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The Genuine Article: An Examination of Identity through Story

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The Genuine Article:

An Examination of Identity through Story

by

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Abstract

The following artist's statement and accompanying script examine the process of playwriting in creating and developing the full-length play, *The Genuine Article*. Based on George DuPre's fictional World War II account that was published as fact and documented by Quentin Reynolds in *The Man Who Wouldn't Talk*, the play reveals DuPre's potential motivation for lying about his true identity.

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Dedication

To George.

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INTRODUCTION

The true story of George DuPre proved an ideal subject for my full-length thesis play. There are a number of reasons for this: first of all, he is a local historical figure and, therefore, carries an inherent interest for me as I was born and raised in Calgary, Alberta. If there is a deficit of knowledge about our local history, then the public replaying of such narratives could serve a collective need to understand our community's past. Secondly, his story has numerous applications as it touches on several universal themes; reaching beyond the confines of its time and place. George's fictional tale of wartime exploits as he told it to Quentin Reynolds reveals connections between storytelling and identity; masculinity and war; truth and journalism—among others. It was these relationships I sought to explore through writing *The Genuine Article*. Thirdly, the format of a play permits an audience to engage with his narrative and, through that engagement, understand the weight it carried. For an audience member unfamiliar with George DuPre, their experience of the play is intended to—at least in some ways—mirror that of a person following the breaking story in 1953 and, by so doing, understand how the public was deceived. Finally, it presented a personal, academic and literary challenge for me to undertake writing such an expansive play. While I have written plays in the past, I have never completed a project on this scale. The narrative moves quickly over geographical and temporal terrain as well as between theatrical worlds. Learning how to execute those shifts proved integral to the writing process. The scope of the play offered me the chance to develop further the playwriting tools I acquired over the last year and a half in the MFA program.

Each of the four chapters in this artist's statement focuses on a different aspect of *The Genuine Article*. The first chapter uncovers, as much as possible, the real George DuPre. When did he begin telling his lie and what pressure—social or otherwise—was he under that prompted

him to do so? What did he actually do during World War II? How was his life altered after Doug Collins broke the story of his deceit? How was his relationship with Muriel, his wife, affected by his public shaming? Based on the extensive research I conducted throughout the writing process, this chapter attempts to paint an accurate portrait of the man I investigated as the basis for the protagonist of my play.

Chapter two focuses on how my research was incorporated into the body of the text itself. While the historical research I conducted offered a significant amount of raw data, distilling that information into the form of a play was a separate process. This chapter examines why I chose to structure the play the way I have and how that decision facilitates—and comments upon—the content. It also seeks to explain which aspects of the play were my own inventions and how those elements were blended with the material obtained during the research phase.

The third chapter investigates *The Genuine Article* through several critical lenses with a concentration on story, identity and masculinity. Reflecting on the play from multiple analytical perspectives reveals the ideological foundations of the text and allows those ideas to come into conversation with each other. The concepts explored in this chapter are indicative of the ideas it is anticipated an audience will extract from a performance of the play.

Chapter four explores how the rehearsal for—and performance of—a staged reading of *The Genuine Article* at the 2013 Taking Flight festival influenced edits and additions to the text. I conclude this chapter by discussing the lessons I have learned through this process, with a special focus on the process of developing plays based on historical figures.

CHAPTER 1: THE REAL GEORGE DUPRE

Sifting through the various newspaper articles, essays and book excerpts that comprise the majority of the material devoted to George DuPre, it is difficult to separate fact from fiction. Who was the real George DuPre? What did he actually do during World War II? Was he a man who constantly told tall tales, or was his story of being drafted by Special Operations Executive, working with the French Resistance, surviving torture at the hands of the Gestapo, escaping and returning to England the only fiction he told? The central dramatic question of *The Genuine Article* asks: why would someone invent such an incredibly complex and detailed story? This question also proves valuable in attempting to uncover the man himself. Revealing why he lied may permit a degree of understanding as to what he was struggling to suppress or supplant within himself. This chapter aims to offer an accurate representation of who George DuPre truly was by defining his actual war experience and the effects of living in Canada after the Second World War.

By assuming the character of an ex-British Intelligence agent and telling a fictional war story, DuPre claimed he was attempting "to prove, especially to the young, that a man with faith can endure anything" (qtd. in *Time*). In spite of this, his claim of attempting to spread a religious message is curiously inadequate. If it is true that "in the days immediately following the war, he found that his message fell on more receptive ears if backed by a personal story," (*Reader's Digest* 108) then he truly did believe he was functioning as a vessel for the word of God. It is conceivable that the deployment of a personal narrative, regardless of whether it was true or not, would be more compelling for an audience. Nevertheless, if his religious conviction was as a legitimate as he claims, then this explanation fails to take into account that he knowingly violated the ninth commandment. Furthermore, no matter how grand his ambitions may have been, by

deceiving his audience, DuPre breached an unwritten contract between the storyteller and the listener.

Conceivably, he never expected his story to gain as extensive a following as it did. He probably never anticipated that his fictional narrative would be published as a book and sold as truth. Did the story really begin as a benign tale with a religious message but, through the telling and retelling of it, built it up until it eventually snowballed out of control? That is, after all, how DuPre described the situation once he was exposed:

> The story eventually got bigger than I was. I was only a means of telling it. I honestly felt I had a message – that no man can survive without faith in God… I thought this story of tremendous self-sacrifice was a means of leading youth – and grownups, too – to new insight into what man can be capable of. The story may not have been true but the message is the truest thing in the world. (Dupre qtd. in *Reader's Digest* 108)

Had DuPre woven his web of lies so tightly around himself that he was starting to believe his own fiction? The last lines of Collins' revelatory article suggest this as a credible possibility: "Asked today by *The Herald* whether he had any statement to make before the paper went to press, Mr. DuPre said: 'Nothing. Except that I have been advised that my story is not a true story'" (*Herald* 13 Nov. 1953). The odd phrasing of this last sentence seems to indicate that he was completely absorbed by his own fiction and had only just been informed of its falsehood. Then again, it could merely be the sheepish response of a man publicly exposed as a liar. By the time *The Man Who Wouldn't Talk* was published, had DuPre told the story so many times to so many people that he was simply unable to come clean out of embarrassment? As with so many instances in the strange case of George DuPre, there is no way to be certain.

What is clear is that, for DuPre at least, there was a powerful association between his identity and his story. Even though he did not accept any financial compensation for the book, by accepting recognition for his fictional wartime exploits, DuPre's true identity was superseded by a new one. The question then follows: why did he desire the recognition he did not deserve and had not rightfully earned? Was there something about his true self he believed to be inadequate?

In his first of five lectures on *The Triumph of Narrative*, Robert Fulford uses George DuPre to illustrate his observations on the interconnected relationship between personal narrative and identity. Fulford points towards a psychological justification for his tale: "When the truth about us feels inadequate, we may try to rewrite it, so that it comes closer to what we believe is expected of us" (17). So while DuPre may have been a religious man who considered it his responsibility to share his faith in God with a younger generation, Fulford presents a more satisfying reason for his duplicitousness:

> We can guess that he was a born storyteller, someone who found it easy to organize facts into orderly tales to amuse himself and those around him. And after the Second World War, his world was filled, or so it must have seemed, with people who were able to tell enthralling wartime stories. At that time, the expression "He had a good war" meant that he came home carrying tales of excitement and adventure. (19-20)

Was DuPre's sense of identity and perhaps even his sense of masculinity threatened by the lack of "a good war" story? Ultimately, there is no way to confirm Fulford's assertion but, if true, it offers a tantalizing view into the mind of George DuPre and the motivation behind his deception. Furthermore, Fulford's assessment of the nature of the relationship between narrative and

identity provides a new and intriguing lens with which to view the play itself, which is expanded upon in chapter three.

The pressure for returning soldiers to have "a good war" story is illustrated in a review of Reynolds' book by Herbert Mitgang. The review was published in *The New York Times* on 1 November 1953, prior to Doug Collins revealing DuPre's fabrication, under the title "Quiet Hero." While the review is generally positive, Mitgang claims that "The story loses interest after the war when Mr. DuPre returns to Canada as an understated hero wondering what it all adds up to… and chooses the normal life of a gentleman." Unbeknownst to the reviewer at the time, DuPre had in fact only led "the normal life of a gentleman" and had genuinely failed to live up to the burden of having "a good war." He goes on to say that, "This incongruous anticlimax, after a fairly interesting war adventure story, may strike some readers as a crashing oversimplification." Mitgang's referral to DuPre's real life as anticlimactic hints at the overwhelming pressure DuPre must have felt, since the facts of his life were perceived as boring, especially when placed in close proximity to his invented exploits.

Fulford's deduction that George DuPre "was a born storyteller" is supported by an article that appeared in the *Lebanon Daily News* on 16 November 1953. "Canadian's Tall Story of Spying Revealed as Hoax" reads the eye-catching title, which goes on to explain DuPre's penchant for telling tall tales. According to the article, DuPre was well-known as a spinner of yarns by the townsfolk of The Pas, Manitoba:

> The 4,000 residents of the town had only to check the dates in the spy yarn, because George DuPre, now manager of a chemical company in Calgary, was a game warden in the Pas for three years in the late 1930's. His former townspeople, reached by telephone, recalled George as an entertaining young man

> who always had interesting stories to relate. They liked the stories, one resident said, but they took them with a grain of salt. (15)

If this excerpt is correct—though there is no way to verify the author's claim of contacting residents of "[T]he Pas"—DuPre was indeed a natural "born storyteller." Was it this inherent quality combined with the pressure of having "a good war" that provoked him to invent such an incredibly complex and detailed lie?

In reality, according to Douglas Dales of the *New York Times*, George DuPre "enlisted in the R.C.A.F. in May, 1942" and from there "was sent to England for seventeen days of training early in 1943 and was then assigned to a post on the West Coast of Canada. In April, 1945, he was assigned to Yorkshire, England, and was there for six months before his return to Canada and his discharge" (15 Nov. 1953). This brief passage illustrates just how banal DuPre must have considered his wartime experience, especially when summed up in a few short sentences. However, when compared with *Time* magazine's article from 23 November 1953, it becomes a little more difficult to ascertain what exactly DuPre did during the war. "[DuPre] had spent a total of 13 months with an intelligence unit in England, where he had been a flight lieutenant. But at about the time the Gestapo was supposed to be torturing him, DuPre was safely back in Canada." Collins was able to prove, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that DuPre was never in France. The question remains: how long was DuPre actually in England? Was it six months or thirteen months or somewhere in between? Since he seems to have been in England for a considerable length of time, what was he actually doing there?

Unfortunately, sixty years later, securing the details of his real war experience is frustratingly difficult. As Quentin Reynolds describes in his "An Explanation" that was included in the third printing of *The Man Who Wouldn't Talk*: "DuPre hadn't gone overseas until 1943…

[and] had never worked for British Intelligence" (4). *Reader's Digest* asserts that "although he had taken an intensive Intelligence training course he had never worked for British Intelligence" (106). While the details appear fuzzy from this vantage point, the general shape of DuPre's real war experience is clear. He went to England for a brief period of time—somewhere between six months and thirteen months—received training but never worked for Special Operations Executive and returned safely to Canada.

Then again, is that really the whole story? Bob McKee, a journalist for the now defunct newspaper *The Albertan* wrote a brief follow-up article on George DuPre, which was published 15 June 1977. At least one of the details mentioned in the article is remarkably inaccurate, especially considering the subject matter. McKee refers to the fictional character DuPre invented for himself as "Paul Couchette" instead of "Pierre Touchette" as mentioned repeatedly in *The Man Who Wouldn't Talk*. While this places any other facts that can be gleaned from the article in doubt, McKee indicates that DuPre's actual wartime experience included working as "an intelligence officer but at a base in the north of England." Again, there seems to be a discrepancy here as to whether or not DuPre actually worked for British Intelligence. The key here is when McKee goes on to say that, "His job [was] to interview airmen who had been forced down and who, with the help of the underground resistance, had escaped from France." While seemingly of trivial importance, this minute detail supports Fulford's assumption that DuPre was surrounded by war stories superior to his own, adding weight to the idea that he perceived himself as inadequate. This point is emphasized by Reynolds himself as he explains that DuPre's real "job had been to interview airmen who had gone down in France and then escaped with the help of the underground. DuPre had learned all that he knew about life under the Nazis from such men"

(*By Quentin Reynolds* 329). If he was debriefing downed pilots, this would position DuPre to have access to a significant amount of detail, which he could draw upon to support his fiction.

After arriving home, he began to talk: "When Mr. DuPre returned from war service, he discussed his experience with his neighbors. Word got around and he was invited to talk before a church meeting in his home town," explains Douglas Dales, in a brief account of the years leading up to DuPre's introduction to Reynolds. "Then came an invitation to address a service club. Demands from clubs and business groups outside his home town followed. With each telling, his war experiences grew and in the next six years he spoke to one group after another across the breadth of Canada" (15 Nov. 1953). So between the end of World War II and June of 1953, DuPre had started building up his heroic fiction, developing it a little each time. He constructed multiple recurring characters and new episodes but always with the theme that it was his faith in God that carried him through.

Laura Z. Hobson's article "Why Didn't DuPre's Wife Keep His Hoax Within Bounds" sheds some light on what Muriel DuPre must have experienced while listening to her husband's tale: "the press dispatches say, 'she had known of the fiction since 1946'" (*St. Petersburg Times* 18 Nov. 1953). Hobson reveals that "[w]hile Quentin Reynolds was working with George DuPre in New York, the author phoned Mrs. DuPre twice for added details." Muriel was trapped between her allegiance to her husband and her own knowledge of the truth. "To every question, she said, 'It's better if George tells you that himself.'" She goes on to say that Reynolds called Muriel DuPre from New York after Collins' article was published. It shows her distress over the situation but also discloses the fact that she left Calgary when Reynolds came to visit. "'I wasn't in the mountains,'" Muriel explained. "'The whole time you were here with George, I was half a mile away from you, right in town. George knew that if I met you, you'd see in my face that

something was wrong. Or else, I'd have blurted out the whole truth.'" Does this mean that George DuPre actually sent his wife away during Reynolds' visit in order to protect himself? Did he have to tell another lie about her taking their two sons out to the mountains in order to conceal her inexplicable absence? Another possibility is that she left of her own volition, unable to actively support her husband's lie or participate in his foreseeable downfall.

Regardless, when the story finally broke, Muriel stood by her husband. Perhaps it is a sign of their sensibility toward marriage in general or an indication of how much she truly loved him but she refused to turn her back on her husband in his darkest hour. "'I am going to stand beside George and nothing will change this,'" she told *Calgary Herald* reporter Bob Christie, in her first interview after the incident. "'He didn't need to be a hero. I was quite satisfied with him the way he was,'" she declared. Christie took note of the fact that "she had 'continually warned George about telling this story' as she was fully aware of the difficulties it might cause." Her final statement reveals a woman firmly committed to her husband: "'He has been the best husband and father possible. I am going to stand beside George and nothing will change this.'" Did she honestly believe that or was she only saying what was expected of her? The shifting terrain of the whole story offers little ground to draw firm conclusions.

By all accounts, George DuPre was an upright citizen and a pillar of his community, which is one of the reasons why his downfall was so shocking. "He impressed everyone he met with his modesty, sincerity and integrity. He was anything but a braggart," claims *Reader's Digest*. DuPre held an accountable position as he was:

> confidential assistant to Nathan E. Tanner, Minister of Mines and Minister of Lands and Forest of the Alberta provincial government, he was in a sensitive position dealing with strategic material and natural resources…. Apart from his

> work, he had only three interests – the Boy Scouts, his church and his family. (107)

The perception of George DuPre as a dedicated, hardworking and religious family man offers him a high platform from which to fall—quite useful for dramatic purposes. Ironically, it was his connection to his family and community that seems to have provided him a safety net to fall into before he faded back into obscurity.

There are not many records of the years after DuPre's public disgrace but a few fragments remain, offering a glimpse at how he spent the rest of days. At the end of his article, Bob McKee remarks on the dead end he came to in his pursuit of the real George DuPre: "What happened to him after his story appeared in November 1953 is shrouded in mystery. His file in the Department of Veteran Affairs ends somewhat abruptly in 1953." McKee's article was published in 1977 but there is one article that was published five years earlier, which permits a brief glimpse into the rest of George DuPre's life. Alan Mettrick, a staff writer for the *Calgary Herald*, was investigating how he was getting on twenty years later. "DuPre, who was purchasing man for a Calgary chemical company up to three years ago, is now 68 years old and is living in retirement in Victoria, B.C.," he wrote. Mettrick draws close ties between George DuPre and Clifford Irving, who became famous for writing a fictional biography of Howard Hughes. Speaking to DuPre over the phone, Mettrick's article provides a few short but tantalizing paragraphs from the ex-celebrity: "'I can see a lot of similarities between the Irving case and the bogus story I told,'" DuPre says. Again, he uses his lack of financial compensation to defend his actions:

> "The difference is that I never got a cent for the *Readers Digest* article, because somebody else wrote it using material I provided, or from a book which came out

> later. Even if I had made any money, I would have given it to the Boy Scouts because I had no thought of personal gain. The story I told about myself was a fake, but I didn't do it to hurt anyone. It just grew. I started talking about my so-called war exploits after the war, and embroidered the story. Before I knew where I was, the thing was in *Readers Digest* and there was a book coming out about me. I got chided about the story at first but gradually it died down and I spent many more happy years in Calgary."

He was publicly humiliated and endured the sharp sting of being labelled an imposter but, after the dust settled, the fallout appears to have been minimal. DuPre retreated back to the safety of anonymity as illuminated by Brian Brennan, another two decades later. Brennan provides a faint sketch of the rest of DuPre's life, noting that he "disappeared into obscurity after what the *Herald* called 'the greatest hoax in the history of journalism.' He continued to live and work in Calgary for another 17 years, retired in 1970, then moved to Victoria with his wife and son. He died some years later" (Brennan). While Brennan condenses the rest of DuPre's life into a few short sentences, perhaps there were further repercussions from the event that have simply gone undocumented.

The assistance of a living relative in researching DuPre and *The Man Who Wouldn't Talk* would undoubtedly prove invaluable in providing context, background and information as to the last years of the man's life. Unfortunately, an attempt to contact David DuPre by mail—who lives in Tsawwassen, BC and is perhaps the son of George and Muriel—went unanswered.

CHAPTER 2: WRITING *THE GENUINE ARTICLE*

After learning of DuPre's story, it was necessary to spend time considering the most effective structure whereby this story could be adapted as a play. The first act portrays the events depicted in *The Man Who Wouldn't Talk*, while the second act centres on the destruction of the myth. The initial intention of structuring the play this way was to draw the audience in with George's story, in the same way that the people George addressed when he spoke were drawn in. The objective was to persuade observers of a performance that he was a bona fide Canadian war hero, allowing a contemporary audience to experience a similar sensation of shock when it is revealed he is not. In order for this bait and switch to work, it was integral that George's story be convincing, carrying the weight of authenticity. Upon reading the book, it became apparent that this approach might be problematic. Some of the stories were so outlandish or improbable, they threatened to damage the verisimilitude of the play. Additionally, there were so many characters in the book, darting in and out of George's tales, that it became unrealistic to employ enough actors to portray all of them.

Supervisor Clem Martini offered some useful advice in dealing with the second problem, suggesting that the actor playing Quentin Reynolds could, during his interview, take on all of the other characters in George's story. This offered a fluid performance style that could shift rapidly across time and geographical locations. Moreover, it provided a reliable structure for the first act; one that was inherently theatrical. As George related his story to Reynolds, the office would fall away and the audience would be dragged back into George's "memories" of World War II.

This structure also proved useful in dealing with the first problem. Whenever something unbelievable happened, Reynolds would be able to drop character—snapping the scene back into his office—and pose questions the audience might want to ask. By scrutinizing the events as they

are depicted, an audience might be willing to suspend their disbelief until the second act, when Doug Collins would force George to admit he had fabricated the entire story.

It was also evident that some events would have to be eliminated from the narrative in its transition from the book to the play. The first act of *The Genuine Article* represents a truncated version of DuPre's tall tales. In chapter twelve of *The Man Who Wouldn't Talk*, for example, he claims to have sabotaged German U-boats in Hamburg (148-62). While chapter fifteen reveals how George DuPre was sent back into the field after being extracted from France (181-92). He claimed that the objective of this mission was to identify Gestapo agents, army officials and Nazi politicians attempting to "pass themselves off as Allied officers" in German prisoner-of-war camps (183). Neither of these narrative strains appears in the first act of *The Genuine Article*. After several attempts to include condensed versions of these additional war stories in the play, two things became obvious: not only would their appearance in the text expand the play so greatly as to demand a third act but their existence would, again, jeopardize the believability of the play as a whole.

In the play, the main story that George tells Reynolds serves to illustrate his faith and his belief that God spared him from death at the hands of the Gestapo. There are three tests that George must face in the climax of this story. George had a vested interest in storytelling and was conscious of the importance of building to a climax by increasing the difficulty of obstacles a protagonist must face. According to Reynolds' book, as the Nazis tortured him, the methods they used to deliver suffering became increasingly more abnormal and perverse. The tortures depicted in the play were drawn directly from Reynolds' book, with some key differences.

Aside from the discomfort of suffering through rapid shifts in temperature and deprivation of food and water, the first real test of George's ability to maintain his character

comes when he is interrogated. A German major and a gestapo agent demand he identify members of the local Resistance. “Pierre shook his head,” wrote Reynolds, “the sergeant kicked his feet from under him; his body went sprawling to the floor but the finger remained in the vise. It snapped like a broken toothpick and the pain of it sent a searing hot needle into George’s brain” (116). George proves himself by managing to stay in character during this first test. At the same time, this passage demonstrates the callousness of his captors.

The second test comes when the Nazis threaten to pour boiling water down his throat. In *The Genuine Article*, one kettle is used by George’s torturers as his mouth is fixed open with a metal appliance. A key difference between the novel and the play is that the audience does not witness the boiling water being poured into his mouth. The decision to portray everything up to the pouring of the water but not the actual torture itself was deliberate. Allowing the audience to fill in the rest is more compelling than actually showing a staged representation of the act itself. In *The Man Who Wouldn’t Talk*, the Nazis use three kettles, each one hotter than the last. (120-21) Again, DuPre uses his natural penchant for storytelling to ramp up the tension for his audience. The danger here is that the struggle starts to feel contrived and it is difficult to fathom how people did not see through DuPre’s fiction.

The third and final test—which is, of course, the most sadistic—in which George must stay in character while being given an acid enema, degrades him physically and emotionally but not spiritually. His faith is the secret weapon he possesses that allows him to endure torture while keeping his identity of Pierre Touchette.

Prior to the final test, George claimed he was nearly executed by firing squad but saved at the last moment by a commanding German officer who wanted to interrogate him further. Although he is saved, the threat of death is robbed of its potency when the teller is alive to tell

the tale. Consequently, the question driving his whole story within the play is not "Will he live?" but instead becomes "How will he survive?" In adapting this sequence of events on to the stage, this particular moment was replaced by a more introspective monologue in which George explains how he chose not to commit suicide.

If the purpose of his story is to demonstrate a capacity to withstand suffering, much like Christ, then it was comparatively more interesting to understand his ability to endure through the ordeal. It was necessary to identify a plausible method of suicide George could attempt to use before realizing it was his duty to continue to suffer. The answer came from a previous chapter of *The Man Who Wouldn't Talk*. "It was an old trick of the Liverpool Irishmen who had once been forced to fight so hard for their jobs and their very lives when they came to work on the Liverpool docks half a century ago," wrote Reynolds (37). "You merely sewed a razor blade inside the peak with the cutting edge facing out." This small detail, which is never revisited in the book, suddenly took on greater significance. It provided the method of suicide that the protagonist of the play would be able to abstain from using, instead relying on his faith to see him through his final test.

> He had faith all right; perhaps that's why he wasn't really afraid at this moment. What was fear anyhow? he asked himself. He answered his own question. Fear was a lack of trust in God. Christ showed no fear when they nailed him to the Cross. His faith in His Father was so great that there was no room for fear in his heart. (125)

This brief excerpt chronicles the turning point in DuPre's fiction; emphasizing the instant he surrendered himself to God as his fear was replaced with faith.

With these minor adjustments, the main thread of DuPre's narrative became clearer, more succinct and particularly effective in a theatrical context. The first act, which is a relatively faithful retelling of George's story as chronicled by Reynolds, is therefore designed to demonstrate and deliver DuPre's message of "You can't have guts without God."

In order to tell the real story behind George's story—which comprises most of the second act—additional research was required. Quentin Reynolds writes extensively about the time he spent with DuPre in New York in his memoir *By Quentin Reynolds*. He records the amount of time and effort he put into investigating him in Calgary. Although it was written many years after the fact, Reynolds' recollection of the events provided details that were filtered into *The Genuine Article*. "George had never been to New York before," he recalls of their first meeting.

> I suggested showing him the city before we drove out to Bedford Village, where Ginny and I were then living. He was delighted at the thought and wondered if we could possibly begin by going to the top of the Empire State Building. Acrophobe that I am, I did not go for the view. George, happy as a child, bought some post cards and statuettes of the building in the souvenir shop. 'My wife and boys will love these,' he said. (327)

These details, specifically the post cards and the statuette of the Empire State Building, became integral to the play. When George returns from New York at the beginning of the second act, he offers the statuette to Muriel as a peace offering. He has purchased the post cards for his sons but learns that he cannot give them to his children as Muriel has sent them to her mother's house.

Reynolds also reveals some critical information about Muriel's disappearance when he visited Calgary. "At the time, I had been told she was on a vacation with her children. Actually, I now learned, she had been hiding, unable to face me" (330). These details were also woven into

the text but, as discussed in chapter one, they do not reveal whether or not George sent Muriel away or if she chose to leave of her own volition.

The appearance of George's father in the play was a relatively late addition. He was drawn out of the need to apply more pressure on George, with the added benefits of illustrating the protagonist's background and providing a plausible psychological motive for his dishonesty. Colonel DuPre is the most broadly drawn character in the text, which was a deliberate decision. He is, after all, a representative of the memory of George's father and is, therefore, skewed by the protagonist's own perception of events that have already transpired. This memory is represented as a ghost who has haunted George, nagging at him since he was a boy; constantly berating him for not conforming to his own standards of masculinity. Colonel DuPre exemplifies the previous generation forcing its own moral code on the next one, which George rejects. The colonel is also indicative of a devoted sense of colonial nationalism, as exhibited by his insistence that George join the army and serve his country. This militaristic undercurrent connects to the overarching theme of identity as shaped through storytelling, specifically war stories. Placing this two-dimensional figure in close proximity to George—the one character the audience becomes intimately familiar with and therefore the most three-dimensional—throws their differences into stark relief. The scenes between George and his father materialize as interruptions into the natural progression of the story; both the one George is telling and the story of the play as a whole. At first, they appear to be flashbacks but, gradually, it becomes clear that they are more vivid and piercing for George. These are not simply memories for George but are more akin to hallucinations that disrupt his reality.

There was no actual evidence from which to draw an accurate portrait of Colonel DuPre. Only his name was mentioned in *The Man Who Wouldn't Talk*, which made it difficult to

separate fact from fiction. Nevertheless, the concept of a father figure, steeped in militaristic pride, spewing nationalist rhetoric proved too compelling not to include and might permit the audience to understand George by witnessing his past. A suitable candidate for the model of George's father came from research conducted into the Scout Association of the United Kingdom. Lord Robert Baden-Powell, founder of the boy scouts, provided a template. According to the Scout Records online, "He was a man who… devoted himself to the service of his country and his fellow men in two separate and complete lives; one as a soldier fighting for his country, and the other as a worker for peace through the Scout Movement." In the surviving footage of Lord Baden-Powell, he is depicted as a kind and considerate man who took pride in serving his country, fostering self-respect in the next generation. In order to ratchet up the pressure on George, it was necessary to pour some venom into this mold. Colonel DuPre became more aggressive and violent; his national pride blossomed into toxic patriotism.

The front page of the *Calgary Herald* on 13 November 1953 displays the headline: "Calgarian Admits Secret Service Story Was Fabrication; George DuPre Tells Calgary Herald He Was Never In France As Spy" and was written by Doug Collins. This was the article that shattered George DuPre's lie. It also reveals how Collins was able to poke enough holes in DuPre's story, forcing him to make his confession. The journalist—a former agent during World War II—trapped DuPre by inventing details about Special Operations Executive, details that DuPre confirmed were true. The smoking gun came in the form of a photograph and a menu card that was delivered to the *Herald* by a former member of the Royal Canadian Air Force. The photograph "was taken in Victoria, June 9, 1942. At top left is George DuPre, who according to Readers Digest and DuPre's personal statement was at that time working in France for British Intelligence. It should be noted that the picture was signed 'C. G. DuPre'." The menu card is also

signed by DuPre and is from the S.S. Bayano on 4 March 1943. This document places him in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, bound for Britain, when he claimed he was working as an agent in France.

With these two pieces of evidence, Collins would have been able to prove beyond the shadow of a doubt that DuPre was lying and, therefore, did not have to go to the trouble of inventing his own lies to trap him. Perhaps he believed he was only doing his due diligence as a journalist or maybe he wanted to publicly humiliate him out of malevolence. Collins was, after all, the real deal and—a decade later—would go on to write a book about his own war experience, *P.O.W.* Presumably, Collins took umbrage at the amount of attention DuPre had received. Nevertheless, the article proved to be an excellent source of information for scene twenty-four of *The Genuine Article*, as it contains a partial transcript of Collins' confrontation with DuPre. This formed the core of the scene that, ultimately, propels George into a confrontation with the ghost of his father, forming the climax of the play.

As this is a play about the relationship between identity and war stories, it was only fitting that Collins be able to tell his own. In *P.O.W.*, Collins went into great detail about his war stories. Therefore, in *The Genuine Article*, Collins tells DuPre of his first attempt at escaping from a prisoner-of-war camp after forcing DuPre's confession. The purpose of including this in the play was twofold: it demonstrates that many men around George had "a good war" story and proves that Collins knew what he was talking about. The story of his twentieth birthday, as he recounts it to George, is terrifying but it is also full of adventure and excitement. Collins paints himself as a determined young man, eager to escape and willing to do anything to return to active duty. By placing this character in such close proximity to George, who has just been revealed as a liar, the two reflect off one another and George is shamed into submission.

The impetus to create the character of Ernest Marshall was rooted in the need for a contrast to George DuPre. While Doug Collins had actually been captured and survived World War II, he does not act as a counterbalance to DuPre. Rather, he is the personification of what George DuPre desired to be. Marshall, on the other hand, is a young man who was drafted to serve as cannon fodder—as opposed to the exploits of a secret agent—and his story is so nihilistic it is void of meaning. As he tells Quentin Reynolds, his purpose was to follow the orders of his commanding officers and try to gain ground. His sacrifice—losing his arm—causes him to suffer without purpose. "Barely got to do anything. Only just arrived in France and they were sending me home again," he says. Ernest was intentionally constructed to serve as the inverse of George's character. His name alone implies that he always tells the truth. His honest description of his perception of the reality of war is distilled into one line: "You're terrified. Scared beyond… Anyone who says different is…" While DuPre claims he felt fear but was able to supplant it with faith, Ernest outright admits he was afraid. Moreover, he comes close to—but never goes through with—accusing anyone who refuses to confess they were afraid as a liar.

The story Ernest Marshall tells is based on actual events, as documented on the Calgary Highlanders website, which offers historically accurate accounts of all the battles the regiment participated in throughout World War II:

> The assault on Hill 67 was the first act of many in the drama surrounding the Verrières Ridge; the assault on the ridge got off to a late start on July 19th. For the first - and last - time, pipers were permitted to play the troops forward. The kilt had already been officially banned from operational dress in 1939 as unsuited for modern war… In all, the Highlanders lost 21 men killed, 10 died of wounds, and 97 wounded, in three days of fighting at Hill 67.

The details included in Ernest Marshall's story—the locations, presence of the pipers and the fact that the German infantry shelled them throughout the night as they attempted to hold the hill—are all true but the character is fictional. In that sense, Marshall is the antithesis of George DuPre, who was a real man telling fictional war stories. The inclusion of Ernest Marshall was also born out of a desire to show respect to the real heroes of Calgary and, as previously indicated in chapter one, applied greater pressure on George to have "a good war" story.

Muriel DuPre, George's wife, was the most difficult character to approach. There was very little information on her, except for a handful of newspaper articles that were written after Collins broke the story. Muriel made it clear that she was aware George was lying and had even cautioned him against it. "In the first interview granted by either George DuPre or Mrs. DuPre since the Herald broke the hoax story Friday, Mrs. DuPre said 'I'm going to stand beside George and nothing will change this'" (Christie). Her motivation for staying committed is debatable but, perhaps, is a reflection of her religious conviction. Unfortunately, Muriel's decision "to stand beside George" no matter what threatened to rob the final moment of the play of its efficacy as portrayed in a theatrical context. Instead, it was more interesting to depict Muriel as unable to reconcile what George had done with the man she called her husband. *The Genuine Article* ends with Muriel unsure as to whether or not she can forgive him—and George begging for her forgiveness—which is more realistic than a simple absolution of guilt.

Considering that Muriel knew of the lie the whole time, early drafts of the play showed her attempting to warn George about going to New York and telling his story to Reynolds. George also phoned her several times from New York but her frustration at not being able to confront her husband undercut much of the dramatic tension. The danger was that the audience might recognize George was lying too soon. Under the advice of supervisor Clem Martini, these

scenes were cut from the final draft. Instead, the audience is thrown into the middle of George's lie and has to scramble to keep up with the events as they are illustrated on stage. They should be tracking George so closely that they are drawn into the fiction, without any hint that the story is false.

The significance of establishing a central dramatic question for the play became apparent early on in the writing process. Initially, this question was "How was George DuPre able to get away with lying for so long, to so many people?" After careful consideration, it became apparent this was simply not strong enough to sustain the dramatic action of the play. Ultimately, DuPre was not able to avoid detection so the question failed to serve the story. A better question was: "Why did he lie?" George DuPre maintained that the reason he invented his story was to spread his message of faith in God. However, the play offers a different answer, which is that he was trying to adhere to an idealized version of masculinity. This version of masculinity was reinforced by the other war stories around him from his father, Ernest Marshall, Doug Collins and even Quentin Reynolds, who worked as foreign correspondent during World War II and, consequently, was well-versed in what it meant to have had "a good war".

CHAPTER 3: STORY, IDENTITY AND THE MASCULINE IDEAL

The completed draft of *The Genuine Article* may be viewed through a broad spectrum of conceptual lenses. This is permitted by the play's structure as a story within a story; the content of the play as it relates to masculinity and identity; the fact that it takes place predominantly during and after World War II; and the inherent nationalist themes that arise from the conflict. The play was not originally conceived of as a means whereby these ideas might be explored. The intention was always to tell DuPre's story. Instead, they were discovered through the process of researching and writing the text or emerged upon critical reflection after the fact. In order to come to a more complete understanding of what *The Genuine Article* might mean to an audience, it was necessary to consider the play from various analytical perspectives and through that process, new discoveries were made. It was also valuable to consider the multiple realities that are advanced by the play's narrative shifts between DuPre's fiction, his haunted psyche and the "real" world. In so doing, noticeable concepts that offered potential for a comprehensive understanding of DuPre's motivation for lying were extracted. The following chapter moves through each of the aforementioned lenses and, by placing their views in proximity to one another, permits the discoveries drawn from this process to reflect on and connect with each other.

Erving Goffman begins the first chapter of *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* with an explanation of the performances people enact on a day-to-day basis. "When an individual plays a part he implicitly requests his observers to take seriously the impression that is fostered before them" (17). Viewing George DuPre's telling of his story as an act that has been rehearsed and refined over repeated performances permits consideration of the multiple and varied performances people switch among in their everyday lives. "At one extreme, one finds that the

performer can be fully taken in by his own act; he can be sincerely convinced that the impression of reality which he stages is the real reality" (Goffman 17). The question of whether not George DuPre actually believed the play he produced is a challenging one to answer. Perhaps he was completely consumed by his new identity as a war hero and had convinced himself this was reality. It was useful to consider the circumstances that drove George to take on a new identity and what that process communicates in the context of the play.

In the introduction to his collection of essays *After Identity*, Jonathan Rutherford explains the complex relationship between phantoms of the past as generated by a pervasive nationalism and the creation of a new persona. "Our subjective sense of self is constructed around a national identity that manufactures ghosts—the dead who cannot settle but who prowl ceaselessly looking for release" (13). In *The Genuine Article*, Colonel Peter DuPre is the manifestation of the protagonist's troubled mind but he is also a representative figure, indicative of the past intruding upon the present. He haunts George's psyche, tormenting him with fractured visions of his own inadequacy. The social values that Colonel DuPre represents—patriotism, colonialism, and militarism—are, from George's perspective, fused with the "correct" masculine identity. His desire to conform to this identity—and inability to do so—causes him so much distress that he is driven to invent a new "self" through his fictional narrative. In Edley and Wetherell's published study of masculinity "Jockeying for Position: The Construction of Masculine Identities," they conclude with a reference to Marx, noting that "whilst men make their own identities, they do not make them just as they please. They make them under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past" (214). The haunting of George DuPre by his father's ghost is also, therefore, a transmission from the past instructing him on the appropriate form of

masculinity he should portray. Unfortunately for George, it is impossible for him to take on that identity as it lies outside of his comprehension and has since he was a child.

George's inability to incorporate the role his father dictates is not, however, due to some sort of "physical ailment" or "undiagnosed nutritional deficiency" as the colonel claims. George's struggle is rooted in his inability to reconcile the difference between his perception of himself and what constitutes masculinity. Distinguishing the discrepancies between George and his father was crucial to understanding how identity would be articulated in the play and offered an intriguing source of conflict for the protagonist, one that was buried in his past. Upon further study, this struggle serves as a microcosm for a conflict inherent within the masculine ideal. Edley and Wetherell point out that Rutherford

> was one of the first to suggest that current conceptions of masculinity exemplify a tension between two dominant images or subject positions: 'retributive man' and 'new man'. Retributive man represents a more traditional form of masculine identity. He is the (major) breadwinner of the family and the principal source of authority within the home: tough, competitive and emotionally inarticulate. (204)

These last three adjectives are certainly applicable to Colonel DuPre, while George is the personification of the "new man" who is described as a "softer, more sensitive and caring individual" (204) and the antithesis of "retributive man." Nowhere is this made clearer than by Reynolds himself in the subtitle of *The Man Who Wouldn't Talk*, which refers to George as "The Gentle Spy." The tension generated between "retributive man" and "new man" provided a practical reason for George to lie about his war time experience.

The fact that George had to confess he spent the war behind a desk is indicative of the value society placed on heroism during World War II. However, George was unique in that he

created a new template of hero through the generation of an innovative brand of war story. In his fiction, DuPre keeps a low profile, does not kill and is destined to suffer. Through the telling of his suffering—however insincere—he exemplifies his religious belief but also produces a counterintuitive "hero" that rejects the stereotypical valiant soldier.

Much of *The Genuine Article* is set during the early 1950s, a decade often associated with economic growth and social stability in the Western world before the civil unrest of the 1960s and '70s. This is probably a reductive vision of the past as seen through a romantic lens. In reality, the "new man" identity formed gradually through the twentieth century in accordance with deviations in "social and economic practices such as the 'feminization' of the workforce and the shift from manufacturing (such as coal-mining and ship-building) to service industries organized around computer-based technologies" (Edley and Wetherell 204). Therefore, "retributive man" became—or is becoming—an obsolete form of masculinity and "new man" has emerged to fill the void. George DuPre's struggle is indicative of the collision between these contradictory forms of masculinity. He is unable to reconcile his proto-"new man" identity because, at the time, such an identity was unacknowledged.

In the introduction to her extensive review of masculinity *Slow Motion*, Lynne Segal points out that the concept of the "new man" has regularly been "an object of media suspicion, when not a target of ongoing derision" (xviii). Nevertheless, her first chapter—the title of which contains a reference to one of John Osborne's most famous plays—"Look Back in Anger: Men in the Fifties" offers a snapshot of the masculine identity in post-World War II Britain. Segal contends that men had transitioned "from battlefield to bungalow with new expectations of the comforts and the pleasures of home. Both the popular and the academic writing of the fifties celebrate a new 'togetherness', domestic harmony and equality between the sexes" (2). She goes

on to problematize this sense of "equality" by pointing out that genders were not actually perceived as equal but, instead considered "balanced" with one another but still autonomous. While masculine and feminine roles were still separate within the domestic sphere, Segal does contend that the hegemonic masculine ideal was in flux after the war. She supports this supposition with quotations from the "well-known community studies of Young and Willmott on working-class families in the early fifties" and describes "the stereotypical working-class husband of yesteryear – mean with money, callous in sex, harsh to his children, neither helpful nor affectionate towards 'the wife'" (Segal 2-3). Young and Willmott's study concludes "that the old style of working-class family is fast disappearing. The husband portrayed by previous social investigation is no longer true to life." (15) George DuPre does seem to reflect this shift in masculinity, especially when compared with his father. His final confrontation with Colonel DuPre constitutes the climax of *The Genuine Article* and depicts the protagonist rejecting his father's perception of what it means to be a man. Moreover, George realizes that he is responsible for teaching Glenn and David, his own two sons, how to embrace a new masculine identity when he shows his father the postcards he brought back for them from New York. "I brought these back," he says. "For Glenn and David. Your grandsons. And I'm… I'm so glad they never had to meet you. And that they never had to sit and listen to your poison. (*Beat.*) I'm not a hero. But I am their father." This final declaration to the ghost of his father was crafted in the later stages of the play's development in order to demonstrate George's recognition of—and refusal to adhere to—the "retributive man" identity.

In *Male Trouble,* a book responding to the work of Judith Butler's ground-breaking *Gender Trouble*, Fintan Walsh contends that at any "given moment in history, any male subject who does not conform to the hegemonic norm of masculinity is relatively peripheralized" (8).

George DuPre's construction of a war hero identity seemed to be an attempt to move from the peripheral edges of masculinity toward the centre. This conclusion was supported by Muriel DuPre's lament after her husband's lie was revealed: "He didn't need to be a war hero. I was quite satisfied with him the way he was" (Christie). George's desire to be recognized as a war hero turned out to be a strong objective for the protagonist to pursue, though it was not necessarily dependent upon his wife's perception of him but, rather, the other men around him.

Masculinity and war are often equated because one offers a method of corroborating the other. To survive war is to face death and, in so doing, one proves one's courage as a tenet of masculinity. Edley and Wetherell indicate as much in their study by suggesting that "games, like rugby, served to underline the players' ability to give and take physical punishments: a core aspect of the traditional definition of masculinity…" (207). In order to prove one's masculine identity it is necessary to show strength, power and aggression in the guise of a warrior. The battlefield being the most suitable venue for the performance of these characteristics can, in and of itself, lead to war. Rutherford explains the roots of the symbiotic relationship between masculinity and war in the introductory paragraph to "At War," the fourth chapter in his book:

> The idea that a man can discover his authentic self by going to war goes deep into the male psyche. It is not that men want war, but that for most of history men have lived under the expectation that it will be their fate. But there also exists… a darker atavistic call from the European past: war makes man. (81)

This concept proved to be a pillar in the foundation of *The Genuine Article* but not only for the character of George DuPre. The play is densely populated with male characters, all of whom identify themselves as having proved their courage through their war experience. Reynolds, for example, is suing the Pegler Corporation for accusing him of being "an absentee war

correspondent" (59). In reality, Reynolds was going through the case at approximately the same time as he was working on *The Man Who Wouldn't Talk.* As he explains in *By Quentin Reynolds*, the journalist had to make a case for his competency as a war correspondent. His lawyer

> put into evidence every article [he] had written during the war, reading excerpts that described [his] experiences at Montmédy and Beauvais, during the London Blitz, on [his] convey trips between England and the United States, in the Libyan Desert, on the Dieppe raid, in Sicily, and at Salerno. (334)

This section of his autobiography was used as the basis for Reynolds in Act Two, when he visits the Canukeena club with DuPre. In that same scene, Ernest Marshall tells both DuPre and Reynolds the story of how he lost his arm in World War II.

After outing DuPre's lie, Doug Collins insists on telling him the story of his twentieth birthday when he managed to escape from a prisoner-of-war camp, only to be recaptured and forced to stand naked outside for twenty-four hours. Collins goes on to confirm his valour by claiming, "That was the first of ten escape attempts I made throughout my time in the war. I survived through Slovakia, Hungary and Romania all the way to the Black Sea." His monologue was based on his book *P.O.W.*

After George has been publicly shamed, he retreats into the safety of his imagination and is visited by a vision of Madame Bouvot, only to have the ghost of his father return. Colonel DuPre enters and attempts to tell his son another one of his war stories, "Did I ever tell you about the first time I led a charge into battle?... That was when men were men!" to which George replies, "I don't want to hear about it." Upon further reflection, George is not only rejecting his father's story but, by extension, his prescription of the "retributive man" ideal.

For George DuPre, not having "a good war" story is a sign that he is unsuccessful in meeting the expectations placed upon him by society. Consequently, he has failed to live up to the expectations of manhood. His father accuses him of a lack of inherent masculinity when he snaps: "Sometimes I think God intended you for a daughter instead of a son." This line was inserted to be indicative of the fact that, as the "retributive man," Colonel DuPre sees gender as an irreconcilable dichotomy between masculine and feminine, with masculinity as the superior. It is consistent with the colonialist ideology that he represents, which was predominant at the time.

> By the mid-nineteenth century, in England, the ideal of manliness, influenced by evangelical Christianity, was associated with public duty, honour, moral obligation and emotional restraint. These virtues were impersonal moral standards. How a man felt at any given moment was irrelevant to the question of how he should live. Manly codes of conduct –'the stiff upper lip' – were intended to give order and meaning to men's lives. (Rutherford 86)

George DuPre claims that the fictitious Colonel Baker reminded him of his father "In that 'stiff upper lip' kind of way." This line demonstrates that George has been affected by the code of conduct he desired—but ultimately failed—to live up to.

Incidentally, it is not only gender that Colonel DuPre perceives in dichromatic terms. One of the first thoughts he expresses to George in the play is "It is our duty… Nay! Our responsibility as Englishmen and, what's more, soldiers of the crown to, at the very least, attempt to convert them into civilized human beings…. Do you understand the burden that is upon us?" The "burden" the Colonel refers to is Rudyard Kipling's "The White Man's Burden" (1899). In *The Man Who Wouldn't Talk*, George claimed he was born in Poona, India (14) not far from Mumbai where Kipling was born. Though it was impossible to verify DuPre's claim, weaving

this detail into the text put George and his relationship to his father in a colonial context, which was ultimately reliant upon racism, sexism and patriotism.

Segal dissects and examines this outmoded—and yet all too present in our contemporary world—ideology by investigating the infamous Ernest Hemingway. She claims that his "struggles with his male identity highlight a real dilemma: a 'pure' masculinity cannot be asserted *except* in relation to what is defined as its opposite. It depends upon the perpetual renunciation of 'femininity'" (97). The journey that George undertakes redefines his perception of masculinity as he comes to grips with the fact that he is a proto-"new man." As such, George recognizes his masculinity is not dependent upon adhering to an old-fashioned machismo, nor is it defined as the opposition to femininity but, rather, marks the birth of a profound and innovative masculine ideal.

In following with Goffman's contention that a performer "implicitly requests his observers… take seriously the impression that is fostered before them" (17), George's identity as a war hero is dependent upon the men around him hearing his story and accepting it as truth. As Rutherford confirms, "In this life and death struggle, a man's worth is measured by the honour conferred upon him by his peers" (91). In writing *The Genuine Article*, DuPre's transmission of his identity through his fabrication offered a precarious tightrope for him to walk as he attempted to maintain his status. "When we discover that someone with whom we have dealings is an imposter and out-and-out fraud, we are discovering that he did not have the right to play the part he played, that he was not an accredited incumbent of the relevant status" (Goffman 59).

Fulford illuminates this concept in his short passage on George DuPre when he suggests that his "fictionalizing was an attempt to give himself distinction and eminence." (20) His inability to maintain his identity results in a loss of face. Consequently, the major turning point in

the play for George is the realisation that he no longer needs the status he so desperately sought. The public shaming he undergoes causes him humiliation but, through this process, he learns that he did not require any distinction in order to affirm his masculinity.

For the rest of the men in the play, however, the question remains as to what threat DuPre actually poses to their own sense of masculinity. If it was so easy for DuPre to manufacture a fictional self through his story, does it delegitimize their own stories and, by extension, their own identities? Perhaps, for Doug Collins, it does. As a journalist, Collins places a special emphasis on objective analysis and the ability to discern fact from fiction. "Some say, 'Never let the facts get in the way of a good story.' Never been my motto," he tells George. He also has a personal investment in destroying DuPre's false status as a war hero because he is an authentic war hero. As Goffman affirms:

> the more closely the impostor's performance approximates to the real thing, the more intensely we may be threatened, for a competent performance by someone who proves to be an imposter may weaken in our minds the moral connection between legitimate authorization to play a part and the capacity to play it. (59)

For Collins then, his perception of himself is at stake when he challenges DuPre because the latter has so easily approximated his own story and utilized it to great acclaim. Reynolds, on the other hand, seems to have nothing but self-pity since he was so easily duped. While Colonel DuPre expresses derision for his son. Ernest Marshall's response is not depicted in the text but George does take it into consideration in the final scene before Muriel returns home, "How can I look at Ernest again?" Perhaps it is safe to assume that George will not be seeing Ernest again or, if he does, he will be ashamed to do so.

There is room to speculate as to whether or not the real DuPre fully understood the psychological motivation behind his deception. He claimed that the reason he invented his story was to spread his message of faith. In the play, George is forced to ask himself why he did it. This final scene was a major struggle throughout the writing process. It was intended to reflect a profound change in George's character as he transforms over the course of the play. He fixates on how his sons will describe their father in the future. The choice to have him beg God to forgive him for his transgression was intended to portray the protagonist realizing—and taking ownership of—his mistake.

In researching and writing this chapter, it was discovered that *The Genuine Article* posits George DuPre as being surrounded by pressure to adhere to a prescriptive masculine ideal. The play advances the notion that it was this pressure that drove him to lie. Through that lie, he invents a new identity whereby the other men around him—and the ghost of his father—view him as worthy of being a war hero, which is synonymous with masculinity in the context of the "retributive man" ideal. Perhaps it was these intricate, invisible connections that made this small story of duplicity so appealing in the first place.

Reflecting on the final draft of the play and the research material uncovered in this investigation, it seems that masculinity in the Western world has been in a state of transformation over the last century. On an individual level, this constant state of flux has forced men to feel pressure to perpetually redefine themselves; or—phrased another way—prove their manliness. "Masculinity is never something you can feel at ease with. It is always something you have to be ready to defend and prove. You have to prove that you are as much a man as everyone else" (Seidler 101). While this insecurity may fade over generations, for the moment, it seems that masculinity is in a continual state of crisis.

CHAPTER 4: *THE GENUINE ARTICLE* IN PERFORMANCE

The following chapter is a chronology of the refinement process of *The Genuine Article*; beginning with the completion of the first draft to the final incarnation of the play, presented as a staged reading at the University of Calgary drama department's Taking Flight festival 2013. The readings took place on Thursday, April 11th and Saturday, April 13th. This chapter follows textual changes that were made through feedback received from supervisor Clem Martini, director Patrick Finn, the cast and the audience. By charting the text's development through this procedure, it was possible to challenge certain critical components of the play itself. This has also made it possible to revisit the process itself. This chapter is intended as an explanation of those insights obtained from the play's development that are useful for playwriting in general but specifically to playwrights interested in developing new dramatic works from historical figures or events.

The first draft of the play was completed in August of 2012 and was originally titled *The Gentle Spy*. This working title was drawn from the subtitle of *The Man Who Wouldn't Talk* by Quentin Reynolds, which reads: "The heroic, true story of 'the gentle spy'" and was Reynolds' initial title for the book. May through August of 2012 were months spent focused primarily on completing the second act, as a first draft of the first act was prepared by April of that year. Writing the second act proved to be a very different process from completing the first. This was due, in large part, to the first act being based on a pre-existing text.

Act one of *The Genuine Article* had a clear trajectory in terms of the writing process. As the events of the book unfolded on the stage, the play followed in a logical progression. It was a procedure based predominantly on identification and selection. The primary task was to identify the most interesting, captivating or compelling moments in DuPre's story as these would become

the plot points of the first act. The second task was trying to find an effective method of dramatizing those selected scenes. Having limited experience writing long fiction but more experience in playwriting meant that bridging the differences between these two forms was a hurdle which had to be cleared. Prose is far more fluid and can change scenes or locations with no effort as the author simply constructs the setting in the mind of the reader. It is also a more intimate form of writing that allows the author to connect one-on-one with the audience. Also, in a book, there is more time to develop the story since the reader can set the book down and come back to it later. Plays, on the other hand, are intended to be performed in a public forum within a compressed time frame and any scene change that is made may require a new set to be built or properties constructed. Finding a method of linking these two forms was vital to successfully adapting *The Man Who Wouldn't Talk* into a single act.

However, the first act is not a direct adaptation of the book since it begins in Reynolds' office and shifts back and forth between DuPre's narrative as well as scenes with his father. This device was adopted under the recommendation of supervisor Clem Martini, as explained in chapter two, so that Reynolds could question DuPre about his story as it was presented to the audience. Since *The Genuine Article* is a story within a story, there are many characters, subplots or whole chapters that had to be omitted from DuPre's tale in order to compress it. Furthermore, it had to correspond with the structure of the play as a whole, which offered a number of interesting compositional challenges. The principal challenge was ensuring that the story he told fit in with the arc of the entire play, while still fulfilling its own arc. This was accomplished, in part, by introducing Colonel Peter DuPre in act one, as well as having three separate mini-scenes depicting George trying to call someone in Calgary, Alberta. The audience does not discover until the end of the second act that he is attempting to contact Muriel. By foreshadowing

conflicts that would be explored further in act two, the first act interlocked with the second and the play became a cohesive whole.

The development process was complicated further by the inclusion of DuPre's father, which generated a third—and completely different—theatrical world. One of the first meetings with director Patrick Finn focused heavily on identifying which world was being depicted at which time. Multiple worlds are portrayed on stage at certain moments, such as when Colonel Peter DuPre interrupts George's conversation with Mr. Jones in scene two. It was imperative those worlds be distinct because it set up a pattern, illustrating that George's conflict with his father is in his mind. When his father first appears, his scenes carry the façade of being flashbacks or memories, which they are, to some degree. The aesthetic shift his father generates interrupts the real world and the fantasy world George has created. This interruption was intended to exemplify that George's struggle against his father is deeply rooted in his psyche.

Initially, the first act followed DuPre's story up until he claimed to have left the village of Torigni-sur-Vire, France under orders from London. He maintained that he was sent East to the city of Bernay, where he was picked up by the Gestapo again and put on a train to Hamburg, Germany. Allegedly, it was his job to "work in the submarine plant which was just a mile away" (*The Man Who Wouldn't Talk* 149). DuPre supposedly used this opportunity to connect with other members of the French Resistance and together they sabotaged German submarines. After this mission, George claimed to have returned to Torigni-sur-Vire before being plucked out of France by plane and heading back to Special Operations Executive's headquarters in London, England. The details in this chapter of Reynolds' book are fuzzy and on the borderline of believability. Beyond that, the first draft of act one was already sixty-four pages. A simple solution to this problem was simply removing this whole section of the narrative. Once George

DuPre had suffered and survived torture by the Gestapo the first time he was arrested, he would be extracted to London. This condensed his story further and, thereby, streamlined act one. It also kept the focus of DuPre's lie on transmitting his message of faith by enduring torture.

In terms of writing a play based on historical events, it became clear that it would be important to separate George DuPre the man from George DuPre the character. Misrepresenting the real person—especially in scenes between the protagonist and Muriel or with his father—was of fundamental concern. These scenes could not be verified through historical records or newspaper articles and were strictly conjecture. By recognizing the difference between the real DuPre and the protagonist of *The Genuine Article*, writing the play became simplified. There seemed to be less of a need to stringently adhere to the facts but, instead, only the relevant details that supported the narrative required inclusion.

In terms of its structure, Act Two is far less complicated than the first. Aside from scene twenty-five, which features Madame Bouvot from George's story and the ghost of his father, only the "real" world is represented on stage. However, there was more room for artistic invention during the writing process of act two since it does not track the events depicted in *The Man Who Wouldn't Talk*. While the first scene of the act—which portrays George and Muriel onstage together for the first time in the play—contains information gleaned from newspaper articles and Quentin Reynold's biography, their relationship had to be constructed from scratch. Similarly, scene twenty-three in the Canukeena club was completely manufactured from a handful of significant details. Reynolds did visit Calgary and the club itself did exist but Ernest is a fictional character with a story based on real events. George's confrontation with Doug Collins in scene twenty-four is drawn directly from Collins' article that he wrote for *The Calgary Herald* as well as his book *P.O.W.* While the final scene of the play uses quotes from Muriel that were

printed after the story broke, it is largely conjecture as to how their relationship was affected by George's lie.

After completing both acts, it became evident—upon reflection—that each required different approaches to composition. The ultimate objective had always been to tell the story as succinctly and effectively as possible. However, there was more connective tissue that had to be invented in order for the play to be coherent. The scenes between George DuPre and Quentin Reynolds in Act One, for example, were embellished with details from Reynolds' own account of meeting George as he explains in his autobiography. Scenes between George and his father—which are completely fictitious—had to be built with very little factual information to go on, as mentioned in chapter two. These different approaches resulted in a first draft that was irregular and uneven. It was also significantly longer than the final performance draft. Nevertheless, arriving at a complete, though flawed, version of the play offered a platform from which to depart. Scenes could be added, deleted or rearranged within the structure in order to improve its effectiveness as a mechanism for delivering the story to an audience. As such, the question that guided edits to the first draft was: Is this helping to tell the story? Anything that took the story off course or might be confusing to an audience experiencing the play for the first time was corrected or omitted.

The next several drafts were developed by going through this process of eliminating unnecessary information or extraneous scenes that failed to serve the plot. This procedure was more akin to sculpting a statue out of stone by chiselling away the excess. Identifying what precisely constituted "excess" relied on recognizing when the audience's attention might wander due to the inclusion of extraneous information. Developing a keen sense of when the audience is engaged or curious as to what will happen next, proved critical at this stage of the script's

development. A reading of the play by supervisor Clem Martini and the other graduate playwriting students, Peter Cochran; Ted Stenson; and PhD candidate Sherryl Melnyk, offered the chance to investigate where exactly the audience's interest might be prone to drift. By stripping away scenes that did not serve the play as a whole, the script became much leaner and economical. Shifting rapidly between worlds, time periods and geographical locations also meant that the events unfolded relatively quickly. This allowed the play to cover a lot of information in a short period of time and ensures that scenes change rapidly so the audience has to constantly reorient themselves.

Hearing the play read aloud before an audience as part of the Taking Flight festival, provided an opportunity to witness audience members' physical responses to the text. For the most part, individual audience members seemed to be engaged throughout both staged readings but there are several instances where additional revisions might eliminate disengagement. Scene ten focuses on how DuPre claimed to have developed new methods of communication for the Resistance group in Torigni-sur-Vire. After several young girls are captured and killed, he suggests building hollow collars for dogs and transmitting their communications in the collars. While interesting in that it demonstrates the level of detail DuPre developed in his lie, it is a relatively passive scene that is disconnected from the larger scope of the story. Likewise in scene twenty-four, Collins goes into great detail in his series of monologues that prove conclusively that George is a liar. While the details are extremely important in this section, there are times when Collins' delivery of them becomes repetitive. These two sections may require attention in a subsequent draft.

Trevor Rueger, the actor who played George DuPre in the staged readings, offered an interesting perspective on the protagonist. After the reading was complete, he mentioned there

were several challenges in performing the role. Rueger's principal concern was that he would have given away the twist too soon by not convincing the audience that DuPre's story was true. He was very much aware that they had to believe everything he said in the first act in order for the twist in the second to work.

During rehearsals, Rueger asked for clarification as to when George was himself and when he was playing the character of Pierre Touchette. This proved troubling in act one when DuPre switches between telling his story to Reynolds and embodying the story he tells. This question was further complicated as he transitions from working with the French Resistance to being forced to stay in character when he is captured. Rueger was not clear whether or not DuPre acted as Touchette the whole time he was in France, which led to the late addition of a short conversation between DuPre and Reynolds at the end of scene ten. Reynolds asks, "Was there anyone on the team that knew your real identity? Or were you always in the guise of Touchette?" George responds, "They all knew I wasn't who I claimed to be… The role of Pierre Touchette was a tool. I used it for camouflage when I had to" (34). This simple adjustment permitted the actor to drop Touchette when he was in scenes with Madame Bouvot, Monsieur Lavelle or Pere Gauraud since, as members of the Resistance, they would have known DuPre was not who he claimed to be.

A conversation with designer April Viczko was particularly helpful in the latter stages of the rehearsal process. She suggested removing the projections from the play entirely as the presence of slides in the performance would distract the audience from the story being told. Initially, the presence of pictures and documents was intended to act as visual citations, proving that this story was indeed true. Images of the real George DuPre, Quentin Reynolds, newspaper articles and other photographs were intended to support the narrative. Ironically, the presence of

the images would have detracted from the performance as the audience would have been comparing the actor portraying DuPre onstage with the image of the real DuPre on the screen. Any information that was imperative to the audience's comprehension of the story was subsequently delivered by Brian Smith, who read the stage directions. This included setting the time and place of a scene or marking transitions.

Another intention of the projections was to provide surtitles for the audience when characters spoke French or German. It was presumed that the audience would be predominantly Anglophone. A great deal of time was spent working with Patrick Finn to find the best method of illuminating what was happening in scenes that contain another language. Much of the French and German was eliminated from the text, solely for clarification. The German was kept in three instances because, in the context of the play, the language itself—whether the audience understands what is being communicated or not—is frightening. For instance, in scene six when George is attacked as his final test with Special Operations Executive, a harsh voice yells at him in German. George DuPre would not have understood what was being yelled at him so his experience of disorientation is mirrored by the audience's lack of comprehension.

A projection screen was still employed at the beginning and end of each act in the performance. It was used to display black and white United News footage of World War II newsreel, which was obtained from the United States National Archive. The newsreel served as "house music" for the audience to enter and exit the theatre. The inclusion of the newsreel proved particularly effective as it captured several of the play's major elements—war, story and journalism—without reference to the real people that inspired the characters of the play. Its bookending presence to the performance itself suggested that DuPre's tale was plausible and

deserved to be included among other true World War II stories. It also provided an eye-catching backdrop for the actors during their curtain call.

A post-mortem after the staged readings with supervisor Clem Martini offered insight into scenes that required additional consideration. The torture section, at the end of act one, was quite long. Though DuPre endured the torture and ultimately survived each test, it was valuable to consider distilling the torture into a smaller unit so that the audience did not become fatigued by it. Moreover, the longer he suffers, the less likely they might be inclined to believe he survived at all, which places his story in doubt at its very climax. Likewise, the last scene of the play when George prays to God and Muriel returns home, did not offer any new information from the previous scene with George confronting the ghost of his father. Both areas required revision. The torture incident has been reduced, though he still suffers by the same methods, just in a compressed time period. Rewrites on the last scene put both George and Muriel into greater conflict with each other. The decision to eliminate her suitcase was drawn out of the realization that it might imply she was returning home permanently but Muriel has not decided that yet. She returns home angry; prepared to confront him, which she does. George is forced to admit to her that he "didn't do it for God" but rather because he feels "hollow" (85). Their future is still uncertain but now George must admit to his wife why he lied and take ownership of his wrongdoing.

The first major lesson drawn from the experience of writing a play based on historical events is the significance of research. This might seem obvious but the importance of thoroughly investigating DuPre's story—and the subsidiary branches of examination that followed—cannot be stressed enough. While the research required rigorous study, it also offered answers to the inherent challenges of writing a full-length play. Oftentimes, the material uncovered throughout

the research process provided a starting point for writing. Sometimes quotes from the real people the characters were based on could be directly incorporated into the dialogue. Other times, a scene was devised based on the knowledge that a person had been in a specific place at a certain time, as with Reynolds visiting Calgary and Muriel leaving during his visit. This material was surprisingly influential during the course of the play's composition.

The second lesson is a rebuttal to the first. Inasmuch as the research was beneficial to the writing process, it was also artistically limiting and offered a unique challenge to textual construction. As mentioned in this chapter, it was important to remember that DuPre is a character in a dramatization of events that have already transpired. *The Genuine Article* is a play; not a documentary. Separating fact from fiction was essential; especially considering the content of this particular play.

An interesting moral dilemma emerged as facts mingled with fiction. The final scene of the play depicts George and Muriel together and their marriage is in jeopardy. In reality, Muriel publicly supported her husband and they stayed together for many years. Unfortunately, that was not a particularly dramatic ending and only demonstrated there were no negative consequences for George's transgression. On the other hand, an open ending has allowed for ambiguity in the final moments, which is more interesting. It demonstrates the possibility of a new status at the end of the play. It is true that she left the house with their two sons but whether she did so of her own volition or because George told her to is uncertain. This is, however, an indication of conflict. It is also conceivable that Muriel had trouble reconciling her husband's lies with her own religious belief. While she may have appeared supportive in public, her response in private could have been drastically different. Therefore, the play never contradicts factual evidence to make the story more captivating but, rather, bends fictional incidents around the facts. Perhaps

Muriel will insist on a divorce or George will have to work to gain her trust back. The audience is left to debate how they fared afterwards.

The third lesson is probably applicable to plays in general but is specific to approaching historically based work: define a clear dramatic question. In retrospect, this has guided the research process all the way long and provided a spine for the play. In *The Genuine Article*, the dramatic question is: "Why did George DuPre lie?" It took some time to define this as initially it was thought the question would be: "How was George DuPre able to fool people with his lie?" In reality, of course, he was not able to do so. Asking why turned out to be a much stronger spine for all of the incidents of the play to suspend from. Even though DuPre claimed he lied to spread his message of faith, this seemed a weak response to the question. It was far more interesting to keep digging into the research material and attempt to develop a more satisfying answer. Keeping this question in mind during the research phase allowed me to keep my focus on finding information that was pertinent to answering this question.

CONCLUSION

When I entered the graduate playwriting program, one of my goals was to leave with a producible full-length play. "Producible" can be a problematic term because it implies there are certain criteria a theatrical text must adhere to in order to be rendered producible. While there are no hard and fast rules for playwrights to follow, there are guidelines that, if respected, might increase the likelihood of a play receiving a professional production.

Foremost of these guidelines is the number of actors required to perform the play. It can be expensive to hire actors in a professional setting so keeping the requisite amount lower is beneficial. *The Genuine Article* has nineteen characters, many of these are smaller roles and can be split among a reduced cast—as was proven during the stage reading at Taking Flight. Employing three performers that were capable of transitioning effectively among various roles offered me the chance to test this. (Though there were six in total, one actor played only Quentin Reynolds; another only George DuPre; and another read stage directions.) While it was an entertaining aspect of the staged reading, I am not convinced that having only three performers to switch among these various smaller roles would necessarily work in a full production. Having the performer that played Muriel also take on the Gestapo agent and Ernest Marshall was a work around solution but I think it might be more practical to consider hiring an additional performer. This may limit the number of companies able to perform the play.

Another one of my goals was to push myself to write a play of substantial scope and scale. While I have attempted to write full-length plays in the past, looking at them now I see how flawed these attempts were. My work used to suffer from too much dialogue and not enough action. Characters would chat incessantly about very little and nothing particularly interesting would happen. Of course, everyone must start somewhere and it is encouraging to

look back at where I began and see that progression. Though I have learned a great deal about playwriting through the struggle of writing my pre-thesis and thesis plays, I also learned about writing from observing other peoples' efforts. The experience of working as a teacher's assistant in the undergraduate playwriting class, as well as reading the other graduate playwriting students' work, was beneficial in this regard. It was much easier to be objective about someone else's efforts and, through that process, learn to identify where it was strong or clear and where the playwright might consider revisions. I found that if I paid careful attention to when I was naturally attentive, as opposed to having to focus to stay engaged, this became a reliable compass I could use to guide my own work. If it required effort to stay focused on the text or I became lost or confused at a certain point, then I knew it required attention. While this may sound like a rudimentary approach, developing this awareness has become influential in terms of my approach to writing, which I did not expect when I entered the program.

Another key difference between the plays I had written—or attempted to write—in the past and *The Genuine Article* is that my thesis represents the first time I have written a play based on another person's experience. My prethesis one act play, for example, was based entirely on my own experience as a support worker in a program for at-risk youths. *The Genuine Article* required diligent investigation but I always had external material to turn back to when I was blocked. For this same reason, I have also come to recognize the importance of drafting a detailed outline prior to writing the first draft. Not only did this offer me a complete view of the story as a whole, it also provided a map of the entire project I could reference while writing. In this way, moving from general to specific as the endeavour progressed, I was permitted the freedom to focus on scenes for which I had the most material at a given time. For example, the second scene I wrote was Doug Collins' confrontation with George DuPre, which ended up

being one of the latter scenes in Act Two. I started there simply because I had the most information with which to begin. While the play has deviated, in some ways, away from my original outline, it is still remarkably similar in terms of its general shape. Therefore, in some ways, writing a play based on another person or a historical event has proven less challenging than I expected. While writing a script about a personal experience ensured accuracy in terms of the content, it was far more difficult to be objective about the form.

I also found it important to spend some time considering the universality of the ideas inherent in the story before I sat down to write. Essentially, what did I want the audience to take away from DuPre's story? I wrote *The Genuine Article* under the assumption that if I represented his story as accurately as possible, then the audience would be interested. Consequently, spending enough time researching in order to become an expert on DuPre and his circumstances was critical. Having this knowledge base to work from allowed me to construct a play that is an authentic representation of historical events. My initial goal was always to tell the story with meticulous attention to detail. The concepts of war, identity and masculinity—as explored in chapter three—may have been what attracted me to DuPre as a subject in the first place but I was never consciously writing with them in mind.

If I were to write another play based on a historical figure—and I would like to—I believe I would begin the same way: first, identify who that person is and, second, articulate why their story might have resonance with a contemporary audience. DuPre's story, for instance, captivated me for a number of reasons. I have always had a keen interest in military history and knowing that I would be spending almost two years working on a single project, I figured the work would be more enjoyable if it focused on a topic I was attracted to. Moreover, DuPre's story—at least, as I have told it—connects to masculinity and identity. I was intrigued by both of

these concepts and this play proved to be a vehicle I could use to explore them. My interest in the masculine ideal stems from my personal experience. As someone who has always been invested in the arts, I believe that investment was contradictory to a social construct of masculinity I was pressured to adhere to. Conceivably, identities in general are in a state of flux in an internet saturated world. Through the use of social media, it is possible to create multiple identities and gain fame or recognition without ever actually achieving anything. In that way, DuPre's story may serve as a metaphor for contemporary Western popular culture, which seems to place a premium on fame without actual success. As it was these elements that attracted me to DuPre's story, perhaps they will also be interesting for an audience. History can be valuable to a contemporary audience for many reasons but I think the trick is to ask why this particular story is significant and demonstrate its value through the telling of it.

When working on historically based fiction, the question arises as to the significance of authenticity and accuracy. Generally, I think audiences are astute enough to detect when a story feels inauthentic and, consequently, maintaining truth is crucial. When the phrase "based on a true story" is used, this creates a contract between the storyteller and the audience as they are led to believe that some percentage of the story itself is authentic. This particular story was about lying and, therefore, I felt it necessary to adhere as much as possible to the facts. Accuracy was paramount and I never wanted to contradict events that had transpired. That is not to say that writers should abstain from inventing their own material, as I have, but there is a fine balance between fact and fiction. There is no one correct answer to this but I am inclined towards sticking to the facts, no matter the content of the play itself.

Plays, by their very nature, are compact forms. They require distillation in order to tell a complete story in a compressed time frame. There is very little room for explanation. Characters

are developed by witnessing their struggle. I have not actually compressed George DuPre's entire life into two hours, which would be impossible. Instead, I have selected key moments from a specific time period in his life and stacked them together so that, when played in sequence, they create a logical progression.

Spending time focused on a single project over the last two years has proven to be a tremendous learning opportunity. I have improved my research, playwriting, editing and dramaturgical skillset. Clearly, the best way to learn how to do something is through the act of doing it and then taking the time to reflect upon what was successful and what was not. Writing the four chapters of this artist's statement has given me the luxury of time to consider *The Genuine Article* from multiple perspectives: how the text relates to the real George DuPre; the research process and how it influenced the play's construction; the relationships between story and identity, masculinity and war; and how the text was refined through the rehearsal process of a staged reading.

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THE GENUINE ARTICLE

A Play

By Dan Perry

CHARACTERS

George DuPre	Mid-forties. A quiet, unassuming religious man who lives in Calgary, AB. Originally born in India, George was an army brat and spent much of his time travelling around the world with his mother and father. After graduating from Cambridge University, he moved to Canada where he met his wife and made a living in Northern Manitoba. He joined the Royal Air Force at the onset of World War II.
Muriel DuPre	Early forties. George's wife and mother of two boys. She is also religious and prides herself on being a good homemaker and supportive of her husband.
Quentin Reynolds	Late forties. Journalist and author of numerous books on World War II. Lives in New York. American.
Col. Peter DuPre	Late fifties. British. George's father. His presence in the text is a theatrical representation of George's memory of him.
Doug Collins	Late thirties / early forties. Collins worked for British Intelligence during World War II. He lives in Calgary, AB and works as an investigative journalist for the local newspaper *The Calgary Herald*.
Mr. Jones	An interviewer for the British Special Operations Executive.
Col. Baker	An invention of George DuPre, Col. Baker is the father George wishes he had growing up.
Madeline	Member of the French Resistance. She has a stoic disposition.
Joseph	Madeline's husband. Also a member of the French Resistance.
Lavelle	Member of the French Resistance. Works at the local garage.

Madame Bouvot	Early forties. Cheerful disposition. Speaks in a sing-song voice. A member of the French Resistance.
Albert Simmons	A downed RAF Pilot.
Père Gauraud	Catholic minister at the church in Torigni-sur-Vire. Leader of the local Resistance movement.
Ernest Marshall	A former private in the Calgary Highlanders.
Bennett Cerf	Co-founder of the Random House publishing firm.

Additional characters: Voice, Pilot, a German Major and the Gestapo Agent.

SETTING

The play requires a minimalist aesthetic in order to facilitate rapid shifts between different aspects of George DuPre's story; his memories of his father; scenes with Muriel DuPre; the offices of the *Calgary Herald*, etc. It is recommended that these distinct theatrical worlds are indicated through the use of lighting or spatial differentiations.

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

(*A clip of a United News World War II newsreel is projected. Fade to black. Lights up on Quentin Reynolds' home office in Bedford Village, New York. 1953.*)

REYNOLDS: Anyone ever told you that you look like a smaller edition of Eisenhower?

GEORGE: That's a good man to look like!

(*George notices the bookshelf and wanders to it. Reynolds sighs, sits at his desk and massages his feet.*)

Thank you for indulging me today.

REYNOLDS: Don't mention it.

GEORGE: The boys will love the postcards.

REYNOLDS: You'll have to bring them someday.

GEORGE: To New York? They'd love that.

REYNOLDS: I'm sure they would.

GEORGE: Especially the Natural History Museum. David loves that sort of thing.

REYNOLDS: Can I offer you anything? Coffee? Tea? I don't know what Canadians like to drink.

GEORGE: I'm fine. Thank you. (*Beat.*) You've written quite a number of books.

REYNOLDS: I was a foreign correspondent in the war.

(*George reads the titles aloud.*)

GEORGE: *The Wounded Don't Cry, A London Diary, Convoy, Only the Stars are Neutral, Dress Rehearsal: The Story of Dieppe, The Curtain Rises –*

REYNOLDS: They're all true stories of real heroes, no matter what the Hearst Corporation would have you believe. My latest is *The Amazing Mr. Doolittle.*

GEORGE: What's it about?

REYNOLDS: James Doolittle.

GEORGE: Oh! Yes, he um…

REYNOLDS: Jimmy led the first airstrike against the Japs.

GEORGE: Right. Yes, of course.

(*Reynolds produces a picture of Doolittle and hands it to George. He holds the picture delicately and stares at it.*)

REYNOLDS: That's him. Won the Medal of Honor for it.

GEORGE: So he did.

(*George offers the photograph back to Reynolds.*)

Well, I'm… I was flattered that you called. Muriel couldn't believe it.

REYNOLDS: Ah, yes… Well, that kind of thing comes with the territory.

GEORGE: How do you mean?

(*Beat.*)

REYNOLDS: The celebrity.

GEORGE: She was just excited about answering a phone call from New York. "Someone telephoned for you," she said. (*Beat.*) "From *New York!*"

REYNOLDS: Ah. Yes, I see. (*Beat.*) So you haven't, um… Perhaps you've seen me on television?

(*George stares at Reynolds in silent bewilderment.*)

I appear regularly on *It's News to Me.*

GEORGE: I, uh… I'm afraid I don't watch much television, Mr. Reynolds.

REYNOLDS: Ah. (*Beat.*) But you know of the show?

GEORGE: A game show, isn't it?

REYNOLDS: About current events. Your story could appear on it someday.

GEORGE: What makes you say that?

REYNOLDS: When I first heard about it… It was Toronto Joe that called me. I was so taken by it I had to meet you. Do you know what he said?

GEORGE: No, I'm uh… I'm afraid I –

REYNOLDS: He said, "Quentin, the greatest adventure story ever told is waiting for you up here!"

GEORGE: He said that?

REYNOLDS: Please, have a seat.

(*George sits. Reynolds grabs a note pad.*)

What you did was… What I mean to say is… Everything you've endured is nothing short of remarkable.

GEORGE: Thank you.

REYNOLDS: The fact that you were able to withstand… Resistance, capture and –

GEORGE: I am, uh… incredibly fortunate. To have survived, I mean.

REYNOLDS: We have to get it down on paper, George!

GEORGE: Honestly, I think, um… I was just doing what anyone else would have done.

REYNOLDS: Modesty! I admire that.

GEORGE: Thank you but, as I mentioned over the telephone, I am a little hesitant / to go on with this without –

REYNOLDS: Yes, yes but George… Your story needs to be told.

GEORGE: You think so?

REYNOLDS: Absolutely! It should be heard by everyone in the free world.

GEORGE: Yes, well I –

REYNOLDS: And people *need* to hear it.

(*Pause. George takes this in.*)

GEORGE: How much of it, um… What exactly do you know?

REYNOLDS: Only the nuts and bolts. That's why you're here! Wanted to get the whole thing from the horse's mouth.

GEORGE: I see.

REYNOLDS: I understand you travel around to Boy Scout meetings now.

GEORGE: Yes, I was a Boy Scout growing up and it, um… Well, it helped me become the man I am today. So, when I got back, I volunteered because I… I wanted to give back to the organization.

REYNOLDS: I see. (*Beat.*) How did Joe hear about it then?

GEORGE: A dinner party. We were sitting around telling stories from the war and I… He started and I, um… I told a few of mine and –

REYNOLDS: It's a damn good thing you did!

GEORGE: Yes, well… I'm a little... I have to be honest with you.

REYNOLDS: Please do.

GEORGE: I'm, uh… The *reason* I'm hesitant to go through with this, Mr. Reynolds is…

(*Pause.*)

REYNOLDS: It must be terrible having to relive it every time.

GEORGE: Well, yes it, um… Yes, it can be but that's not exactly –

REYNOLDS: Trust me, George, people *need* war stories.

GEORGE: Yes, you, um… So you've said.

REYNOLDS: And I've heard a lot of war stories in my time and I know a great one when I hear it. Yours is better than great! It's exceptional! And there's a huge demand for them.

GEORGE: Why, um… Why is that, do you think?

REYNOLDS: They give people hope, George. They prove that there is nothing as strong as the human spirit. The next time someone is going through a difficult stretch in their lives, maybe they'll stop and think: "George DuPre went through far worse than *this* and he came out on the other side." Take a look at my situation, for example.

GEORGE: *Your* situation?

REYNOLDS: My legal entanglements with the Hearst Corporation.

GEORGE: Yes, you mentioned that you've been –

REYNOLDS: I'll give you the gory details another time but, believe you me, it's taken its toll on Ginny and I.

GEORGE: I'm sorry to hear that.

REYNOLDS: So when I heard your story, it brought everything back into perspective. And I remembered why I got into this business in the first place. I remembered there are still decent men out there. Men who are willing to sacrifice everything for what's right.

GEORGE: Thank you. But the thing is… Well, my wife and I… We're Christians and we don't believe in… (*Beat.*) It was God. He saw me through it.

REYNOLDS: God?

GEORGE: That's right. When I'm talking to the boys… The, um, the Boy Scouts I mean… I always say: "You can't have guts without God."

(*Reynolds takes a few notes.*)

REYNOLDS: Is that right?

GEORGE: Yes but, um… I, um… If you're going to write my story then it has to be about God.

REYNOLDS: How He saw you through the war?

GEORGE: To tell it any other way would be to make a false idol of / me and I just couldn't –

REYNOLDS: Ah! Yes, I understand. Absolutely, George. I want to tell *your* story and we're going to do it *your* way.

GEORGE: Alright, well… Good.

REYNOLDS: Where did you get that phrase: "You can't have guts without God"?

GEORGE: Something my commanding officer at the training camp used to say.

REYNOLDS: Walk me through it. From the beginning. How did you get drafted into the secret service?

GEORGE: Well, I was, um… I was told that I was too old to fly when I volunteered for the Royal Canadian Air Force.

REYNOLDS: How old were you?

GEORGE: Thirty-six. Finished training in Toronto and I was, um… I was sent to England to gather reports from returning airmen after they had completed their missions.

REYNOLDS: A desk job.

GEORGE: Right.

(*Reynolds keeps making notes.*)

Do you need me to slow down or –

REYNOLDS: No, please… Go on.

GEORGE: Well, so… One day my commanding officer asked if I might be interested in transferring to an Intelligence unit with the Royal Air Force and, honestly, I um… I didn't care one way or the other.

REYNOLDS: You didn't care?

GEORGE: Well, no. I figured I was going to be sitting at a desk the whole time anyway.

REYNOLDS: Right.

GEORGE: So I was sent to London to meet with a civilian who went by the name of Mr. Jones. Whether that was his real name or not, I can't be sure but –

REYNOLDS: What was he like?

GEORGE: You want me to describe him?

REYNOLDS: If you can. The more details you can provide the better.

GEORGE: Let's see… He wore a light suit. And, um… He was tall. Clean cut with a thin moustache.

(*Lighting shift. Spotlight on George DuPre, sitting alone centre stage.*)

SCENE TWO

(*Reynolds' office falls away revealing London, England. 1940. Mr. Jones appears. He speaks with an upper-class accent.*)

JONES: Been studying your record for some time now.

GEORGE: My outfit arrived here… what, less than a month ago?

JONES: It was forwarded to us from Toronto. Prior to your crossing.

GEORGE: Pardon me but… I'm a little… (*Beat.*) My C.O. asked if I'd be interested in transferring to Intelligence. I'm afraid I don't really understand what this is –

JONES: We're looking for someone.

GEORGE: Who?

JONES: You, I expect.

(*A kettle whistles quietly. Mr. Jones rises and walks across his office to a table, which appears in another light. On the table is a tea set.*)

Tea?

GEORGE: Are you having a laugh at my expense here?

JONES: This is no joke, I assure you.

(*Mr. Jones pours hot water into the teapot. He brings the tray to his desk.*)

It may be that you're the man we're looking for to do a particular job.

GEORGE: What sort of job?

(*Mr. Jones opens a file on his desk.*)

JONES: You were born in Poona, India. Is that right?

GEORGE: How did you know that?

JONES: Your father was Colonel Peter DuPre.

(*Pause. Col. Peter DuPre appears in a spotlight on a separate platform.*)

GEORGE: Sorry, was that a question or a statement?

JONES: Must have been awfully hard on you as a boy.

GEORGE: My father?

JONES: I was referring to moving around. Malta, Gibraltar; the Isle of Wight.

GEORGE: We settled here in London when I was twelve.

JONES: On the other hand, travel is good for a boy. Broadens the mind, wouldn't you say?

(*Mr. Jones pours the tea into two cups.*)

GEORGE: The job you referred to earlier, is it –

JONES: One lump or two?

GEORGE: No sugar. Thank you.

JONES: Cream?

GEORGE: A splash.

(*Mr. Jones offers the teacup to George on a saucer. He takes it.*

Mr. Jones returns to reviewing his file.)

JONES: Colonel Peter DuPre of the Royal Artillery.

GEORGE: About the job, Mr. Jones –

JONES: It was on the Isle of Wight that you joined the Boy Scouts, wasn't it?

GEORGE: That was way back in… (*Beat.*) I don't recall offhand exactly but –

JONES: 1915. You were eleven.

GEORGE: The other members of my troop and I… We acted as air wardens and messengers.

JONES: When the Zeppelins headed for London, out you went on your bicycles.

GEORGE: That's right.

JONES: No sirens in the Great War.

GEORGE: Forgive me but… where are you headed with all this?

JONES: We'll come to that. (*Beat.*) Attended Cambridge. Fair record. Nothing remarkable but sound, at least. Your whole life, except for Cambridge, spent in Army garrisons.

GEORGE: Until…

JONES: Yes?

GEORGE: Until I left for Canada.

JONES: Ah, yes. Story seems to peter out at that point.

GEORGE: I don't see what any of this has to do with / the job I was told –

JONES: We are concerned with intelligence, George. I am simply ensuring the accuracy of our information.

GEORGE: It's accurate.

JONES: I imagine you had your fill of army discipline then?

GEORGE: What makes you say that?

JONES: Your father was a colonel.

GEORGE: The army gave me everything, Mr. Jones.

COL. DuPRE: They're Godless savages, George!

(*George glances at his father.*)

GEORGE: Who are?

JONES: (*To George.*) Not Cambridge?

COL. DuPRE: (*To George.*) All of them!

GEORGE: (*To Jones.*) Cambridge, too.

(*Mr. Jones busies himself with the file on his desk.*)

COL. DuPRE: It is our duty… Nay! Our *responsibility* as Englishmen and, what's more, soldiers of the crown to, at the very least, *attempt* to convert them into civilized human beings.

(*George stands and turns to his father.*)

GEORGE: With all due respect, sir –

COL. DuPRE: Do you understand the burden that is upon us?

GEORGE: Yes, sir. However, I think that / if you would –

COL. DuPRE: Now that you have finished your education, the time has come for you to enlist.

GEORGE: Father, I…

COL. DuPRE: What is it?

GEORGE: I've given a great deal of thought to the matter, sir.

COL. DuPRE: Quite right! So you should.

GEORGE: Well, it's… You see, I um –

COL. DuPRE: Speak up, man!

GEORGE: I'm not certain that enlisting would be the wisest decision for me.

(*A long pause. Col. DuPre stares at George.*)

COL. DuPRE: Army's given you everything, lad.

GEORGE: Yes, sir.

COL. DuPRE: Would serve you well not to forget it!

GEORGE: I haven't forgotten it, sir.

COL. DuPRE: Can't spend your life riding about the countryside.

GEORGE: No, sir. That's not my intention.

COL. DuPRE: Then what, exactly, *is* your intention?

GEORGE: Well, sir… I…

COL. DuPRE: Yes?

GEORGE: I want to travel, sir.

COL. DuPRE: Travel?

GEORGE: Yes, sir.

COL. DuPRE: Then join the army! British army's the finest in the world.

GEORGE: But father I –

COL. DuPRE: Courage, boy! *That's* what you are desperately lacking!

GEORGE: No, I'm –

COL. DuPRE: Perhaps it's due to some sort of physical ailment.

GEORGE: It's not –

COL. DuPRE: A weak spine or –

GEORGE: Father!

COL. DuPRE: Undiagnosed nutritional deficiency.

GEORGE: No! That's not the reason I don't want –

COL. DuPRE: At any rate, it is painfully clear that you lack a degree of intestinal fortitude! You have a weak constitution!

GEORGE: I'm going to Canada! (*Beat.*) Sir.

COL. DuPRE: Canada?!

GEORGE: Yes, sir.

COL. DuPRE: Good heavens. Why would anyone want to go to Canada?

GEORGE: I… Well, I um… The North West Mounted Police.

COL. DuPRE: You wish to join the North West –

GEORGE: Mounted Police. Yes, sir.

(*Colonel DuPre considers this a moment.*)

COL. DuPRE: Still within the Empire, I suppose.

GEORGE: Yes, sir. I read all about it in this book and –

COL. DuPRE: Of course! You read about it in a book! That's you! Can't spend your whole life reading books, George! Flitting about from one idea to the next.

GEORGE: I have no intention of doing that, sir.

COL. DuPRE: Then you fancy yourself an explorer, do you?

GEORGE: No, sir. I suppose / not but –

COL. DuPRE: What's the sense in sending you to Cambridge only to have you venture off to the arctic?

GEORGE: I've given this a great deal of / thought and –

COL. DuPRE: Nose always stuck in a book! Off telling stories with your friends. Doodling, daydreaming… (*Beat.*) Dreaming won't get you anywhere!

GEORGE: My mind is made up, sir.

COL. DuPRE: Should have toughened you up years ago.

GEORGE: That's why you forced me into the scouts, isn't it? Wanted to toughen me up?

COL. DuPRE: A lot of good it did! Look at you. Barely a man.

GEORGE: I am a man!

COL. DuPRE: You're a child! (*Beat.*) Sometimes I think God intended you for a daughter instead of a son.

(*George stares at his father. He pulls a ticket out of his breast pocket and holds it up to him.*)

GEORGE: I have already purchased my ticket. I leave next week. On an ocean liner.

(*George turns to exit.*)

COL. DuPRE: Your mother will take a dim view of it.

GEORGE: Yes. I suppose she will.

COL. DuPRE: Head off to Canada if you wish but, if you do, don't bother coming back.

(*Colonel DuPre's spotlight fades. George stares at the void where his father was standing. Disoriented, he finds his way back to the chair. Lights snap back into Mr. Jones' office.*)

JONES: I was Cambridge, by the way.

GEORGE: Is that right?

JONES: Let's see… (*Beat.*) Met your wife in Canada.

GEORGE: Muriel, yes. (*Beat.*) You, um… You know more about me than I know myself.

JONES: Dare say we do. When Special Operations Executive is looking for a man to do a particular job, we investigate as thoroughly as possible.

GEORGE: So I see.

(*Mr. Jones closes the file and scrutinizes George for a moment.*)

JONES: You could be of use to us. Would you care to try our training course?

GEORGE: How could I be of use? I've read about the exploits of British agents and I don't think I'm / what you're –

JONES: Forget everything you've read about our service, George. It isn't glamorous. It isn't a job for a superman.

(*Mr. Jones sips at his tea.*)

GEORGE: I'm really… I'm not the type for this kind of work.

JONES: Afraid I'll have to disagree with you there. You're *exactly* what we're looking for.

(*Lighting shift.*)

SCENE THREE

(*Reynolds' office.*)

GEORGE: I returned to my regular duties. Two or three days later, I received a telegram inviting me to the Oxford Home for Convalescents. A grand old baronial mansion surrounded by five hundred acres of woodland.

REYNOLDS: Sounds like heaven.

GEORGE: But it was actually a top secret installation.

REYNOLDS: A school for British agents?

GEORGE: Yes. That's where I met Colonel William Baker.

REYNOLDS: Tell me about him.

GEORGE: Well, he was, um… He was about fifty at the time, I'd say. (*Beat.*) And he, um… He reminded me of… of my father.

REYNOLDS: How so?

GEORGE: In that "stiff upper lip" kind of way. Except I, uh… Well, I *liked* Colonel Baker.

(*Lighting shift. Oxford Home for Convalescents. Colonel Baker crosses to George.*)

BAKER: DuPre, old boy! If you accept our invitation, which you should, you will have to undergo a vigorous nine-month training course. You will study short-wave radio operation, the architecture of French bridges and viaducts; the strengths and vulnerabilities of the French railroads. You will also learn how to handle various kinds of explosives, how to use pigeons to deliver messages and everything there

is to know about French automobiles. On top of all that, you will master the art of parachuting!

GEORGE: Parachuting?

BAKER: From a plane! How's your French?

GEORGE: A little rusty, sir, but if I brush up on it / I could –

BAKER: You will be constantly working on your French!

GEORGE: Yes, sir.

BAKER: Oh, yes… and there will also be a commando course in silent killing.

GEORGE: Silent…? I don't know if I can do that, sir.

(*Col. Baker throws his arm around DuPre.*)

BAKER: My dear chap, killing a man is one of the easiest things in the world. No trick to that at all. We are fragile creatures. But *you* will be taught to kill a man silently, so quietly that a sentry standing fifteen feet away won't know anything has happened.

GEORGE: I understand, sir. However, I'm a –

BAKER: The particular job we have in mind for you may not involve any killing at all!

GEORGE: I hope not.

BAKER: But one must be prepared for any eventuality. Wouldn't you agree?

GEORGE: Oh, well, um… Yes.

BAKER: Good show! For nine months you will be trained for just one job. Yours is a rescue mission. Your job is to assist British airmen in returning to England!

GEORGE: Sounds like an excellent opportunity to help with the war effort, sir.

BAKER: I'll give you a day to think it over. You see, in our show, once you agree… Well, you're committed.

GEORGE: I don't need any time to think it over, Colonel. I'm ready now.

BAKER: Good show! Well, then… I'll give you the "gen".

GEORGE: The "gen"?

BAKER: Orders.

(*Baker produces a sealed envelope. He hands it to George. He opens it and reads as Baker continues to talk.*)

After being dropped into France, you will coordinate with French Resistance. Your headquarters will be in the village of Torigni-sur-Vire, not far from Saint-Lo. You will act as liaison between the resistance group in that vicinity and our London office. From now on you are to think of yourself as Pierre Touchette who was born in Torigni on August 10, 1903.

GEORGE: I'll be impersonating him?

BAKER: Yes. A halfwit. Pierre left the village of Torigni with his parents in '34. Moved out to a farm. The little family was caught in the rush of the German offensive. All three were killed. The body of young Pierre was never officially recovered. Still listed as missing.

GEORGE: Pardon me, sir but won't I be recognized?

BAKER: No one in the village has seen Pierre Touchette since 1934! I'll see you in the morning at 06:00 hours.

GEORGE: Yes, sir. I, um… I look forward to it.

(*Lighting shift. Reynolds' office.*)

I liked the idea of being involved in a rescue mission.

REYNOLDS: It all happened that fast?

GEORGE: Like lightning. There was this feeling, in the early days, that they had caught us napping and we had to… (*Beat.*) Churchill had been right all along and we had to scramble to catch up. Everything had to be quick and efficient. There was no time to think.

REYNOLDS: When did you begin training?

GEORGE: The next day.

(*Lighting shift.*)

SCENE FOUR

(*Col. DuPre appears.*)

GEORGE: Father?

COL. DuPRE: Come to say goodbye to your mother?

GEORGE: And you.

COL. DuPRE: She's not feeling well.

GEORGE: Surely I can just pop up / and say goodbye.

COL. DuPRE: She's not to have any visitors!

GEORGE: Not even her son?

COL. DuPRE: Doctor's orders.

(*Pause.*)

GEORGE: Alright. I'll, um… I'll be on my way then.

(*George turns to leave. He stops himself and turns back.*)

Will you tell her something for me?

COL. DuPRE: Mmm.

GEORGE: Just tell her… That I love her.

COL. DuPRE: Yes, yes.

GEORGE: And I'll write to her.

COL. DuPRE: "Dearest Mother, I'm making snow cones with an Eskimo! Love, your *boy*."

GEORGE: Why are you being like this?

COL. DuPRE: You're abandoning her.

GEORGE: Is that how you see it?

COL. DuPRE: That's how she sees it. Abandoning everything. Your education, your country; your family. For what?

GEORGE: You know why.

COL. DuPRE: Do as you will.

(*George steels himself and starts to exit.*)

They've accepted you then?

GEORGE: I'll apply when I arrive.

COL. DuPRE: What will you do for money?

GEORGE: I have a job lined up.

COL. DuPRE: Doing what?

GEORGE: Working on a ship. In the arctic.

COL. DuPRE: Yes, that sounds far better than joining the army. Freezing your willy off in the Canadian wilds!

GEORGE: It'll give me time to…

COL. DuPRE: To what?

GEORGE: To think. I need to think about what I'm going to do for –

COL. DuPre: Think?! What's there to think about? Aren't you off to become a Mountie?

GEORGE: You wouldn't understand.

COL. DuPRE: For once in your life, you're right. I don't understand. (*Beat.*) Off you go then. Run along like a good little girl.

(*Pause. George turns to exit.*)

But don't come crawling back to England with your hand out.

GEORGE: I won't.

COL. DuPRE: See that you don't.

GEORGE: Goodbye, father.

(*Lighting shift.*)

SCENE FIVE

(*Reynolds' office.*)

REYNOLDS: What was the training like?

GEORGE: I wasn't ready for it. The physical nature of it. I'd been sitting at a desk for months filing reports. It, um… It took some getting used to.

(*Lighting shift. Col. Baker grabs George in a half nelson.*)

BAKER: You may never have to use this stuff, old boy, but you might as well know it. Could come in handy someday if your mother-in-law stays over too long.

GEORGE: Baker took to me rather quickly.

REYNOLDS: You two had a good rapport?

GEORGE: I like to think he confided in me.

(*Col. Baker releases George.*)

More so than the others, at least. I was walking on the grounds during one of our scarce few hours of down time. He was doing the same. I remember asking him… Why doesn't the S.O.E. use criminals, sir?

BAKER: Criminals?!

GEORGE: Well, I just thought that… Maybe they would be better suited for this kind of thing. No scruples, sir.

BAKER: Bless me, no! They'd be no jolly good at all. Don't have the guts, DuPre. Criminals only kill out of fear or panic. For us, killing is only part of the job. Matter of fact, some of our best men are very religious. You really can't have guts without God.

(*Col. Baker exits. Lighting shift.*)

GEORGE: You can't have guts without God.

REYNOLDS: It's a hell of a byline, George.

(*George nods.*)

Do you need a break?

GEORGE: No, no. We can keep going.

REYNOLDS: How did you go about taking on the character of Pierre Touchette?

GEORGE: I was ordered to spend time with a young man named Johnny Peterson. Johnny had, well, to put it bluntly… He had the mind of a child. I observed his behavior.

REYNOLDS: And impersonated him?

GEORGE: Yes. I, um… I had never done any acting before. So I copied him as best I could and, eventually, over time it became natural.

REYNOLDS: And this was while you were working through the physical training?

GEORGE: Yes. It was a grueling schedule. I spent a few hours with Johnny every evening. The rest of the training happened during the day.

REYNOLDS: How many of you were there in the classes?

GEORGE: About a dozen or so.

REYNOLDS: And you all had similar missions?

GEORGE: Nobody knew what anyone else's assignment was. Officially, anyway.

REYNOLDS: But everyone had a military background?

GEORGE: No, no. There were, um… University professors and a graduate student from Oxford. I know there were a few businessmen that had spent extended periods in Germany and France.

REYNOLDS: And what were they like?

GEORGE: To be honest we, uh… Well, we didn't talk too much about our personal lives.

REYNOLDS: There wasn't anyone you managed to become friends with in nine months?

GEORGE: Oh, sure. But we were encouraged not to… (*Beat.*) It was a job like any other. Except we all knew we'd be going over the edge at some point and… The chances of seeing one another again were…

REYNOLDS: Right. (*Beat.*) So who did you become friends with?

GEORGE: Archie Steele.

REYNOLDS: What was he like?

GEORGE: Salt of the earth. Bit of a braggart but I liked him all the same. He, um… He told me they were using him to impersonate a dead Frenchman.

REYNOLDS: Similar to your role.

GEORGE: Yes. Though I don't know the full extent of his assignment. (*Beat.*) But he had to have his right leg shortened by a few inches.

(*Pause.*)

REYNOLDS: Come again?

GEORGE: The man he was impersonating, his right leg was shorter than his left so…

REYNOLDS: How did they do that?

GEORGE: Surgery.

(*Pause.*)

REYNOLDS: Pardon the pun but… You're not pulling my leg here, are you?

GEORGE: No, I swear! That was part of his… part of his character.

REYNOLDS: It just sounds a little farfetched.

GEORGE: It was! It was completely… (*Beat.*) Sometimes truth is stranger than fiction, Mr. Reynolds. But that was the sense of commitment we all had. We were willing to go through… almost anything.

REYNOLDS: Alright. Anyone else?

GEORGE: There was, um… Sam Rosen. He was being groomed to impersonate a German officer. Sam was fluent in German. His accent was, apparently, impeccable. But the problem was that the, uh, the German officer he was impersonating had a terrible stutter.

REYNOLDS: So he had to learn how to stutter in German?

GEORGE: That's right.

(*George chuckles at the memory of it.*)

"Auf – Auf – Auf – Auf Wiedersehen!"

REYNOLDS: Were there any physical changes you had to make for your character?

GEORGE: Not like Archie, no. But they, um… they had this psychiatrist visit me once a week. He helped me refine my performance.

REYNOLDS: How did he do that?

GEORGE: I had to relearn everything, in a way. He directed me on how to talk, how to eat, how to walk, how to carry myself…

(*George changes into a pair of heavy boots, baggy trousers and the black cotton jersey of a French peasant.*)

I was becoming Pierre Touchette. (*Beat.*) This was the final phase of my training. (*Beat.*) The last nine months had prepared me for this moment.

(*Reynolds offers George a peaked cap to complete his outfit.*)

Careful! There's a razorblade sown into the brim.

REYNOLDS: A razorblade?

GEORGE: An old trick I learned from an Irish dockworker. If you're ever in trouble, catch your assailant's neck with the edge of the brim and…

(*George jerks his thumb across his throat. George puts on the hat.*)

It was only another few days before I would leave for France. The men I had started to become friends with… They were all leaving. Woke up one morning and Archie Steele was gone. He had left in the middle of the night. Then Sam Rosen. One by one our numbers dwindled. I knew my time was coming.

(*Lighting shift.*)

SCENE SIX

(*George pulls a small envelope out of his pocket. Col. Baker enters.*)

GEORGE: Sir? May I speak with you a moment?

BAKER: DuPre! How are you, lad?

GEORGE: Very well, sir.

BAKER: Good show, good show!

GEORGE: I've, um… I've written a letter to Muriel, sir.

BAKER: Muriel?

GEORGE: My wife, sir. And with your permission, I wonder if I might be able to send it to her?

BAKER: Afraid not, my boy.

GEORGE: It's just that, well, I haven't seen her in over a year, sir and –

BAKER: Correspondence has been sent on your behalf.

GEORGE: Yes, sir. I know, sir but –

BAKER: I understand where you're coming from, DuPre. Believe me, I do. My wife thinks I'm in South America and damn it she only lives eight miles from here. You'll just have to trust us, my boy.

GEORGE: I do, sir. I trust *you*, sir.

BAKER: Newspapers call us the Silent Service. Not bad that. No thanks, no medals; no acclaim. And no letters, it would seem. But if we can help a little towards ending all this, then… (*Beat.*) Your allotment will go to her every month, George.

GEORGE: Yes, sir.

BAKER: Good show.

(*Col. Baker exits.*)

GEORGE: They cut my food intake down to six hundred calories a day. Kept me awake for twenty-four hours. I was forced to run an obstacle course and take long hikes with a fifty pound bag strapped to my back. All of it was designed to…

REYNOLDS: To what?

GEORGE: Break me down. Prepare me for… (*A long pause.*) One night, after I collapsed from exhaustion…

(*A blinding white light flashes across the stage before we are plunged into darkness. The sounds of a struggle are heard. A man, George, being beaten and pinned down. A harsh voice yelling in German.*)

VOICE: Wer sind Sie?! [Who are you?!]

GEORGE: Que dites-vous? [What are you saying?]

VOICE: Was tun Sie? [What do you do?]

GEORGE: Arrêtez! Arrêtez! [Stop! Stop!]

VOICE: Wo sind Sie geboren? [Where were you born?]

GEORGE: Je… Je ne comprends pas. [I… I don't understand.]

VOICE: Wo sind deine Eltern? [Where are your parents?]

GEORGE: Je ne comprends pas! [I don't understand!]

(*Darkness. Silence.*)

REYNOLDS: Your final test?

GEORGE: Yes. Even though I was awoken in the middle of the night and questioned, I stayed in character the whole time.

(*The lights slowly come up on George and Colonel Baker.*)

BAKER: You leave at twenty-three hundred hours. Skies are clear. Unseasonably warm weather we're having.

GEORGE: Much colder this time of year back in Canada, sir.

BAKER: Nice night for flying.

(*George shakes Baker's hand.*)

God speed.

(*The thunderous roar of a Lysander aircraft rattles the stage. A field of stars comes into view. The roar of the aircraft quiets down to a steady hum.*)

GEORGE: It was a single-engine Lysander. I was sitting in the rear gunner's cockpit. The waters over the channel looked calm. A routine trip for the pilot. He keeps us low and slow. He tells me…

PILOT: She's bright tonight.

GEORGE: Clear sky and a three-quarter moon. Less than ideal conditions for avoiding detection.

PILOT: Five minutes. When we hit 1,200 feet, you jump.

GEORGE: I think of Muriel. The three years we spent together in a log cabin up North. I try to put her out of my mind and focus. Running through a checklist in my head. Hit the field. Gather the 'chute. Stash it under the hedge. Follow the hedge-line east. Turn north. Run to the farm. On the left, two-story farmhouse. On the right, two smaller buildings. The shorter one contains the henhouse below and the hayloft above. Fifteen steps to the hayloft. The rendezvous point.

PILOT: All set?

GEORGE: Yes.

(*The sound of the plane opening and air rushing past.*)

PILOT: Go! Go! Go!

GEORGE: I hurl myself from the aircraft.

(*The low hum of the Lysander aircraft quickly fades away.*)

A large, metal disk on my chest releases the 'chute. A canopy of black silk unravels above me. Everything is silent; calm… And I float. Hanging there in the dark. My legs dangling. (*Beat.*) Suddenly, the earth rushes up to meet my feet.

(*The field of stars slowly fades to reveal a clear, moonlit night.*)

I hit the ground of the freshly plowed field and my body automatically goes through the motions. Hide the 'chute. Hedge-line east. North. Farm. Henhouse. Fifteen steps. Hayloft. Safety. (*Beat.*) I hide up there all night, curled up under the hay. Listening to the scratches of clucking hens. My eyes close. Eventually sleep overtakes me.

(*George pauses for a moment as the lights shift to daylight. The sound of hens clucking.*)

Sunlight streams through a crack in the blistered roof. 05:00 hours. The farmer's wife will feed the chickens. Do not move until she whistles the Marseillaise.

(*Pause.*)

REYNOLDS: What happened after that?

(*George fails to respond.*)

George? Are you –

GEORGE: Do you mind if we stop there for today?

REYNOLDS: Oh. Certainly.

GEORGE: It's getting rather late and I'd –

REYNOLDS: Yes. Yes, of course. We'll pick up there tomorrow, shall we?

(*Lighting shift. Reynolds' office disappears.*)

SCENE SEVEN

(*A telephone appears beside George. He looks at it for a moment before picking it up. He starts to dial then puts it back down. He picks it up again and dials.*)

GEORGE: Hello, Operator? (*Beat.*) I'd like to make a collect call, please. (*Beat.*) Calgary, Alberta, Canada. (*Beat.*) Yes. (*Beat.*) The number… Sorry, I'll…

(*George hangs up the phone and stares at it for a moment. Lighting shift.*)

SCENE EIGHT

(*Reynolds' office. The following morning.*)

REYNOLDS: So you were in the barn?

GEORGE: Spent the night there. I was so exhausted but I… I slept in fits. I remember my heart racing. Pounding in my ears. In the morning, I heard the signal.

(*Lighting shift. Reynolds' office disappears. Outside Torigni-sur-vire, France. 1941. Sunlight streams in through the cracks in the roof. Madeline enters, scattering chickenfeed into the henhouse. She whistles the Marseillaise quietly to herself. George listens to her. He stands. She stops whistling and straightens up.*)

I gave the password… Fermez la porte. [Close the door.]

(*She stares at him for a moment, expressionless.*)

MADELINE: Suivez-moi. [Follow me.]

(*She jerks her head towards the door and exits. George follows cautiously, as Pierre Touchette.*)

GEORGE: That was Madeline. She was a very, um… stoic woman. I followed her out of the barn into the sunlight; then into the house. She served me black coffee and bread.

MADELINE: You will remain here two, maybe three days.

GEORGE: I remembered Colonel Baker's advice.

(*Col. Baker appears in a separate pool of light.*)

BAKER: Perhaps you'll find them unduly suspicious. Remember, before they give you their confidence, they'll want to make certain you've come from London – not Berlin.

(*The spotlight on Col. Baker snaps out.*)

REYNOLDS: You stayed there three days?

GEORGE: In the second bedroom upstairs. We didn't speak much but she brought me food and a washcloth and basin.

(*Madeline places the basin in front of George.*)

Merci. [Thanks.]

MADELINE: Je vous en prie. [You're welcome.]

GEORGE: That was the extent of our conversation. (*Beat.*) Her husband arrived on the morning of the third day.

(*Joseph enters.*)

JOSEPH: Bonjour. Je m'appelle Joseph Thibaut. Préférez-vous plutôt parler l'Anglais ou le Français? [Hello. I am Joseph Thibaut. Would you rather speak English or French?]

GEORGE: Je préfère parler l'Anglais. [I prefer English.]

JOSEPH: You have met my wife, Madeline.

GEORGE: I have.

JOSEPH: She's treated you well, I hope.

GEORGE: Very well.

JOSEPH: She is beautiful, non? (*Beat.*) Her face is better than her cooking! That's why I'm so skinny. Ha!

(*Joseph offers him a card.*)

Ration card. Carry with your… papiers d'identité?

GEORGE: Identification.

JOSEPH: Ah, oui. Dress. Follow me. I will introduce you to Monsieur Lavelle.

GEORGE: It was about two hundred yards to the village of Torigni-sur-Vire.

(*The setting changes around George as a soundscape of a bustling French village fades in underneath: people talking in French, a dog barking, horse hooves on the coble street, a car horn and children laughing.*)

We passed the post office, the church: Église Saint-Pierre, the bakery, a harness shop and a clothing store. Two tall, thin gasoline pumps stood sentry at the filling station. Lavelle emerged from behind them.

LAVELLE: Ça fait plaisir de vous revoir! [It's good to see you again!]

GEORGE: Vous… vous aussi. [You… you too.]

LAVELLE: Je vais vous montrer où vous dormez. [I'll show you where you sleep.]

GEORGE: He led me to a shack behind the garage.

LAVELLE: Il n'y a pas grand chose. Un poêle. Un lit. [It's not much. A stove. A bed.]

GEORGE: C'est bon. Merci. [It's good. Thanks.]

(*Lavelle leans in to George.*)

LAVELLE: Mass is at seven in the morning. Remember, you must go to church every morning.

(*George nods silently. Lavelle exits. George looks around the shack.*)

GEORGE: I attended mass the following morning. After the congregation was dismissed, a handful of people stayed behind.

REYNOLDS: How many?

GEORGE: Well, let's see… There was, um… Georges Lavelle, Joseph and Madeline Thibaut. The service was given by Père Gauraud. Then there was Dr. Henri Rennet, Albert Baudouin, Gerard Benois and…

REYNOLDS: There were eight of you?

GEORGE: Madame Bouvot.

(*Madame Bouvot appears in a spotlight. She wears a large skirt that swings at her hips. When she speaks, it is cheerful, almost as if she is singing.*)

BOUVOT: Ravie de vous rencontrer! [Lovely to meet you!]

GEORGE: Au plaisir. [The pleasure is mine.] (*Beat.*) They all stood in a circle, staring at me expectantly.

GAURAUD: This is Pierre Touchette. He is from… He's here to help.

(*George stuffs his hands into his pockets and looks down at his shoes.*)

BOUVOT: Have you anything to report?

GEORGE: I, um…

GAURAUD: How is the war going?

GEORGE: I don't know.

BOUVOT: Is there nothing you have to tell us, Pierre?

GEORGE: No. I… I don't.

GAURAUD: You must have some information about –

GEORGE: I don't. I… (*Beat.*) I'm sorry.

(*Gauraud and Bouvot look at each other.*)

I wished I had something to tell them. A hostile force had invaded their country and they were, um… They were desperate. But we hadn't made contact with London yet so I, um… What could I say?

(*Lighting shift.*)

REYNOLDS: And nobody thought your sudden reappearance in the village was odd?

GEORGE: By the end of the first week, everyone believed I was Pierre Touchette. A few of them thought they might have remembered me from before the war. So much the better.

REYNOLDS: Was there a heavy occupation force in the town?

GEORGE: They were present. The town is along a main artery to Saint-Lo. They would stop at the gas station frequently.

(*Lighting shift. A Gestapo officer enters.*)

It wasn't long before I had to refuel a Gestapo agent's car. I was cleaning off the windshield when he got out and –

GESTAPO: This is taking too long!

(*George looks away.*)

Where is your identification?

(*Lavelle rushes between them.*)

LAVELLE: Pay no attention to him.

GESTAPO: Who is he?

LAVELLE: Nobody. Nobody. Here, let me –

(*Lavelle turns to George.*)

Where is your identification?

(*George produces his identification papers. He hands them to Lavelle who passes them to the Gestapo officer. He snaps the papers out of his hand. The officer looks at them for a moment, then at George.*)

LAVELLE: He's an idiot.

(*The Gestapo officer lifts George's head up with his finger and stares into his eyes. He drops the papers on the ground and exits.*)

You missed a spot on his car.

(*Lighting shift.*

SCENE NINE

In the shack behind the garage.)

GEORGE: About a week later, it was the middle of the night and Lavelle came rushing in. He was in a sweat and panting …

LAVELLE: We have picked up two British flyers. At least, they claim to be British flyers. They are at Joseph's farm. Will you come, please?

GEORGE: Père Gauraud met us at the farm. The two young pilots were in the tiny room where I had spent my first few nights.

(*Lighting shift. Père Gauraud stands guard over two British pilots. One of the pilots, Albert, is pacing back and forth. The other sits motionless.*)

ALBERT: Can you get us on the Rat Run or not?

GAURAUD: Not until we confirm your identity.

ALBERT: We've already given you our names and serial numbers.

GAURAUD: (*Speaking in broken English.*) Where you trained? Which aeroplane you fly? Missions, how many have you had?

ALBERT: You know the gen, Padre. All we give is names and numbers.

GAURAUD: More information. Please.

ALBERT: Names and numbers. That's all we're required to reveal to the enemy.

GAURAUD: We are not the enemy!

ALBERT: Maybe you are and maybe you aren't, mate.

(*George whispers into Gauraud's ear.*)

Who's he then? Stan Laurel?

GAURAUD: Tell us about Leicester Square, London.

ALBERT: I was born in the West End! Leicester Square? Okay, well, let's see… There's the big Odeon Cinema and the 400 club – that's a bottle club, Padre. Um, what else…?

(*George whispers into Gauraud's ear again.*)

GAURAUD: Where is… Skeen-dles? Skin-dles. Where is Skindles?

ALBERT: I was there a few weeks ago! On the Thames at Maidenhead. Jolly good pub that. Not far from the Izaak Walton.

(*George and Gauraud confer. The pilots look at each other anxiously.*)

GAURAUD: We must be careful.

ALBERT: Who's this chap?

GAURAUD: A villager.

ALBERT: Uh-huh.

GAURAUD: You will… um… We will give you new clothes. Follow the road two miles. You will come to another farmhouse.

ALBERT: We're in your hands, mate.

(*Lighting shift.*)

GEORGE: Whenever a downed pilot was scooped up by one of our members of the Resistance, I would go along for the interview. Over the next two months, we assisted in the movement of thirty British airmen along the Rat Run.

REYNOLDS: Sorry, you mentioned that before…

GEORGE: The Rat Run?

REYNOLDS: Yes.

GEORGE: It's what the RAF called the escape route which passed through Torigni to Saint-Lo; then to the coast. From there they took boats across the channel.

(*Lighting shift.*)

SCENE TEN

GEORGE: Another few weeks passed without incident. One morning at mass, Père Gauraud said –

GAURAUD: There's been an accident.

GEORGE: What sort of accident?

GAURAUD: One of our girls… She was hit by a Gestapo car.

BOUVOT: It was my idea to use the girls. They roll up the messages and carry them in their handlebars.

GEORGE: Did she survive?

GAURAUD: She was thrown from her bicycle.

BOUVOT: And the handlebars were…

GEORGE: They found the message?

GAURAUD: A communiqué from London, asking the number of German troops in Saint-Lo.

BOUVOT: She was with three of her friends at the time, all of them working for us. They were taken and…

GEORGE: And?

BOUVOT: They were questioned. (*Beat.*) And killed.

GAURAUD: May the Lord keep them.

GEORGE: Would they have revealed the origin of the messages?

BOUVOT: Impossible. The transfers were always blind.

GEORGE: Alright. (*Beat.*) We have to re-establish a secure line of communication.

GAURAUD: No children.

(*Pause.*)

GEORGE: What about dogs? We could, um… Could Monsieur Baudouin build hollow collars? We'll hide the messages in there then we just have to hand off the collar.

GAURAUD: See it is done.

(*Bouvot nods. Lighting shift.*)

GEORGE: After that, we changed communication methods frequently, even relying on carrier pigeons. Life went on like this over the next six months. By that point, we had smuggled seventy airmen through the Rat Run.

REYNOLDS: Seventy?

GEORGE: Approximately.

REYNOLDS: That's remarkable.

GEORGE: Happened so often, we developed a bit of a routine, Père Gauraud and I. He would interview the pilots and I'd stand by, offering suggestions if necessary.

REYNOLDS: Why didn't you conduct the interviews?

GEORGE: And risk exposing my real identity?

REYNOLDS: Was there anyone on the team that knew your real identity? Or were you always in the guise of Touchette?

GEORGE: They all knew I wasn't who I claimed to be.

REYNOLDS: Right. But were you always in character around them?

GEORGE: Not always. The role of Pierre Touchette was a tool. I used it for camouflage when I had to.

(*Lighting shift.*)

SCENE ELEVEN

GEORGE: One morning, Père Gauraud told us…

GAURAUD: New orders. From London. The time has come for more active resistance.

BOUVOT: I retrieved a package dropped a few nights ago. Dynamite, fuses; blasting caps.

GAURAUD: The target is a control tower in Saint-Lo.

(*Gauraud produces a map of the area.*)

Here. The signal box is on the Eastern side of the freight yard. Your target.

GEORGE: Why now?

GAURAUD: German anti-aircraft in Saint-Lo.

GEORGE: Destroying the control tower means tying up delivery of ammunitions and supplies.

BOUVOT: They're preparing for an Allied attack?

GAURAUD: I think so. (*Beat.*) The freight yard is close to the edge of town but you need enough time to return under cover of dark.

GEORGE: That's a two and a half hour walk.

GAURAUD: You can borrow my bicycle. Stick to the fields and dirt roads.

BOUVOT: You're not sending him alone, are you?

(*George and Gauraud stare at her for a moment.*)

You're sending him alone?!

GEORGE: I'll be fine.

GAURAUD: Have you ever handled explosives?

BOUVOT: No but –

GAURAUD: *He* is the most qualified person for –

BOUVOT: He'll be out past curfew.

GAURAUD: Correct.

BOUVOT: Alone.

GAURAUD: Correct.

GEORGE: I'm aware of the risks.

BOUVOT: What if he is captured?

GAURAUD: We develop a new plan.

BOUVOT: But this is –

GEORGE: I appreciate your concern but it's not necessary.

GAURAUD: The signal box must be destroyed.

BOUVOT: I don't like it.

GAURAUD: I never asked if you did.

GEORGE: God will protect me.

BOUVOT: I will go with you.

GAURAUD: Why?

BOUVOT: If he gets into any trouble, I can –

GAURAUD: What? What can you do?

GEORGE: It would be best if we respect Père Gauraud's decision in –

BOUVOT: He shouldn't go alone!

GEORGE: Really, it's no trouble.

BOUVOT: Nonsense!

GAURAUD: Fine! Go with him if you like.

GEORGE: How about we do a reconnaissance this afternoon? We'll find the best route to enter Saint-Lo.

BOUVOT: I approve.

GAURAUD: I'm so glad.

BOUVOT: Gerard Benois' café, The Black Dog, is on the Westside of town. It will be safe. We can return in the middle of the night.

GEORGE: How much dynamite are we talking about?

GAURAUD: Six batons.

GEORGE: We need somewhere to hide them.

BOUVOT: Leave that to me.

(*Lighting shift.*)

SCENE TWELVE

REYNOLDS: So you rode into Saint-Lo in the afternoon…

GEORGE: And quickly scouted the perimeter of the rail yard before withdrawing to the café.

(*Inside Benois' Café in Saint-Lo, Bouvot brings two drinks to a small table. The song "Lili Marlene" plays softly in the background.*)

BOUVOT: Somewhere you learned to handle explosives.

GEORGE: My father taught me.

BOUVOT: I knew your father. He couldn't light his pipe without burning the rug.

GEORGE: He taught me.

BOUVOT: All right, *Pierre*. If you say so. (*Beat.*) Will you dance with me?

(*George looks away from her.*)

Come on. There's no one here.

(*He stands, offers her his hand and they dance.*)

GEORGE: The guards on the perimeter are stationed about a hundred yards apart. And it'll be a moonless night tonight.

BOUVOT: I didn't see any guards on the control tower.

GEORGE: Me neither.

BOUVOT: Just be careful. (*Beat.*) I'm glad you're here.

GEORGE: I'm glad you're here, too.

(*Pause.*)

We have good people on our team.

BOUVOT: When you live in an occupied country, you have to choose. Either you collaborate with the enemy or you fight. Each of us has our own reason for resisting.

GEORGE: What's yours?

BOUVOT: My husband was killed in the Great War. (*Beat.*) And my son was… he was taken…

GEORGE: I'm sorry.

BOUVOT: And you?

GEORGE: My parents were killed in the rush of the German offensive. Now I work at the garage.

BOUVOT: D'accord. Your secrets are yours to keep.

(*Pause.*)

GEORGE: I appreciate you accompanying me this far.

BOUVOT: We don't want you to get hurt.

GEORGE: But it would be best if we part ways here.

BOUVOT: Are you sure?

GEORGE: Head back to Torigni. (*Beat.*) Trust me.

BOUVOT: Will I see you in mass tomorrow?

GEORGE: Of course.

(*George checks his watch.*)

Can you give me the…?

(*Madame Bouvot reaches under her skirt and pulls out a small package wrapped in brown paper.*)

Looks like I've just come from the butcher.

BOUVOT: Bon chance. [Good luck.]

(*Bouvot kisses George on the cheek. Lighting shift. George crawls along the ground towards the control tower.*)

GEORGE: I crawled for ages across the field in the pitch black night. The dynamite strapped to my back. As I got closer, I'd stop every few feet. The guards were silent. I slipped right in between them on the Eastern edge of the rail yard and stopped for a moment. All I could hear was the squealing of breaks as train cars slammed into one another. I fixed the dynamite to the closest leg of the control tower, attached the fuse and slipped back out into the field. It was a slow-burning fuse. Half an hour to detonation. I had to get to the other side of the field where Lavelle's bicycle was lying in the ditch. (*Beat.*) I made it in less than fifteen minutes. The

explosion came as I was riding down the dirt road, South-East towards Torigni. It lit up the sky with an orange glow.

(*A loud explosion rocks the theatre. Lighting shift.*)

SCENE THIRTEEN

(*A second explosion occurs but this one is somehow different from the first. London, 1915. George is a boy scout in London during World War I. A third explosion. He drops his bicycle and runs down an alley, cowering against a brick wall. George's father appears.*)

COL. DuPRE: Stand up, lad!

GEORGE: I can't!

COL. DuPRE: Stand up, damn it! You have to keep moving!

(*George buries his head against the wall.*)

We're counting on you!

(*His father grabs him and pulls him up.*)

Stand up straight!

(*Another explosion brings George to his knees.*)

GEORGE: Father! Please!

COL. DuPRE: Stand up!

GEORGE: I'm scared!

COL. DuPRE: Are you a man or a mouse?!

GEORGE: I don't… I'm not –

COL. DuPRE: Which is it?!

GEORGE: I'm a man!

COL. DuPRE: Are you?!

GEORGE: Yes!

COL. DuPRE: Then act like it, damn it! What are you doing out here?

GEORGE: I have a message.

(*He reaches into his pocket and pulls out a telegram.*)

COL. DuPRE: Where is it headed?

GEORGE: Whitehall, sir.

(*Another explosion, closer than the first two. George starts to cower but forces himself to stand up straight.*)

COL. DuPRE: The only way we're going to beat these bastards is by showing them what we're made of!

GEORGE: Yes, sir.

COL. DuPRE: Now what are you made of?

GEORGE: I… I don't –

COL. DuPRE: What are you made of, boy?!

GEORGE: I don't know, sir.

COL. DuPRE: You're a bullheaded British son of St. George!

GEORGE: Yes, sir.

COL. DuPRE: Now get back on that bicycle and pedal until your legs burn!

(*George grabs the bicycle.*)

Deliver your message to Whitehall before the bloody Zeppelins deliver theirs!

GEORGE: Alright! Alright! I can do this!

COL. DuPRE: For God and country, George! For God and country!

(*Lighting shift.*)

SCENE FOURTEEN

(*Reynolds' office.*)

REYNOLDS: Was that your first sabotage mission?

GEORGE: Yes, it… Yes. Our, um… Sabotage mission.

REYNOLDS: Do you need a minute?

GEORGE: No, I'm… I'm fine. Thank you. The, uh… That first attempt had worked so well… A few weeks later, we were ordered to take out a bridge. We handled the operation the same way. Reconnaissance first during the day. Wait until the next moonless night before sneaking the explosives in under Madame Bouvot's skirt and –

REYNOLDS: That operation was successful as well?

GEORGE: Unfortunately, yes.

REYNOLDS: Unfortunately?

GEORGE: They were a month apart. The Gestapo knew a pocket of French Resistance had formed in Torigni. The next day they –

(*Lighting shift.*)

GAURAUD: Pierre! They captured Bouvot.

GEORGE: When?

GAURAUD: Early this morning. At the market. Rounded up everyone outside the post office.

(*Madame Bouvot appears in a separate pool of light, her hands behind her head.*)

BOUVOT: Search me?! How dare you! I am a respected member of this community! An honorable assignment for a proud member of the mighty German army! Beating on a woman! The Colonel and I are good friends! I demand to speak with him. I suggest you fetch him immediately, Sergeant, unless you want to spend the rest of your time in France cleaning toilets!

GEORGE: She was friends with the Colonel?

GAURAUD: Of course not. When the commanding officer arrived, he said he didn't know her and demanded –

BOUVOT: I remove my clothes and be searched? (*Beat.*) If you insist.

(*Madame Bouvot lifts up her skirts and pulls out a grenade. She holds it up and removes the pin. A blinding white light shines behind her. A short, loud blast is heard. The light fades.*)

GAURAUD: She'd had that grenade strapped to her all along. (*Beat.*) Took out four officers.

(*George sits down, taking in the news.*)

We will say a prayer for her at mass tomorrow.

GEORGE: Perhaps we should lay low for a while.

GAURAUD: Perhaps.

(*Lighting shift.*)

GEORGE: But we didn't.

REYNOLDS: How come?

GEORGE: There was still work to be done. Orders kept coming in from London and… It wasn't long after that I was picked up myself.

REYNOLDS: How long?

GEORGE: A few weeks maybe?

REYNOLDS: So they were on to you?

GEORGE: No, no… They were casting a wide net. Arresting large groups of citizens all at once. Herding them into the back of a truck and… Sometimes you saw them again. Sometimes you didn't.

REYNOLDS: They wouldn't just execute everyone?

GEORGE: Some were released and… some were killed… It was arbitrary. This man lives. That child dies. (*Beat.*) Maybe they took pity on some. I really don't know. Perhaps that was the whole point. You never really knew.

REYNOLDS: What was going through your mind when they picked you up?

GEORGE: Stay in character. My identity was my protection.

REYNOLDS: You weren't scared?

GEORGE: I don't remember. It was still just a job.

REYNOLDS: So you were rounded up on the street…

GEORGE: A dozen of us, yes. Men and women.

REYNOLDS: Did anyone try to run?

GEORGE: Armand. Fifteen year old boy. He worked for us. (*Beat.*) They put a bullet through the back of his head. Rest of us were shoved on to the truck. Like cattle.

REYNOLDS: Where did they take you?

GEORGE: An old veterinary hospital in Saint Lo.

(*Blackout.*)

SCENE FIFTEEN

(*A square of light appears centre stage. George is pushed into it.*)

GEORGE: Cells had been constructed out of the stables.

REYNOLDS: What size?

GEORGE: Maybe… four and a half by three feet? I could only lie down if I drew my knees up to my chest.

(*Echoed sounds of people screaming and crying filters in.*)

There were vents in the stalls to heat the horses. They blasted us with hot air for two hours. I lay there sweating like I had a fever. Then they dropped the temperature rapidly.

REYNOLDS: Why?

GEORGE: Extreme heat followed by extreme cold… It can break a man very quickly.

REYNOLDS: Any food or water?

GEORGE: A slice of stale bread and a small ration of water.

(*The screaming and crying intensifies.*)

It went on like this for four days until…

(*The sound of a large metal door opening is heard. A German Major grabs George and pulls him out of the cell. A Gestapo agent enters and looks George up and down.*)

MAJOR: Wer ist der Anführer des Widerstands in Torigni? [Who is the leader of the Resistance in Torigni?]

(*George doesn't respond.*)

Wer ist der Anführer des Widerstands in Torigni?! [Who is the leader of the Resistance in Torigni?!]

(*The agent punches George. A loud cracking sound is heard as he crumples to the ground. Blood pours from his nose.*)

Sag uns die Wahrheit, du Schwein! [Tell us the truth, you pig!]

GEORGE: Je ne comprends pas. [I do not understand.]

(*The Major drags George over to a table and places his fingers in a vice.*)

GESTAPO: I remember you from the gas station. You're the poor idiot.

GEORGE: I don't… I don't remember.

MAJOR: Who blew up the bridge at Saint-Lo?

GEORGE: What bridge?

GESTAPO: Do you know what we do with people like you in Germany?

MAJOR: Who is helping the English pilots?

GEORGE: I don't know.

(*The Gestapo agent and the Major look at each other. The Major twists the vice down, crushing George's finger.*)

MAJOR: Who is in the Resistance in your village?

(*George shakes his head. The Major kicks George in the stomach, he crumples and falls. His finger snaps, still in the vice. George wails. The Gestapo agent releases the vice and George looks down at his broken finger.*)

GESTAPO: We have more questions. You have more fingers.

(*The Major grabs George and straps him into a chair. His head is tied back against a tall post and his mouth is forced open with a*

steel appliance. The Major places a kettle of water on a glowing red burner.)

MAJOR: You will answer my questions.

(*The Gestapo agent puts a pencil in George's hand and a piece of paper beneath.*)

GESTAPO: Give me the names of the Resistance in Torigni.

(*The water boils. The kettle whistles.*)

MAJOR: Names! We want names!

GESTAPO: People like you… You are a social disease. Infecting society. I pity you. I shouldn't but I do. A flaw in my character, I suppose.

(*George drops the pencil. The Major grabs the kettle and lifts it over George's mouth to pour it as the lights snap to black. Lighting shift. George is lying on the ground in his cell. Reynolds appears out of the blackness.*)

REYNOLDS: What were you thinking?

GEORGE: It was just… pain. (*Beat.*) They left me for two days. I knew they were going to come back for me and that I had to keep my… my real self… buried inside. Sometimes… Thoughts of Muriel would creep in. But I… I had to force her out of my head. (*Beat.*) But a man doesn't really know what his breaking point is until he's truly tested and… There would be more.

REYNOLDS: But you never revealed any information?

GEORGE: No.

(*George removes his hat and pulls the razorblade out of the brim.*)

The fear came not from what they had done but from what they were capable of. (*Beat.*) I held it for hours…

REYNOLDS: The razorblade?

GEORGE: One quick slit up the length of my arm… It would… It would all be over. (*Beat.*) Then I remembered… You can't have guts without God.

(*George throws away the razorblade.*)

I knew, in that moment, there was nothing to fear.

REYNOLDS: Why?

GEORGE: What could they do to me? Break my bones. Burn me. Cut me. Physical pain is nothing compared to the power of faith. It was the only weapon I had and the only one I would need. At that moment, I *knew* I would never talk. Fear is no match for faith.

(*George is pulled out of his cell again. The Major straps him facedown to a table and produces a syringe attached to an enema tube. He splits the back of his pants. The Gestapo agent watches.*)

MAJOR: A small dose.

(*The Major gives him an enema with the liquid in the syringe. George makes an unintelligible noise.*)

GESTAPO: Again.

(*The Major gives him a second dose. George struggles.*)

That's acid burning your guts from the inside out. Must be incredibly uncomfortable. All you have to do is give us the names of the members in the local resistance and it will be over.

(*The Major unshackles his unbroken hand and gives him a pencil and a piece of paper. George writes on the paper. The Major picks it up and stares at it for a moment before reading.*)

MAJOR: "Je ne sais pas."

(*The Major throws the piece of paper on the ground, nods to the Gestapo agent and exits. The Gestapo agent unshackles George and drags him off the table. He pulls him up to his knees, produces a luger and aims it at him. George looks up at the agent, he hesitates. George puts his hands together, praying silently. The Gestapo agent exits. A door creaks open, allowing a shaft of light to split the dark. After a moment, Reynolds appears.*)

REYNOLDS: Why did they spare you?

GEORGE: God spared me.

REYNOLDS: But they just let you walk out the door?

GEORGE: I couldn't walk. I crawled into the street. It was dark. The road was wet. And I… I struggled to pull myself but… A man found me and took me in. He got me a safe ride back to Torigni. Père Gauraud hid me in the basement of the church. He took care of me, he prayed for me and I healed.

REYNOLDS: What about the damage from the boiling water? And the acid?

GEORGE: When I got back to London, plastic surgeons were able to repair much of the scar tissue around my mouth and throat. If you look closely you can see a faint outline of where I was burned here around my mouth. The acid was… (*Beat.*) There was

no lasting damage but at the time it… (*Beat.*) I can use words like torture or humiliation but… there's really no way to describe it.

(*Reynolds nods. Lighting shift.*)

SCENE SIXTEEN

GEORGE: After a few weeks recovery, Père Gauraud came down to the basement. He said –

GAURAUD: They want exact specifications of bridges in the area. Do you know what this means?

GEORGE: They're building replacement bridges.

GAURAUD: For the ones the Germans will destroy after their retreat! (*Beat.*) They're coming.

GEORGE: We don't know that.

GAURAUD: They're definitely coming.

GEORGE: How can you be certain?

GAURAUD: The German soldiers, if you look at them… they are all very old or very young. The best have left.

GEORGE: To where?

GAURAUD: The North Coast.

GEORGE: They're preparing to land on the beach?

GAURAUD: I think so.

GEORGE: But we can't be sure.

GAURAUD: I believe it.

GEORGE: And then it happened… June 6th, 1944. Père Gauraud was right.

(*Lighting shift. Père Gauraud produces an envelope.*)

GAURAUD: New orders.

(*He hands the envelope to George, embraces him and offers a kiss on each cheek.*)

I will remember you in my prayers. Au revoir.

(*Père Gauraud exits. George opens the envelope.*)

GEORGE: I followed the road north out of town. About four miles. There was an old barn. I fell asleep inside and woke in the middle of the night to the faint whine of an airplane motor.

(*Lighting shift. The sound of an airplane flies in underneath.*)

I saw it in the adjacent field. A single-engine plane circled once before landing.

REYNOLDS: And you vanished from the village?

GEORGE: Like a thief in the night. (*Beat.*) I arrived at an airfield in Portsmouth and they whisked me off to London. The Savoy Hotel.

REYNOLDS: And that was your extraction?

GEORGE: Yes. France had been liberated but it wasn't over. The day after I returned, I was interviewed by a corporal. Documented everything I'd done over the last few years.

REYNOLDS: He was S.O.E.?

GEORGE: Yes.

REYNOLDS: Would they still have that file on you?

(*Pause.*)

GEORGE: I'm not sure. Perhaps it's still classified.

(*Reynolds makes a note. Lighting shift.*)

SCENE SEVENTEEN

(*London, England. 1944.*)

GEORGE: Then Colonel Baker found me in the Savoy. I was standing at the window, looking out over the Thames, when he snuck up behind me and –

BAKER: Made it back in one piece, have you?

GEORGE: More or less.

(*They shake hands.*)

Good to see you, sir.

BAKER: Pleasure's mine.

GEORGE: How are things going?

BAKER: Normandy's secured. Got a foothold on the continent. Can't let up now, my boy!

GEORGE: No, sir.

BAKER: We'll push them all the way back to Berlin.

GEORGE: Yes, sir.

BAKER: We've arranged for a doctor to see you. Plastic surgeon. He'll fix you up. You'll be right as rain.

GEORGE: Thank you, sir.

BAKER: I read your debrief. You've done use proud, George. I mean that.

GEORGE: Thank you, sir.

BAKER: Good show! I imagine you must be getting sick of all this lying about.

GEORGE: Can't get used to it, sir.

BAKER: That's because you're a man of action! Like me! Chin up, old boy. You'll be home in no time.

(*George salutes Col. Baker. Lighting shift.*)

GEORGE: Two surgeries after that. One to repair the soft tissue in my mouth and esophagus. The other to fix my nose. I spent the next few months reading in a hospital bed. (*Beat.*) Couldn't sleep much. I'd get these… I had nightmares. And also… (*Beat.*) It was strange, I uh… Colonel Baker was right. I did miss being out in the field. (*Beat.*) Do you mind if we take a break?

REYNOLDS: Not at all. I'll type this up. We can review it tomorrow.

(*Lighting shift.*)

SCENE EIGHTEEN

(*A telephone appears beside George. He picks up the receiver.*)

GEORGE: Hello, operator? I, um… I'd like to make a collect call to…

(*He sighs and puts the receiver back. Lighting shift.*)

SCENE NINETEEN

(*Reynolds' office.*)

REYNOLDS: When it came to an end in Europe, how did you hear about it?

GEORGE: A nurse wheeled the wireless into the hall and everyone on our floor gathered round. We listened to Churchill's radio address. After everything we'd… Finally, it was over.

REYNOLDS: Then back to Canada?

GEORGE: Not right away. I was required to spend another few months in, um… in a psychiatric hospital. There was a doctor who visited me regularly.

REYNOLDS: Did his visits help?

GEORGE: Eventually… the nightmares stopped and…

REYNOLDS: Did you have any contact with your wife by this point?

GEORGE: I was able to finally write her a letter but my mission was classified.

REYNOLDS: It's not classified anymore?

GEORGE: Not exactly… S.O.E. was dissolved after the war.

REYNOLDS: They must have files on you somewhere.

GEORGE: I dare say they do.

REYNOLDS: If I were to contact British Intelligence, what would the official line be on you?

GEORGE: That's an excellent question. To be honest, I've never asked.

(*Reynolds pauses for a moment and makes a note.*)

REYNOLDS: Would you mind if I came to Canada?

GEORGE: Why would you, um… I don't mind at all but… Do you need to?

REYNOLDS: I'd like to close with a brief chapter about what your life is like now. And it might be worthwhile to get your wife's perspective.

GEORGE: My wife's?

REYNOLDS: What's it like to be married to a hero and all that.

GEORGE: I see.

REYNOLDS: Or your boys… What does it feel like to be the son of "the man who wouldn't talk"?

GEORGE: I, uh… Well, I don't mind if you want to come to Calgary and, uh… follow up but Muriel and the boys, that's um… Well, I'll call them tonight and –

REYNOLDS: Great! (*Beat.*) Can you tell me about going home? What was that like?

GEORGE: Landed in Norfolk, Virginia and took a train north. Muriel was waiting for me in Winnipeg.

REYNOLDS: And she didn't know what you'd done this whole time?

GEORGE: No.

REYNOLDS: What did she say when she saw you?

(*Lighting shift.*)

SCENE TWENTY

(*Winnipeg, Manitoba. 1945. A train whistle. The sounds of a bustling train station fade in underneath. Muriel enters through a haze, searching for George. He stands, sees her and waves.*)

MURIEL: George!

(*He rushes to her, taking her in his arms. They kiss and hold each for a long time. She pulls back and looks at him.*)

Your hair. It's all white.

GEORGE: Must be that English sun.

(*She smiles. They embrace again.*)

MURIEL: You're home, George. (*Beat.*) You're home.

(*Blackout.*)

SCENE TWENTY-ONE

(*A telephone rings in the dark. Offices of the Calgary Herald. November, 1953. Lights up revealing a reporter, Doug Collins, at his desk. He answers the phone.*)

COLLINS: Doug Collins. (*Beat.*) Yes, sir. (*Beat.*) Is that right? (*Beat.*) No, I haven't heard of it. *The Man Who Wouldn't Talk,* eh? (*Beat.*) No. No, I'll take a look at it. (*Beat.*) I'll find the article.

(*He hangs up the phone and looks at his notes.*)

George DuPre?

(*Blackout.*)

ACT TWO

SCENE TWENTY-TWO

(*Calgary, Alberta. June, 1953. As the lights slowly fade up on the DuPre home, George enters with his suitcase. Muriel enters from the kitchen, drying her hands on her apron. She stops short when she sees George. They stare at each other for a moment.*)

MURIEL: You're home.

(*He smiles at her.*)

How was your flight?

GEORGE: Fine.

(*George takes off his coat. Muriel goes to help him.*)

It's alright, Muriel. I can do it.

MURIEL: I know you can. I was only –

GEORGE: Don't have to fuss over me.

MURIEL: I wasn't *fussing* over you, George. I'm –

(*Pause. She sighs heavily, takes his coat and hangs it up. They stare at each other again.*)

GEORGE: It's good to see you.

MURIEL: You too.

(*After a moment, she kisses him on the cheek. He tries to hold her but she pulls away.*)

Something to drink?

GEORGE: No, thank you. Where are the boys?

MURIEL: Out.

GEORGE: Out where?

MURIEL: With that little… what's-his-name down the street.

GEORGE: Ah. Good ol' what's-his-name.

MURIEL: You're sure you don't want something to drink before dinner?

GEORGE: No, I'm fine. (*Beat.*) Thank you.

(*George sighs and sits on the couch. Muriel stands and stares at him, waiting.*)

MURIEL: Well?

GEORGE: Well what?

MURIEL: What's happening with the article?

GEORGE: He'll present it to his editor at Reader's Digest.

MURIEL: And then?

GEORGE: And then… we'll see.

MURIEL: What does that mean?

GEORGE: It means we'll see.

MURIEL: But what happens after / that?

GEORGE: I don't know. Maybe they love it. Maybe it gets turned into a book like Quent said and –

MURIEL: Quent?

GEORGE: He's a nice man, Muriel.

MURIEL: He's "Quent" now is he?

GEORGE: That's what he told me to call him. (*Beat.*) He's quite witty.

MURIEL: Is he?

GEORGE: Knows Dorothy Parker.

MURIEL: Oh, how lovely.

GEORGE: Dottie, he calls her.

MURIEL: Well, I'm glad you had a nice time in New York with Quent and Dottie.

(*Pause.*)

GEORGE: Muriel.

(*She stares at him for a moment.*)

Actually we were in Bedford most of the time. With Ginny, his wife.

MURIEL: Wonderful.

GEORGE: It *was* wonderful.

(*A silence lingers between them.*)

Speaking of Ginny…

(*George bolts from the couch, grabs his suitcase and flips it open.*)

MURIEL: What are you –

(*George pulls several boys' shirts out of the suitcase and holds them up for Muriel.*)

GEORGE: They're from Ginny.

MURIEL: She gave us these?

GEORGE: For the boys. (*Beat.*) They're nice people, Muriel.

(*George hands Muriel the shirts and plunges back into the suitcase. He produces a small statuette of the Empire State Building and holds it up for her.*)

The Empire State Building.

MURIEL: Thank you, yes, I know what it is.

GEORGE: Quentin took me there, even though he's afraid of heights. I have postcards for the boys as well. And then we went to Toots Shor's restaurant, Times Square and the Museum of Natural History.

MURIEL: I'm glad you enjoyed yourself.

GEORGE: Spent the rest of the week at his office in Bedford. I told him my story and he… He kept asking me questions and he… He *listened* to me, Muriel. Just like when I was talking to the Boy Scouts and –

MURIEL: *I* listen to you!

GEORGE: Of course you do but –

MURIEL: And down at the Canukeena Club… *They* listen to you.

GEORGE: I know they do / but –

MURIEL: Suddenly that's not good enough for you? (*Beat.*) Things around here are a bit too humble for you? Well, I'm sorry Calgary isn't as exciting as New York!

GEORGE: I never said… (*Beat.*) Why are you / being like this?

MURIEL: How much money are you collecting from –

GEORGE: Money?

MURIEL: How much are you –

GEORGE: I never asked for a penny!

MURIEL: No?

GEORGE: I told him… I said, "I wouldn't want to make a financial profit off this. Can you make the payment direct to the Canadian Boy Scouts?"

MURIEL: You said that?

GEORGE: No word of a lie. And that's what they're doing, if DeWitt Wallace gives the green light. (*Beat.*) He's coming to Calgary.

MURIEL: Who is?

GEORGE: Quentin Reynolds. Said I'd pick him up at the airport. He's staying at the Palliser. (*Beat.*) I thought you could come with me and we'd have dinner there.

(*Muriel freezes for a moment.*)

What do you think?

(*She doesn't respond.*)

Or we could have dinner here. I just thought it would be a nice treat for us to / go down and –

MURIEL: The boys are at my mother's!

(*Pause.*)

GEORGE: You sent them to your mother's?

MURIEL: Last night.

GEORGE: Why?

MURIEL: Because they're… (*Beat.*) I don't want them getting mixed up in this.

GEORGE: But Muriel, I –

MURIEL: And I don't want any part of it either!

GEORGE: Muriel. (*Beat.*) Don't you think you're being a little…

MURIEL: A little what?

GEORGE: Unreasonable.

MURIEL: I told you from the beginning. I told you I didn't want to be involved! But you didn't listen. And now you're… And now…

GEORGE: There's nothing to… It's… Look, this is… It's a good thing, Muriel!

MURIEL: Is it?

GEORGE: Think of how many people's lives I could change.

(*Pause. They stare at each other for a moment. Muriel grabs the suitcase.*)

If people read my story and… and find faith or… What I'm saying is, if it… If it *helps* people, Muriel… If it brings them closer to God and strengthens their belief, how can that –

(*She dumps George's clothes out on to the couch.*)

What are you doing? That's my…

(*She exits to the bedroom.*)

Where are you going?

(*George doesn't follow her into the bedroom. He turns around and goes back into the living room. He looks through his clothes on the couch and finds the postcards. George stares at one of them for a moment. Muriel enters from the bedroom with the packed suitcase.*)

Can we talk about this? Please?

MURIEL: I have nothing more to say.

GEORGE: Can you call me when you get to your mother's?

(*She puts on a coat, a hat and shoes. George watches her silently. She picks up the suitcase and looks at George. He holds out the postcards to her.*)

For the boys.

(*She exits. George listens to the silence for a moment. He looks down at the postcards and back to the door. Blackout.*)

SCENE TWENTY-THREE

(*Lights up on The Canukeena Club. Calgary, Alberta. August, 1953. Images of World War II posters slowly fill the upstage wall. DuPre and Reynolds sit at the bar. Reynolds drinking scotch and DuPre drinking a glass bottle of Coca-Cola. DuPre is going through a manuscript.*)

REYNOLDS: What do you think?

GEORGE: It's all here. What did Wallace say?

REYNOLDS: Are you kiddin'? He loves it! Obviously it's too long for the *Digest.* But Bennett Cerf over at Random House? He's on board to publish it as a book, assuming it passes your inspection.

GEORGE: So, it's… It's all happening.

REYNOLDS: Didn't I tell you? People love war stories. Can you sign the last page for me?

GEORGE: Oh, alright. Why, um… What am I signing it for?

REYNOLDS: Just to show that you've read it and I haven't changed anything or altered the facts in any way.

GEORGE: Ah. Yes, I see.

(*George flips to the last page of the manuscript and signs.*)

REYNOLDS: I have to admit, George, it's good to get away for a while.

GEORGE: Is it?

REYNOLDS: This trial with Pegler and the Hearst Corporation… it's just that it's –

GEORGE: Weighing on you?

REYNOLDS: That's an understatement.

GEORGE: Well, the things they said about you were terrible.

REYNOLDS: Slander, George! Complete slander! Libel comes on horseback but leaves by foot.

GEORGE: Why would he, um… Why would he invent such obvious lies about you?

REYNOLDS: Pegler? Because he's a hack, that's why! He tried to destroy me! And the only way to… This trial will clear my name. Let's just leave it at that.

GEORGE: Alright.

(*Beat.*)

REYNOLDS: I'd rather not, you know, get into the details of the trial before –

GEORGE: Of course.

REYNOLDS: You understand.

GEORGE: Perfectly.

(*Beat.*)

REYNOLDS: All I meant was it's nice to forget about it for a while.

GEORGE: We don't have to talk about it.

(*Pause.*)

REYNOLDS: It's just that the things he said are completely unsubstantiated! He called me an "absentee war correspondent"! I've risked life and limb as a journalist! I was

there during the London Blitz and the Dieppe Raid and… and I was in the Libyan Desert! Does that sound like an "absentee war correspondent" to you?!

GEORGE: Not at all.

REYNOLDS: Ed Murrow! I worked with Ed Murrow, God damn it!

GEORGE: I understand you're upset –

REYNOLDS: You're God damn right I'm upset!

GEORGE: But could I ask you to not take the Lord's name in vain?

(*Pause.*)

REYNOLDS: You're a good man, George.

GEORGE: I don't know how this is all going to turn out. All I know, Quent, is that watching you work at your typewriter is like watching Rubenstein play the piano. And you knew more about me when the week was over than I knew about myself.

(*Reynolds sighs then slaps George on the back.*)

REYNOLDS: Thank you, George. That means a lot. If Wallace hadn't let me write this, I don't know where I'd… Nobody would hire me after the things they said.

(*Ernest crosses through the Canukeena Club, beer in hand.*)

ERNEST: George!

GEORGE: Ernest!

(*Ernest puts down his beer and they shake hands. Reynolds looks on with interest.*)

ERNEST: Haven't seen you around lately. You in hiding?

GEORGE: No, no… I was in New York, actually.

ERNEST: What were you doing there?

GEORGE: Well, I was… oh, um… Ernie, this is Mr. Quentin Reynolds. I don't know if you've heard of –

ERNEST: The author?!

REYNOLDS: Hello.

ERNEST: Pleasure to meet you, Mr. Reynolds.

REYNOLDS: Likewise.

ERNEST: Ernest Marshall, sir. I've read some of your books.

REYNOLDS: Is that right?

ERNEST: I'm a big fan!

REYNOLDS: See? Now here's a man with good taste!

ERNEST: What are you doing in Calgary?

REYNOLDS: Research. I'm writing a book on George and –

ERNEST: Well don't that beat all! You're writing a book about our George, eh?

GEORGE: About my, um… My time in the war.

ERNEST: High time he got the recognition he deserves!

REYNOLDS: I'd say so. You were there as well, son?

ERNEST: Nothing like what George here did but yes. That's where I lost my…

(*Ernest motions to his missing arm.*)

REYNOLDS: Who were you with?

ERNEST: Calgary Highlanders, sir. I didn't do anything special. Wasn't even there on June 6th. But we were in the Normandy Campaign.

REYNOLDS: Care to join us?

ERNEST: Oh, I wouldn't want to impose…

REYNOLDS: Nonsense! Any friend of George's is a friend of mine!

(*Ernest sits at the table.*)

ERNEST: We were just South of Caen in France. That's where I lost it. Not too far from where you were stationed in Saint Lo, right George?

GEORGE: Yes, that's… In Saint Lo.

ERNEST: Imagine that, eh? Both of us over there at the same time only a few miles apart. I wish it were a better story… How I lost it, I mean. Guys around here, they always like to swap stories, eh?

REYNOLDS: Tell me.

ERNEST: Oh, I don't think you'd be interested in hearing mine.

REYNOLDS: Always interested in a good war story, son.

ERNEST: Alright, well… You twisted my…

(*Reynolds laughs. George rolls his eyes.*)

GEORGE: Tells that joke any chance he gets.

ERNEST: Our orders were to take this hill south of Caen. Hill 67 it was called.

REYNOLDS: When was this?

ERNEST: July 17th in '44. Commanded by Lieutenant Colonel MacLauchlan. I think he was trying to make a point or something, eh? But he actually had our pipers leading the battalion.

REYNOLDS: Sorry… "Pipers"?

ERNEST: Bagpipes. We are the Calgary Highlanders after all. Anyway, he may as well have waved around a big banner saying "We're over here!" Not the most discreet way to march into Europe but it was a hell of show. And it's a straight road up to Hill

67, eh? So we're marching along and there's the tanks and the infantry and these damn pipers leading the parade.

REYNOLDS: Son of a…

ERNEST: Now you probably already know this but the Germans don't like to keep a strong frontline infantry. Instead what they'd do is they'd have a small force upfront and the bulk of their infantry in the rear, eh? That way the smaller force would have a secure fallback position and the counterattack would be poised to strike fast and hard.

REYNOLDS: Right.

ERNEST: Unfortunately, MacLauchlan wasn't as learned a man as yourself. So we take the hill and secure it and we're pretty full of ourselves thinkin' we'd scared them all back to Berlin. And this is our first real test in the field, eh? We couldn't've known any better but… That's when they retaliated. Mortar rounds and shellfire. We're stuck up there on the top of this hill and our orders are to secure it no matter what the cost so… All you can do is… All you can do is dig your slit trench and hold the line. (*Beat.*) They rained hell down on us all night and we…

(*Ernest stops for a moment.*)

REYNOLDS: It's alright, son.

ERNEST: You're terrified. Scared beyond… Anyone who says different is… Everyone's trying to pretend like they're not. They don't want to show it but… Sometime during the night they let up for a short while and I think… I thought maybe I'd poke my head up outta the trench and try to see if they were starting to advance so I pull myself up a bit and… That's when I hear it come screaming in from the

dark. We called ‘em “Moaning Minnies” ‘cause of the sound they make. Damn thing lands a few feet in front of me and… and… I don’t remember too much after that though they said… Guess I’m lucky I didn’t bleed to death up on that hill, eh? Lord knows enough of our boys did. (*Beat.*) Though I’m sure glad those pipers were there that night. They were the ones that dragged me back to the field station.

(*Reynolds shakes his head and George sits silently staring off into the distance. After a moment, Reynolds breaks the silence.*)

REYNOLDS: You’ve made a great sacrifice. Thank you.

ERNEST: Barely got to do anything. Only just arrived in France and they were sending me home again. (*Beat.*) But like I said, nothing like what our George here did, eh?

REYNOLDS: I must’ve interviewed hundreds of soldiers; if I’ve learned one thing it’s that every part played by every soldier, no matter how small, helped us to victory.

ERNEST: Thank you, sir. That means a lot coming from you. Though it’s not really enough for a book.

REYNOLDS: It’s a hell of a good story.

(*They both drink. Reynolds notices George is staring off into the distance.*)

Hey George. (*Beat.*) George! You feelin’ alright?

GEORGE: Sorry? Oh, yes. I’m fine. No, I was… I’m fine.

REYNOLDS: I was thinking maybe I could interview Muriel this evening.

GEORGE: Muriel? Oh, she’s um… I’m sure she’d love that but –

REYNOLDS: I look forward to meeting her.

GEORGE: But, um… she's gone out of town.

REYNOLDS: Where'd she go?

GEORGE: Took the boys off to a camp on the west coast. A holiday.

REYNOLDS: You didn't tell her I was coming?

GEORGE: They'd had this planned for months. I, um… I forgot all about it.

REYNOLDS: Maybe I can call her. I still want some personal touches.

GEORGE: They're way up in the mountains. No phone up there.

REYNOLDS: Oh. That's a shame.

GEORGE: They won't be back for a while but maybe I'll have her call you when you get back to New York?

REYNOLDS: Alright then.

(*Reynolds pulls out his notebook.*)

So, listen… I contacted British Secret Service.

GEORGE: You did? What did they say?

REYNOLDS: They could neither confirm nor deny any of the activities of their agents.

GEORGE: Of course. They're obligated to say that.

ERNEST: How come?

GEORGE: Security. My file's been closed and classified. It'll be another forty odd years before they can release it to the public.

REYNOLDS: I see. (*Beat.*) So, the schedule for the next few days: I have an appointment with Nathan E. Tanner tomorrow.

GEORGE: Tanner? Why do you need to speak with him?

REYNOLDS: Just background, George. Have to fill in the details for the last chapter. Remind me again of your relationship to him.

GEORGE: I used to work for him. Former provincial Minister for mines, minerals and forestry. Retired last year.

REYNOLDS: Right.

GEORGE: Who, um… Who else are you meeting with?

REYNOLDS: In the afternoon, I'll be meeting with the editor of the *Calgary Herald.* He's interested in serializing the book in the paper.

ERNEST: Hot damn, George! You've hit the big time now, eh? You're gonna be famous!

GEORGE: I, um… I suppose so.

(*Blackout.*)

SCENE TWENTY-FOUR[1]

(*Lights up on the offices of The Calgary Herald Thursday, November 12th 1953. We see Doug Collins in his office, reviewing photographs. There is a light knock at the door. He stuffs the photographs into a file folder, puts on his suit jacket and opens the door to reveal George DuPre.*)

COLLINS: You must be George.

GEORGE: Yes. And, uh… and you are?

COLLINS: Doug Collins. Come in, please.

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[1] This scene uses quotes from an article, "Calgarian Admits Secret Service Story Was Fabrication; George DuPre Tells Calgary Herald He Was Never in France As Spy," written by Doug Collins and published in the Calgary Herald on 13 November 1953.

(*George steps into the office. They shake hands.*)

Pleasure to meet you.

GEORGE: Nice to meet you, too.

COLLINS: Especially after reading about everything you did for the war effort.

GEORGE: Only doing what any good Christian would have done.

COLLINS: Please, have a seat.

(*George sits.*)

I appreciate you coming in like this on short notice.

GEORGE: Yes, I uh… I wasn't quite sure, um… What's this about?

COLLINS: I've been assigned to do a follow-up article.

GEORGE: Ah.

COLLINS: What with the book and all being so popular, we thought people would be interested in reading about how you're doing.

GEORGE: I see.

COLLINS: Would you mind if I interview you for tomorrow's edition? In connection with the book by Mr. Reynolds?

GEORGE: Not at all. If it's going to help me spread my message to the public then –

COLLINS: And what is your message?

GEORGE: You can't have guts without God.

COLLINS: Ah. Yes, I recall in a previous article it was mentioned that you spent some time touring to Boy Scout meetings.

GEORGE: Who better to share my story with than the next generation of honest Christians?

COLLINS: Quite. (*Beat.*) I'm sure some of these questions are repetitive for you. Forgive me. It's a new story to me and I'm trying to get all the facts straight.

GEORGE: Yes, of course.

COLLINS: You have to get your facts straight before you go to print, you know. Some say, "Never let the facts get in the way of a good story." Never been *my* motto.

GEORGE: No?

COLLINS: A story is subjective but facts are irrefutable.

(*George smiles, clears his throat and nods in agreement. Collins looks through the file.*)

I've been going over some of the recent news articles. Actually, this is rather embarrassing, but… I wonder if you might sign a copy of Reader's Digest for me? With your article in it?

GEORGE: Certainly.

(*Collins hands George a pen. He signs.*)

COLLINS: You've earned a lot of attention these last few months.

GEORGE: Yes. It was all rather unexpected.

COLLINS: How are you dealing with it?

GEORGE: I didn't do my part in the war for any sort of notoriety or –

COLLINS: Of course not.

GEORGE: But it's an honor to be recognized for it.

COLLINS: I'm sure it is.

GEORGE: It was a bit overwhelming, at first, as I'm sure you can imagine. My wife and I, Muriel… we, um… Well, we talked it over in the beginning when Quentin Reynolds phoned me out of the blue and –

COLLINS: Quentin Reynolds is the author of the book based on your part in the war.

GEORGE: That's right. "The Man Who Wouldn't Talk." Originally, he wanted to call it "The Gentle Spy" but that sort of thing isn't really up to me.

COLLINS: I see. (*Beat.*) And sorry, you talked it over with your wife…?

GEORGE: Yes, well, we weren't really sure if it was the right thing to do. To come out about it, I mean. The concern was that it might seem a little…

COLLINS: Fulsome?

GEORGE: I wouldn't want people to think I was only… That I was seeking attention.

COLLINS: No, no. (*Beat.*) So, you were with Special Operations Executive, which directed all British clandestine activities in Europe?

GEORGE: Yes, that's right.

COLLINS: And how long were you in France?

GEORGE: 1940 to '44.

COLLINS: Working with the French Resistance the entire time?

GEORGE: That's correct, yes.

COLLINS: And the identity you assumed was…

GEORGE: Pierre Touchette.

COLLINS: Right. A sort of… "village idiot"?

GEORGE: You could say that.

(*Pause.*)

COLLINS: You know I was connected with Intelligence once myself.

GEORGE: Is that right?

COLLINS: Captured at Dunkirk in 1940. Now that I think about it, I may have come across you some time. Which section of S.O.E. were you with?

GEORGE: Which section?

COLLINS: A, B, or C?

GEORGE: B Section.

COLLINS: Oh! Then you must have known dear old Colonel Kitchingham, who was in charge of that lot at the time.

GEORGE: Yes, indeed. I knew him well.

COLLINS: He was a grand old chap, wasn't he?

GEORGE: I had the pleasure of meeting him on several occasions.

COLLINS: Is that right? And of course you must have known that silly old fool John Cooke, who was liaison between S.O.E. and the Royal Air Force?

GEORGE: Certainly! What a character he was.

COLLINS: I suppose you did your para-dropping course at the school in Wimborne, Dorset?

GEORGE: That's right.

COLLINS: Those instructors were rotten so-and-so's, weren't they? They never knew what the chaps were in for and always put them through a rough time.

GEORGE: I lost a few pounds there myself.

COLLINS: We all did, didn't we? (*Beat.*) I wonder if you might be able to walk me through this… You were dropped by a Lysander aircraft within 100 paces or so of the farm in which you were to make your first contact with French resistance.

GEORGE: Madeline Thibaut.

COLLINS: And your objective was to rescue Allied flyers that had been shot down.

GEORGE: Correct.

COLLINS: You were captured by the Gestapo, tortured but refused to talk and after…

(*Collins checks the file on his desk.*)

After eight or nine days –

GEORGE: I can't be sure. I know it was more than a week.

COLLINS: Mmmm. After eight or nine days you were released.

GEORGE: God spared me.

COLLINS: A *fantastic* story, Mr. DuPre.

GEORGE: Yes, well… When I close my eyes I can put myself right back there.

COLLINS: Is that so?

GEORGE: I, um… well, yes…

COLLINS: Still seems like it was yesterday?

GEORGE: At times.

(*Collins stares at George long and hard for a moment, until George becomes uncomfortable and looks away. George stands.*)

Will that be all, Mr. Collins? You just needed to check the facts or –

COLLINS: That will be all, Mr. DuPre.

GEORGE: Well, um… It was a pleasure to meet you.

(*George extends his hand over the desk to Collins. They shake. George turns, grabs his coat and reaches for the doorknob.*)

COLLINS: Sorry, one more question before you go –

GEORGE: Yes?

COLLINS: Are you quite certain it was a *Lysander* aircraft?

GEORGE: Yes.

COLLINS: You're positive about that?

GEORGE: Absolutely.

COLLINS: Alright.

(*George turns to the door again and grabs the handle.*)

Did it not strike you as *odd* that you were dropped from a Lysander aircraft?

(*George freezes for a moment and stares at Collins.*)

GEORGE: How do you mean?

COLLINS: Lysander aircraft were rarely used for para-drops, due to their small size. They were more commonly used for landing in selected areas with agents and supplies or taking people out for whom the chase was getting too hot, as it were.

GEORGE: Oh, yes. Um…

COLLINS: Para-drops were usually made from Hudsons or Halifaxes. (*Beat.*) As you know.

GEORGE: It would take one of our own to spot that detail but yes, you're right. It was highly unusual. Then again, this was not a typical mission.

COLLINS: No, I suppose it wasn't.

(*George smiles and opens the door.*)

One last question, George.

(*George slowly closes the door and turns to Collins.*)

For the newspaper. The article's going to be published tomorrow and I just want to make sure I've got everything.

(*Beat.*)

GEORGE: Yes, of course.

COLLINS: You worked to smuggle downed flyers out to the English Channel for water pick-ups?

GEORGE: Yes.

COLLINS: Weren't water pick-ups too hazardous to justify the risk? It was my understanding that downed flyers had merely to contact French Resistance, which had grown so extensive that they could be smuggled from one contact to another via land routes to Spain. (*Beat.*) Or am I mistaken?

GEORGE: Well, no, you're not mistaken but –

COLLINS: On that note, you said you were in France from 1940?

GEORGE: Yes but –

COLLINS: May 1941 was when the first agents were dropped into the field and by December of that year there would've been only twenty S.O.E. men. (*Beat.*) How do you account for the discrepancy?

GEORGE: Well, it's, um… That's an interesting story, actually.

COLLINS: Is it?

GEORGE: Yes, it's um… um…

(*George pauses. Collins studies him.*)

COLLINS: Are you playing the part of Pierre Touchette again?

GEORGE: (*Laughing uncomfortably.*) No, no… I was only –

(*Collins reads from the file.*)

COLLINS: None of the twenty S.O.E. men that were dropped by December of ’41 had been briefed to work specifically on organizing escape routes for fliers. At that time there were precious few fliers to be rescued. It wasn’t until ‘43 that escape routes received much attention; even then they were strictly a secondary consideration to the primary task of espionage and sabotage.

(*George starts to crumple. He slowly sits in the chair, holding his hat and coat in his lap.*)

Speaking of Pierre Touchette, a missing local from Saint-Lo, whom you claim to have resembled… Wouldn’t everyone in the village have been interested in the sudden reappearance of such a person? Would he not have also been required to register his presence with the Gendarmerie? Registration would, in turn, have meant the Gestapo would have learned of your presence from the beginning. You would have immediately been subjected to interrogation. (*Beat.*) Not a very auspicious beginning, to say the least.

GEORGE: No, I… I suppose not… But –

COLLINS: And it seems unlikely you would have resembled the absent one so well as to deceive all the old ladies who would have known him from birth. You expect me to believe that no one would have recognized the subterfuge?

(*Collins starts to pace, almost as if he is talking to himself.*)

Villages are very conspicuous places, and for a stranger to walk through during the war was enough to set all the dogs barking and the curious staring! At least, that was my experience.

(*George looks up at Collins.*)

GEORGE: Are you finished?

COLLINS: Not even close. (*Beat.*) If I am to believe your version of being dropped, then you almost landed in the washtub of the woman who was to be your first contact. Normally, agents were not dropped so near to the first contact and the recognition would not be…

(*Collins checks the file again.*)

Something as hammy as "singing the Marseillaise." Perhaps in a Hollywood version of the activities of British Intelligence. Unfortunately, it bears little resemblance to reality.

GEORGE: May I say something?

COLLINS: Let's assume, for the sake of argument, that you *had* been arrested by the Gestapo in Saint Lo. It is incredibly *un*likely you would have been released in the space of eight or nine days, as described by Mr. Reynolds. Neither is it likely that you would've remained in Saint-Lo for such a period. Those suspected of espionage activities were shipped off to a concentration camp in Germany, proof or no proof. Before that, they were invariably moved to a large headquarters for detailed interrogation.

GEORGE: Please, my story it's… It's in the book and –

COLLINS: But I thought you were the man who *wouldn't* talk? (*Beat.*) Assuming you had in fact been arrested and released by the Gestapo, which according to Reader's Digest occurred in… (*Checking the file.*) 1943? London would never have allowed you to remain in the village for another year. You would've been flown out within forty-eight hours! Twenty-four if the weather was good. Your release

could only have meant one of two things… Either you had been recruited by the Gestapo to work for them or you'd been released in the hopes of leading them to a resistance group. (*Beat.*) But no agent ever worked in one village for four years, Mr. DuPre.

GEORGE: Why won't you let / me speak?

COLLINS: Mobility!

GEORGE: I have / something to say!

COLLINS: Safe houses!

GEORGE: Let me speak!

COLLINS: Go ahead!

(*Beat.*)

GEORGE: I… I…

COLLINS: Alternative cover identities were essential requisites of the agent's equipment! There is no mention of them / in your story!

GEORGE: I made it up! (*Beat.*) I made… I made it all up.

(*Pause.*)

COLLINS: Obviously. (*Beat.*) I have never heard of anyone called Kitchingham. Or Cooke. And the parachute training for S.O.E. was *not* carried out at Wimborne. Neither was there an A, a B or a C section. In the initial stages, the Western European Directorate of S.O.E. was commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Keswick and was divided into two parts: The French section was commanded by Lt. Col. Buckmaster. The Resistance Francaise was commanded by Captain and, later, Colonel Dismore in 1942. Though it was controlled by the British, it was mainly

concerned with the dispatch of arms and agents to resistance groups. The French section was more directly concerned with espionage, Mr. DuPre.

(*Collins reaches into the file and pulls out a photograph. He hands it to George.*)

This photograph was taken in Victoria, British Columbia in June of 1942.

GEORGE: Where did you get this?

COLLINS: It was delivered to our offices a few days ago by an R.C.A.F officer that read about you in the paper. (*Beat.*) And this is your signature…

(*Collins lifts up his copy of Reader's Digest.*)

A perfect match.

(*Pause.*)

How could you allow it to go so far, George?

GEORGE: Honestly… I don't… I don't know.

COLLINS: You don't?

GEORGE: I started telling people… just at parties…

COLLINS: When?

GEORGE: I wasn't, um… What I mean is… I wasn't trying to –

COLLINS: When was the first time?

GEORGE: It would've been in, um… '46… or maybe '47, I suppose.

COLLINS: But why, George?

GEORGE: I don't know, really. / I mean, it was –

COLLINS: Yes you do. You know why. Why would you fabricate all of this?

(*Pause.*)

GEORGE: I guess I… Well, I was… I was thirty-six when the war broke out… (*Beat.*) They said that I couldn't, um… That I was too old. I sat behind a desk at the end of the rat run, interviewing men as they came home. That was my job. Take down their statements. Write a report. Put it in a filing cabinet.

COLLINS: Why don't I give you a statement right now? How's that sound?

GEORGE: Please, I –

COLLINS: After being picked up at Dunkirk, I was sent to a POW camp just outside of Gleiwitz, which was no longer in Poland. This was due to Poland not existing as a country anymore. The other prisoners and I were working on the Adolf Hitler canal. That's actually what they called it. One night, Dick Parker – who, incidentally, happened to be thirty-five and still on active duty – he decides that we're going to escape or die trying. But the only way we can think of is by climbing into the thirty foot long latrine and coming out the sewer at the other end. So in we go. Clinging to the slippery, shit-covered crossbeam above us, we traverse the latrine and make it out in the middle of the night. We head for the train line and manage to scramble aboard an eastbound freight. That's when we're caught. And they decide to make an example of us so they drag us back to the camp in the morning and beat the living daylights out of us in front of everybody. We were ordered to strip naked and stand facing a wall out in the yard for twenty-four hours while guards stood behind us, bayonets fixed in case either of us moved a muscle. Sunday, September 8th 1940. My twentieth birthday. (*Beat.*) That was the first of ten escapes attempts I made throughout my time in the war. I

survived through Slovakia, Hungary and Romania all the way to the Black Sea. You want to tell stories about it? I *lived* it!

(*George sits silently in a broken heap.*)

GEORGE: I'm sorry.

COLLINS: Sorry you lied or sorry you got caught?

GEORGE: No, I'm… I only meant… I'm… I'm sorry.

COLLINS: Thought you could get away with it and no one would be any wiser?

(*Suddenly, Doug Collins and his office drops away as George is assaulted with a hot, white light. A powerful, buzzing noise begins and is layered with other military sounds: machine guns, men yelling and screaming, explosions, which morphs into an overwhelming cacophony. The cacophony ends abruptly. George is alone on stage. Stillness. Silence. Lighting shift.*)

SCENE TWENTY-FIVE

(*"Lili Marlene" plays, as if filtered through an old, tinny speaker. Madame Bouvot appears. George turns to her.*)

BOUVOT: Bonjour, Georges.

GEORGE: I've missed you.

BOUVOT: And I you. May I have this dance?

(*George extends his hand to her. She takes it. He pulls her close. They dance.*)

GEORGE: Where are we?

BOUVOT: You're in the hospital.

GEORGE: Why?

BOUVOT: You fainted.

GEORGE: I did? (*Beat.*) Where's Muriel?

BOUVOT: Do we have to talk about your wife, Georges?

GEORGE: No, I was just… concerned about her. Haven't seen her in a while and we –

BOUVOT: She's fine. Wherever she is.

GEORGE: And the boys? Do they know about…?

BOUVOT: Not yet.

GEORGE: What's going to happen now?

BOUVOT: How do you mean?

GEORGE: My story was… (*Beat.*) Everyone in the world will know. People are… They're going to be upset.

BOUVOT: Can you blame them?

GEORGE: No, I… I suppose not.

BOUVOT: Life will go on. It always does.

GEORGE: But they'll want answers.

BOUVOT: What will you tell them?

GEORGE: The truth.

BOUVOT: And what's that?

GEORGE: The story it… It just grew. I told it and then… People kept asking me to tell it so I told it again and again. Adding a little each time.

BOUVOT: You were always a wonderful storyteller.

GEORGE: I thought it would… It was supposed to help people.

BOUVOT: By bringing them closer to God.

GEORGE: Exactly! You can't have guts without –

(*Col. DuPre appears in a spotlight upstage.*)

COL. DuPRE: Did I ever tell you about the first time I led a charge into battle?

GEORGE: Father?

(*The music stops abruptly. Madam Bouvot kisses George on the cheek.*)

BOUVOT: Au revoir, Georges.

(*Madame Bouvot disappears as Col. DuPre takes the stage.*)

COL. DuPRE: That was when men were men!

GEORGE: I don't want to hear about it.

COL. DuPRE: Have I told you about –

GEORGE: Many times.

(*Pause.*)

COL. DuPRE: This would never have happened if you'd joined the army when I / told you to.

GEORGE: Oh, yes! Then everything would've been different for –

COL. DuPRE: Biggest mistake you ever made was leaving England.

GEORGE: What reason did you give me to stay? You were such a…

(*Pause.*)

COL. DuPRE: What? What was I? (*Beat.*) Go on. Time for you to be a man! Tell me straight!

GEORGE: You were a bully! Everything I did… It was always in your… I was never good enough! I couldn't live up to you and now / the whole –

COL. DuPRE: Blame me, will you? I tried to give you a good dose of British mettle! You were the one who couldn't be bothered to listen.

GEORGE: All I ever did was listen! Every story you ever told, I listened! How brave you were, how strong you were… Stiff upper lip and all that. But I was never… I was never… Everything I did was –

COL. DuPRE: Stop all this blubbering about like a woman.

GEORGE: I desperately wanted to be the man you wanted me to be. What son doesn't want to make his father proud? (*Beat.*) But I was… I was never enough. I wasn't… And I couldn't –

COL. DuPRE: Perhaps, to you, they were only stories. I lived them, George.

GEORGE: You haven't heard a / word I've said!

COL. DuPRE: You wanted me to proud of you? Alright then. Why didn't you do something to make me proud?

GEORGE: I… I… I tried. Every chance I… I couldn't take it anymore! I had to leave and –

COL. DuPRE: Yes, that's right. Fled off to the colonies. Broke your mother's heart when you left. Personally, I thought it was the first interesting thing you ever did. Stupid but interesting.

GEORGE: I can't count how many times I thought about coming back.

COL. DuPRE: To cling to your mother's apron strings?

GEORGE: Mother was so browbeaten she was barely / able to –

COL. DuPRE: When you returned to England during the war and sat at a desk, listening to the stories of real men, did you ever think about visiting?

GEORGE: Visiting? You're dead!

COL. DuPRE: You could've put some flowers on my grave.

GEORGE: Why would I do that?

COL. DuPRE: You have absolutely no sense of occasion.

GEORGE: You think I missed you? I hated you. (*Beat.*) I knew I couldn't come back but… I wanted to see mother again… If only once more before she… (*Beat.*) Do you remember the day you found me in the street? You had gotten me a job as a messenger? Riding my bicycle?

COL. DuPRE: You had a message for Whitehall.

GEORGE: Yes.

COL. DuPRE: Instead of doing your duty, I found you cowering in an alleyway in your piss-soaked pants.

GEORGE: There were zeppelins over London!

COL. DuPRE: Precisely! And you cowered from them! Spent your whole life cowering.

GEORGE: I'm sorry I was such a disappointment to you.

COL. DuPRE: Ah! That's it! Hit the nail on the head there. That's precisely what you are. A disappointment. Though I question whether or not you're genuinely sorry for it.

GEORGE: Why couldn't you have said one nice thing to me in your whole damn life?

COL. DuPRE: You wanted me to be nice?! We were at war!

GEORGE: But I'm not a war hero!

COL. DuPRE: Well, you fooled the world, George. If only for a moment. And now everyone will see you for what you truly are.

GEORGE: And what am I?

COL. DuPRE: A frightened boy trembling in an alley.

GEORGE: I spent my entire life trying to live up to your expectations. When I realized that I couldn't… When it finally dawned on me that I was simply too… too…

COL. DuPRE: Too much of a milksop?

GEORGE: When I realized that I never would, that's when I left. It was to get away from you! And I thought that… I thought that if I left, you'd…

COL. DuPRE: What?

GEORGE: I thought you'd leave me alone. But you haven't! You've haunted me ever since and I… God help me, I still wanted to impress you! How pathetic is that? Even on the other side of the world, I still craved your approval. I still wanted you to look at me, father, and tell me you would love me… that you could love me. And not because of what I'd accomplished but simply because I am your son. (*Beat.*) But now I… Now I understand.

COL. DuPRE: What do you understand?

GEORGE: I'll never be enough. No matter what I do.

COL. DuPRE: But that's just it, boy. You haven't done anything. You lied.

(*George turns away and puts his hands in his pockets. He finds the postcards. He holds them up to his father.*)

GEORGE: I brought these back. For Glenn and David. Your grandsons. And I'm… I'm so glad they never had to meet you. And that they never had to sit and listen to your poison. (*Beat.*) I'm not a hero. But I am their father.

(*George turns his back on his father. Colonel DuPre slowly disappears. Blackout.*)

SCENE TWENTY-SIX

(*Lights up on Quentin Reynolds drinking alone in his office. A knock at the door. Reynolds checks his watch.*)

REYNOLDS: Not now, Ginny! I'm busy at the moment.

CERF: (*From off.*) Busy with a bottle!

(*Reynolds stands, tucks in his shirt and shuffles to the door.*)

REYNOLDS: Bennet, I uh… I thought you were –

CERF: Ginny let me in.

REYNOLDS: Sorry, I would've answered the door but I was –

CERF: Burning the midnight oil?

REYNOLDS: Yes, um… Care for a drink?

CERF: No, thank you. But you might want to make yourself another one.

(*Pause.*)

REYNOLDS: You've heard.

CERF: I received a phone call from Calgary. Doug Collins?

REYNOLDS: He called me, too.

(*Pause.*)

CERF: I'm sorry, Quent.

REYNOLDS: Nice of him to let us know before they break the story tomorrow.

(*Pause.*)

CERF: Look, I just have to ask…

REYNOLDS: Bennett.

CERF: I'm just asking…

REYNOLDS: You know me better than that.

CERF: So you didn't –

REYNOLDS: I had no idea!

CERF: People are going to start asking questions and you should think about how you're going / to answer –

REYNOLDS: I trusted him, Bennett! Me and Wallace. Everybody at the Digest. We all trusted him!

CERF: Alright.

REYNOLDS: He was like family! Ginny shook his hand when he came into our house and threw her arms 'round him when he left.

CERF: Alright, alright. Settle down.

REYNOLDS: Do you know how bad this looks?

CERF: Yes. I know. It looks / bad. But –

REYNOLDS: In the middle of this Goddamn libel suit?! It's a fucking nightmare!

CERF: Does Wally know?

REYNOLDS: Not yet. I should call him.

CERF: I'll call him.

REYNOLDS: What are you gonna say?

CERF: That we're moving the book from the nonfiction to the fiction section.

REYNOLDS: I'm glad this is funny to you.

CERF: What else can it be? He duped us. And it became a nonfiction bestseller! (*Beat.*) Did he profit from it?

REYNOLDS: No but –

CERF: And how are they going to use it against you in court?

REYNOLDS: It's ammunition for the Hearst Corporation. They're saying that I'm an absentee war correspondent.

CERF: Did you check your facts?

REYNOLDS: Look, I… I thought I did.

CERF: Either you did or you didn't.

REYNOLDS: I spent a week in Calgary with him and his friends. It was obvious he was widely respected and admired in his community. One of his friends being a cabinet minister.

CERF: A politician? Sure, they always tell the truth.

REYNOLDS: Everybody vouched for him! At no time did I receive the slightest hint I should kill the piece. I even contacted British Intelligence. Sent them a copy of the manuscript before… Where the hell is it?

(*Reynolds hunts through the papers on his desk and finds a note scribbled on a pad.*)

Here!

(*Cerf reads aloud.*)

CERF: "It is the policy of British Intelligence never to review, affirm, or deny books written by former agents. Tell Reynolds we wish him well with his book."

REYNOLDS: That's verbatim. And see? "…by former agents." He may as well have said, "Yes, he's a former agent of ours but we can't confirm anything he's done or hasn't done."

CERF: Alright. Can you just –

REYNOLDS: Dozens of Canadian newspapers had published his story. He showed me the clippings. I trusted him, Bennett. I would've bet my life on him.

CERF: Did you go through a Canadian military channel?

REYNOLDS: In August, I had a telephone conversation with Brigadier Penhale in Winnipeg. Told me that he remembered DuPre well.

CERF: He remembered him?

REYNOLDS: He said he did. He'll probably retract his statement now but… A Goddamn Brigadier… He vouched for him.

CERF: So that's your defense.

REYNOLDS: I suppose so.

CERF: You believed him and he –

REYNOLDS: I had no reason not to.

CERF: So you're the victim here.

(*Cerf thinks for a moment.*)

Type it up.

REYNOLDS: Type what up?

CERF: Your side of the story. Include every detail. We'll put it in the front matter of the third printing.

REYNOLDS: What about the copies that have been sold already?

CERF: What about them?

REYNOLDS: People thought he was a hero, Bennett.

CERF: Can you take a letter for me?

(*Reynolds sits down at his typewriter and finishes his drink. He types as Cerf dictates to him.*)

"Dear Bookseller: Disclosures over the weekend having proven conclusively that 'That Man Who Wouldn't Talk' is pure fiction, Random House hereby authorizes all booksellers to refund the full purchase price to any customer's request who have bought copies prior to November 14th." (*Beat.*) New paragraph.

"George DuPre's story of breath-taking adventures in the French underground simply was too good to be true. It had been accepted as gospel in Canada for over five years but grew, evidently, each time it was repeated. By the time DuPre told it to Quentin Reynolds, it was…" What was it?

REYNOLDS: A whopper.

CERF: A whopper! I like that. New paragraph. (*Beat.*) "Newspapers have been requested to transfer 'The Man Who Wouldn't Talk' from their non-fiction best-seller lists to the fiction category. Meanwhile, all copies distributed by Random House from this day forward will include a full account by Quentin Reynolds of one of the most ingenious literary hoaxes perpetrated in many a day."

(*Brief pause.*)

How's that?

REYNOLDS: Good.

CERF: I'll have my secretary type it up on our letterhead and we'll distribute it.

(*Reynolds finishes typing and hands the piece of paper to Cerf, who looks it over.*)

REYNOLDS: You think it'll work?

(*Cerf picks up his hat and coat.*)

CERF: I'll bet you a steak dinner that book sales go up after this story hits.

REYNOLDS: Ya think?

CERF: People love scandal. Besides, it's a great twist at the end which, no offense, I thought the book needed anyway. (*Beat.*) Get me your side of the story.

REYNOLDS: I will.

(*Cerf starts to exit. He turns back.*)

CERF: Oh, by the way, I want you to tackle a new project for Random House.

REYNOLDS: What's that?

CERF: A history of the FBI. J. Edgar Hoover's even agreed to cooperate on it.

REYNOLDS: You still trust me?

CERF: I don't think you'll make the same mistake twice. Besides, what's Hoover got to lie about? (*Beat.*) And stop worrying about the damn Hearst Corporation. Once the trial's over, your name will be cleared.

REYNOLDS: Thank you, Bennett.

CERF: Try to get some sleep.

(*Cerf exits. Reynolds pours himself another drink and sits at his desk. He picks up a copy of the book and stares at it for a moment.*)

REYNOLDS: More like the man who talked too much.

(*He takes a drink and starts to type. He continues typing as the lights fade to black.*)

SCENE TWENTY-SEVEN

(*Lights up on George sitting at home. He is alone. He holds a copy of "The Man Who Wouldn't Talk". He stares at the cover. The phone rings. George rushes to grab it.*)

GEORGE: Hello? (*Beat.*) No, nothing. Except that… I have been advised… that my story is not a true story.

(*George hangs up the phone.*)

A cup of tea cures all, as my mother would say.

(*George exits to the kitchen to put the kettle on. The phone rings again. George re-enters, picks up the receiver and drops it. He looks at the book again and sighs. He paces.*)

You can look into a man's heart and see his true intentions, so you know I was… No. No, I… I honestly… I had a message! And I had to… I had to deliver my message, no matter what. (*Beat.*) A man with faith can endure anything.

(*Muriel slips in through the front door, unnoticed by George. She is dressed in her hat and coat but does not carry her suitcase. She listens to him.*)

I mean I… It just, it… It got away from me! People will understand that. They'll know I was… They'll see my intentions were good. The guys down at the Canukeena… They'll know that… (*Pause.*) How can I look at Ernest again? (*Beat.*) Or my boys? How will they describe their father? (*Beat.*) And Muriel… (*Beat.*) Lord, what have I done? How could I have been so… petty? This whole time, it was never about you. It was always about… Me and, and… My father. (*Beat.*) I only wanted to have a good war. God forgive me.

(*Pause.*)

MURIEL: Quentin telephoned me at my mother's.

GEORGE: Muriel!

MURIEL: He asked if I was really in the mountains.

GEORGE: How long have you been –

MURIEL: I told him: the whole time you were here, I was a half mile away. In Calgary.

GEORGE: I'm sorry, Muriel. Please, you have to –

MURIEL: I told him that you knew if I had met him, I would have blurted out the truth.

(*Pause.*)

GEORGE: I humiliated him.

MURIEL: Not just him. (*Beat.*) The number of times I had to sit there listening to you tell your stories. What was I supposed to do?! (*Beat.*) I warned you, didn't I?

GEORGE: Yes, you did.

MURIEL: You didn't need to be a hero, George. I was quite satisfied with you the way you were.

GEORGE: I'm… I'm sorry, Muriel.

MURIEL: Maybe that's not enough.

GEORGE: Please, I… I don't know what else I can do to… (*Beat.*) I tried to call you when I was in New York. I just wanted to hear your voice. But I couldn't.

MURIEL: You have been the best husband and father possible. But I never asked for this and I don't know if –

GEORGE: Muriel, no. I… I need you. All of this, it was… It was my fault and I… I didn't do it for God. I did it because I'm… I'm hollow. (*Beat.*) Can you forgive me? Please. Forgive me.

(*They look into each other's eyes for a moment. As the lights fade to black, the kettle whistles in the kitchen.*)