

THE GRIPPE OF OCTOBER

A one-act drama by
John P. McEneny

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

Pines Hills is the upper middle class neighborhood of Albany.

ALMA GAFFEY, Suffragette older sister of Mother.

MOTHER, Alice and Jack's mother.

NANA JANE, Alice and Jack's grandmother.

ALICE McMAHON, 16, headstrong young girl with dreams of being an actress.

HAL, 18, next-door neighbor to Alice and best friend of Jack. He is in love with Alice. Fights in France as a Doughboy.

JACK, 18, brother of Alice. Fights in France as a Doughboy.

AGNES, Alice's best friend.

KITTY, Alice's friend. Completely boy crazy.

HELEN, Alice's friend.

ORMA, Alice's friend.

DOROTHY, Alice's friend.

RUTH, Alice's friend.

HELEN, Alice's friend.

DELMUS, Jack and Hal's friend.

ANNA, Alice's friend.

DELMUS, Jack and Hal's friend.

LADDIE, Jack and Hal's friend.

Garder Bay is the working class neighborhood of Albany.

MRS. GRIGGS, mother to Tristan, Clifford, Honey, Margaret.

MR. GRIGGS, alcoholic husband to Mrs. Griggs.

CLIFFORD, 13, mentally challenged boy.

TRISTAN, 18, young soldier with eyes damaged in the war.

MARGARET, 13, twin sister of Clifford, Honey, and Tristan. Works at Mr. Kimmey's bakery.

HONEY, 15, sister of Clifford, Margaret, and Tristan. Works at Mr. Kimmey's bakery.

MRS. DEWITT, landlord of many rooming houses in Garder Bay including the home of Mrs. Griggs. Very wealthy and condescending woman.

ELMER DEWITT, 15, son of Mrs. Dewitt.

PORTER, stern security officer at Union Station.

PALMER, owner of the Palmer Funeral Home.

TIMOTHY, 15, African-American boy hired to help Mr. Palmer deal with the overwhelming deaths at the funeral home.

PROFESSOR C. EDWARDS JONES, superintendent of Albany Schools.

ORVIN, a huckster selling useless medicine to aid the plague.

MRS. QUACKENBUSH, rooming house manager in Garder Bay.

MR. KIMMEY, owner of Kimmey's Bakery.

When the play was performed in Scotland and Brooklyn: it was performed by 30 students (30 characters). When it was performed at Siena College, I was asked how we could double the characters up so that 20 actors could perform 30 characters. Many of the friends of Alice and Jack have few lines and turn into choral characters. Some characters such as Alma and Timothy have only one scene, so to offer an actor more stage time and give the show a stronger sense of ensemble, we doubled up many of the roles.

These were the roles doubled in previous productions, but there may be other combinations:

ALMA/QUACKENBUSH

KITTY/HELEN

ORMA/PALMER/PORTER

DOROTHY/MRS. DEWITT

TIMOTHY/ORVIN

HONEY/MR. PALMER

MRS. BAKER/DELMUS/MR. GRIGGS

ANNA/ELMER

LADDIE/ PROFESSOR C. EDWARDS JONES

NOTES ON MUSIC

All songs used in the play are in the public domain, and their sheet music can be found online. "Over There" is one of the best known World War I songs and was written by George M. Cohan in 1917 shortly after the U.S. declared war on Germany. The most popular recorded versions during this time were by Billy Murray, Nora Bayes and the tenor Enrico Caruso.

"Send Me Away With a Smile" was written by Louis Wesley and Al Piantadosi in 1917 and made popular by the singer John McCormack.

"I Didn't Raise My Boy to be a Soldier" was written by Alfred Bryan and Al Piantadosi in 1915 as an anti-war song and was part of the pacifist movement that existed before the American involvement in World War I.

"La Madelon" or "Quand Madelon" was written by Louis Bousquent and Camille Robert in 1914.

SCENE 1

(The actors are waiting on both sides of the stage, dressed in period clothing from 1918. They are still. Some sit, some lounge, some stand in pairs. Their attention is all cast in different directions. The sound of a drum is suddenly heard. The actors come alive.)

MRS. GRIGGS: Spring 1918. Pine Hills, Albany, New York.

(There is a spontaneous party going on. Several young people surround MRS. MCMAHON. JACK and HAL are dressed in full doughboy infantry uniforms. The party is for Jack. Suddenly, there is a bang on the drum. Everyone freezes for a moment. We can see their youth, their excitement, and their period clothing. The drum bangs again; the merriment of the party instantly comes alive, even more boisterous than before.)

AGNES: Hush, Hal. Let Mrs. McMahan give her speech.

MOTHER: It's not a speech. I'm just a proud mother. If Mr. McMahan were still with us, he'd give this speech. But I'll stand here proudly today in his shoes. And before the proceedings become too merry, I'd like to tell my neighbors and friends just how proud I am of my son, my Jack.

ALL: Here! Here!

ORVIN: Cheers to you, Jack!

KITTY: I'm so proud of you, Jack.

ORVIN: He signed up just as soon as President Wilson declared war against the Huns. He went before he was called up.

NANA JANE: I can't believe it. He's just eighteen not five months.

HAL: Don't you worry, Mrs. McMahan? I'll take care of him. He's my best friend.

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MOTHER: You had better.

JACK: And who'll take care of you?

MOTHER: Can I get you another beer, Hal? Maybe just a snootful?

NANA JANE: Don't be getting the boys tipsy now, Henrietta.

ORVIN: I'll get it.

MOTHER: *(To Nana Jane:)* They're going off to war, Mother. Let's ease up on them. Are you begrudging the boys for all their labor? They carried the keg from the ice truck all the way up Madison.

NANA JANE: Don't remind me. I don't want to even know how it got here. Thank God, Father Pat's not here.

MOTHER: Let them have their party. Look how happy they are. I'm not the first mother to be sending a boy off to war.

NANA JANE: I know war well, daughter. Much too well. I lost two brothers in the Civil War.

MOTHER: This is a different war.

NANA JANE: Tell that to my brothers.

MOTHER: It'll be good for our country.

DELMUS: I hope they call my number up soon.

LADDIE: I hate waiting. It's agony.

KITTY: I love how handsome the boys look in their doughboy uniforms. Hal, you'll look so noble and mature.

(Enter AUNT ALMA, wearing a large wide hat. She is a Suffragette and not pleased at the sight of all these young people drinking. Perhaps a few of the partygoers groan when they see her.)

ALMA: What's going on? Why is there red and blue paper all over the front porch?

HAL: They're flags, Aunt Alma. Or at least that's what they were supposed to be.

MOTHER: Alma, did you eat yet? Can I grab you a plate?

LADDIE: Your mother has made a grand spread. I bet she used up all her butter rations to make this cake. (*To NANA JANE:*) Or maybe you made Jack's cake from the black market.

NANA JANE: I did no such thing. Hal's father gave me the butter.

ORMA: And don't forget my sugar rations! This is the most beautiful cake ever.

MOTHER: Where's Alice?

ALMA: She's coming. Always lally gagging about that one.

(Enter ALICE.)

ALICE: Sorry I'm late.

NANA JANE: Alice, I told you to be here by six.

KITTY: You almost missed your brother's party. Really, what is wrong with you?

ALICE: I had a quarter after the pictures so Aunt Alma and I split a victory dog. Why are we celebrating? What's going on?

KITTY: Your brother has been called up. He's going to Europe.

ANNA: Jack is going to France!

KITTY: Hal too. They just got their papers. We've been setting up for the party all morning. Can you think of anything more exciting?

ALICE: No I can't. Oh Hal, you're going on a great adventure.

LADDIE: When did you hear?

JACK: This morning.

DELMUS: The letter came right to the house. And Hal got his a few minutes later.

ORMA: Special courier. Good thing the tailor had your suits ready and altered.

JACK: Hal and I registered two months ago at the federal building for the draft.

ALICE: Can I see?

(Jack hands the letter to Alice.)

It's beautiful. A real letter of induction.

LADDIE: Did the President sign it?

DELMUS: No, but it's from Washington.

HAL: On the same day – can you beat that?

ALMA: When? How much time does he have?

JACK: They're sending me over on Saturday morning. We're going to smash through the German line.

KITTY: Oh Hal, I'll write you every day!

ALICE: So this is your going away party?

HAL: Sort of. Ned, John, and some of the boys from C.B.A. are coming over after six. That's when the real party will begin. Want to dance with me, Alice? You still got that ole symphonium?

KITTY: Yes, let's dance. I'll dance with you, Hal.

ALMA: Promise me, you'll be very careful.

JACK: What am I, six? I'm 18, Aunt Alma. I'm a man now. Men fight wars. It's what we're made for.

AGNES: Alma, this is a party. Be happy for your nephew.

ALMA: I was hoping the war would be over by now.

HAL: We'll be as careful as can be. We still have a month of basic training in Virginia before they ship us off.

ALICE: You're going to take a boat? One of those giant tankers?

MOTHER: Alice, of course they're going to take a ship. It's across the ocean. They're not going to swim to France.

ALMA: I don't want you to go. You're just boys.

AGNES: Alma!

HAL: Look around, Miss McMahan. There's a horrible war going on. We've got to save these Belgian children. We've got to stop the Kraut aggression. Don't you read newspapers?

ALMA: Of course I read papers. All I ever read are pages and pages of news about Europe. It's a wonder if anything else goes on in Albany.

LADDIE: We're all patriots in this neighborhood, Miss Alma.

ALMA: I wear my liberty bond buttons just like every other woman. I help make wreaths to go on our neighbors' doors. I don't eat meat on Tuesdays and I don't eat pork on Saturdays. We all conserve coal and live in a freezing house, and I don't mind it. I'm as patriotic as any one of you. I love this country as much as any woman.

ALICE: I find it all exciting.

ALMA: What?

ALICE: I do. I love the carnival that downtown has become

with its parade of American flags going up and down Pearl Street. I love the music. It's terribly exciting. It's a good war.

ALMA: No war is good. All anyone ever talks about is this good war, good war, good war. And that's all it's been for such a long time that I can't even remember what it was like before. And now it's going to take my brother's boy.

NANA JANE: Sister, you need to be quiet. You need to be quiet right now, or I will ask you to leave. This is not one of your suffragist meetings. This is my home.

ALICE: Aunt Alma, don't you realize? This is the war to end all wars. Jack and Hal are going to be heroes.

ALMA: Do the nuns ever teach you history at that fancy school, young lady? War is nothing but dead schoolboys.

ALICE: Of course I know history.

HELEN: Everyone knows history and the cost of war, Mrs. McMahan.

LADDIE: That's why they're brave. This country was created by sacrifice. C'mon Miss Alma, let me take your coat and get you a drink.

ALMA: This shouldn't be a party. It should be a wake.

LADDIE: If this were a wake, there'd be a lot more booze.

MOTHER: *(To Alma:)* You are making a spectacle of yourself in front of our friends.

ALICE: Aunt Alma, please stop. Be happy.

ALMA: Your brother and his friend might die. And you're celebrating. What kind of girl are you?

(Beat. The sound of a drum is heard. Everyone on stage freezes except Alice. Alice walks over to her brother, touches his arm,

looks over to Aunt Alma. The drum is heard again and everyone comes alive.)

ALICE: I don't know what kind of girl I am.

ALMA: There'd be no wars if mothers ran the world.

ALICE: Stop.

JACK: No. I know what Aunt Alma means. Now it's really here. The war is here in our parlor and we got to think about cost. It's real. Not just newspaper articles and rallies. I think about the reality of it, Alma. I'm not going into this without great thought and conscience.

HAL: It'll probably be over before we even get there.

ORVIN: Don't say that! You'll miss all the action.

DELMUS: *(To Hal:)* You better bring home a Frenchy wife!

KITTY: *(Outraged, she has a large crush on Hal.)* Oh Delmus, Don't you dare say such a thing. A Frenchy? Really, Delmus! There are enough nice girls here in Albany who are planning to wait patiently for Jack and Hal. He wouldn't even be interested in a French wife. A Frenchy in Albany?! Would you, Hal?

LADDIE: What? He'd never be unfaithful to his beloved Alice!

(Everyone laughs. Alice is not happy at being teased by her neighbors.)

NANA JANE: Boys, don't tease Alice.

ALMA: You could be injured. Charlie Martin lost his legs and he's wheeled around like a gimp. You could be killed, Jack.

MOTHER: Alma, there will be no more talk of death in this household. If I had two boys, I would want both of them to follow bravely into the European path.

ALMA: But you don't have two sons, sister. You only have one.

MOTHER: My son is a patriot. He is a red-blooded American boy and I am proud of his decision. He is fighting for liberty.

(She turns and faces Jack.)

Your father would be so proud of you if was alive. You have to know that. And if you're half the boy you are in Europe as you are in Albany, I know you're going to make a difference in this war. And when you get on that train tomorrow morning, you better know that all the love in the world that your mother, and sister, and friends, and neighbors, and me have every had for you will be with you when you're fighting in "No Man's Land."

(The friends and neighbors of the McMahons surround Jack and Hal. All are incredibly proud and fearful for their safety.)

Over There

GIRLS: JOHNNIE, GET YOUR GUN, GET YOUR GUN, GET YOUR GUN.

TAKE IT ON THE RUN, ON THE RUN, ON THE RUN.

HEAR THEM CALLING YOU AND ME,
EVERY SON OF LIBERTY.

HURRY RIGHT AWAY, NO DELAY, NO DELAY.

MAKE YOUR DADDY GLAD, TO HAVE HAD SUCH A LAD.

TELL YOUR SWEETHEART NOT TO PINE, TO BE PROUD
HER BOY'S IN LINE.

OVER THERE, OVER THERE, SEND THE WORD, SEND THE
WORD OVER THERE,

THAT THE YANKS ARE COMING, THE YANKS ARE
COMING, THE DRUMS RUM-TUMMING EV'RYWHERE.

SO PREPARE, SAY A PRAYER, SEND THE WORD, SEND
THE WORD TO BEWARE.

WE'LL BE OVER, WE'RE COMING OVER, AND WE WON'T
COME BACK TILL IT'S OVER, OVER THERE.

(The music from the symphonium sticks. The phrase "And we won't come back till it's over, over there" is repeated four times. The girls stop singing and the music repeats a fourth time without words. Jack and Hal walk towards each, look into each other's eyes. Jack puts his arm on Hal's shoulder and they exit together. All exit.)

SCENE 2

(Limbo. Each actor crosses from the sides, passing each other. Words becoming braided like headlines in a newspaper.)

DELMUS: It starts with an ache.

RUTH: An ache.

ANNA: A heavy head.

TIMOTHY: A heavy head.

PORTER: Maybe in your back.

LADDIE: Did I pull something? Lift something heavy?

ALMA: Then a loss of appetite.

ORMA: No dear, I think I'll retire early to bed.

HONEY: And heaviness in your chest.

DELMUS: And it happened fast. Overnight.

MARGARET: Oh I must have a cold. Really must take better care of myself.

NANA JANE: It's just a cold.

(The sound of a drum is heard.)

SCENE 3

(Ruth enters.)

RUTH: Orange Street in Garder Bay, Albany, New York.

(The small flat of Madeline Griggs and her poor family. It's colder and poorer than the middle class neighborhood of Pines Hills. Her small son, CLIFFORD, 11, is mentally retarded and on the floor drawing with melted wax. Their landlady, MRS. DEWITT, is wearing a fur coat. She has just finished having a cup of tea with her tenant, MRS. GRIGGS. MARGARET and HONEY are folding laundry, trying not to interrupt.)

MRS. GRIGGS: Mrs. DeWitt, I can't leave Clifford alone during the day.

MRS. DEWITT: Why not? Is he getting even more feeble?

MRS. GRIGGS: He's not blessed with simple intelligence. He's one of God's gentle creatures.

MRS. DEWITT: Madeline, he's nearly 12. And high the time for you and the husband to start thinking of putting him in a home where he can learn a skill.

MRS. GRIGGS: Mrs. DeWitt—

MRS. DEWITT: It's good for halfwits and mongrels to be with their own kind. Somewhere in the country.

MRS. GRIGGS: I would never put him away, Mrs. DeWitt. I made my husband promise long ago that we would never hide him away like some mistake. He's my burden and my joy.

MRS. DEWITT: A burden to be kept behind locked doors. What will you do when he get's bigger? God help you.

MRS. GRIGGS: If I didn't have my children, I'd have...well...nothing.

MRS. DEWITT: You've got nothing now, Madeline: An idiot boy, a husband almost twenty years your senior, two unmarried round-faced daughters and a skinny bum who fills whole days hitting a ball against my back wall while I'm trying to get my afternoon reading in. And Mrs. White told me that her husband had to give him a ticket for suspected public drunkenness last weekend. He only let your son off because he recognized him from the Liberty Parade last week.

MRS. GRIGGS: Be patient, Mrs. DeWitt, the boy was just letting off some steam. He's not home for more than two weeks. He was fighting the good war.

MRS. DEWITT: Well he's back now. He's had his parade and it's high time he get himself a job. Or he could re-enlist. Why can't they send him back?

MRS. GRIGGS: You know he was injured and he can barely see as it is.

MRS. DEWITT: How old is he?

MRS. GRIGGS: Twenty-three.

MRS. DEWITT: (*Shocked:*) For the love of sweet Saint Anthony! Old enough to take care of a family of his own, he is. Why can't he be a stonemason like his half drunk father? Or get a job at the bakery like his plain-faced sisters? There's now six bodies in this tenement and five fully abled adults who can bring in an honest living.

MRS GRIGGS: Both Honey and Margaret work almost seven days a week. They both dropped out of school as soon as the war started. They're good girls.

MRS. DEWITT: It's been almost a year that I've let you go on charity. I'm going to have to raise the rent a dollar. I'm no one's fool. I kept the rent at where it was because I'm a patriot

like all others. And it didn't seem right to profit from a soldier's mother, but now the war, according to the papers, is coming to a close. And it is what it is. Elmer is waiting for me.

MRS. GRIGGS: How is your young Elmer?

MRS. DEWITT: A fine upstanding boy. Thank you for asking, Madeline. He's been home from Exeter for a week. He has this odd chill that he can't quite shake. He thinks he may have gotten it from one of the Italian boys in his dorm.

MRS. GRIGGS: Will he be registering for the constriction? He must be nearly eighteen.

MRS. DEWITT: Of course. Though the war will probably be over by the time his number comes up. God bless you, then. I'll see you at church. Thank you for the tea.

(Mrs. DeWitt exits. The girls sigh in relief.)

CLIFFORD: Did the witch leave? Let's read her tea leaves and find her future.

MRS. GRIGGS: You've been listening to your brother again.

CLIFFORD: Tristan is my big brother and I like my brother and I listen to him. He is a soldier.

MRS. GRIGGS: I told you to stay out of sight when Mrs. DeWitt came over. We have some real problems here and now, Clifford.

CLIFFORD: No problems for Clifford. No problems for him, sir.

MRS. GRIGGS: Wipe your nose.

CLIFFORD: When Tristan is back now. We have no more problems. He'll kill the witch and then you, me, Honey, and Peggy will go to Warner's Lake. And maybe Father too. And we'll swim in the lake, and we'll eat butter cakes, and Tristan

will mind me. He's a soldier. And he's back now. And now Peggy's not going to have...she won't have to cry at night or have bad dreams. And I don't have to have bad dreams either.

(Enter Tristan. He is wearing glasses.)

TRISTAN: Why is it so early? What is the party about?

MRS. GRIGGS: It's nearly 10:30 a.m. Shouldn't you be out looking for a job? You promised your father. Give me that shirt.

HONEY: Did you sleep in your clothes? You've becoming a savage.

(He gingerly takes off his shirt and hands it to his mother. Under his shirt, he has bandages covering his arm from his shoulder to his wrist.)

TRISTAN: You're looking particularly ravishing today, me mam! Come here and give me a kiss. You're still my girl, aren't ya?

(Tristan spins Mrs. Griggs around and she lands on his knee.)

MRS. GRIGGS: Tristan, careful. Your arm. Have you been drinking? Oh, Tristan. I can smell it on the whole of you. You're ripe to be arrested, Tristan. And Mrs. White has been telling all Garder Bay that you were almost put on the paddy wagon. There's reason they're talking of the whole country taking the temperance pledge.

TRISTAN: The land that I nearly took a bullet for and they won't allow this boy a glass of gin? Ain't never going to happen. Can you beat that, Clifford?

MRS. GRIGGS: Drinking never did any person good. And you've got the cause and weakness in you so you better be watching yourselves good and close. All of youse. I better not hear you're hanging about Green Street.

MARGARET: Thank God, Father took the temperance pledge.

HONEY: I bet Mr. Kimmey could use an extra hand at the bakery. I could ask.

MRS. GRIGGS: You've got to get yourself a job. Why don't you talk to Father? He said he'd be more than happy to help.

TRISTAN: He'll just bark at me.

MRS. GRIGGS: Talk to him.

TRISTAN: Why?

MRS. GRIGGS: To be responsible.

TRISTAN: But I don't feel responsible. I don't want to be a stonemason. I don't know what I want to be.

HONEY: You're talking like a child.

TRISTAN: No, I'm talking like a man who has been to war and seen, really seen, what war is all about. Look, I signed up for the life experience. I don't regret it. I believed it. I believed what we were fighting for but now...now...now I want to drink, dance with tarty girls at Professor Bauman's, and be silly and young. I want to swim today. Would you like that, Clifford? Would you like to go swim at the bathhouse or maybe we could go up to the lake?

CLIFFORD: I want to swim.

MRS. GRIGGS: No one is swimming today. For the love of God, it's October.

HONEY: The water is way too cold.

MRS. GRIGGS: We have laundry to take in and you're going to find a job. If you don't want your father's help then you'll have to find one on your own.

TRISTAN: There will be a job for me. Don't worry. My arm is feeling better and better every morning.

MRS. GRIGGS: And your eyes.

TRISTAN: My eyes are as good as they're ever going to get. Let's stop being so gloomy. Who would you be if you weren't always so gloomy?

MRS. GRIGGS: I'm a mother. I worry about you. That's what mothers do.

TRISTAN: And what if you didn't have to worry?

MRS. GRIGGS: Then I wouldn't be a mother.

TRISTAN: Let's be happy today, Mam. I am just so happy to be back. I'm so happy to see you, and Father, and the girls.

HONEY: You know he hasn't picked up a drink since you went away. He said he didn't want you to come home to see a drunk.

CLIFFORD: And you're happy to see Clifford.

TRISTAN: And especially Clifford. He needs me to protect him from the monsters.

CLIFFORD: No more monsters.

TRISTAN: I missed Clifford's monsters. And this kitchen. And the corners we can never keep clean. And the alley cats next to the house. And the row houses. And my friends. And your food. And Mr. Kimmey's bread. I'm just so happy. I have this strange smile inside of me all the time. I want to stay in this state of perpetual gratitude and contentment for a while, just long enough to forget everything that I saw in France.

MRS. GRIGGS: I want you to be happy, Tristan, but it's idleness. Mrs. DeWitt is raising the rent. We really need your help.

TRISTAN: I know it is. It's irresponsible. I'm sorry. I'll go out today and see if I can work on the docks. Jim can probably can get me some piece work.

MRS. GRIGGS: I'll iron your shirt.

TRISTAN: But this Sunday, we're going up to the lake! We'll watch the color of the leaves. And I'm jumping in!

CLIFFORD: And no more monsters.

TRISTAN: No more witches! No more monsters! No more villains! And no more wars.

Send Me Away With a Smile

(Tristan sings to his sisters and Clifford. Even Mrs. Griggs is delighted.)

TRISTAN: LITTLE GIRL DON'T CRY
I MUST SAY GOODBYE
DON'T YOU HEAR THE BUGLE CALL?
AND THE FIFE AND DRUM BEATS ALL
WITH THE FLAG WAVE OV'ER US ALL
THO I LOVE YOU SO
IT IS TIME TO GO
AND THE SOLDIER IN ME YOU'LL FIND
WHEN ON LAND OR SEA
MANY BOYS LIKE ME
YOU WOULD NOT HAVE ME STAY BEHIND?
SO, SEND ME AWAY WITH A SMILE LITTLE GIRL
BRUSH THE TEARS FROM EYES OF BROWN.
IT'S ALL FOR THE BEST
AND I'M OFF WITH THE REST
WITH THE BOYS FROM MY HOMETOWN.
IT MAY BE FOREVER WE PART LITTLE GIRL
BUT IT MAY BE FOR ONLY A WHILE.

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BUT IF FIGHT HERE WE MUST
THEN IN GOD IS OUR TRUST.
SO, SEND ME AWAY WITH A SMILE.
WHEN I LEAVE YOU DEAR
GIVE ME WORDS OF CHEER
TO RECALL IN TIMES OF PAIN.
THEY WILL COME TOWARDS ME
AND WILL SEEM TO BE
LIKE THE SUNSHINE AFTER RAIN.
AMID SHOT AND SHELL
I'D REMEMBER WELL.
YOU MUST BE A SOLDIER TOO.
AND THROUGH THIS WAR I AM FIGHTING
FOR MY COUNTRY, MY HOME, AND YOU.
IT MAY BE FOREVER WE PART LITTLE GIRL
BUT IT MAY BE FOR ONLY A WHILE.
BUT IF FIGHT HERE WE MUST
THEN IN GOD IS OUR TRUST.
SO, SEND ME AWAY WITH A SMILE.

SCENE 4

(New York City. Port. Soldiers are waiting in line.)

ORMA: Late September 1918. New York City.

(Orma exits.)

HAL: What's goin' on here, boys? Why don't you let me off the train?

PORTER: No, soldier. You just got through the port?

HAL: Yes sir. 323rd Infantry regiment. Here's my papers. Honorable discharge.

PORTER: And no one put you through isolation?

HAL: I really want to see my family.

PORTER: And everyone appreciates what you boys are doing over there. I myself bought over 85 dollars of Liberty Bonds. But Governor Whitman is holding all men here until further notice. There's already been 50 cases of the Spanish Lady right here in New York City. Health Department is taking steps. Precautions.

HAL: I feel fine.

PORTER: Oh sure, you feel fine. But you've spent the last two weeks packed into that steel boat like a sardine breathing and passing about the same germs. No one's sure where this flu is coming from. But it's striking young people like yourself first.

HAL: I'm fine. If the Gerry couldn't kill me, no bug is going to knock me off. I've been away more than five months. I got a family that's been waiting for me. A girl too.

PORTER: Get back in line. Get your inoculation like every other Jim. We don't want this to turn into another yellow fever scare.

SCENE 5

(Limbo. Each actor crosses on a line.)

RUTH: And then it would attack.

DELMUS: It would attack you if you were strong.

ANNA: And young.

LADDIE: It would knock the wind out of you within 24 hours.

PORTER: Sometimes within just hours.

ORMA: And you'd take to your bed as the infection chose its attack.

HAL: Sometimes attacking the lungs. Sometimes attacking the respiratory system.

ALMA: Sometimes the lymph nodes. Sometimes the stomach.

NANA JANE: Sometimes the brain.

HONEY: Causing wrenching pain. And no matter how much you rested or which medicine you took, the disease had you.

(A drum is heard.)

ALL: The Spanish Lady. The Spanish Influenza. The Grippe.

(A drum is heard.)

SCENE 6

(Pine Hills. Alice walks tentatively towards her mother. She has practiced this moment for months.)

ALICE: Mother, I want to be actress.

MOTHER: Kill me now, Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. I haven't even had my tea.

ALICE: You need to listen to me. Please. I've spent the better part of the week thinking rather deeply on the issue, organizing my thoughts, and collecting the courage I would need to stand my ground. I need you to listen to my arguments, which I believe will address all of your concerns.

MOTHER: Have you talked to your Nana Jane about this ambition?

ALICE: Of course not.

MOTHER: Acting is a frivolous profession.

ALICE: Actors change the world. Pictures are changing the world every day.

MOTHER: Actors do not make significant changes in the course of history.

ALICE: John Wilkes Booth might argue otherwise.

MOTHER: Are you planning on assassinating a President, Alice? Poor Wilson is just saving the free world from the Krauts and Turks and now you're going to go spring yourself from the bushes and attack him with your hat pin? You've been attending one too many Suffragette meetings with your Aunt Alma.

ALICE: I'm not planning on killing anyone. I want to be an actress like Laureate Taylor. Maybe go into pictures like Pickford or Mae Marsh. I'm not mad.

MOTHER: I've often thought the two go hand in hand. I've always encouraged your outspokenness and interest in theatricals, Alice, but...vaudeville...pictures, it's not a decent life for a young girl.

ALICE: It is a noble profession. I can think of no more decent a life.

MOTHER: There are reputations to be earned. Do you know the reputation of most actresses, Alice?

ALICE: Times are changing, Mother.

MOTHER: Not fast enough.

ALICE: Women are bearers of vicious gossip on all fronts.

MOTHER: You only get one life, Alice. Hasn't this war shown you how fragile time truly is? Jack will be coming back from Virginia. We're lucky he's even alive.

ALICE: And you said we could discuss my going to New York when he came back. When the war was over and now the war is almost over. There are no opportunities here in Albany. I want to be on Broadway and then tour the provinces.

MOTHER: You don't even know where the provinces are?

ALICE: No, but I will learn about them when I tour.

MOTHER: Alice. No. Your Nana Jane and I are not raising actresses or Bohemians or Bolsheviks. For God's sake, we're Catholic. Now we've indulged your dance lessons at Campbell's Parlor Academy and elocution lessons with Professor Beauman for years now. We sat through endless recitals and pantomimes.

ALICE: Professor Beauman says I have so much promise.

MOTHER: Professor Beauman is not your mother. You are

not dropping out of high school. After you have passed your exams, then if you wish, you may remain here with me and your Nana Jane or help at your aunt's house until it's time for you to be married.

ALICE: Mother!

MOTHER: Don't look at me with those big brown stage eyes, Alice. Your grandmother and I are firm. What kind of girl are you?

(A drum is heard. Alice's mother freezes. Alice looks to her hands and then up. The drum is heard again, Alice's mother unfreezes.)

ALICE: This is my dream. I can make a difference in the world with my acting.

MOTHER: Alice. No.

ALICE: You are not listening to me. I need you to listen.

MOTHER: Very well.

ALICE: *(She takes in a deep breath. She has practiced this speech for a very long time. Her presentation is very theatrical:)* Since the dawn of western civilization when the first actor broke away from the chorus line and began to challenge the second actor; it demanded that an audience participate. It demanded that a person in the audience, sitting on the warm stone steps of the theater of Dionysus, become empathetic to the human condition. They must choose to understand why people behave the way they do in order to understand the argument. I can think of no more noble a life's pursuit than to be a conduit to this experience. I want to be an actress. I am an actress. I have given great thought to this dream. I need

permission to attend the American Academy of Dramatic Arts in New York City.

MOTHER: Not on my nickel. I'm going to the market and when I get back, there will be no more talk of acting. This family has been through enough these past two years with Jack gone and missing. And...and...now with his coming back...in whatever nervous state. It's time for our family to come together to a joyful calm time. I'm sorry, Alice.

(There is a knock. Nana Jane cries from offstage.)

NANA JANE: Alice, dear, could you grab the front door? I have my arms filled with the beef stew.

(Alice groans. She lies down on the ground defeated.)

ALICE: I am without a voice here in this house. No one listens or cares.

(She turns over on her stomach.)

ALICE: No one. Just no one.

MOTHER: I'll get the door!

(Hal enters still wearing a full doughboy WWI uniform. He carries a big bag.)

Hal! I didn't even recognize you. How are you?

NANA JANE: Oh sweet heavens. Hal, you're back. Look at you. You're so thin.

ALICE: Hal?

(Alice sits up.)

MOTHER: Let me get your bag.

HAL: Thanks Mrs. McMahan. I'm good.

MOTHER: I've got a letter to you from Jack. Have you heard

from him?

HAL: Not since we left basic training.

MOTHER: Let me go dig it out of the secretary. I'll be right back.

(Mother exits.)

HAL: Hi, Alice. It's grand to see you.

(Alice and Hal hug.)

ALICE: You are so thin. I guess you didn't like the food. I'm sorry I didn't write these past few months. I've been very busy with my elocution lessons and the Leland theatre had me playing a young boy prince in *The Cradle Song*. We did it right before a Charlie Chaplin picture. Have you heard of *The Cradle Song*? It's a perfectly mad play. People thought I was quite good.

HAL: Do I really look that bad? That's all people been saying to be since I came back.

NANA JANE: No, Hal, I don't think you could ever look awful.

HAL: I'm not sick.

ALICE: I know. You just look older.

HAL: It's been gone a while, haven't I? Everything in Albany looks small.

ALICE: It is small.

NANA JANE: *(Correcting her granddaughter:)* Alice, Hal looks fine. I can't tell you how much we've missed you here. It seems like only yesterday you were chasing dogs with Alice and Jack.

HAL: Have you heard from Jack?

NANA JANE: *(This is hard for her to say:)* He's coming back next week. He was injured in Messines. He's now in Virginia under doctors' care. *(Long pause.)* He's going to be fine.

ALICE: He was missing but they found him.

HAL: They're not sending him back?

NANA JANE: Not immediately. He'll be back soon and I'm sure he can't wait to see his best pal again.

HAL: How is he?

NANA JANE: He's alive. That's all I care about. God kept all my boys safe. You included. And now you can all come back to the neighborhood. You boys had more prayers coming from this parish than all the kings of Ireland. Where's your mother? She must be so overjoyed to have you back.

HAL: I don't know where they are. She was supposed to pick me up at Union Station this morning and there's no one at the house.

NANA JANE: Well, you rest here with us till they get back. I'll make you some cucumber sandwiches.

HAL: That'd be nice, Mrs. McMahan.

(Nana Jane leaves Hal in the room with Alice.)

ALICE: *(Excited:)* Did you kill anyone?

HAL: What do you mean?

ALICE: I mean did you have to "click" anyone when you were over there?

HAL: Yes.

ALICE: I can't imagine you killing anyone. You used to cry when Jack would shoot a jaybird.

HAL: I didn't cry.

ALICE: I suppose you had to do what you had to do.

HAL: I knew what was expected of me. I signed up.

ALICE: I remember. You and Jack signed up together.

HAL: Yep. But they didn't keep boys together if they came from the same city. No more pal units. So we got separated right away.

ALICE: Did they do anything to you, Hal? Did they hurt you?

HAL: I got out. I'm back here in Albany. And I want life to be the way it was before the war and I'm just glad there ain't going to be no more wars after this one.

ALICE: You deserve a parade.

HAL: (*Laughs.*) Don't worry, I'll get one.

ALICE: But why would you want to stay in such a dreary place like Albany? It belongs to your parents and their dreams. Why not start somewhere fresh and exciting? Like New York. Or Boston.

HAL: Albany is good enough for me right now. I've seen Paree.

ALICE: Paris? How exciting.

HAL: And all I thought about while I was there was getting back to this block and being with my family, my friends, and you. I missed you, Alice. I thought about you some. I wish you had written me. I had some feelings for you before we left.

ALICE: I know.

HAL: Alice?

ALICE: I was only 15 when you left. And I never thought you

were really going to go away. When I was in grammar school, everyone was against the war and United States involving themselves in a foreign war. We were isolationists. And then the world shifted in what seemed overnight and everyone, almost everyone was reversed and gung ho for joining up with the war. Everyone was sending out their sons and brothers to Europe. Even you. And before I knew it, you and Jack went away. You can't imagine how scared we all were.

HAL: Do you still have feeling for me?

ALICE: No. Too much time has passed, Hal. Now that the war is almost over, we all have a fresh slate to create and I don't think I'm really the type to fall in love with the boy next door. I'm sorry. I suppose I could have put this all down in a letter. I've had these feelings for months but how would that have helped you? I knew what you were going through. We heard reports about the trenches, the barbed wire, gas warfare and even some violent moving pictures from Somme at Harmanus Bleecker. We bought Liberty Bonds. We've even had three gold star mothers in this neighborhood alone. I knew what you were going through.

HAL: You have no idea what I went through.

ALICE: I never asked you to go fight.

HAL: You haven't changed at all, Alice.

ALICE: Yes I have. I'm going to be an actress. I'm a girl with dreams now. I'm going to New York City. Professor Beauman from the Guild says I have great potential but that theatrical careers have to be started young for an actress and I'm going to be 17.

HAL: How is Jack?

ALICE: Not good. He's coming back. But we're told he's not

right. So we're all wary of what is to come. Especially Mother. But who can blame her? Jack always was the favorite.

HAL: You think?

ALICE: He could charm a smile off of sunshine. Everyone knows it.

HAL: You were always my favorite.

ALICE: I don't want to fight with you, Hal. I really am ever so happy that you're alive and safe. But I think you should go now. I feel a particular nervous tension between us that makes me uncomfortable.

HAL: My parents aren't home.

ALICE: Then you should wait for them on the porch. Think how happy they'll be to find you waiting on their doorstep like a dearly desired postal package.

HAL: Tell your brother I stopped by.

ALICE: Yes, and when he gets back, we'll make him play your mother's piano and we'll all sing and drink mint iced tea.

HAL: I'd like that. Just like when we were children.

ALICE: Yes. Goodbye, Hal.

HAL: Goodbye, Alice.

(Hal exits. Enter Nana Jane with a tray of sandwiches.)

NANA JANE: Well the stew is heating up and I have sandwiches on the back porch.

ALICE: Oh Nana Jane, thank you, I am so famished.

NANA JANE: Where is Hal?

ALICE: He had to go back home.

SCENE 7

(Limbo. Each actor crosses on a line.)

ORVIN: J. Lansing Kimmey Bakery.

ORMA: South End, Albany. October 10, 1918.

MARGARET: A cough.

MR. KIMMEY : A hack.

HONEY: And then it feels like a house falls on you.

MARGARET: I don't feel good today, Mr. Kimmey. I'm going home.

MR. KIMMEY: Take a few days there, Peg. You've hacked over my bread trays all day.

MARGARET: I'm sorry there, Mr. Kimmey.

HONEY: A fever hits. You break out sweating like you're about to explode. Then chills.

ORMA: The chief danger of the grippe is the weakening effect on the system, which allows complications to develop. There are chiefly pneumonia and bronchitis, and sometimes the inflammation of the middle ear, or heart afflictions.

MARGARET: My teeth are rattling so.

HONEY: Can I get you another blanket? A little Quinine?

ORMA: An aspirin?

LADDIE: Dovet's Powder?

PORTER: Vick's Vaporub in a steam kettle?

MARGARET: Leave me alone. Just leave me alone.

HONEY: And the best you could hope for was sleep.

ORMA: A dark dreamless wait.

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(Orma, Margaret, Porter, Honey, Laddie, Porter exit. Anna and Orvin enters.)

ANNA: October 14, 1918.

ORVIN: Embarkation Hospital. Camp Stuart, Virginia.

(Orvin and Anna exit. Jack enters in his doughboy uniform. There is something haunted and lost about him. He races his fingers through his hair. Mother enters silently pulls a letter from an envelope and reads along.)

JACK: Dear Mother, Sorry I haven't written. Please excuse my penmanship. They're calling it nerve exhaustion. As you might imagine, I'm all kinds of knocked about. But I'm not really as hurt as the doctors might have you believe. The legs have healed up really nicely and I can almost bend my knees. It takes a great deal to write so I won't be too loquacious. I fear you'll be unable to recognize me when I get back, Mother. I have seen so much that my very soul has been changed. I have always strived to earn your love and pride, but when I return, I shall be a much quieter person. A man you might not recognize. And I hope that you will find it in your heart to have the patience to love this new half man. I dream often of you playing baseball with Hal and me in the backyard, and you and Alice dancing in the parlor. Is that what we fought for? Tell them I am in good spirits and eager to return home. I am not as the Germans would have wished—"Kaput." Such a funny word: Kaput. I'll be in Albany soon. Much love, your son, Jack.

SCENE 8

(Honey enters and slowly falls to the floor. Mrs. Griggs and Margaret enter and sit by her side. Mr. Griggs enters and stands worried. Clifford stands with his back to his sick sister.)

ANNA: Orange Street in Garder Bay. October 15, 1918.

(Tristan enters. He is soaked in sweat. He crosses center and looks like he is about to collapse.)

MRS. GRIGGS: Tristan, did you go to the drug store? Mr. Goldstein has put aside some Pepto Mangan.

MR. GRIGGS: We have to build up Peg's red blood.

(Tristan sits down.)

MRS. GRIGGS: My God, what happened? I knew I shouldn't have let you out of the house. Tristan, look at me.

MRS. GRIGGS: You're as white as a sheet. Oh Lord, not you too. You must have gotten it from one of the girls. We have to get you to a doctor.

TRISTAN: No ma, no doctors. All a doctor can do is put his cold hands in my throat and charge us a month's rent for the privilege of giving a prescription.

MRS. GRIGGS: Then let me get you to the hospital.

TRISTAN: I'm done with sleeping in bunkers. I don't want to sleep 50 to a ward.

MRS. GRIGGS: Tristan, please.

TRISTAN: You can take care of me—I'll be fine.

SCENE 9

(Pine Hills.)

AGNES: Alice, you have to join the League of Catholic Women. Look at the neat caps they gave us. They need nurses.

ALICE: I'm no nurse, Agnes. I'm an actress.

AGNES: But they've closed all the theaters due to the flu.

ALICE: Don't remind me. I could thrash Mayor Watt.

AGNES: Not just here in Albany. All the way up to Syracuse. And with all the schools closed, what else do we have to do?

ALICE: I don't know the first thing about dressing or tending to sick people. And the League of Catholic Women isn't exactly the Red Cross.

AGNES: Some of them are nurses and they have real doctors who will train us.

DOROTHY: Where's your patriotism? Your brother is off fighting for our freedoms.

ALICE: Yes, and we're very proud of him.

AGNES: I think you should come with me. There are advertisements all over the newspapers looking for girls like us. Everyone is pitching in.

AGNES: And what about Hal? Is he still sweet on you?

DOROTHY: I bet you could live with his sister in one of those new houses on Delaware. A lot of boys are going to come back from war ready to settle down right away.

ALICE: I have no time for Hal McNamara.

KITTY: You have no time for anyone but yourself. You're a blind patootie not to see how wonderful he is. I would give anything in God's green world to have Hal McNamara look at

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me with those haunted eyes.

ALICE: Hal is just a boy.

KITTY: No one is a boy anymore, Alice. Life is short and if someone as handsome and kind as Hal is smitten with the likes of you, then you should shut your trap and say thank you. You are one of the most selfish girls I have ever met.

ALICE: Don't yell at me, Kitty. I'm too young to be married. And Hal is too.

AGNES: What's he up to?

ALICE: He got a machinist job with his uncle. He's lucky to get it too. They have a bunch of men out sick.

AGNES: Yeah, five men out of my father's office this week too.

(Mother enters holding a letter and an envelope. She has been driven ivory pale and her hands shake.)

ALICE: What is it, Mother? Has Jack written? Mother say something. You're scaring me.

MOTHER: Alice. Get your grandmother. No wait. It will be too much for her.

ALICE: Mother! Mother, tell me what has happened?

(Nana Jane runs in.)

MOTHER: I knew he was under the weather. Oh Mother. Oh Mother. I'm so sorry.

NANA JANE: What happened? Please tell me. Open up your mouth and tell me. Please. Please. Is it Jack?

MOTHER: Yes.

(Mother falls to her knees. There are no words to express her pain. Maybe she screams. Maybe she curls up into a ball.)

ALICE: But you just received a letter from him. You said he was fine. You promised me he was going to be fine.

DOROTHY: Leave your mother be, Alice.

MOTHER: Our boy is gone.

ALICE: You promised.

AGNES: Oh Mr. McMahon, I'm so sorry. Would you like me to get Father Pat?

DOROTHY: Who sent you the telegram?

MOTHER: Uncle Sam.

I Didn't Raise My Boy to be a Soldier

MOTHER: TEN MILLION SOLDIERS TO THE WAR HAVE GONE

WHO MAY NEVER RETURN AGAIN;

TEN MILLION MOTHERS' HEARTS MUST BREAK

FOR THE ONES WHO DIED IN VAIN.

HEAD BOWED DOWN IN SORROW,

IN HER LONELY YEARS,

I HEARD A MOTHER MURMUR THROUGH HER TEARS:

"I DIDN'T RAISE MY BOY TO BE A SOLDIER

I BROUGHT HIM UP TO BE MY PRIDE AND JOY;

WHO DARES TO PLACE A MUSKET ON HIS SHOULDER

TO SHOOT SOME OTHER MOTHER'S DARLING BOY?

LET NATIONS ARBITRATE THEIR FUTURE TROUBLES,

IT'S TIME TO LAY THE SWORD AND GUN AWAY;

THERE'D BE NO WAR TODAY,

IF MOTHERS ALL WOULD SAY,

'I DIDN'T RAISE MY BOY TO BE A SOLDIER.'"

WHAT VICTORY CAN CHEER A MOTHER'S HEART

WHEN SHE LOOKS AT HER BLIGHTED HOME?

WHAT VICTORY CAN BRING HER BACK

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ALL SHE CARED TO CALL HER OWN?
LET EACH MOTHER ANSWER
IN THE YEARS TO BE,
"REMEMBER THAT MY BOY BELONGS TO ME!"

SCENE 10

(Garder Bay.)

ORMA: Experiments are now being made to perfect a vaccine. Owing to the nature of the septicemia in grave cases of influenza, hypodermic, metallic, colloidal, or sublimate injections are recommended.

(Tristan is in bed, sleeping. His mother sits by him. Clifford enters.)

CLIFFORD: Mother, I can't sit with Honey anymore. She's burning up the bed like an oven.

MRS. GRIGGS: Clifford, the nurse has already been here an hour ago. She said that Honey needs to rest and perspire it out. Open the windows. Get some air in here. How could it be so cold when it's just October? We had the hottest August I can remember. I have to sit here with Tristan. Your father has taken Peggy to Memorial Hospital. There's real doctors there.

CLIFFORD: Tristan has lips that are blue. He has blue toes and blue feet and blue lips. Like the night before the sun goes down. All soft blue.

MRS. GRIGGS: Tristan, boy. Does it still hurt?

CLIFFORD: This afternoon Tristan had blood in his ears. That's when Father got the nurses to come here. He was yelling a lot until they came.

MRS. GRIGGS: Tristan? Come here, Clifford. Hold your brother's hand. His hands are as big as a man's. When did he become a man? Not like you. You'll always be a boy. When he was born I could fit his entire red hand onto the tip of my finger. You have such beautiful hands, Tristan. Amazing. And now you're twice the size of me. Built like a Griggs. You are such a beautiful boy. A wonderful son.

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CLIFFORD: If you push in, you can feel his bones. What's this?

(Clifford examines a large scar on his brother.)

MRS. GRIGGS: That's part of his war wound. It's a scar. It's healed up nicely.

CLIFFORD: What is it?

MRS. GRIGGS: Someone shot him.

CLIFFORD: Why would anyone want to hurt Tristan?

MRS. GRIGGS: A German, maybe.

CLIFFORD: Why did the Germans want to hurt Tristan?

MRS. GRIGGS: He was probably attacking them with his unit.

CLIFFORD: Why?

MRS. GRIGGS: I don't know. I don't remember.

CLIFFORD: Please don't cry anymore, Mother.

MRS. GRIGGS: I can't.

CLIFFORD: No.

MRS. GRIGGS: I can't take care of you now.

CLIFFORD: MOTHER!

MRS. GRIGGS: I could only love you knowing that I had the others. And I don't know if I can take care of you.

CLIFFORD: Why?

MRS. GRIGGS: There was a comfort that the others were normal and blessed. But if I were to lose Margaret, Honey, and Tristan then I would only have you. And I don't know if I can bear having just you as my only child.

CLIFFORD: MOTHER!

MRS. GRIGGS: Having just an imbecile for my child.

CLIFFORD: Mother, don't cry. Tristan will get better. C'mon, Tristan, tell her you're going to get better.

(He leans in against Tristan's face.)

He can't talk. What is that sound?

MRS. GRIGGS: It's a rattle. A death rattle.

SCENE 11

PORTER: The letter arrives too late.

(Mother enters with an envelope. She opens it and reads it as Jack stands center.)

JACK: Dear Mother, A heaviness of thoughts sits in me causing me such a prevailing sadness that I cannot bear. I'm plagued by such horrific images that would disease a moral mind. Pictures of boys being destroyed. Pictures of boys falling face first into mud and never getting up. Twisted violent forms dancing in my head like you haven't ever seen. Insides turned out like in a butcher shop. Arms with no hands. Heads and no bodies. Oh sweet Jesus, Mother. Rattle. My mind and body shake so I fear I will never find peace. When I recover from this flu, Dr. Lee is going to try Electro-Medical methods to help me and I will need you to sign the permission forms that accompany this letter. I know it sounds extreme, but I am continually worried for my own sanity. Thank you for your care package and not worrying Nana Jane or Alice. You are my greatest confidant, friend and mother. Love, Your son, Jack.

SCENE 12

(*LOHOMA: The newspaper headlines for October 22, 1918.*)

ANNA: Unprecedented conditions confronts Albany undertakers in supplying caskets for the dead. Both leading manufacturing companies, the National Casket Company and Owosso, cannot keep up with the demand and have adopted the rule that the bodies must wait their turn.

RUTH: At the home for aged men and women, conducted by the Little Sisters of the Poor, on Central Avenue, the old people have been singularly free from the disease and remain in general good health.

LADDIE: Because of the uncertainty over the reopening of schools next week, Professor C. Edward Jones, superintendent of schools, today issued the usual schedule for next week's homework for high school students.

HELEN: The Albany Casket Company will supply only their regular customers; that is, if an undertaker previous to the epidemic did not do business exclusively with the one concern, he can't do business now, even though he has the money.

PROFESSOR C. EDWARDS JONES: English. In a 200-word theme, give an account of the achievements of the American Army in France. Supplementary reading: Prepare a report upon one of the novels selected from the supplementary list. War fiction may, of course, be substituted.

DELMUS: History. Explain the historic significance of aggression in the German character. Please site contemporary historic facts.

RUTH: Arithmetic. Lessons and exercises to completed in your primer. pp. 124-444.

PROFESSOR C. EDWARDS JONES: Latin. Write a letter in German (200 words) about your daily work and experience.

RUTH: I don't know why we have to continue learning German, especially after you fired Professor Miller and disbanded the German department.

(Alice stands center, Timothy stands behind her and puts her hair up. Dorothy and Agnes, both wearing white masks, join her on either side and put a white pinafore over her as well as a white nurse's head piece.)

ALICE: My daily work and experience by Alice McMahan. Today I woke up at seven and hopped on the trolley to go downtown. I pinned up my hair and put on a pinafore, and escorted my best friend, Agnes Mary Brien, to Miss Baker's home on North Pearl for training. One man coughed on the trolley and the conductor stopped the car and made him get off. Miss Baker gave us cotton masks to wear over our mouths and a bag of medicine.

MISS BAKER: Open the windows. Keep your hands covered. Change the sheets. Empty the sick bowl. You may read to them or sing or pray but do not offer false hope.

(Mrs. Griggs enters with a white sheet around her shoulders. She is lost and suffering from influenza. Her face and hair are soaked. Clifford follows behind his mother. Mrs. Griggs slowly falls to the floor.)

ALICE: They sent me to a row house in Orange Street in Garder Bay.

DOROTHY: It was a poor family. The apartment was small and smelled like warm sickness.

ALICE: I sat down next to a woman, to a mother who had lost three of her children the day before. Her husband sat in the kitchen drinking gin. Her hair was plastered to her face in

sweat. Her lips were blue, sharp, and she was angry.

MRS. GRIGGS: Keep away from me! Don't touch me! Clifford! Don't let her touch me! Go git my boy! Honey, get this bitch out of my house.

LADDIE: Her cough was like a barking dog deep inside her chest desperate to get out.

RUTH: She kept hitting the top of the bed with her knotted fist.

ALICE: I couldn't stop her.

(Mr. Griggs enters. He's drunk.)

MR. GRIGGS: You going to do something to ease her pain, girl?

ALICE: Yes sir. They gave me these bottles. I have menthol and camphor.

MR. GRIGGS: Then give her something. She hasn't stopped wailing since yesterday.

ALICE: Why?

MR. GRIGGS: She lost two girls in two days.

ALICE: I'm so sorry.

MR. GRIGGS: And a boy too.

ALICE: I don't know what to say. God must have his reasons.

MR. GRIGGS: Don't talk to me about God.

ALICE: I lost my brother. Jack. In Virginia.

MR. GRIGGS: I need some rest.

ALICE: She's delirious. I'm trying as best I can, sir.

CLIFFORD: When I get upset. She sings to me.

ALICE: I don't know any songs.

(Jack enters, strong and kind. He stands in full uniform.)

JACK: Aw come on, now, you know lots of songs. You're going to be an actress on the stage. You've practiced hundreds of songs with Hal and me in the living room. You've taken music lessons downtown for two years. God's sake, give 'em a tune.

ALICE: *(To Jack, no one can see him but her:)* I don't know any songs to sing to a dying woman.

JACK: Then sing to the boy.

ALICE: *(To Jack:)* Jack, no. You are asking too much of me.

JACK: Alice. Sing.

(Tristan enters wearing his WWI uniform. He stands behind Clifford, who cannot see him. Tristan and Jack mirror each other, their eyes locked together.)

CLIFFORD: My brother could swim the entire Hudson from Albany to Troy and then swim back with the outgoing tide. And he went to France. And rode in a submarine. And shot hundreds of Germans. And he kissed Florence Burt in back of the Empire Music Hall. And he could make my mother laugh even when there was nothing to laugh about. And he punched both the Clark boys in the face when they called me feeble. And he made—things—everything nice and bright. Every time he walked in the door, he was happy to walk in and see us. I can't sing. I can't sing the way it would make her happy. I can't do nothing to make her happy. I can't make her happy.

Madelon (I'll Be True to the Whole Regiment)

ALICE: THERE IS A TAVERN WAY DOWN IN BRITTANY
WHERE WEARY SOL-DIERS TAKE THEIR LIBERTY

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THE KEEPER'S DAUGH-TER WHOSE NAME IS MADELON
POURS OUT THE WINE WHILE THEY LAUGH AND
"CARRY ON"

AND WHILE THE WINE GOES TO THEIR SENSES
HER SPARKLING GLANCE GOES TO THEIR HEARTS
THEIR ADMIRATION SO INTENSE IS
EACH ONE HIS TALE OF LOVE IMPARTS
SHE COQUETTES WITH THEM ALL BUT FAVORS NONE
AT ALL
AND HERE'S THE WAY THEY BANTER EV'RY TIME THEY
CALL

*(Clifford hold his mother's hand, then crawls into her lap. Mrs.
Griggs dies. The ghosts of Tristan and Jack leave. Clifford
realizes his mother is dead and moves away from her.)*

O MADELON YOU ARE THE ONLY ONE
O MADELON FOR YOU WE'LL CARRY ON
IT'S SO LONG SINCE WE HAVE SEEN A MISS
WON'T YOU GIVE US JUST A KISS
BUT MADELON SHE TAKES IT ALL IN FUN
SHE LAUGH AND SAYS
"YOU'LL SEE IT CAN'T BE DONE
I WOULD LIKE BUT HOW CAN I CONSENT
WHEN I'M TRUE TO THE WHOLE REGIMENT"
O MADELON YOU ARE THE ON-LY ONE
O MADELON NOW THAT THE FOE HAS GONE
LET THE WEDDING BELLS RING SWEET AND GAY
LET THIS BE OUR WEDDING DAY
O MADELON SWEET MAID OF NORMANDY
LIKE JOAN OF ARC
YOU'LL ALWAYS BE TO ME
ALL THRU LIFE FOR YOU
I'LL CARRY ON MADELON MADELON MADELON
HE WAS A FAIR HAIR'D BOY FROM BRITTANY

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SHE WAS A BLUE EYED MAID FROM NORMANDY
HE SAID GOODBYE TO THIS PRETTY MADELON
HE WENT HIS WAY WITH THE BOYS WHO CARRY ON
AND WHEN HIS NOBLE WORK WAS ENDED
HE SAID FAREWELL TO HIS COMMAND BACK TO HIS
MADELON
HE WENDED TO CLAIM HER LIT-TLE HEART AND HAND
WITH LOVELIGHT IN HIS GLANCE THIS GALLANT SON
OF FRANCE
HE MURMURS AS SHE LISTENS WITH HER HEART
ENTRANC'D

ALICE: She was still. Her eyes half open.

RUTH: Her front teeth jutting out cruelly.

ISABELLA: She was dead with damp blankets circling her.

ORVIN: Her eyes were open. The girl had to shut them.

ANNA: The boy crawled up in a ball in his mother's lap and cried.

HELEN: The old man ran his fingers through his thick white hair and left the girl to clean up.

AGNES: He told her that they didn't have any more sheets left to wrap the body.

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