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DWRI 720-N01

Prof. Abigail Taylor-Sansom

All Quiet on the Western Front Audio Drama - The Hospital

<Explosion and a rain of dirt>

<Paul and Albert panting>

<Explosion and a rain of dirt>

<Staggered, haphazard, muddy steps>

PAUL

HEY! ... HEY!

<Clipping of a horse and the rickety knocking of a wooden kart>

PAUL

Come on Albert! We must get to the ambulance.

ALBERT

I can't feel my leg.

PAUL

Here. Lean on me.

<Staggered, haphazard, muddy steps>

<Creek of kart suspension followed by two wet thumps>

<A whip of the reigns and lurch of the kart>

ALBERT

Your leg. You've been hit too.

PAUL

I'm not leave you behind. We are going home.

ALBERT

Let's hope so. How far above the knee am I hit?

PAUL

At least four inches.

PAUL (CONT.)

(narration)

It was closer to one.

<pained groans>

<shuffle of shoes on wood floors>

<chaotic murmurs>

PAUL (CONT.)

We soon arrived at the dressing station. There, they gave us thin soup which we greedily spooned down.

ALBERT

I've made up my mind. If they take off my leg, I'll put an end to it. I won't do through life as a cripple.

PAUL

We must stay awake. These surgeons will amputate at the slightest provocation.

<footsteps and a metal kart wheel closer>

SURGEON

Alright. Hold still.

(to himself)

Let's get this scrap out

<Squelching of flesh>

<wet clicking and scrapping of metal>

<fabrics ruffle violently>

SURGEON

Chloroform the scoundrel!

<clatter of shoes on wood floor>

<Paul yelling incomprehensibly>

<thuds and squeaking of bed springs>

PAUL

WAIT! ... Herr Doctor. I promise to keep still, but do not chloroform me.

SURGEON

Very well.

<snquelching of flesh>

<wet clicking and scrapping of metal>

<light clang as bit of metal is dropped into metal tray>

SURGEON

Tomorrow you'll be off home.

<footsteps and a metal kart wheel away>

PAUL

(narration)

I was then taken to separate room where my leg was put in plaster. Soon I was back with Albert. When the medical sergeant major approaches our beds, I slip him a couple of cigars.

<sergeant-major takes a sniff>

SERGEANT-MAJOR

Have you got any more of them?

PAUL

Another good handful sir. And my comrade here- He has some as well. We would *both* be willing to hand them to you out the hospital train in the morning.

<sergeant major takes another sniff>

SERGEANT MAJOR

Done. I'll see you both on the train.

PAUL

We are going home, Albert.

<rain pitter patters into puddles and onto sheets>

<train bells>

<train roars in and gradually stops with a hiss>

PAUL

Albert and I later arrived at a Catholic hospital in Cologne. We were put in the same room and the hospital had been filled from the train. No one could sleep that night. Towards the morning, I began to doze off. Until-

<heavy wooden door groans as it opens>

<women's voices reciting prayers>

<annoyed, tired moans of soldiers>

SOLDIER 1

Up here in the corridor the sisters say prayers every morning. They call it Morning Devotion. They leave the door open to make sure you can get your fill.

PAUL

That's absurd! Just when we were dropping off to sleep.

PATIENT 1

It is the only room with light fixtures, so they hold their prayer here.

ALBERT

Be quiet! Trying to sleep!

SOLDIER 2

(away)

Please shut the door sister.

NUN

We are saying prayers. That is why the door is open.

Patient 2

But we want to sleep-

NUN

Prayer is better than sleeping. And it is seven o' clock already.

<Albert groans>

PAUL

Shut the door!

NUN

But we are saying these prayers for you.

PAUL

Shut the door anyway.

<nun huffs and walks away>

<prayer continues>

PAUL

I'm going to count to three. If those prayers don't stop, then something is going to fly ... One ... Two ... Three ... *Four ... Five ...*

<a glass slides against wood, a woosh and glass shatters>

<prayer stops and large shuffle of footsteps>

PAUL, ALBERT, AND OTHERS

(out of sync)

Shut the door!

NUN

Heathen.

<wooden door groans and shut with a CLACK>

<chirping of birds>

<deliberate, hasty steps>

<clanking of a sword in the scabbard>

HOSPITAL INSPECTOR

Alright. Who threw the bottle?

<silence>

HOSPITAL INSPECTOR (CONT.)

As the hospital inspector and officer in command, I order you to answer. Who threw the bottle?

JOSEF

I did.

HOSPITAL INSPECTOR

You?

JOSEF

(stiff, robotic)

Yes. I was annoyed because we were woken up unnecessarily and I lost control. I did not know what I was doing.

HOSPITAL INSPECTOR

What is your name?

JOSEF

Reinforcement-Reservist Josef Hamacher.

HOSPITAL INSPECTOR

I see ...

<squeak of boots pivoting>

<deliberate steps fading out>

PAUL

Why did you say that? I was the one who threw that bottle.

JOSEF

(chuckling)

That doesn't matter. I have a shooting license. You see, I got cracked in the head and they presented me with a certificate to say that I am periodically not responsible for my actions. I've had a grand ol' time. No one dares to annoy me, and nobody ever does anything to me. If they open that door again tomorrow, we shall all throw another!

<soldiers laugh and cheer>

<fade to crickets>

FRANZ

Hey. Hey!

PAUL

What? What is it Franz?

FRANZ

Ring the bell. I think I have a hemorrhage.

<loud ring of a bell>

<beat>

FRANZ (CONT.)

Ring again.

<loud ring of a bell>

PAUL

Franz are you sure you're bleeding? Otherwise, the night sister is going to curse us out again.

FRANZ

I'm sure. The bandage is wet. Can't anybody make a light?

<soldiers grumble>

<sheets ruffle>

<bell rings for several seconds>

JOSEF

Should we throw another bottle?

PAUL

She wouldn't hear that any better than the bell.

<door groans open>

<single set of leisurely footsteps>

FRANZ

IM BLEEDING!

<frantic running>

NIGHT SISTER

Why didn't someone say I was wanted?

PAUL

We did ring, and none of us can walk.
(narration)

Franz was to be moved to the bandage room. The men who had been at the hospital the longest called it the Dying Room.

FRANZ

Where are you taking me?

NIGHT SISTER

To the bandaging ward.

<creak of bed springs decompressing>

NIGHT SISTER (CONT.)

Let's not forget your tunic.

<clack of metal coat hanger onto metal>

FRANZ

No. I'm stopping here!

<thumb of a body against a metal frame>

<Franz cries out in terror>

FRANZ

I won't go to the Dying Room.

NIGHT SISTER

But we are going to the bandaging ward.

FRANZ

(winded)

Then why do you want my tunic for? Am I not coming back?

NIGHT SISTER

We are going to the bandaging ward

FRANZ

(wheezing)

Stopping here!

<kart rolling away>

PAUL

(narration)

Franz never returned from the Dying Room. a few days later, they took Albert and amputated his leg. The whole thing was taken off up to the thigh.

ALBERT

Once I get ahold of my revolver, I think I am going to shoot myself.

<German skat music>

PAUL

(narration)

Albert's stump healed well. The wound was almost closed. He was soon to go off to an institute for artificial limbs. He had become more solemn and would often break off from his speech to stare in front of himself. If Albert were not with the other men in the hospital, he would have shot himself long ago. He has gotten past the worst of it. He often looks on while we play skat. I was given leave to take time to recover, but I did not return home. My mother was sick and feeble, and I did not wish to see her like that for the last time. I was soon recalled to my regiment and returned to line once more. Parting with Albert was hard. But a man gets used to that sort of thing in the army.

<German skat music fades out>