits Paul's helmet and knocks it clean off his head. Paul falls off the ladder and lands in a puddle at the bottom of the trench.

PAUL (CONT'D)
I'm hit! I'm hit!

He frantically feels his face and head to see where he's hit. Then he inspects his helmet and discovers two bullet holes.

PAUL (CONT'D)
They shot me. Twice!

KROPP
Well, there were two rats, after all.

KAT (O.S.)
Who shot?

Katczynsky comes out of the covered path and approaches up the trench. Paul shows him his bullet-riddled helmet.

(CONTINUED)

PAUL

They shot me. Two of those bastards
shot me.

KAT

With one shot?

Kat looks at the damage: One entry hole, one exit hole.

KAT (CONT'D)

They saw your muzzle flash. Next
time, don't stick your head out.

He hands Paul back his helmet. The boy dons it, awkwardly and
returns to his original position.

KAT (CONT'D)

If you don't wanna catch the next
bullet with your teeth, I suggest
you moved ten meters down the
trench.

The two recruits stare at him.

KAT (CONT'D)

Shoot, move, shoot, move. Got it?

Kat heads off, shaking his head. Paul and Kropp head along
the trench and take their positions again. Paul reloads.

Two FLARES are shot into the sky, gliding down on parachutes.
Paul and Kropp gape at the spectacle. It would be beautiful
if it weren't so deadly.

We now have time to scan the battlefield: A landscape pocked
by craters, dark black dirt, crisscrossed by barbed wired.

Two FRENCHMEN looking for wounded in no man's land are
surprised by the bright flare. Kropp raises his rifle and
aims. Paul pushes his barrel down.

PAUL

Those are medics.

KROPP

So? They're Frenchmen!

A sudden throaty ROAR. BOOM! Just a few yards behind the
trench, an artillery shell hits, pelting them with dirt.

BOOM! BOOM! Two more hits, in quick sequence. Kaczinsky
hurries up.

KAT

You two. In here! Quick.

Paul and Albert stumble over to the bunker.

31 INT. LATIERRE HILL / BUNKER - NIGHT

31

The SOLDIERS sit in the bunker, huddling tight. It's dark. Earth and wood walls.

Paul and Kropp find themselves a spot, near Müller and Behm. Kat and Tjaden are with them.

Shells hit outside. BOOM. BOOM. BOOM. It doesn't stop. The recruits are in panic. They shut their eyes, shaking, as the veterans sit there, stoically waiting for the end of the barrage.

Behm holds his ears shut, sweating and and gasping for air.

BEHM

"You are what you eat..." My mother always said.

Paul smiles. Behm looks at him.

BEHM (CONT'D)

We'll stick together, Paul.

PAUL

Yeah.

A shell strikes nearby. BOOM. A roof beam breaks and collapses, sending dirt raining down on the soldiers.

A desperate recruit pukes in a corner. Ludwig Behm wants to get up and flee, but Paul is holding him back. *

PAUL (CONT'D) *

Don't, Ludwig. Everything will be fine. *

BEHM *

I can't do this, Paul. I can't. I wanna go back home. *

PAUL *

Ssssh. *

The barrage gradually recedes to behind the front. A few clods of dirt rain down from the ceiling. Behm gets a grip on himself. The soldiers are listening. *

TJADEN *

Creeping barrage. *

PAUL *

What? *

TJADEN *

The artillery barrage moves forward every few minutes, as the infantry advances behind it. *

(CONTINUED)

KROPP

What does that mean?

KAT

It means they're coming.

He grins into the silence. The men await the impending attack. Behm chews his lip in fear. Paul and Kropp clutch their rifles...

But nothing happens. There's no attack. The air is suffocating, Behm yanks open his uniform collar. The men sit there, as if sitting in their graves.

BOOM! The walls shake. A SCREAM and FLASH. Smoke. Sulfur. Dirt. Dust. The bunker creaks under the hit, all the beams straining, but they hold.

A frantic recruit, 19 years old, climbs over the men and heads for the exit. Kat and Tjaden try to stop him.

KAT (CONT'D)

Where are you going? You are staying here.

SOLDIER

No. Let me out. I wanna get out of here!

KAT

Settle down. Clam down, god damn it!

The SOLDIER breaks free and runs towards the exit, when a HUGE EXPLOSION hurls him back, ripping the young soldier apart.

Blood spatters Tjaden's face. Shrapnel and bits of uniforms everywhere. Ludwig Behm is hitting his head against the wall like a billy goat, over and over again. Paul almost has to puke for a moment, then the next shell hits the top of the bunker. BOOM. BOOM. BOOM.

KAT (CONT'D)

Out! Out! Out!

BOOM! A direct hit. The beams burst over their heads. The soldiers leap up with their rifles and try to flee out of the bunker...

It's too late.

The earth SHAKES.

BLACK.

(CONTINUED)

31 CONTINUED: (2)

31

Silence. DEATHLY SILENCE.

CUT TO:

32 EXT. LATIERRE HILL / UNDERGROUND - DAWN

32

A quiet SCRATCHING and SCRAPING noise. Flat breathing.

Suddenly, a first ray of dawn light pierces the dirt: Paul lies buried beneath. He gasps for air, hears the SOLDIERS' muffled voices.

SOLDIERS

*< Here's one. Go on, help me get
him out! Pull! >*

Paul still can hardly hear. His ears RING. A DEAD SOLDIER out of the corner of his eye. Suddenly, Franz Müller appears, helping his fellow soldiers.

MÜLLER

*< Paul. It's Paul. >
(calls)
< Albert, we found Paul! >
(to his comrades)
< Get that beam out of the way! >*

33 EXT. LATIERRE HILL / DESTROYED TRENCH - DAWN

33

The soldiers lift a beam aside, finally freeing Paul. They drag him out of the dirt, groaning, then Albert Kropp appears beside them.

KROPP

*< Paul?! Are you hurt...? Is
everything okay? >*

Paul is still hard of hearing. He nods. Their comrades urge them to leave.

SOLDIERS

< Come on, let's go. >

MÜLLER

< See you later, Paul. >

The soldiers move on to rescue the next soldier.

Paul stares at the pale blue sky for a beat. His lungs fill with air. Then he struggles up.

The trench is almost completely destroyed. It's only a few feet high in some places -- riddled with holes, craters and piles of dirt.

(CONTINUED)

Kat sits at the opposite wall, scarfing down a slice of bread, his face completely dirty. A few MEDICS hurry up and carry off a WOUNDED MAN.

The two men exchange looks. A beat. Finally, Kat hands him the piece of bread. Paul eats, wordlessly taking a bite. He chews and takes another bite.

FOOTSTEPS approach and stop before him.

SGT. STEINBERGER (O.S.)
< *Are you injured?* >

PAUL
< *N-- no.* >

SGT. STEINBERGER
< *Then collect these, please.* >

The Sergeant tiredly holds out a bag to him. Paul takes it, looks inside: A handful of dog tags of dead soldiers. He gives Kat a quizzical look, who shrugs.

KAT
< *Helps to keep moving.* >

He takes his shovel, gets up and keeps going.

Paul limps along the destroyed trench, piled with dead. He bends down to them and breaks off their dog tags. He places them in the bag.

KRRK. Paul suddenly pauses: He stepped on something. He slowly bends over and picks up a bloody, broken pair of glasses. Behm's glasses.

Paul frantically runs along the trench until he finds a lifeless body and turns it over: 18-year-old Ludwig Behm lies dead in the dirt at his feet. His eye is bloody. He's missing a leg.

Paul fights back the tears and leans over his dead friend. He tries to button up his uniform collar with trembling hand -- *for the cold* -- but he can't. His fingers are cold. Then he has to sob. Violently.

SGT. STEINBERGER (O.S.)
< *Come on, keep going. Or else this will take till day after tomorrow.*>

The Sergeant marches on. Paul wipes his tears off, gets a grip on himself. He wordlessly collects the dog tags, gets up and keeps doing his job.

34 EXT. FIELDS - DAY 34

The wheat is tall and golden in a field, the wind whips the stalks gently. Calm, peaceful, majestic.

35 EXT. FIELDS BEHIND THE FRONT - DAWN 35

It's Fall by now. The fields are bare. Fog hangs low over the ground. Leaves are still blowing across the roads here and there.

18 MONTHS LATER. NOVEMBER 1918.

36 INT/EXT. TRUCK / ROAD BY FARM - DAY 36

An ammo truck heads for the front. Spent cartridges jiggle on the cargo bed. Paul dangles his legs off the back of the truck. Paul has aged. His gaze has hardened. Kat leans against the cab.

Finally, he knocks on the window. The DRIVER brakes, the two buddies jump off the back. Kat offers the driver two cigarettes as payment.

KAT

Thanks.

The truck slows down. Kat and Paul march across a field.

37 EXT. ROAD / FARM - DAY 37

A farm wall appears off to one side of the road. Kat and Paul march toward it.

KAT

I did the math, Paul If we keep up this pace, we'll have conquered all of France in 180 years.

Paul grins.

PAUL

What? Are you gonna go get 'em?

KAT

M-hm.

PAUL

Don't get caught.

KAT

No way.

He shrugs.

38 EXT. FARMYARD - DAY

38

Kat stops at the farmyard wall, listening to the wind.

KAT

Listen.

Soft CLUCKING NOISES in the distance. Kat glances at his friend.

KAT (CONT'D)

What do you think? Is this worth dying for?

PAUL

Anything's worth it when you're hungry.

Paul grins. He squats down and extends his clasped hands to Paul. Kat sticks his foot in his cradle and deftly climbs over the wall.

Paul stays behind, alone, looks down at the valley, pensively. A DOG barks somewhere.

Paul listen up. A GOOSE HONKS like an alarm, a door slams on the farm yard, and suddenly... BANG! He hears a man swear in FRENCH.

Paul peers through a crack in the gate, sees the dog run by. A BOY (10) stumbles along after it.

Paul creeps around the yard as Kat staggers out of the stable door onto the fields.

KAT

Quick! Run!

FARMER

< *Voleur!* >

BLAM! Another bullet misses him. The Farmer CURSES in French behind him. Paul runs along with him, PANTING.

KAT

Throw. Throw!

Kat tosses the goose to him like a rugby player. Laughing, the two buddies flee over the field.

39 INT./EXT. SHED / STAGING CAMP BEHIND THE FRONT LINES - DAY 39

A shed on the edge of a staging camp, where soldiers can recuperate.

Through a dirty window, we see Paul, Kropp, Müller and Tjaden heads straight for the shed.

(CONTINUED)

CLACK. The men stumble in, famished. Kat already has plucked the goose and is frying it in the pan. It sizzles on the stove. The men greedily inhale the smell.

TJADEN

Oh, my God. You're the best, Kat.

KAT

Shut the door or everybody will smell it.

Tjaden shuts the door. They all take out the plates of their mess kits. Kat carves big fat slices for the gang with his trench knife.

KAT (CONT'D)

Password?

TJADEN

I forgot. I'm drawing a blank.

KAT

What's the password?

KAT (CONT'D)

Wide eyes, long fingers.

TJADEN

Mouth open, goose in.

They LAUGH.

MÜLLER

I'll take a wing.

TJADEN

Gimme the rest.

KAT

No goose for Franz.

KROPP

Sleep well in the MG barrage.

Kat passes out meat on their plates. Paul is stuffing the goose down in his pillow case. Tjaden grins.

TJADEN

I'll never forget this, guys.

The men wordlessly sit down on crates and start eating. Teeth gnash. Grease drools. They dunk grey biscuits in the gravy.

Tjaden has a wing in his mouth like a harmonica, chewing and MOANING in happiness.

KAT

Taste good?

(CONTINUED)

ALL

Mmmh. Good. You too?

KAT

Life is short.

Frank digs a piece of shotgun lead out of his mouth and spits it into his mess kit. Tjaden drinks grease straight from the pot, smacking.

TJADEN

Oh boy, oh boy... Jeeves, you may serve the caviar and coffee now!

MÜLLER

And draw my foot bath, please!

Artillery fire. A low THUD rattles the shed, aerial bombs hit. Muffled SHOUTS. A few SCREAMS. It must've hit a barracks.

Airplanes BUZZ in the distance. MG fire: RAT TAT TAT TAT TAT. Tjadsen suddenly looks up.

TJADEN

Kat...

KAT

Hm?

TJADEN

...The goose is gone and the fox is on the town-o...

The men LAUGH and join in.

In here, the fire flickers on the stove, illuminating their faces. The men sit in a circle in their worn uniforms, eating happily. Five friends by the stove, with food to eat - what could be better?

40-42 OMITTED

40-42

42A EXT. STAGING CAMP - DAY

42A

The staging camp on a wide meadow. The sun is low in the sky. A covered truck rolls past. A BUGLE plays in the distance.

43 EXT. STAGING AREA CAMP / STABLE - DAY

43

Shells stick in cratered ground. Nature reclaims a crashed airplane. A few trucks park by the side of the road, by artillery and flak batteries. MG FIRE in BG.

(CONTINUED)

The men sit beneath a shelter off to one side of the staging camp, peeling a huge pile of potatoes. It has rained, water drips from the roof.

Only Kat sits on the ground, sunbathing his face. Franz has hung his coat on a nail and brushes the dried mud off it.

KAT

So, this schoolteacher asks the kids what medals their dads got in the war. So Little Fritz says: "My dad got the Iron Cross." Then little Karl says: "My dad got the Medal of Honor." Then little Otto says: "My dad didn't get a medal, but he was trapped in the hotel?" "Trapped in the hotel?" the teacher says. "Never heard of it." The next day, little Otto comes back to school and says: "Sorry, M'am. My dad wasn't trapped in the hotel; he had the clap in the hospital."

PAUL

Look.

The men stop laughing: By the edge of the woods, three GIRLS pass by with an ox cart, spades and picks on their shoulders, coming home after a long day's work. Albert Kropp gets up and waves.

KROPP

Hey. Salut!

PAUL

Venez-ici. Pain, baguettes. Pour vous.

KROPP

Liver wurst. Amour. Beaucoup d'amour!

Their French is rudimentary. The girls are not persuaded by the gang's awkward charms and just keep going.

Meanwhile, Franz plucks up his courage, puts on his coat and marches over to them... He just wades over to them. Kropp calls after them.

KROPP (CONT'D)

Hey, Franz. Where are you going? Take me with you.

MÜLLER

Come on.

(CONTINUED)

SERGEANT STEINBERGER

If you take another step, I'll take two!

Steinberger calls from behind him, standing beside the cook by the field stove. Kropp hesitates. He doesn't go. Shrugs.

KROPP

They probably don't want company, anyway.

Paul and Kropp watch their buddy approach the girls and talk to them. Kropp tries to listen in, while Paul sits down.

KROPP (CONT'D)

What's he saying?

He can't hear him. He's too far away. Franz does a little jig for the girls. Kropp LAUGHS.

KROPP (CONT'D)

Look, he's just making a fool of himself.

(mocks him)

"Oh là là, vous-êtes très belles."

(calls)

Franz! Save the skinny dark-haired one for me!

But Franz doesn't react. The girls LAUGH and talk to him. Finally he takes one of the girls' burlap bags and takes off with them. Kropp's grin freezes on his his face.

KROPP (CONT'D)

Hey, where's he going...?

(calls)

Franz?!

No answer. Steinberger loses his patience.

SERGEANT STEINBERGER

Kropp! Those potatoes won't peel themselves. The company needs to eat.

Kropp stares after his buddy, longingly. Then he heads back to the shelter, where they are peeling potatoes. He shakes his head.

KROPP

If the war were over now... you know what I'd do now?

KAT

There's no peace. It's not over yet.

(CONTINUED)

KROPP

Sure, but if -- Damn, then there'd be girls again, too, right?

PAUL

That too.

KROPP

I wouldn't wear pants for a week, I swear. What about you, Paul?

PAUL

(shrugs)

Beats me. Can't think of anything.

KAT

I should kick your ass for even starting talking like that.

Kat has spotted a beetle in the mature and lets it crawl over his hand. Kropp takes his stick out and starts whittling. Tjaden butts in.

TJADEN

I'd stay with the Prussians.

KROPP

You're crazy.

TJADEN

Ever dug peat? Try it.

KROPP

Can't be worse than trench digging in the Champagne.

TJADEN

Takes longer, though. And you can't shirk... In the peacetime army, your mess is no problem, either. Your food arrives every morning, or you raise a stink. You got your bunk, fresh laundry every week, make NCO, get all kinds of nice stuff. In the evening, you go to a bar...

He stares in reverie.

TJADEN (CONT'D)

When your twelve years are over, you get your retirement.

Kat uses his knife to poke a few air holes in a box of matches. He pads the box with leaves and puts the beetle in it. Tjaden rambles off the cuff.

(CONTINUED)

TJADEN (CONT'D)

Just imagine being a Ranger. A cognac here, a pint there. Everyone wants to be friends with a Ranger.

KAT

There's a catch to your plan, though, Tjaden.

TJADEN

Which one?

KAT

You'll never make non-com.

Tjaden eyes him, stricken. Reality comes crashing back.

TJADEN

You always get hung up on such nonsense. It doesn't help, does it?

He turns away, grumbling.

The driver unloads several bags of mail from the back of the truck and carries them into the camp post office.

SOLDIERS throng a table, on which a bag of mail is emptied out. Kat is stuck in the throng and fights her way to the fore. Tjaden digs through it on the other side of the table.

TJADEN

Hey, Kat!

He holds out a letter to Kat.

Behind the camp, Kat drags a latrine box across the meadow, till he reaches another latrine box, where Paul is sitting comfortably, writing in his diary.

Kat wordlessly drops his drawers and sits down on the latrine. He hands Paul his letter.

KAT

Here.

He digs out a cigarette, as Paul opens the envelope and reads it aloud. It seems like a kind of ritual.

(CONTINUED)

PAUL

(reads)

Honeybuns! You asked for a food package. Four helpings of wurst and pork fat are on the way, a few cakes, sauerkraut and bockwurst, one dose of Hing- Hingfong essence with sugar cubes. Oh, and a jar of plum jam. Don't eat it all at once, I don't wanna send another package anytime soon. Better-- Better not share with your buddies.

(to Kat)

God damn, what a scrawl.

KAT

Hm.

Kat puffs his cigar, grinning.

Yellow barrage blimps on the horizon and white puffs of flak. A DOGFIGHT in the sky over them, plus the distant ROAR of battle. Like a thunderstorm.

PAUL

(reads)

I have to ask you one more thing, honeybuns: How much have you saved up yet? Can you maybe send some home? They say it's gonna be over soon, you want some money left over. Now you gonna think, listen to the old lady, hitting me up for money, but you know me, I can never get enough, give her an inch and I'll take a mile. So don't give up on the last lap. Carl Lemmer is in hospital in the East, something with his stomach, and he was hardly there for three weeks. Can't you take sick leave with your back? You already did your part, dintcha?

(to Kat)

If she could only see you now, sitting in the sun with your cigar.

KAT

Hm.

Kat relishes the sun. Paul laughs and keeps reading.

PAUL

On Sunday I'm going... to our little one's grave.

(hesitates)

I'll read to him again, he always like that so much.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

46

CONTINUED: (2)

46

PAUL (CONT'D)

*Next-- next year we'll go together
and celebrate his tenth birthday.
Well, that's all I have to say,
kisses from your wifey. Goodbye!*

One of the airplanes over them is HIT and CRASHES out of the sky in a plume of smoke like a comet. Paul GULPS and folds up the letter, sheepishly meets his buddy's gaze.

PAUL (CONT'D)

I didn't know.

KAT

What's gonna happen now, Paul? Are we gonna go home some day? And go back to our old life, where they all just wanna know if you were in close quarters combat. We'll be like travelers in a landscape from a bygone era... I wonder if I'd rather sit around the campfire with you and Tjaden and Kropp and Müller eating baked jacket potatoes.

Kat shrugs and takes a deep drag off his smoking cigar.

47

EXT. STAGING AREA CAMP BEHIND THE FRONT LINES - NIGHT

47

Night has fallen. The barracks are still and dark. A single soldier returns to camp... Müller.

48

INT. BARRACKS / STAGING AREA CAMP - NIGHT

48

In the barracks, the men lie in their bunks, asleep. Paul opens his eyes, as Franz quietly gets undressed by his cot. He whispers.

PAUL

Franz...?

MÜLLER

Yeah?

PAUL

We gotta get up at six. Look for a few kids.

MÜLLER

What happened?

PAUL

Got lost.

Franz nods. Paul can't hide his curiosity.

(CONTINUED)

PAUL (CONT'D)

How was it?

MÜLLER

Mmh. Nice.

PAUL

Yeah?

MÜLLER

(nods)

Here, smell.

Franz hands him a scarf he has tied around his neck. Paul takes it and sniffs. *Mmh.* Heavenly.

PAUL

What's her name?

MÜLLER

Eloise.

PAUL

(sniffs again)

"Eloise."

MÜLLER

Mmh. Her skin is white as milk. And her breasts...

Franz stands beside the bed, wordlessly, and gives in to the beautiful image. Same with Paul... what a dream. Albert sits up in the next bunk.

KROPP

Hey. I wanna turn, too.

Paul reluctantly passes the scarf to Albert, who takes it and sniffs, shutting his eyes in relish. Tjaden leans over.

TJADEN

Kropp... Kropp! No hogging.

Kropp hands the scarf to Tjaden, who inhales the smell of the girl intently. He whispers to his buddies.

TJADEN (CONT'D)

A girl like that never has dirty fingernails. Maybe some sand off the beach.

KROPP

Yeah. I bet she bathes twice a day.

Franz has had enough.

MÜLLER

Gimme that.

(CONTINUED)

48 CONTINUED: (2)

48

With that, he yanks the scarf away from them. He will wear it all the time from now on.

49 INT/EXT. DIPLOMAT'S LIMOUSINE / SCHOOL - DAY

49

A shot-up school by the side of the road. A wall of new, unvarnished coffins long one side, at least a hundred. A squad of tired SOLDIERS buries them in a hole.

A convoy of three limousines ROARS by with their brights flashing. Little flags flap on the fenders, the sides are decorated with the Imperial eagle. Diplomats.

Two SOLDIERS on the runner boards of the leading vehicle: One of them blows a long HORN to ask for a cease fire. The other waves a big white sheet as a flag.

A pudgy man with spectacles and mustache sits in the second car: MATTHIAS ERZBERGER, 43, Secretary of State and head of the Armistice Negotiation Delegation. Erzberger is a Centrist politician and a Catholic pacifist. He sweats a lot.

Up front in the passenger seat sits GENERAL FRIEDRICHS, 50, military hard-liner and combat vet. A scar across his cheek.

The roads are in terrible shape, riddled with potholes, mud and craters.

GENERAL FRIEDRICHS

The Frenchmen have advanced their train to Tergnier. From there, they will take the train at night.

ERZBERGER

Thank you for the escort.

GENERAL FRIEDRICHS

No problem. With a little advance warning we could've fixed the potholes, too.

Erzberger stares at the coffins. Friedrichs doesn't even notice them.

GENERAL FRIEDRICHS (CONT'D)

The High Command will join us in Compiègne?

ERZBERGER

(shakes his head)

The High Command is not part of the delegation.

Friedrichs gapes.

GENERAL FRIEDRICHS

... You think that's a good idea?

(CONTINUED)

ERZBERGER

What I think is of no matter. The Reichs Chancellor himself formed the Delegation. I'm just doing his bidding.

GENERAL FRIEDRICHS

With all due respect, Mr. Erzberger, shouldn't the General Command support you in the negotiations?

ERZBERGER

No. The general consensus is that the Allies have had enough of our military... German uniforms aren't so popular there.

Friedrichs eyes the diplomat in the rear-view mirror. Erzberger goes on.

ERZBERGER (CONT'D)

Even if it's hard for you to accept, General, I'm afraid you will have to accept orders from a civilian. Believe me, it wasn't my idea.

Friedrichs swallows his anger, then looks forward again.

A HORN HONKS, heralding the convoy's arrival in the early-morning woods. A squad of soldiers watches the car go by: Kat, Tjaden, Paul, Kropp, Müller and three others.

Tjaden snaps to and salutes as a joke.

TJADEN

Look, it's the Kaiser himself.

KAT

Sock counter.

They cross the street and disappear in the woods.

KROPP

The Kaiser is top dog, right?

MÜLLER

Mmh.

KROPP

And everyone has to salute him? Really everyone?

(CONTINUED)

TJADEN

Yeah, sure.

Kropp smiles.

MÜLLER

What?

KROPP

I was just picturing Hindenburg
clicking his heels and snapping to
attention.

DESOLATE WOODS off to one side of the road -- blasted trees,
pock-marked ground. Terrible craters here and there.

The soldiers have spread out. Paul walks alongside Kat.

PAUL

That's a hell of a blast.

KAT

Mine thrower.

He points his barrel up -- a dead body dangles in the
branches, naked, only his underwear on one leg, and a helmet
on his head. Both his arms are missing, like a doll. Scraps
of uniform stick in the mud.

KAT (CONT'D)

He got blasted out of his uniform.

PAUL

Is he one of the guys we're looking
for?

Kat shakes his head.

KAT

He's been hanging there for a
while. Our kids have only been gone
since yesterday.

PAUL

No joke, Kat.

TJADEN

Don't get soft.

The men keep going toward the edge of the woods.

MÜLLER

How many are we looking for?

(CONTINUED)

51 CONTINUED:

51

KAT

Sixty men.

52 EXT. TRAIN YARD BEHIND FRONT LINES - DAY

52

It's noon. The squad walks along the railroad embankment in a row, finally coming to a stop: The train tracks are bent up before them.

Beyond, a deserted train station has been completely destroyed by bombardment. The windows are shot out, the walls knocked down, a few overturned boxcars by the tracks.

The men sit down around a flatbed wagon. Tjaden gets their rations out of his knapsack and eyes the sandwiches grumpily.

TJADEN

Turnip sandwiches for breakfast,
turnip sandwiches for lunch, turnip
sandwiches all the time, I can't
stand it anymore.

Albert's canteen is empty. He heads over to a train shed, chewing, where he fills his canteen at a pump. Suddenly he looks up: The faded poster of a front-line theater from last year. He goes toward it with interest...

Meanwhile, Kat looks around, suspiciously. Tjaden calls after them.

TJADEN (CONT'D)

Tell me when you find them. I'm not
taking another step.

Kat keeps going, warily. Something's wrong here. Empty shells strewn on the ground, which the fog creeps over. Eerie silence.

Paul and Franz join him.

KAT

Gas. They were gassed.

Kat kicks a canister on the ground. They proceed toward the destroyed train station.

53 INT. TRAIN YARD / ENGINE HALL - DAY

53

WHOOSH. Kat pushes open a gate to a train station hall. Light falls into the dark. His eyes have to adapt...

The men switch on their flashlights. Wordlessly, Kat nods to his mates, the men split up and spread out.

Paul is alone now...

(CONTINUED)

53

CONTINUED:

53

A long hall full of rust and shards. A pile of shells, old engines, huge puddles on the floor...

Paul clutches his gun.

Kat tiptoes though the next hall, when he suddenly listens up: Behind, Paul has opened a door, slips outside.

54

INT. TRAIN YARD / BETWEEN TWO HALLS - DAY

54

Paul goes up a dark alley between two storehouses. A sudden NOISE.

Paul holds his breath, cocks his rifle. Rain water drips from the roofs...

There it is again. He feels his way forward, step by step, then he startles...: GAUNT BIRDS peck at a dead dog on a chain. The birds scatter.

Paul breathes a sigh of relief.

55

EXT. TRAIN YARD BEHIND FRONT LINES - DAY

55

The rest of the squad sits in the sun, eating their sandwiches. Albert still stands at the faded posters from last year.

All of a sudden, he sees a GIRL in a bright summer dress and a red lacquer belt, wearing white stockings and white shoes with a dainty buckle and heels. She holds her straw hat with one hand. The blue ocean behind her, a gentleman beside her.

The girl is like a miracle to Kropp. So much beauty and so much happiness: That's what peace is like.

He draws his knife with a grin and cuts away the rival. Then he folds up the picture and puts it in his pocket.

56

INT. TRAIN YARD / WAREHOUSE - DAY

56

A coat on the ground. Old blankets. A few pots of beans in the dirt. Soldiers once housed here, but it looks like they departed in haste.

Paul sneaks along the halls reaching a rusted door. For a moment, he listens to the silence, then he plucks up his courage and opens the bolt.

He pushes the door open with his barrel, as it SQUEAKS on its hinges. He gingerly crosses the threshold...

57 INT. TRAIN YARD / STOREROOM - DAY 57

It's dark and quiet in the storeroom. It's quiet as a grave. All we hear is a few drops from the ceiling and the BUZZ of a swarm of flies.

Paul stares... His breath in the damp air, fears rises in his eyes. A sticky pile in FG, flies BUZZ around it.

58 INT. TRAIN YARD / ENGINE HALL - DAY 58

Franz in a hallway of the building when we hear SHOUTS in the distance.

PAUL (O.S.)
Kat... Kat!?

Franz turns on his heel, then Kat joins him from a side wing. They head up the hall together...

59 INT. TRAIN YARD / STOREROOM - DAY 59

A moment later, they reach Paul in the storeroom --

Franz Müller makes a face.

MÜLLER
Fuck.

SIXTY RECRUITS on the floor before them, all DEAD. Blue faces, black lips, frozen in place, their gas masks in their lifeless hands, like they were struck dead.

They're all dead.

KAT
Fucking kids.

MÜLLER
They took their masks off too soon.

Kat heads over to the dead: Pale faces with cramped hands. None older than 18, their uniforms much too big for them.

Wordlessly, Kat opens a satchel on his belt and gets out a handful of chlorinated lime. He goes along the row of bodies and sprinkles them with lime... Skinny, white bodies in the dark, shining like funeral shrouds.

Kat tosses lime on a BOY (17), who suddenly wakes up and starts to COUGH. He stares at him, wide-eyed and trembling on the floor, too scared to move.

Kat quickly kneels down to him.

(CONTINUED)

KAT

Hey, hey, hey. It's okay. Can you hear me?

The recruit nods, a crust of blood in his ears.

KAT (CONT'D)

Can you speak? What's your name? My name is Kat.

THE BOY

E... e...

He can't get any more out. Paul approaches and hands him his canteen, but he's too weak. He CHOKES and COUGHS.

Müller indicates his boots.

MÜLLER

Look at those boots. Those are nice boots. Right, Kat?

KAT

Come on, let's get him out of here.

Paul and Kat help the kid get up. They help him limp out of the room, while Müller ogles his boots: They're made of soft yellow leather, with nice buckles on the shaft.

Outside, in the fresh air, the kid keels over again. He shyly sticks a hand out for a canteen. Kat holds it up to his mouth.

KAT

Not so fast. That's better.

The kid catches his breath again.

KAT (CONT'D)

Can you walk? We'll take you to the infirmary.

The kid nods. He bravely tries to get on his feet, but he can do it alone. Paul and Kat have to support him.

They stagger across the courtyard with him a few feet, then he vomits a gush of blood and collapses in exhaustion again.

He lies on the ground, pale as a sheet. He whispers. Kat crouches down to him.

KAT (CONT'D)

Easy, easy. It'll pass --

(CONTINUED)

THE BOY

St--stay... stay here.

KAT

Sssh.

THE BOY

Stay here.

KAT

Don't worry. I won't leave you.

Kat takes the boy's hands, who can hardly breathe. His face is wet with soft tears, which he tries to suppress. He's very brave.

One last gasp, then he's dead. Kat looks at him for one more moment, then he lets go of his hands and gets up.

Paul can hardly breathe. The soldiers silently stare at the dead kid. Tjaden nods.

TJADEN

Germany will be depopulated soon.

Müller joins him on the ground, taking the kid's boots off. He wordlessly holds up the soles to his own, then puts them on. They fit perfectly.

61 EXT. EQUISAC MANOR - NIGHT 61

Night. A diplomatic limousine pulls up to a mansion.

The DRIVER jumps out and opens the door, snapping to. A BOY waits with a dog. General Friedrichs takes the dog, wordlessly.

62 EXT. EQUISAC MANOR - NIGHT 62

General Friedrichs quickly strides through courtyard, past a group of smoking OFFICERS, who salute him.

63 INT. EQUISAC MANOR / HALL - NIGHT 63

The General leads the dog down the hall.

SOLDIERS snap to and salute.

64 INT. EQUISAC MANOR / STUDY - NIGHT 64

A big study: The Division HQ. The dog sits down by the fireplace as Friedrichs storms in, helping himself to a cigarette from a silver box. He greedily lights it.

(CONTINUED)

MAJOR VON BRIXDORF (47) salutes patiently.

MAJOR VON BRIXDORF
General, Sir.

No answer. Friedrichs goes to the window, turning his back on him. Friedrichs takes a deep drag. Then, finally...

GENERAL FRIEDRICHS
What's new, Major?

MAJOR VON BRIXDORF
The Frenchmen are putting on pressure, Sir. Our scouts intercepted orders this morning to advance several divisions to Latierre. Apparently, an Armored Regiment is still stuck in Fernancourt... We have to expect an attack.

The only sound is the TICKING of a grandfather clock at the head of the room. Friedrichs nods... as he expected. He takes a tired drag off his cigarette.

GENERAL FRIEDRICHS
Social Democracy is the doom of mankind.

MAJOR VON BRIXDORF
...? General, Sir...?

GENERAL FRIEDRICHS
I just put a delegation in a train to go to Compiègne and negotiate an armistice. These men are traitors to our country, Major. But my orders are to wage war. And before anyone tells me otherwise, I will continue to fight for every meter.

Friedrichs extinguishes his cigarette, then he looks at the major.

GENERAL FRIEDRICHS (CONT'D)
The Frenchman want to force us to our knees, so we have to accept their demands... We have to counterattack, with all our might. We have to stay strong. The next generation of recruits is due in a few months. I will never surrender.

Von Brixdorf nods. That's an order.

65 EXT. DIPLOMATIC TRAIN - NIGHT 65

The lights of a train peel out of the dark.

66 INT. DIPLOMATIC TRAIN / ERZBERGER'S COMPARTMENT - NIGHT 66

CLACK-CLACK. CLACK-CLACK. CLACK-CLACK. The monotonous rattle of the train on the tracks. Erzberger can't sleep and sits up in the middle of the night.

He pulls his sheets back and picks up pen and paper, making a few notes. The photo of a young man in a frame on his night stand: His son.

67 INT. DIPLOMATIC TRAIN / HALL - NIGHT 67

WHOOSH. Erzberger comes out of his compartment in his pajama. He rubs his face, tired, then staggers down the hall to the toilet.

68 INT. DIPLOMATIC TRAIN / TOILET - NIGHT 68

Erzberger opens the toilet lid. He quietly whispers to himself, rehearsing a bit.

ERZBERGER

*... in the interest of -- I have to
insist... I demand, that--*

A sudden JERK in the train. Erzberger staggers and misses the toilet. He CURSES softly.

ERZBERGER (CONT'D)

Damn.

He washes his hands and looks for a towel, can't find one, then he looks out into the dark. The window is painted over, through a narrow slit you can see --

A CLEARING IN A BARE FOREST.

A second train stands a few hundred meters off on parallel tracks. Wood boards through the mud between the two trains.

FRENCH SOLDIERS stand guard, as a grey man gets out of the train. Skinny. Stern. Proud. His uniform fits perfectly. He's FERDINAND JEAN MARIE FOCH (67), French Marshal and Supreme Allied Commander.

He lights his pipe.

Erzberger -- with wet hands, dressed in his pajama -- starts to SWEAT. He wipes his hands on his pajama pants.

69 INT. DIPLOMATIC TRAIN / HALL - NIGHT 69

CLACK. Erzberger opens the toilet door and ties the belt of his robe to cover his wet pants. Suddenly, a young man stands before him:

Cavalry CAPTAIN VON HELLDORF (27), the delegation's interpreter. He quickly emerges from his compartment and pulls his robe shut.

VON HELLDORF

What?

ERZBERGER

We're here.

Erzberger can't hide how much it weighs on him.

70 EXT. STAGING CAMP - NIGHT 70

The quiet camp in the dark. A few petroleum lamps burn. Lieutenant Hoppe marches over to the Barracks.

71 INT. BARRACKS / STAGING AREA CAMP - NIGHT 71

The barracks lies in the dark, as the light suddenly comes on again. Lt. Hoppe staggers down the hall, loudly hitting the bunk beds with a cane.

LIEUTENANT HOPPE

Soldiers! Pack your knapsacks, roll up your bedding, wash your mess kits. Our Regiment will advance to the front line. Anyone who can stand is coming.

The SOLDIERS sit up in bed. Hoppe quickly loses his temper. He starts to SCREAM.

LIEUTENANT HOPPE (CONT'D)

Get out, God damn it! You think the French will wait for you to comb your pubes? Anyone who's not on the truck in fifteen minutes, I will chase on foot with the truck myself!

The place comes alive. The soldiers leap out of their beds. Paul stuffs his things into his knapsack. Müller slips his boots on. Kat buttons up his shirt.

KAT

Here we go.

MÜLLER

Where to?

(CONTINUED)

71 CONTINUED:

71

KAT

To battle.

The men nod and buckle on their daggers and spades.

72 EXT. TROOP TRUCK / ROAD BEHIND THE FRONT - NIGHT

72

A convoy of hard-top trucks barrels through the night. The road is pot-holed and worn. The trucks have their lights off and hit all the bumps.

The men stand crowded on the back of the lead vehicle. There's no room for anyone to sit. Paul, Kat, Müller and Tjaden sway monotonously between the others. Kropp carves a stick, giving it its finishing touches.

Suddenly, a reedy NOTE sounds: He plays the flute he carved. It gradually turns into a TUNE... short, but eerily beautiful.

KROPP

For my sister.

Paul nods.

The trucks turn off their brights, one after the other. They cruise through the dark.

73 OMITTED

73

74 EXT. LATIERRE HILL / ENTRY TO ACCESS TRENCH - FIRST LIGHT 74

An indefinite blue-black light on the horizon, illuminated by muzzle flashes of distant cannons. The air is muggy with gunsmoke and fog. Flares shoot up here and there. It's silent otherwise.

The soldiers jump into the access trench one after the other, wearing backpacks. Their heads and rifles stick out like out of a pond, then they disappear underground.

75 EXT. LATIERRE HILL / ENTRY TO ACCESS TRENCH - FIRST LIGHT 75

The soldiers goose-step along the trench. Paul stubbornly stares at the back of the guy in front of him. Müller is wearing his scarf and is proud of his boots. Kropp quietly plays his FLUTE.

76 INT. DIPLOMATIC TRAIN - DUSK

76

Early morning: It's dawning outside.

(CONTINUED)

The rest of the distinguished delegation sit with Erzberger and Major General von Winterfeldt in a generous compartment, which was turned into a meeting room:

MAJOR GENERAL DETLEF VON WINTERFELDT (51), the Reich Chancellor's military attaché, dressed in uniform from head to toe. Navy Captain ERNST VON VANSELOW (42), ALFRED COUNT VON OBERNDORFF (47) -- members of the Foreign Ministry, CAPTAIN GEYER (36) and the translator: Von Helldorf.

The train is comfortable, almost luxurious. ATTENDANTS in white uniforms. A generous breakfast on the table: Fruit and croissants. Cheese and eggs... everything you could want.

Erzberger writes in his notebook, trying to concentrate, while Oberndorff noisily scarfs down his breakfast. Winterfeldt nervously jiggles his foot under the table, impatiently pulls his watch out of his vest pocket.

A BUTLER arrives with a plate.

BUTLER

Omelette au jambon?

VON HELLDORF

Oui.

Von Helldorf raises his hand. The Butler brings it. Erzberger writes in his notebook, when his ink pen suddenly leaks. Cursing, he tries to wipe the ink off with a napkin.

A sudden KNOCK at the door. A FRENCH INTERPRETER enters. A brief nod in greeting; he speaks with an accent.

INTERPRETER

Monsieur le Maréchal will see you now.

Erzberger looks around, awestruck. He gulps.

ERZBERGER

Gentlemen, as Representative of the German Reichs Government, I wish us the Lord's aid and guidance.

The men get up from the table. Von Helldorf downs a few bites of his omelette. Erzberger pulls out a handkerchief and wipes the sweat off his gleaming brow.

Two trains side by side on the tracks, only separated by a narrow woods. It's fall. The trees are bare. The leaves rot on the ground.

(CONTINUED)

French guardsmen with guns slung over their shoulders and escort the German Delegation to the train of the Allied Powers. They have their collars up.

Erzberger suddenly slips and gets his shoe stuck in the mud. He swears.

ERZBERGER

Damn.

It's a bad omen. Panting, he tries to wipe off his shoe on the boards... his breath in the cold air.

CLACK. The door opens. The delegates climb up the steps to the compartment: A remodeled dining car serves as the meeting room. The walls are wood paneled. Expensive furniture. Marshal Foch sits at a long oak table with the rest of the Allied delegates:

MAJOR GENERAL MAXIME WEYGAND (51), Frenchman, the Marshal's close adviser. ADMIRAL GEORGE HOPE (49), Deputy First Sea Lord of the British Navy. ADMIRAL ROSSLYN WEMYSS (54), First Sea Lord and thus Hope's commander. Off to one side sits a YOUNG OFFICER who serves as scribe.

The interpreter introduces the German delegation.

INTERPRETER

*Monsieur le maréchal... La
délégation allemande.*

The proud men rise for a moment. He snaps into a salute, then they all sit down again. A draft treaty on the table before them.

Erzberger nods in greeting and sits down with the German delegation. He looks at his notes with sweat on his brow.

ERZBERGER

I stand before you in the hope you will take our presence as an opportunity to suspend hostilities. In the name of humanity, I urge you to agree to an immediate ceasefire for the duration of our negotiations, to save our nations unnecessary losses. The bloodshed must end today... Matthias Erzberger, head of the German Armistice Commission.

He gulps, while the Interpreter ends the translation. Foch and his men eye him deadpan. No one offers him a chair. No one says a word.

(CONTINUED)

Foch eyes Weygand coolly.

FOCH

Que désirent ces messieurs?

Von Helldorf clears his throat.

VON HELLDORF

Marshal Foch asks what brings the gentlemen here.

ERZBERGER

Monsieur le maréchal. We look forward to your suggestions for reaching a final armistice on land, sea and air.

The interpreter translates. Foch answers.

FOCH

Suggestions? Dites aux messieurs que je n n'ai aucune suggestion pour eux.

VON HELLDORF

Suggestions? I don't have any suggestions for you.

ERZBERGER

What does he mean?

Erzberger looks around, confused, but his fellow delegates don't know, either. Von Helldorf gives it a shot.

VON HELLDORF

Perhaps he disapproves of the formulation.

ERZBERGER

Sure, fine. Then...

VON HELLDORF

(to Foch)

Monsieur, le maréchal. Si vous permettez, on aimerait connaître les conditions--

FOCH

Vous souhaitez l'armistice? Alors, dites-le!

Foch interrupts him abruptly. Both sides stare at each other. Winterfeldt finally breaks the silence.

MAJOR GENERAL WINTERFELDT

He wants you to ask him formally.

ERZBERGER

Monsieur, I - I would like to request a cease fire.

(CONTINUED)

VON HELLDORF

Nous demandons un armistice.

Erzberger swallows his pride, sounding pretty meek. He nervously plays with his napkin, still with ink on his fingers. Foch eyes the man across from him disparagingly, twiddling his moustache. He finally slides a treaty across the table to them.

FOCH

On vous donne 72 heures pour accepter nos conditions. Mais que ne vous y trompez pas... Ce n'est pas une négociation. La guerre est la guerre, on continue jusqu'à ce que vous signiez.

VON HELLDORF (CONT'D)

We will give you 72 hours, to accept our conditions. But please don't get me wrong... This is not a negotiation. War is war, and it will go on until you sign.

ERZBERGER

72 hours? Monsieur le maréchal, don't let 72 hours go by. People are dying out there!

FOCH

Alors, signiez.

Erzberger has worked himself into a rage, but Foch holds out the ink open to him... The German doesn't accept it.

Finally, the Marshal gets up from his chair and wordlessly leaves the car. Erzberger looks at von Helldorf, who takes the treaty.

It's foggy at the front and still almost dark. A dead horse is rotting on the battlefield. A soldier with no hands lies beside it, caught in a wire obstacle.

The silent SOLDIERS are spread out in the trench. Sergeant Steinberger stands at periscope binoculars, observing the enemy lines. A young RECRUIT has to VOMIT. It's terribly quiet.

Paul has taken his position beside his friends. Kat sticks a package of chewing tobacco in his mouth. Kropp takes out the half-poster from the theater. He smoothes it out, kisses the girl, and pins it to the wall with a stick. He whispers.

KROPP

I'll be right back.

He looks at Paul.

KROPP (CONT'D)

Jealous, huh?

(CONTINUED)

79

CONTINUED:

79

Paul smiles. You can't hear much except for his breath.

80

INT/EXT. LATIERRE / TRENCH - DUSK

80

Lt. Hoppe holds a field phone in a shelter, receiving orders and nodding.

LIEUTENANT HOPPE

Yes, Sir.

He hangs up wordlessly, goes out to the trench.

81

EXT. LATIERRE / TRENCH - DUSK

81

A thick fog bank lies over No Man's Land as Sgt. Steinberger approaches Hoppe. Finally, a quiet order.

LIEUTENANT HOPPE

Soldiers, march.

SERGEANT STEINBERGER

Soldiers, march.

The Sergeant passes on the command to his men. The order echoes down the trench. Paul clutches his rifle. A last breath, and the men climb out..

82

EXT. LATIERRE HILL / NO MAN'S LAND - DUSK

82

Paul and his fellow soldiers robotically race over the battlefield toward the enemy lines, their bayonets before them. GASP. Dirt. Fog. Mud. They jump over barbed wire.

Finally, the enemy lines emerge from the fog. The first MGs rattle. Behind Paul, FELLOW SOLDIERS fall in the mud like flies.

RAT TAT TAT TAT TAT.

Bullets SAIL by Paul and hit his fellows. LIEUTENANT HOPPE waves them onward, SCREAMING, when he is hit by an explosion. He staggers, his momentum carries him on a few steps until he finally falls to his knees.

Paul reaches for his Commanding Officer in the dense artillery smoke. He gasps: Shrapnel has torn half his face off.

He lets go of him, aghast. He overcomes his panic and gives in to anger.

He staggers on blindly, toward the enemy trenches, keeps on going. Into hell on earth. Like a feral beast.

83 EXT. LATIERRE / FRENCH TRENCH - DUSK 83

RAT TAT TAT TAT TAT. A French MG GUNNER fires deadly salvos.

84 EXT. LATIERRE / NO MAN'S LAND - DUSK 84

All hell breaks loose around us, coloring the fog red. Paul staggers and falls, getting back up, forced to take cover behind an earth berm.

He wipes the dirt from his face. Then he crawls up the wall and pulls a hand grenade out of his satchel.

Trembling, he pulls the pin and tosses it in the enemy trench, where young eyes flash under enemy helmets.

CALLS and SHOUTS. THE MG falls silent. Then: BOOM! The hand grenade explodes, tearing the French SOLDIERS apart.

Anger. Sweat. Blood. Death. Paul struggles up and charges over the berm, FIRING into the enemy trench, SCREAMING, and charging into it.

85 EXT. LATIERRE / FRENCH TRENCH - DUSK 85

A few DEAD SOLDIERS killed by the hand grenade before them. A FRENCHMAN tries to flee. Paul SHOTS him at close quarters. Another one of them is barely alive.

Paul stabs him with his bayonet, where it gets stuck between the ribs. He rams his feet in his ribs to pull it out.

A FRENCHMAN attacks him from behind, Paul drops his bayonet. He gets his trench shovel out with his other hand and HITS the man with the sharp edge of his shovel.

The Frenchman defends himself with his arms, but it's no use. The sound of BREAKING BONES. WHAM! WHAM! WHAM!

GASPING, the Frenchman falls into the black mud, his hand on his shattered collar bone, blood oozing out between his fingers.

Paul Bäumer stands over him. They exchange looks: Innocent eyes, filled with the horror of this waking nightmare.

The Frenchman can hardly breathe and clutches Paul's collar, desperately. Blood GURGLES in his throat. His body drains. He whispers.

FRENCH SOLDIERS
*Pourquoi tu veux me tuer? Je veux
pas te tuer... Pourquoi?*

He stares up at the German, who stands there, transfixed, his shovel raised for the next blow, staring like a wild beast.

(CONTINUED)

Müller appears out of nowhere. He draws his gun and SHOTS the man in the head, matter of factly.

MÜLLER

Let's keep going, Paul!

Paul takes his eyes off the man and runs after his comrade.

CUT TO:

FURTHER ALONG THE TRENCH

Kat and Tjaden make their way along the trench until they reach a bunker. A FRENCHMAN tries to escape, but Kat HITS him in the face with his rifle butt.

Kat quickly secures the entrance of the bunker, then Tjaden tosses a hand grenade into the bunker.

The earth trembles. A BLAST, smoke and groans.

A French OFFICER staggers out, ears bleeding. Kat stabs him with his bayonet, as Paul and Franz join him from BG. Franz staggers on without stopping to catch his breath.

CUT TO:

FURTHER ALONG THE TRENCH

The FRENCH are overrun.

Paul staggers after Kat and Tjaden, breathlessly. He falls on a soft body, struggles back up.

CUT TO:

SIDE TRENCH

Kat and Tjaden exchange GUNFIRE with two Frenchmen, until they lie dead on the ground.

Another one turns on his heel and takes cover in a shelter. Kat hurries after them, pulls out a grenade, but Tjaden holds him back and runs past him.

A mad look, a deep breath, then Tjaden charges into the shelter with a madman's glee, SCREAMING and FIRING blindly. Kat charges after him.

It's the kitchen. Three FRENCHMEN have taken cover here. Tjaden shoots all three, a Kat kneels at the door, covering him.

(CONTINUED)

Bullets whip the dirt, cans EXPLODE on the shelves. Finally, all the Frenchmen are hit and lie on the floor, bleeding.

Tjaden heads to the shelves, plundering their supplies. He draws his knife and opens a can of corned beef, spreads it on a baguette.

FRENCHMEN run by the door. While Paul keeps guard, Kat finds a bottle of Cognac and opens it.

Kat, Paul and Tjaden drink and scarf the food down, hungrily. They look at the ground with dirty eyes, chewing. They still their hunger. It tastes good.

They suddenly freeze: A swarm of RATS flees through the kitchen and disappears underground... The men exchange looks, with a sinking feeling.

Then, softly, very softly, we hear a RUMBLE in the distance. The ground trembles. Cooking pots rattle on the ceiling. Water drips down the tent canvas... Tjaden takes another quick bite.

The three men run out.

Outside, the German soldiers are lined up in the trench, aiming their rifles out at the French side.

Paul chambers his rifle, dropping his ammo belt into the muddy water. He picks it up with trembling hand and takes his place beside Kropp and Müller...

The men stare into space, transfixed. A loud ROAR comes at them: Suddenly, steel monsters appear out of the fog:

Three FRENCH SAINT-CHAMOND TANKS roll at them from behind the front. A 75mm canon barrel in front, four Hotchkiss MGs on the sides. The monsters crawl toward the trench unstoppably.

All hell breaks loose.

RAT TAT TAT TAT TAT. The German MGs open fire, but the bullets just bounce off the steel plating. The steel monsters stop, their cannons swivel.

Kat drags Paul down to the ground before the tank cannons shoot back, blasting everything in their path to shreds. THUMP. THUMP. THUMP. Bodies are flung in the air out of the mud. The MG EXPLODES.

The German soldiers start to flee. In a panic, they clamber out of the trench, running back to their own lines through No-Man's Land. Paul crawls back to Franz and Albert, helps them up out of the mud.

(CONTINUED)

SERGEANT STEINBERGER

Hold your ground! Close ranks!

THUMP. Sgt. Steinberger gets shot. Paul and Kropp fire away, but the attack is just too strong. The first tank has almost reached then. Kat SHOUTS through the barrage.

KAT

Hand grenades! Aim for the tracks
when they're over us!

Paul huddles at the bottom of the trench with Kropp and Müller. The ground shakes. One position further on, a belching tank ruthlessly crushes two SOLDIERS, crawling in the mud at the bottom of the trench. Their bodies sink into the mud.

RAT TAT TAT TAT TAT. The Hotchkiss mows the fleeing soldiers in the trench down with a salvo.

Then, a tank crosses the trench right over their heads. VRRRRR. The ENGINE NOISE is unbearable. Another cannon blasts. BOOM!

Dirt rains down on our soldiers. A few walls collapse. Kropp SCREAMS, but no one hears him. COMBAT NOISES drown everything out.

The men shrink together in their pale skin, until the monster rolls by. It crawls on unstopably, at a walking pace through No Man's Land, across to the German lines.

Kat BARKS.

KAT (CONT'D)

After it.

PAUL

Let's go... Franz!

But Müller is carried off by a group of INFANTRY SOLDIERS. He calls out, but can't be heard any more.

Paul and Kropp grab their grenades and follow the soldiers, around Kat over the berm onto the battlefield.

WHOMP. The tank behind our guys fires a shell which hits right behind them.

Paul struggles up and runs after the lead steel beast, firing its MG at the men. Then he pulls the pins of the hand grenades to place them on the track. They hit the dirt and take cover.

(CONTINUED)

BOOM! The grenades blast the tank treads. A GRINDING and SQUEALING noise as the tread comes off, stopping the tank in its tracks.

Kropp jumps up and throws a hand grenade through the visor. THUMP. A muffled explosion inside the tank, then a door opens and two burning GRENADIERS stagger out.

Paul and Kat SHOOT them with their rifles. One position further on, the tank burns brightly as Kropp SHOTS in the visor like crazy. Then he stops and looks up.

KROPP

Paul.

They turn around. In the middle of No Man's Land, 20 meters from the trench, the worst nightmare of modern warfare appears:

FLAME THROWERS! They appear out of the fog, advancing in a row.

The French INFANTRYMEN have the deadly canisters on their backs. A second SOLDIER holds the hoses, spurting fire. Long, deadly flames shoot out of the long nozzles, incinerating anything in their way.

The smell of petroleum wafts over with the gun smoke. We can hear the Germans' DYING SCREAMS, being burned alive.

The psychological effect can instantly be felt. Fear and terror seize the soldiers. Even the most hardened men turn and run. Behind them, hundreds of FRENCHMEN advance in a dark mass.

Our guys quickly duck, before they come under fire.

KAT

Open fire! Open fire!

Paul feverishly reloads, but then one of the bullets jams... suddenly he looks and finds himself in the middle of the barrage the approaching INFANTRYMEN fire at them. Kat is in charge.

KAT (CONT'D)

Retreat! Retreat!

BAM! BAM! BAM! Bullets whizz by, forcing the men to flee. Paul runs a few meters behind Kat when a shell hits beside him.

BOOM! Paul is hurled through the air with a hail of dirt and hits the ground, hard. He digs his way out and gasps for breath, the shock wave still ringing in his ears.

He looks around, dazed...

(CONTINUED)

A fews steps on, Kat is getting up out of the mud. The French soldiers cross the trenches and approach inexorably.

A group of GERMAN SOLDIERS wants to surrender. They climb out of a crater with their hands up, but are shot by the FRENCH.

Albert kneels right by them, tries to escape from a flame thrower. WHOOSH! Too late. The flames consume him.

The smell of petroleum wafts over with the gun smoke. We can hear the Germans' DYING SCREAMS, being burned alive.

Paul GASPS.

PAUL

Albert...

Paul wants to help, but Kat grabs him by the collar and drags him off with him.

KAT

Retreat. Let's go! Go on!

PAUL

Albert? Albert!?

But it's too late.

The men stagger across the battle field, breathlessly, past another tank, stuck in the mud, helpless. MG salvos shred the ground, spewing fountains of dirt.

RAT TAT TAT TAT TAT.

Kat drops two live hand grenades, to cover their retreat.

Finally they're back where we began this morning: In the shot-up German trenches.

Paul hurtles after his buddies, completely out of breath...

Into the trench, where they all throng the cooling water of an MG. Thirstily, they stick their heads in the bucket and guzzle half of it.

Kat looks at the MG GUNNER.

KAT

Aim for the tanks on their backs.

RAT TAT TAT TAT TAT. The MG opens up beside them again. The gunner mows down FRENCHMEN, a lit cigarette in the corner of his mouth. The Frenchmen fall in a row. One of them falls on a wire obstacle.

(CONTINUED)

BOOM! A flame thrower tank goes up in flames. The FRENCHMAN is riddled by MG fire. He falls. The GUY holding his nozzle loses his grip. Fire shoots in all directions, they both burn brightly.

CLANG CLANG CLANG. French bullets bounce off the MG shield and ricochet all over. Paul and Kat duck. Their lips are dry. Sweat bites their eyes. They take a moment to catch their breath.

PAUL

Where's Franz? I lost Franz.

No answer. Who the hell knows?. Suddenly: THUMP. The MG GUNNER collapses, dead, shot in the head. A SERGEANT appears behind them and BARKS ORDERS.

SERGEANT

Katczynsky, pitch in! Disable the MG and retreat. We'll regroup in Eguisac. Two kilometers northeast of here.

PAUL

I'm missing my comrade, Sarge.

SERGEANT

I'm missing my mommy, God damn it.

No more time to catch their breath. Kat rolls the MG GUNNER away, a cigarette still burning between his lips. Then he takes the MG.

KAT

Come on!

SERGEANT

(to Paul)

Grab the ammo and the tripod!

Paul lifts the equipment on his back, awkwardly. He peers over the rampart out at the battlefield -- INFANTRYMEN and FLAME THROWERS in the fog all over.

CLANG CLANG CLANG. A few ricochets ZING around his head. Paul ducks, but then runs after Kat.

The trench is already full of frightened soldiers, fleeing the front. Paul lags behind...

The German troops retreat all along the front. Tanks burn. FLAME THROWERS belch flame. French INFANTRYMEN advance.

91 EXT. DIPLOMATIC TRAIN - DAY 91

The diplomatic train stands deserted in the woods. A FRENCH GUARDSMAN is smoking in the fog.

92 INT. DIPLOMATIC TRAIN - DAY 92

The German Armistice negotiating team is back on their train. They sit around the conference table, grumpily.

Major General von Winterfeldt pages through the Allied treaty draft, then slams it shut angrily.

MAJOR GENERAL WINTERFELDT

This isn't a negotiation, it's a dictate.

COUNT VON OBERNDORFF

Maybe we should go back to Spa to consult with the High Command?

MAJOR GENERAL WINTERFELDT

What good will that do? There's no alternative but to fight to the end. Even if we wind up losing, we won't be worse off than with this capitulation.

ERZBERGER

Except for a few hundred thousand more dead.

Erzberger stands at the window, staring out at his dirty shoes. With a scoff, the Major General takes the contract and waves it like a stinking rag.

MAJOR GENERAL WINTERFELDT

This is a complete capitulation. Alsace-Lorraine. The occupation of the Rhineland. Cannons. Locomotives. Wagons. Negotiating over this is political foolishness!

ERZBERGER

250,000 Americans are landing in Europe every month. Cambrai, Marne, Cantigny -- all lost. The only thing separating us from Armistice is false pride... We will now undo the mess you and your fellow Generals have left us. But if you don't want to stay... be my guest. We will stay here. And then, if you wanna blames someone afterward, well, here I am.

(CONTINUED)

Erzberger stares at his opponent, with a calm but sharp tone. Count von Oberndorff gets involved, expressing his doubts.

COUNT VON OBERNDORFF

It's winter. Without trains and provisions, the Bolsheviks will overrun us. The men will starve on their way home, instead of dying with honor on the battlefield.

ERZBERGER

Honor? My son fell in this war. Where's his honor?

Erzberger eyes the others coolly. Then he turns to Von Helldorf.

ERZBERGER (CONT'D)

Von Helldorf. Get us a few copies of the Allied demands and telegraph headquarters to inform the government.

Von Helldorf salutes and exits the car. Erzberger looks around at everyone.

ERZBERGER (CONT'D)

We have 72 hours, gentlemen. Every minute we waste talking here, another soldier dies. Let's pray for God's mercy, but for God's sake end the war.

Erzberger wipes the sweat off his brow.

General Friedrichs steps out on the balcony of HQ, looks out at the battle in the distance. A shadow of a doubt on his face, as he resists the looming defeat.

Tree trunks blasted by the artillery barrage. Their blackened, splintered tree trunks dot the plain. In between, a wasteland of craters and holes.

Heavy fire covers the land. Dead bodies all over. The whole company is retreating.

Panting, Paul carries the heavy tripod on his shoulder. A SHELL EXPLODES barely five meters away from him, killing a private.

(CONTINUED)

THUMP THUMP THUMP. The bullets ZING past, riddling tree trunks. Soldiers fall all over. A plane ROARS overhead, also opening FIRE.

With his last strength, Paul jumps into a crater for cover.

An oily mess at the bottom of the crater, a yellow puddle of blood in it. Paul leaps in it.

It's noon. The hot sun burns down. Out of breath, Paul wipes the blood off his face. His hands tremble uncontrollably.

He rises up a bit to look out, but quickly ducks down again: GUNS BLAZE, SHELLS EXPLODE. SOLDIERS race by at a trot -- FRENCHMEN with their Commandos.

Paul slides down in the puddle, diving in up to his chest. He draws his dagger, in terror.

He lies curled up in the stinking puddle, eyes the dead man. Muffled BOOTSTEPS over him, which turn on their heel now. METAL JANGLES. FRENCH ORDERS. Someone shouts "RETRAITE! RETRAITE!" THUNDER.

MGS RATTLE. German batteries FIRE, repelling the attack. FRENCHMEN leap over his hole in the ground, when suddenly... CLACK.

A ROUND being chambered.

Paul looks up to the top of the crater: A FRENCHMAN stands over him, pointing his rifle at him.

He shuts his eyes and hugs the ground, digs his way in, waiting for death.

And then:

BOOM! An explosion hits the Frenchman and hurls him down by Paul. A bullet hits the water by Paul, while the Frenchman lands on a gravel bank.

Paul immediately goes on the attack. He pulls out his dagger, wades through the puddle, while the Frenchman crawls toward his rifle, frantically trying to reload, but Paul quickly stabs him in the chest, blindly stabbing as the blood spurts in his face. He only feels the body convulse, then go soft and collapse.

Paul lies on his back in the mud, exhausted, coming to again. His hand is sticky and wet. The injured FRENCHMAN lies beside him, gasping in his battle between life and death.

Trembling, Paul takes a handful of dirt and stuffs his mouth with it.

(CONTINUED)

Then he crawls off to the furthest corner, his eyes staring at the man, ready to stab him again if he moves again.

Finally, Paul dares to move again. He puts his helmet on the Frenchman's bayonet and holds it aloft, gingerly, but then... CLANG! A bullet knocks it right out of his hand.

Paul doesn't stand a chance. The bullets ZING low over the ground. He's pinned down.

Paul tries to ignore the Frenchman's RATTLE. He hisses.

PAUL

Shut up.

He holds his ears shut, groaning, until he spots his hand: Blood. All over. He almost has to throw up. He rubs his body with dirt until it covers all the blood.

Suddenly, the shape across from him moves. The man tries to lift his head. With his final effort, he spits out the mud, then he collapses again.

Paul looks at him for the first time: A small mustache over his full lips, his slack hand on his chest. Paul gingerly crawls up to him, lying beside him.

The man opens his eyes wide in fear. His body is quiet, no more gasping, but his eyes are SCREAMING.

Paul gently strokes his forehead, but the man recoils from his touch.

PAUL (CONT'D)

No, no... No, no, no.

The man's mouth gapes open. He tries to talk.

Paul digs the dirt out of his mouth. He looks around: His canteen is gone. So he spoons the yellow water out of the mud puddle with his handkerchief... The Frenchman drinks it.

Finally, Paul opens his collar. His shirt is stuck shut. Paul digs for his knife in the mud, to cut it open...

The man sees the knife. He desperately tries to defend himself, but he's too weak. There's the fear, the scream in his eyes.

Paul holds his eyes shut.

PAUL (CONT'D)

No, no. Comrade... *Camarade, camarade, camarade.*

Paul whispers in his ear. Finally, he places a few bandages on his bleeding wounds...

(CONTINUED)

The man finally dies. A last twitch, he stops WHEEZING, the front starts to quiet down.

Paul GULPS. He whispers.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Camarade. Camarade. I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

No answer. He gingerly adjusts the dead man's body, bedding his head more comfortably in the mud. Then he shuts the man's eyes.

The man's uniform is half open. Paul takes out a wallet, from which a few letters fall in the mud.

A picture of a mother with a little girl: Simple country folks, standing before an ivy-colored wall.

Paul takes the letters and tries to read them, but can't understand the French. He opens his pay book, in back of the wallet.

The soldier's name on the cover. He reads:

Gérard Duval, Typograph.

Paul gulps. With wet lips, he whispers in the Frenchman's ear, almost like he's praying, giving confession. A few words reach him.

PAUL (CONT'D)

*Maison, ta femme... Je promets.
Promise.*

Paul wipes the mud off the man's face. He notes down the dead man's address on the bloody envelope. Then he sticks the wallet back in the man's coat.

Tired with exhaustion and hunger, he lowers his head on his arms, suddenly listening up:

Nothing. No more gunfire. A pale sky over him, a flock of birds crosses it. The battle has moved on. Night starts to fall.

Paul trembles with excitement, his will to live comes back.

Paul peers over the edge of the crater, carefully: Fog shrouds the charred tree stumps. It's otherwise quiet and deserted.

Paul crawls out of the crater and stumbles on, past corpses and a deserted bunker, in the middle of nowhere.

(CONTINUED)

96

CONTINUED:

96

Behind him, a piece of paper flutters down into the dirt... the envelope with the printer's address on it.

97

INT. EGUISAC MANOR / DINING ROOM - NIGHT

97

While daylight fades outside, General Friedrichs and Major von Brixdorf sit at a richly set table. He chews at a scrumptious pigeon drumstick while an AIDE pours them red wine.

Friedrichs drinks and nods to himself. He eyes the label approvingly.

GENERAL FRIEDRICHS

When were you born, Major?

MAJOR VON BRIXDORF

Eighteen seventy-one. June.

GENERAL FRIEDRICHS

A summer child. Same here.

MAJOR VON BRIXDORF

Yes.

Friedrichs takes another bite of his drumstick. The hearty sauce tastes good.

GENERAL FRIEDRICHS

What does your father do?

MAJOR VON BRIXDORF

My family owns a workshop in Holstein.

GENERAL FRIEDRICHS

What kind of workshop?

MAJOR VON BRIXDORF

Riding saddles, Sir.

GENERAL FRIEDRICHS

Well. They'll always need saddles. That's a safe bet.

MAJOR VON BRIXDORF

Lucky for me.

General Friedrichs tears off a piece of pigeon meat. He nods and chucks it under the table, where his dog scarfs it up greedily.

GENERAL FRIEDRICHS

So you're looking forward to going home, Major? When we're not needed here anymore?

(CONTINUED)

MAJOR VON BRIXDORF

Yes, Sir. Another job is waiting for me after war. I will take over the business.

GENERAL FRIEDRICHS

Hm.

MAJOR VON BRIXDORF

What about you?

Friedrichs hesitates. A beat. He listens to the SHOUTS of returning soldiers.

GENERAL FRIEDRICHS

My father served in this Regiment. He fought in three wars under Bismarck. And won all three. In 1871, he marched on Paris and came home a hero.

He shakes his head and discovers a stain on his uniform pants.

GENERAL FRIEDRICHS (CONT'D)

We were born too late, Major. A half-century of peace. Who needs soldiers without war?

He pensively dips his napkin in a glass of water and rubs the stain on his pants. Von Brixdorf gulps and looks at the General, who can only barely hide his thirst for glory.

MAJOR VON BRIXDORF

Were you and your father close?

General Friedrichs shrugs.

GENERAL FRIEDRICHS

Men are born alone. We live alone and die alone.

He looks at Von Brixdorf, sullenly.

In the General's study, his boy piles firewood in the hearth, lights a fire and empties the trash, then he adjusts the chair behind the desk.

The last section on the western front where order still reigns.

99 EXT. EGUISAC - DUSK

99

Finally, we reach Eguisac. A deserted, destroyed village with bombed-out roofs. A flare shoots skyward behind a shot-up church tower.

SOLDIERS warm themselves at the campfires which burn all over.

100 EXT. EQUISAC / VILLAGE SQUARE - NIGHT

100

On the village square, a few SOLDIERS drag up mattresses from the houses. Two of them lie in a four-poster bed in the middle of the burning street. Beside them, a SOLDIER is shooting up morphine. A CROWD chases a pig across the square.

Soldiers PLUNDER the town and urinate on the street, SINGING and SHOOTING in the air. A drunk PRIEST (32) is blessing a loose group of men kneeling before him on the ground.

PRIEST

Lamb of God, you take away the sins
of the earth: have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, you take away the sins
of the earth: give us your peace.

SOLDIERS

Lord, I am not worthy that you
should enter under my roof, but
only say the word and my soul shall
be healed.

The Priest goes around between the soldiers, hands them his bottle of wine. He blesses them.

PRIEST

Born in war, died in war.

A PHONOGRAPH plays on the other side of the street. A SOLDIER sits at the head of the bed in a velvet fauteuil armchair, listening to the music and smoking a cigar like Che Guevara himself. A man beside him sits in a cast-iron tub full of bloody water. If this were Apocalypse Now, this would be Col. Kurtz's camp, only without the leadership.

Paul staggers up the street, exhausted. A few SOLDIERS sidle past, rifles slung over their shoulders Russian-style, with the butts up. One of them runs into Paul's arms.

SOLDIER LEMROTT

Knock on the monastery's door and
you will only find thieves and
hoodlums.

PAUL

...?

(CONTINUED)

100 CONTINUED:

100

SOLDIER LEMROTT

It's over. It's all over. The pig fuckers are surrendering. They're finally negotiating...!

No answer.

SOLDIER LEMROTT (CONT'D)

We're going home soon, Soldier!

He marches by with his comrades. Paul calls after them.

PAUL

Where's the infirmary?

SOLDIER LEMROTT

Who the hell cares? I survived!

Paul stays behind, dazed.

101 INT. EGUISAC INFIRMARY - NIGHT

101

An old village church, converted to an infirmary. A bucket of water is poured out on the floor. A NURSE scrubs the blood off.

A MEDIC brings chloroform to the OR, where a young RECRUIT lies on the operating table, his arm broken to pieces. The man struggles like crazy, while the ARMY SURGEON approaches with a bone saw.

OR RECRUIT

No! No! Stop it!

ARMY SURGEON

Hold still! Will you chloroform him, already?

The MEDICS press a cloth soaked in chloroform on the man's face, as the surgeon starts sawing his bone.

Paul enters, goes along the rows of WOUNDED on the floor, looking for his buddies. No luck.

The SCREAMS behind him fall silent. The doctor stops sawing. The Medics carry the corpse off.

102 INT. EGUISAC INFIRMARY / HALL - NIGHT

102

Paul heads down the crowded hall of the infirmary, when a voice comes from the yard.

TJADEN (O.S.)

Bäumer. Bäumer!

Paul exits.

103 EXT. EGUISAC INFIRMARY / YARD - NIGHT

103

Tjaden is lying on a wood bier in the yard, a bloody bandage on his leg. He's sweating and feverish, pale and weak with loss of blood. Paul joins him quickly.

PAUL

Tjaden. What happened? Where did you get hit?

TJADEN

Over the knee, I think. I can't feel anything.

Paul takes off his helmet and lifts the bandage: A gaping, ugly wound. Tjaden's knee is totally shattered and gangrenous.

TJADEN (CONT'D)

How far up is the bullet? I can't lift my head.

PAUL

(lies)

At least ten centimeters... You're heading home, Tjaden.

TJADEN

You think so?

PAUL

I'm sure of it.

Tjaden nods. He clenches his teeth.

TJADEN

Paul. I heard there will be peace soon. This will all be over soon.

PAUL

That would be something.

TJADEN

Goddamn it, how am I gonna make Ranger now?

PAUL

You still can.

Tjaden shakes his head.

TJADEN

I'm not gonna let them amputate, Paul. I'm not gonna be a cripple.

(CONTINUED)

PAUL

You won't have to. You'll see --
They've patched up much worse cases
here.

Tjaden gulps and shuts his eyes. He has to get a grip on himself.

TJADEN

Paul...

With great effort, he sticks his hands in his pocket. Then he gets a scarf out... Müller's scarf. A smattering of blood on the corner.

Tjaden sticks it in his hand, whispering.

TJADEN (CONT'D)

This is for you.

Paul stares at it, incredulous.

PAUL

Is he dead?

Tjaden nods.

TJADEN

(shakes his head)

You have to be brave now, Paul.
You're still alive. You have to be
grateful for that... for us. For
all those who didn't make it.

PAUL

Stop it, Tjaden. Don't say that.
Not you!

Paul gets angry. He has tears in his eyes. Tjaden clenches his teeth and takes Paul's hand with the scarf in it.

TJADEN

Listen, Paul. I heard they're
serving beans in back of the yard.
Can you bring me some?

PAUL

(nods)

Sure.

TJADEN

Come right back, huh? And don't
forget your mess kit.

Paul stares at him -- *why should he forget his mess kit?* With that, he leaves. Tjaden lets go of his hand, Müller's scarf glides from his fingers.

104 EXT. EGUISAC INFIRMARY - NIGHT 104

Paul comes out on the street. He looks at the scarf for a beat, then he ties it around his neck... He will wear it all the time from now on.

105 INT. EGUISAC SOUP KITCHEN - NIGHT 105

The fires flicker outside. The ARMY COOK (32) at the head of the room, defending his mess kitchen. A horde of SOLDIERS crowds around him with their mess kits. Kat is in the front row.

ARMY COOK

Not so fast! Not until everyone's here.

SOLDIER FROM CHURCH

We are.

ARMY COOK

Yeah, sure. Where are the others?

KAT

Dead or infirmary. They're not your business any more.

Paul listens up. Was that his buddy? Paul quickly grabs a mess kit off a pile and approaches the rebellious horde, while the cook is blown away for a beat. Kat is in the very front.

KAT (CONT'D)

Go on, Cookie, serve it up. We can smell it's done.

ARMY COOK

I -- I can't'.

SOLDIER FROM CHURCH

Why not, bacon grease?

ARMY COOK

I cooked for a hundred and fifty. I can't serve eighty men food for a hundred and fifty.

KAT

I think you need to be relieved of duty. You got provisions for 2nd Company. That's us. We're the 2nd Company. So dish it out!

SOLDIER FROM CHURCH

As if they were your provisions.

PRIVATE FROM CHURCH

Go on, hurry up. We finally wanna eat.

(CONTINUED)

KAT

Don't lose count!

PAUL

Kat... Kat!

KAT

Paul?

The soldiers shout overlapping and throng the cook. Suddenly a SOLDIER hits an ORGAN keyboard -- the shattered organ pipes GROAN in atonal cacophony.

Paul pushes his way amid the throng, reaching Kat by the field kitchen. He SCREAMS over the chaos.

PAUL

Kat, you're alive! You're alive!

KAT

Paul!

The two buddies hug, happily. Paul SCREAMS over the mayhem.

PAUL

Tjaden got hit. He's in the church.

KAT

He'll get double rations from us.

Kat sticks his mess kit out to the cook.

Kat and Paul gingerly balance their mess kits full of beans and bacon on the way back to the infirmary.

PAUL

Fucking hell, I thought you were dead.

KAT

We all have to die.

PAUL

But not on the home stretch.

They reach the church.

KAT

If you die before me, I'm gonna kill you.

He LAUGHS.

107 INT. EGUISAC INFIRMARY / YARD - NIGHT

107

Tjaden lies in the yard, half-unconscious. Kat shakes his shoulder.

KAT

Tjaden. Tjaden... wake up.

TJADEN

Hm.

KAT

We brought you beans.

TJADEN

You got the silverware?

Kat takes out the silverware. Tjaden sits up as best he can and smells the steaming grub.

TJADEN (CONT'D)

Smells good. Fatty.

PAUL

Need help?

TJADEN

(shakes his head)

I can do it. You got silverware?

The men sit up and eat. Embarrassed, Paul avoids the gaze of an injured, FAMISHED SOLDIER, who stares at him, lying on the ground.

Tjaden can hardly swallow a bite, but Kat and Paul relish it so much, they huddle over their mess kits, eating silently.

Suddenly, Tjaden RAMS THE FORK into his throat. It's a little dull, but he rams it deeper. He keeps stabbing till he hits the jugular.

Kat and Paul TACKLE him.

PAUL

No! Stop. STOP IT!

They try to grab the fork from him with all their strength, finally get hold of it. Kat looks around for help.

KAT

(calls)

Help, he's bleeding to death!

Kat presses his hand on Tjaden's gushing wound, but no one hears them, no one comes to help. Blood streams out of Tjaden's mouth. Paul whispers.

(CONTINUED)

107 CONTINUED:

107

PAUL

Why did you do that? Why?

TJADEN

It's over, boys. It's over.

KAT

We need help!

PAUL

Tjaden. Tjaden.

Paul and Kat try to help Tjaden, who GURGLES and GASPS.

The FAMISHED SOLDIER scrapes up the dish of beans from the dirty floor, greedily scarfing it down on his stretcher.

Then Tjaden stops breathing. His blood stops gushing, Kat and Paul are left alone by their dead buddy.

108 EXT. EQUISAC / FIELD - NIGHT

108

Reedy grass wafts in the wind as a flare sails into the sky.

109 INT/EXT. EGUISAC / VILLAGE SQUARE RESTAURANT - NIGHT

109

The flare sails over Eguisac, casting its shadows over the destroyed village.

In a destroyed restaurant, Paul and Kat sit on mattresses on the floor. The light of the flames outside dances on their exhausted faces. They're drinking rum.

Kat watches his beetle, dreamily holding out a twig to it. Paul has his mouth and nose buried in Franz's scarf. Suddenly, he has an idea. He searches his pockets for the envelope with Duval's address.

KAT

What?

PAUL

I lost something.

Paul searches for a beat, then gives up in despair.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Kat...? Do you speak French?

KAT

How? I never saw a Frenchman before I came here.

PAUL

I wish I spoke French... My mother wanted me to learn French.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

PAUL (CONT'D)

And piano. But she didn't want me to go to war. "It's not for you", she said. "You'll be dead in two days."

Paul sinks back down on the mattress.

PAUL (CONT'D)

I wanted to prove I could do it.

KAT

And how does that help us now?

Paul just shrugs. Not at all.

PAUL

"In two weeks, we'll be in Paris."
Two years of hand grenades, you can't just discard all that like a pair of socks. The stench will always be with us. Ludwig is dead. Franz is dead. Albert--

KAT

What do we care? We're alive. There's nothing we can do for them now. Who knows what's in store for us.

Kat hands the bottle to him.

KAT (CONT'D)

It's like a fever dream. No one wants it, but suddenly it's there. We didn't want it, they didn't want it, either. Yet suddenly, the whole world is at war... God looks on while we kill ourselves.

A brief glance at his buddy, then he lets his beetle fly off... He looks after it for a beat. Then he spits his chew out.

KAT (CONT'D)

What do I know? I'm just a pair of boots with a rifle. Orders are orders and schnapps is schnapps. Lie down and rest. We got lucky.

PAUL

Yeah.

Paul lies down and shuts his eyes. Fire flickers on the other side of the bombed-out front wall.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Kat?

(CONTINUED)

KAT

M-hm.

PAUL

What did your son die of?

KAT

Smallpox...

PAUL

I'm afraid of what's next.

KAT

Don't be.

They fall silent.

Erzberger sits in a compartment and cleans the crusted mud off his shoe. The mud falls on a newspaper, showing the Kaiser on the front page. The headline reads:

"Le Kaiser a abdiqué." The Kaiser has stepped down.

Erzberger looks at the photo. Then, there's a KNOCK at the door.

ERZBERGER

Come in.

The door opens. Von Helldorf on the threshold, holding a telegram. Erzberger looks at him. The weight on his shoulders bows him.

ERZBERGER (CONT'D)

Von Helldorf. What does it say?

VON HELLDORF

(re: telegram)

Hindenburg...

ERZBERGER

...?

VON HELLDORF

...

ERZBERGER

Go on, read it.

Von Helldorf rips open the telegram and reads it, then he gives Erzberger a look of relief.

VON HELLDORF

Hindenburg urges us to sign.

(CONTINUED)

110 CONTINUED:

110

Erzberger SIGHS in relief.

VON HELLDORF (CONT'D)

What - what will become of our country now?

ERZBERGER

We're on a suicide mission. This is a mess, Von Helldorf. The world is waiting for us to do the right thing.

Erzberger puts his shoe back on. Let's go.

111 INT. MARSHAL FOCH'S TRAIN - NIGHT

111

In train: Coffee and a basket of bread rolls on a side board. Foch bites into a croissant, which tastes awful. He waves to his BUTLER, who hurries over.

FOCH

Essayez.

Foch offers him the croissant. The butler gapes, but has no choice: He has to tear off a piece and try it. Foch watches him chew.

FOCH (CONT'D)

Ils sont d'aujourd'hui?

FOCH'S BUTLER

Je suis désolé, monsieur. Je crois pas.

FOCH

Mmh.

Foch wordlessly takes the basket of stale croissants from him, goes over to the table. Then, a KNOCK at the door: Erzberger enters with his entourage. He nods to everyone.

ERZBERGER

Messieurs... Monsieur le maréchal.

A cool welcome on both sides. Erzberger takes a seat and CLEARS HIS THROAT. Foch eyes him coldly. The Interpreter and Von Helldorf both interpret simultaneously.

FOCH

Dites-moi.

ERZBERGER

The Kaiser has stepped down. Soldiers are refusing to obey orders, deserters are marauding in the countryside.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ERZBERGER (CONT'D)

The German economy is on the verge of collapse, a revolution has broken out... My country is on its knees, M. le maréchal. The German government pledges to do its utmost to fulfill your demands... But the German people may fall into starvation and anarchy, through no fault of their own. Have mercy on your opponent, lest he come to despise this peace.

FOCH

Vous parlez de culpabilité?

VON HELLDORF

You speak of 'No fault'?

The Supreme Allied commander stares at him.

FOCH

Vous voulez signer ou non?

VON HELLDORF (CONT'D)

Are you going to sign?

He wordlessly slides the treaty across the table. Erzberger has no choice: He sits down, takes the ink pen and dips it in the ink well...

He seems to hesitate for a beat, when he sees the Allies have already signed. Then he adds his signature and passes it on to his colleagues.

Graf Oberndorff signs. Captain Vanselow. Von Winterfeldt is last, tears in his eyes. He obviously doesn't want to have to do this.

The Allies watch in satisfaction. Major General Weygand checks his watch. Foch leans back in his chair.

FOCH

Très bien. Fini la guerre.

MAJOR GENERAL WEYGAND

Let the record show the Armistice was concluded between at twelve after five a.m. by both sides. The Armistice will begin in six hours... In the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month.

Foch silently slides the basket of croissants across to them. Erzberger hesitates.

ERZBERGER

We may have saved thousands of lives, but millions of Germans will never forgive us.

Finally, he takes a croissant and takes a bite. Foch watches him chew in satisfaction.

112 EXT. EGUISAC MANOR - NIGHT 112

The manor on the edge of the village. News of the Armistice spreads like wildfire.

Celebrating SOLDIERS pass by on a truck, SHOOTING in the air. People are SINGING from somewhere. Everyone is looking forward to peace.

113 INT. EGUISAC MANOR / STUDY - NIGHT 113

General Friedrichs stands at the window, looking out at the celebrating soldiers. The sight is like a knife in his heart. Tiredly, he reaches in the pocket of his vest and takes out his pocket watch: It's the middle of the night.

MAJOR VON BRIXDORF (O.S.)
What will you do now?

Major von Brixdorf stands behind Friedrichs with a message in his hand -- news of the Armistice has reached the German high command as well.

The General silently goes to his map table. His dog lies by the warming fireplace.

GENERAL FRIEDRICHS
Have a look. What do you see?

MAJOR VON BRIXDORF
The plains of Latierre, Sir.
Eguisac...

GENERAL FRIEDRICHS
You know what I see? I see our once
glorious Army running away.

He looks at the map.

GENERAL FRIEDRICHS (CONT'D)
In Latierre, the Frogs are farting
in our foxholes. And over there is
a train full of horse fuckers who
want to betray our country.

Friedrichs eyes his Major.

GENERAL FRIEDRICHS (CONT'D)
But we're German soldiers. And if
there's one thing German soldiers
are good at, it's fighting to the
last man.

Brixdorf eyes him in confusion. He's not sure what the General is trying to tell him.

(CONTINUED)

113 CONTINUED:

113

GENERAL FRIEDRICHS (CONT'D)

Withdraw the recruits from all their positions and have them assemble in the yard. I will address them at dawn. We're gonna save the day.

Friedrichs nods and reaches a decision.

114 INT/EXT. EGUISAC / RESTAURANT ON VILLAGE SQUARE - DAWN 114

Early morning. Birds drink from the fountain on the village square. The embers of the fire fade.

Drunk SOLDIERS sleep it off in the colonnade. A RADIO plays softly in a room amid the destruction, with the same message over and over.

RADIO

Firstly: Hostilities will cease at eleven a.m. today, November 11th, in all theaters. Secondly: Troops will not cross the lines held at that hour. These lines will be marked and recorded. The Army on the West Front will immediately begin to withdraw from occupied territory. Thirdly: Communication with the enemy remains prohibited--

Kat sits silently in the demolished restaurant, looking out at the fog. He looks tired, hasn't slept. Paul wakes up behind him.

PAUL

Kat... What time is it? Why aren't you sleeping?

KAT

Shh... Listen.

Paul listens and hears: The birds SING. The leaves RUSTLE. A serene quiet in the village.

KAT (CONT'D)

It's so quiet I almost think I'm dead.

He smiles.

KAT (CONT'D)

They signed it. The war's over.

PAUL

...?

(CONTINUED)

KAT

We lost. It's finally over.

Paul gapes at him. Kat gets up and pats the dirt off his pants. Then he marches off.

KAT (CONT'D)

I'm hungry. Are you hungry?

PAUL

Where are you going?

KAT

Come on, before the son of a bitch wakes up. I hear a KP volunteer!

With that, he's gone. Paul hurries after him.

Kat and Paul cross a meadow in the valley. You can see their breath in the cold morning air.

KAT

What will you do for Christmas, Paul?

PAUL

I dunno.

KAT

I'm gonna fry a goose. With red cabbage and kraut. Then I'll light all the candles and kiss my wife. God, Paul, she's so beautiful.

PAUL

(laughs)

Yeah? What does she look like?

KAT

Dark, curly hair. She's plump and strong.

PAUL

Christmas. It seems so far away.

KAT

It isn't, though! It's very close! We wanna have kids again, Paul! What's Christmas without kids? Maybe we'll have a White Christmas!

Kat pulls up his pants. Paul ventures an idea.

(CONTINUED)

PAUL

Once we get home, Kat, we'll do something big together. The two of us together.

Kat LAUGHS.

PAUL (CONT'D)

What?

KAT

I'm a shoemaker, Paul. I make shoes. You know how to read. And write. You graduated from high school.

PAUL

What good did it do me?

KAT

And what are we gonna do together? Nail shoe soles on? Are you trying to piss me off? I can't even read a letter from my wife... You go to college, Paul, or I'm gonna shoot you on the spot. Damn, my pants are loose.

They both head off, laughing.

PAUL

You just gotta eat more.

KAT

Hm. We'll be home soon. Then we can eat whatever we want.

Fog over the valley, as Paul and Kat sneak over to the farm yard. At the gate, Kat gives his buddy a look, asking him to help him over the wall.

KAT

Come on. Go.

PAUL

(shakes his head)
It's my turn. If that farmer catches you again, he'll shoot to kill.

Kat cradles his hands and hoists his buddy over the wall.

KAT

Watch out for the damn dog.

(CONTINUED)

116 CONTINUED:

116

PAUL

Yep.

Paul jumps over the wall.

117 EXT. FARM YARD - DAY

117

No one in sight. Paul warily sneaks over to the barn. The door is barred with a wood beam. He listens: Steps, a flapping?

Paul gingerly removes the beam and enters.

118 INT. BARN - DAY

118

It's dark in the barn. Paul's eyes have to adjust to the dark. A pile of manure in the corner. A few ducks between the hay and a hand cart, and a meager nest of eggs.

Paul kneels down on the ground, grinning, pockets a few eggs, when he suddenly hears a noise... the door CREAKS. He turns around:

The LITTLE BOY stands in the door behind him, staring silently at him.

Paul gingerly raises his finger to his lips. Psst. He whispers and shows him an egg.

PAUL

Regarde. C'est très beau. Tu veux?

The boy stares at him for a moment, then he runs off. Paul swears.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Damn.

He quickly runs to the back door, but it's nailed shut this time.

119 EXT. OUTSIDE FARM YARD - DAY

119

Meanwhile, Kat stands at the wall, shivering, sticks a plug of chew in his mouth. A flock of birds flies overhead, when he suddenly listens up:

The BARN DOOR slams on the farm yard, quick steps on the cobblestones. Paul calls from the other side of the wall.

PAUL (O.S.)

Kat, get out of there!

(CONTINUED)

119 CONTINUED:

119

Kat peers through the gate into the yard, which Paul comes racing across. He starts to run himself, to meet his buddy behind the farm house.

120 EXT. FARM YARD

120

Paul hurries out of the barn toward the stable, when the angry farmer emerges with his son, aiming his rifle. A DOG BARKS somewhere. Paul runs off.

121 INT. STABLE - DAY

121

The door to the stable suddenly flies open, and Paul rushes in.

BLAM! The blast just barely misses him. The wood door frame SHATTERS by Paul's head.

Paul runs to the exit of the stable, as the farmer SHOOTS at him again. BLAM! Misses again. The door shatters, Paul rushes out.

122 EXT. FARM YARD - DAY

122

Paul staggers out of the stable door onto the field, where Kat already awaits him. He shouts.

PAUL

Run... run!

Kat runs. The farmer reloads, aims and FIRES again. BLAM!

Paul pulls his butt in. A BRANCH is HIT by gunfire next to him. The Farmer curses in French.

FARMER

Connard! Sales boches!

But Paul and Kat are out of range now. In the stable door, the farmer's son appears and looks after them.

123 EXT. VALLEY / FARM YARD - DAY HIT

123

Paul and Kat run off through the valley, when Paul suddenly lags behind.

PAUL

Damn. Look at this.

KAT

What?

A broken egg drips from a hole in his pocket-- the bullet riddled his uniform and just barely missed Paul. He LAUGHS.

(CONTINUED)

PAUL

That was lucky.

KAT

Damn waste of good eggs. Give me my mess kit.

Kat holds his hands under the dripping mess, while Paul takes the mess kit off his belt. Laughing, they dump what's left of the egg in it.

KAT (CONT'D)

Come on, get it all in the dish. We'll eat it right here.

PAUL

We have to fry 'em.

KAT

Nonsense. Tastes fine raw.

Paul digs the left-over eggs from his pocket and cracks them into the mess kit. Kat stirs them with his knife. Grinning, the two men slurp the raw eggs off the tin, licking it clean.

KAT (CONT'D)

Like I say. What could be better?

Kat takes a deep breath of the morning air and looks down in the valley, then he hikes his pants up.

KAT (CONT'D)

Don't get me wrong, but... I'll be right back.

He marches off, past a stone crucifix with a Madonna in it. Pauls sits down on the field.

123A EXT. VALLEY / EDGE OF WOODS - DAY

123A

A few feet inside the woods, Kat unbuttons his pants, silently pissing against a tree and listening to the wind and the silence. A sudden NOISE...

CLACK. Kat slowly turns around:

The farm boy stands before him-- the innocence of youth in his gaze, a rifle in his hands. War spares no one.

The boy cocks the rifle. Kat looks at him... his expression goes soft for a moment. The boy is the same age as his son-- if he were still alive.

123B EXT. VALLEY / FARM YARD - DAY 123B

Paul sits on the meadow by the woods, staring at the broken egg shells in his hands.

Suddenly... BANG! A gunshot behind him makes Paul jump to his feet.

PAUL

Kat...?

He runs into the woods.

123C EXT. VALLEY / EDGE OF WOODS - DAY 123C

Paul hunts for his buddy in the woods. Finally he finds him amid the trees, leaning on a stump.

PAUL

Kat... Kat? What happened?

Kat turns around and limps back.

KAT

Nothing. Let's get out of here...
Or we'll miss the end of the war.

123D EXT. VALLEY WITH MANOR - DAY 123D

He stubbornly limps out onto the meadow, but suddenly his legs buckle.

Kat huddles on the ground, hanging his head. Paul looks at him, worried.

PAUL

Who fired that shot, Kat?

KAT

It's a mess. The little snot from
the farm.

He SIGHS. Finally, he pulls his shirt from his pants, feels his stomach wound. Paul helps him.

PAUL

It's alright. I'll have a look.

Paul raises his uniform coat to look:

Kat was hit in the liver. Not bigger than a fingernail, but dark blood oozes out.

KAT

How big is it?

(CONTINUED)

123D CONTINUED:

PAUL

Little finger. I'll get the bullet out.

KAT

(shakes his head.)

Let the medic do it. It's stuck too deep. Come on, give me a cigarette.

Paul offers him a cigarette and lights it for him. Kat looks at the blood on his hands for a moment-- dark blood on cold fingers. The he looks up bravely.

KAT (CONT'D)

They stuck me in a class with seven-year-olds. I was already shaving. Find a word that rhymes with "monkey"... Nothing rhymes with monkey.

Kat shakes his head.

KAT (CONT'D)

Fucking hell. Now of all times.

PAUL

Come on, we have to get back to camp. I'll help you.

KAT

Sure. Let's go.

Kat struggles up.

PAUL

Are you okay, Kat?

KAT

Gotta be.

PAUL

It's not far. We can make it.

Gasping, Paul takes him on his back and carries him off.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Kat?

KAT

Yes.

PAUL

Flunky. Flunky rhymes with monkey.

KAT

...? Go hang yourself.

Paul grins, and marches off down the valley with his buddy.

124

EXT. EDGE OF WOODS BEI EGUISAC - DAY

124

Paul runs along the edge of the woods, sweating, carrying his injured buddy on his back. He breathes heavily, his face swollen with the effort of carrying Kat, the blood from Kat's wound drips from his hand.

PAUL

Kat, when we get back, you can fix my boots for me. My feet are bloody.

Paul listens up and gapes: A row of trucks with reinforcements is arriving from the rear.

Paul quickly puts down his buddy and tries to stop a truck.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Hey! Stop... Stop!

The SOLDIERS just wave and cheer.

Paul remains behind with Kat, who lies unconscious in the mud now. He takes a deep breath and gets a grip on himself, before hoisting his buddy on his shoulder again.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Kat, look. We're almost there...

KAT

(weakly)

Mmh.

PAUL

I'll shoot myself in the foot so we can stick together.

He carries Kat down the road, panting.

125

EXT. EGUISAC / VILLAGE SQUARE - DAY

125

Bustle on the main square. RECRUITS jump off the trucks, chattering excitedly. Paul makes his way through the crowd, carrying Kat.

126

INT. EGUISAC INFIRMARY - DAY

126

Paul hurries through the infirmary, finally reaches the OR. It's deserted except for a grunt mopping the floor.

PAUL

Medic... Medic!

No answer. He spots a vacant stretcher. He goes to his knees and lowers Kat gingerly. A MEDIC hurries up.

(CONTINUED)

Paul smiles. His hands and legs are quivering with exhaustion, but he made it -- *Kat is saved.*

He slowly catches his breath again. He gets up and takes out his canteen. He raises it to his lips, dying of thirst, but can't drink, he's trembling so much.

MEDIC

Well, that was a waste of effort.

Paul eyes him, not understand. The medic points to Kat.

MEDIC (CONT'D)

He's dead.

PAUL

...? It was just a flesh wound.

MEDIC

Sure. Black blood. Right in the liver. His organs are poisoned.

Paul turns around to Kat. He breaks a sweat again and runs down his eyelids. He wipes the sweat away. Kat lies there, immobile.

PAUL

Unconscious.

MEDIC

(shakes his head)

Uh-uh. Dead. I'm the expert.

PAUL

That can't be. I was just talking to him. He's just unconscious!

Paul pulls his buddy's shirt up and examines the wound on his back... the blood has stopped oozing. He reaches for Kat's hands, his shoulders, his head... and suddenly he stops.

Kat isn't moving. The medic WHISTLES through his teeth.

MEDIC

You see. Tough luck, right at the end.

Paul GULPS. Stanislaus Katczinsky is dead...

The church doors open behind him: A platoon of celebrating SOLDIERS charges in. They BELT OUT A SONG: The recruits' marching song from the beginning.

SOLDIERS

*Tomorrow we march
To the farmers night quarters.*

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

126

CONTINUED: (2)

126

SOLDIERS (CONT'D)

*A cup of tea, sugar and coffee, A
cup of tea, sugar and coffee, and a
glass of wine, and a glass of wine!*

Paul sits beside Kat on the ground and holds his hands. Finally, he takes out a matchbox, slides it open: It's empty. The beetle is gone.

The Soldiers keep singing.

SOLDIERS (CONT'D)

*Darling I love you,
but I can't marry you,
just wait a year,
then it'll come true;
just wait a year,
then it'll come true;
and we'll be a pair.
And we'll be a pair.*

Paul sits beside Kat, silently. All his friends are dead. He's dead inside. Everything's dead.

127

INT/EXT. EGUISAC / RESTAURANT ON VILLAGE SQUARE - DAY

127

Paul sits alone in the destroyed restaurant on the square, fiddling with Kat's dog tag. Celebrating SOLDIERS go by, guzzling Schnapps and drinking to each other.

One of them calls to him.

CELEBRATING SOLDIER

*Come on, Soldier! The General is
gonna send us home.*

Paul can hardly hear them. It's like always and yet everything's different. He's all alone now. He slowly straightens up. Nothing means anything anymore.

128

EXT. EGUISAC - DAY

128

Squads of young RECRUITS get out of the trucks: Reinforcements are arriving. They're all children. None of them is older than 17.

One of the kids drops his helmet on the cobblestones. His name is WALTER. He's sixteen and awkward as a foal that can't run yet.

A LIEUTENANT and several MPs on horseback drive them onward.

LIEUTNANT

Come on, keep going.

(CONTINUED)

128

CONTINUED:

128

Beside the kid, Paul takes one step before the other. He can barely feel his feet.

129

EXT. EGUISAC INFIRMARY - DAY

129

DOCTORS. MEDICS. PATIENTS... They all stream out of the infirmary. An MP drives them on.

MP

Let's get a move on. The general isn't gonna wait for you.

The mood is upbeat. A doctor lights a cigarette and trots after them.

130

INT. EGUISAC MANOR / ANTEROOM & STUDY - DAY

130

A group of OFFICERS is packing up the reception room. It's loud and frantic. Friedrichs sits in the office next door, smoking.

He watches from his desk. It's churning inside him. Finally, he averts his gaze and puts out his smoke in his ashtray. The dog watches him from the fireplace.

131

EXT. EGUISAC MANOR - DAY

131

Hundreds of German SOLDIERS have assembled outside the manor, several DOCTORS and WOUNDED among them. Their joy at the armistice is clearly visible on their faces.

Paul runs along other soldiers, driven on by MPs on horseback. He shuts his eyes and looks skyward, where the sun breaks through the clouds.

Von Brixdorf gives orders, mounted MPs beside him.

MAJOR VON BRIXDORF

Attention!

MP

Snap to, Soldier. You're still on duty.

The soldiers sloppily stand at attention. Paul takes his position amid them.

Finally, General Friedrichs appears up on the balcony, his STAFF OFFICERS below him. He proudly looks down at his men.

GENERAL FRIEDRICHS

Comrades. We stand here as brothers in arms amid a world of enemies.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

GENERAL FRIEDRICHS (CONT'D)

Arch villains have undermined the German people with an incomprehensible Armistice. Like Siegfried was stabbed in the back, they are now trying to sabotage the Army.

The soldiers stand at attention, but their discipline is lax. Friedrichs looks down at them.

GENERAL FRIEDRICHS (CONT'D)

The war is over. We're going home now. To our families. To our wives. To our children. After years of sacrifice and deprivation for your country, you can now see your just reward in reach: A hero's welcome for all you've achieved.

The soldiers nod proudly. The General scans the men.

GENERAL FRIEDRICHS (CONT'D)

But... this Regiment has never lost a battle in its 500 year history. We were victorious in every war Germany ever waged. And now they expect to sit on our hands and watch as they strip us of power and honor...?

Young Walter, who just arrived at the front, behind Paul. He listens to the General's speech in confusion, with a mixture of fear and adventure on his face. He shuts his eyes and starts to pray.

GENERAL FRIEDRICHS (CONT'D)

Comrades. When you return to your families now, do you want to do it as soldiers and heroes? Or as cowards who turned and ran when the chips were down? How do you want your wives and children to remember you?

The soldiers start to get uneasy. The general raises his voice.

GENERAL FRIEDRICHS (CONT'D)

This regiment will not end the war in retreat. This regiment will face any armistice - no matter what it is - with head held high. Let's do our duty. Let us honor the memory of this glorious Army and sacrifice ourselves for our country, for today is about nothing less than our being.

(CONTINUED)

A soft MURMUR from the crowd. Paul doesn't show any reaction, he's long dead inside. Friedrichs wraps up his speech.

GENERAL FRIEDRICHS (CONT'D)

Soldiers. A thoroughbred doesn't give up just before the the finish line and neither will we. We will strike back, with all our might. Latierre belongs in German hands. We will retake the plains by eleven a.m. and end this war with a victory.

No one cheers this time. The soldiers stare at their boots, silently. General Fiedrichs adds for emphasis.

GENERAL FRIEDRICHS (CONT'D)

Go with God, who is with us as he was with our fathers.

MAJOR VON BRIXDORF

Forward march!

Von Brixdorf represses any emotion. The SERGEANTS orders ring out across the square here and there. MEDICS ready stretchers and stash bandages in their knapsacks.

A few soldiers stay where they are and drop their weapons. The celebrating soldier among them. He shouts. *

CELEBRATING SOLDIER *

How many officers will go into battle with us? Will you, General?
(to the officers)
Or you? Or you?

Von Brixdorf silently nods to the MPs, who draw their guns on the MUTINEERS. Friedrichs vanishes in his office.

MP

Pick up your rifle, Soldier.

CELEBRATING SOLDIER *

Are you going to join us in the attack?

DESERTER

No... no. I won't.

WHAM! The MPs HIT the deserters and drag them off. Young Walter stays standing, shaking.

PAUL

Come on.

Paul drags him off, with the crowd. His will to live is broken.

(CONTINUED)

131 CONTINUED: (3)

131

SHOTS ring out somewhere in the distance... somewhere, a firing squad eliminates the mutineers. Walter turns around.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Keep going. Don't look back.

Paul grabs his arm.

132 INT. EGUISAC MANOR / STUDY - DAY

132

At his desk in the study, General Friedrichs ignores the GUNSHOTS from the yard. The dog looks up from the fireplace for a moment, then goes back to sleep.

133 INT. EGUISAC SOUP KITCHEN - DAY

133

The goulash on the floor in the deserted soup kitchen. Flies circle the dried soup. The place is a mess.

134 EXT. EGUISAC - DAY

134

The men stream out of the village, silently trudging through the mud, disappearing in the fog.

The OFFICERS and MPs bring up the rear on horseback, rifles shouldered. Ammo being issued from the backs of trucks.

135 EXT. EDGE OF WOODS OUTSIDE EGUISAC - DAY

135

The MPs herd the SOLDIERS out of the fog to the emplacements.

136 INT. EGUISAC INFIRMARY - DAY

136

Back in Eguisac, the infirmary is deserted. One last NURSE hurries past the WOUNDED MEN.

137 EXT. LATIERRE HILL / EMBLACEMENTS - DAY

137

Paul advances amid the rest of the soldiers, until the MP raises his hand on horseback: Halt!

MP

Company halt!

The troops gather at the crest of the hill over the plains, looks down at the thick fog. CLACK. The men wordlessly fix bayonets.

138 EXT. LATIERRE HILL / TRENCH - DAY

138

A FRENCH MAJOR, GRENIER (44) is taking a piss on the latrine and talking to a fellow soldier, also on the latrine.

MAJOR GRENIER

Va chercher Bernard et Dubois quand tu as fini de chier. Ils collectionnent les médailles dehors.

SERGEANT

Bernard et Dubois sont morts, monsieur.

MAJOR GRENIER

...? Quand?

SERGEANT

La semaine dernière. Lambert et Fournier sont dehors.

MAJOR GRENIER

Alors, va les chercher.

Grinning, Grenier buttons up his fly, heads along the trench, nodding to a SOLDIER here and there until encountering a Corporal: MOREAU (31).

MAJOR GRENIER (CONT'D)

Moreau. Ça va?

MOREAU

Ça va bien, Ms. le majeur.

MAJOR GRENIER

Vingt minutes, eh?

They go their way, when something occurs to Grenier. He turns back and calls Moreau back to him.

MAJOR GRENIER (CONT'D)

Moreau? Venez. J'ai quelque chose à vous montrer

MOREAU

Quoi?

MAJOR GRENIER

Surprise.

Moreau returns and accompanies him to a shelter.

MAJOR GRENIER (CONT'D)

Attendez.

Grenier disappears inside the shelter, comes back a moment later, carrying a bottle of Cognac. He cradles it reverently.

(CONTINUED)

MAJOR GRENIER (CONT'D)
*Ç'était à Lefevre. Cet imbécile
 gardait pour la fin. Il n'en aura
 plus besoin.*

He opens the bottle and sniffs it, then pours. They drink to each other.

MAJOR GRENIER (CONT'D)
*Merde, ç'est bon. La fin du
 cauchemar.*

Grenier nods and heads off, with a last greeting to Moreau.

MAJOR GRENIER (CONT'D)
Y a plus qu'à survivre, Moreau!

He reaches the next SOLDIERS, who hold tin cups out to him. Grenier pours them cognac.

MAJOR GRENIER (CONT'D)
Beau travail, soldat.

He goes on, laughing.

Next to Paul, a YOUNG SOLDIER checks his watch, trembling... a little photo of his parents in the lid. Paul stares out at the battlefield.

PAUL
 What time is it?

YOUNG SOLDIER
 Fifteen more minutes.

Up front, the MP raises his hand -- *Ready to attack. Forward march!* He wordlessly gets down off his horse, as the soldiers march on down the hill.

The sound of FOOTSTEPS and boots in the mud, canteens JANGLE on belts. It's eerily quiet otherwise... The fog swallows every sound.

In the French positions, the SOLDIERS start to relax. Here and there, there's still a few MGs mounted on the edge of the craters. Sand bags are piled up in the gaps of the trench.

The soldiers mingle in groups, exchanging stories and cigarettes, laughing and joking, peace just minutes away.

Grenier is rolling a cigarette when he passes a squad playing cards.

(CONTINUED)

CARD PLAYER

*Majeur, soyez pas si avare. Nous
avons soif, nous aussi!*

MAJOR GRENIER

*C'est le meilleur cognac de votre
vie.*

Grenier fills their cups, emptying the bottle.

MAJOR GRENIER (CONT'D)

Je vais chercher un autre.

He tosses the bottle out on to No Man's Land.

TRACKING SHOT out onto the battlefield, where LAMBERT and FOURNIER are picking up dead comrades' dog tags.

Grenier shouts into the fog.

MAJOR GRENIER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

*Lambert. Fournier! Vous voulez
quelque chose à boire? On a du
cognac!*

Fournier shoos off a few birds pecking at a fallen soldier.

141

EXT. LATIERRE HILL / HINTERLAND - DAY

141

The SOLDIERS pick up the pace. They break into a run, between craters and blasted tree trunks, past the deserted bunker over to the French lines.

Paul is in the middle of it all, stony faced. With his rifle and battle gear, he looks ready for anything.

The steps get louder. WHOOSH. WHOOSH.

142

EXT. LATIERRE HILL / TRENCH - DAY

142

Major Grenier stands at a boiling cauldron, tries the soup.

MAJOR GRENIER

Ç'est le boeuf des americains...?

The cook nods. Grenier keeps going, determined, when he suddenly stops and listens up. A distant sound, like boots in lockstep -- *is he imagining things?*

Grenier slowly climbs up a ladder, peers out into No Man's Land... no sign of his soldiers. He calls out.

MAJOR GRENIER (CONT'D)

Fournier...? Lambert?

No answer from the fog.

(CONTINUED)

142

CONTINUED:

142

Grenier returns to a GROUP OF SOLDIERS in the trench.

MAJOR GRENIER (CONT'D)
Avez-vous vu Fournier et Lambert?

They shake their heads. He shrugs and keeps going, then he stops again.

The SOLDIERS hear it, now, too. The soldiers get up, look around, the sound gets louder: WHOOSH. WHOOSH.

Grenier listens into the fog... Suddenly, he realizes: It's an attack.

MAJOR GRENIER (CONT'D)
*Attaque ennemie. Attaque ennemie.
Tenez-vous aux armes!*

Panic breaks out amid the Frenchmen, who rush for their rifles, which they have discarded in their joy. Grenier pulls out his WHISTLE, and we are back at...

143

EXT. LATIERRE HILL / HINTERLAND - DAY

143

Several WHISTLES in the fog.

Paul races forward with the infantry, back into the bloodshed he escaped from a few hours ago. No more fear on his face, only resignation in the face of death.

An ominous YELL gradually goes up... The men scream like berserkers, a mix of despair and defiance -- no more trace of calm and discipline.

The first MG salvo hits the mud. RAT TAT TAT TAT TAT.

144

EXT. LATIERRE HILL / TRENCH - DAY

144

The Frenchman are caught off guard. One of them is pulling up his suspenders as they frantically feed the MG ammo belts.

Major Grenier blows his WHISTLE.

MAJOR GRENIER
Tirez! Tirez!

Then they see the first GERMAN SOLDIERS emerging from the milkwood, barely a hundred yards away.

RAT TAT TAT TAT TAT.

145 EXT. LATIERRE HILL / HINTERLAND - DAY 145

The MG salvos carve through the ranks. Men fall left and right, but Paul is in a tunnel. It's all about survival now, as he runs on and on, his legs aching...

The muddy craters are hard to climb. The soldiers keep slipping in the mud, sliding back and starting over.

RAT TAT TAT TAT TAT. Fifty yards. The Lieutenant barks an order.

LIEUTENANT
Ready grenades!

The MEN take cover behind a dirt berm. Paul ducks behind a dead horse, whipped by bullets.

A few feet on, a soldier stands up to throw, but get shot and then torn apart by his own grenade exploding. Paul ducks in time.

A French grenade lands beside him. He grabs it and tosses it back, taking out an MG nest. BOOM!

146 EXT. LATIERRE / FRENCH TRENCH - DAY 146

Grenier ducks in the trench, while the MG nest and its SOLDIERS are blown sky-high behind him.

MAJOR GRENIER
Chargez!

The flattened trench hardly offers cover to the FRENCH, so they jump out and engage hand to hand.

147 EXT. LATIERRE / HINTERLAND - DAY 147

Behind the dead horse, Paul SHOTS at the attacking FRENCHMEN, but a few steps later, they appear before them.

The SOLDIERS are now fighting hand to hand. Steel on steel. Bayonets hit shattered bone. Into the melee, the apocalypse. Men with breathtaking injuries.

Next to Paul, a FELLOW SOLDIER falls in a crater with a FRENCHMAN, while the next one gets his face slashed by a bayonet.

Paul struggles forward angrily, stabs an enemy, before he is knocked to the ground by a CORPORAL.

Paul loses his rifle in the struggle. He reaches for his helmet and hits his enemy in the face with it until he stops moving.

(CONTINUED)

Paul can barely catch his breath when a FRENCHMAN SHOOTS several GERMAN SOLDIERS at close range. He quickly crawls over to his rifle, while the MARKSMAN takes aim at him.

BANG. A RICOCHET hits the Frenchman in the hip. He falls on his behind, dazed, but before he can take aim again, the Paul hits him with a fatal shot.

Paul crawls toward the trench. Suddenly, a VOICE in the chaos, SCREAMING.

WALTER (O.S.)

No!

Paul stands over the trench, looks around in all directions. Young Walter hits the ground beneath him. A Frenchman raises his bayonet and wants to stab him, but Paul shoots him in the back.

The next ENEMY appears and wants to attack Walter. Paul is out of ammo and jumps down with a SAVAGE SCREAM --

WHAM. The man rams Paul's back against the wall. Paul gasps for a moment, breathless, but neither man relents. They tumble across the trench, wrestling, till Paul gets him in a headlock from behind.

The man drops his rifle, grabs Paul's arm with both hands to free himself from his grasp. Paul throws his gun away and starts to strangle him...

They wrestle. Elbow and knee each other. Tug, choke and punch. A battle of blood and chaos in the mud.

The man is strong, tries to hurl Paul over his shoulder, finally manages to trip him up. The two men lose their balance and fall in the mud.

The Frenchman lands atop Paul in a puddle at the bottom of the trench. Gasping, he tries to drown him in the mud, presses his fingers in his eyes and mouth.

Paul can hardly breathe, almost drowning in the puddle. Finally he gets his hand on a rock and HITS the Frenchman on the head. WHAM.

Paul takes a moment to catch his breath, then the Frenchman reaches for the pistol in the hand of a dead soldier, half buried in the mud.

Paul attacks him with all his might. He SCREAMS and rams his head in the Frenchman's stomach, they both plunge into a bunker head-first.

149 INT. LATIERRE HILL / BUNKER - DAY 149

Paul lands hard on the ground and immediately struggles up again. Suddenly, he finds himself face to faces with his enemy for the first time.

Both men gasp for breath. They look at each other for a moment, both ashamed of what they're doing.

Then a very young FRENCHMAN (16) charges out of the shadows and rams his bayonet in Paul's back. WHAM. And again.

Paul stares down at his chest, incredulous, where the blade sticks out.

The Frenchman pulls the bayonet out again. Paul sinks to his knees. A distant WHISTLE from outside...

A last look at his opponent, then the Frenchmen turn away and disappear.

Paul is alone now. He staggers down the stairs with an effort into the trench.

150 EXT. LATIERRE HILL / TRENCH - DAY 150

Along the front, Officers pass on the cease fire order. WHISTLES across the battlefield. A FRENCH BUGLER plays a tune.

MAJOR VON BRIXDORF MAJOR GRENIER
Cease fire. Cease fire! It's *Cêsse-feu! Cêsse-feu!*
eleven o'clock.

The gunfire instantly stops. An eerie silence.

Paul looks up and listens to the silence. He looks at the sky, where the fog wafts by. It's all so bright and white. Finally, he sinks to the ground, drained of energy. Blood gushes out of his wound.

He wears Franz's scarf. Paul looks down at it. He slowly opens the knot, to hold it in his hand.

His lungs fill with air for one last time. The life slowly drains from his gaze and he just keels over lifelessly.

The remains of a front theater poster from last year hang on a shattered wall... a pretty girl in a white dress.

151 INT. MANOR / STUDY - DAY 151

DONG. DONG. DONG. Back at HQ, the big grandfather clock strikes eleven. General Friedrichs sits at the table, stonily, his elbows on his knees.

(CONTINUED)

151

CONTINUED:

151

The clock stops striking. It's quiet here now, too. Only the TICK-TOCK of the pendulum. The ashtray on the table with a burnt-out cigarette. The maps. A Bible...

General Friedrichs lets his head hang. It's over.

152

EXT. LATIERRE / TRENCH - DAY

152

On the silent battlefield, the dead lie in the mud all along the hilltop. Soldiers crawl from the craters and stagger off, homeward bound. Major Grenier helps a soldier up on his feet and staggers off with him.

153

EXT. LATIERRE / TRENCH - DAY

153

Major von Brixdorf marches along the destroyed trench and picks his way past the corpses.

He stops stops before a young man, who's sitting in the dirt, exhausted:

Walter. He survived.

MAJOR VON BRIXDORF

Are you alright, Soldier?

WALTER

... Yes, Sir.

MAJOR VON BRIXDORF

Collect the dog tags, please.

The tired Major holds a bag of dog tags out to Walter, who takes them. He weighs them in his hand and looks inside... heavy.

The tin rattles in the bag.

Walter finally gets up and heads down the trench, bending down to the dead, deadpan, taking their dog tags and putting them in the bag.

A soldier sits on the ground, leaning on the trench wall. Walter lifts his head and gapes:

It's Paul Bäumer. High school student. 19 years old. His expression is composed, almost serene. He could almost be asleep. But he's dead.

Walter kneels down to him and takes his dog tag. He seems to hesitate for a moment. Then he takes the scarf from Paul's hand, ties it around his own neck, and keeps going.

He makes his way down the trench. He will always wear the scarf from now on.

(CONTINUED)

153

CONTINUED:

153

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END.