



Scripts.com

# Adopting Terror

By Nik Frank-Lehrer

BULGARIAN BORDER, 10 SEPT. 1918

Relax!

Coffee's on the way.

It's nothing!

Stay put Ferrandire.

It's just the 9 o'clock mail.

Sleep, sleep!

Who ordered that flare?

Something moved sir.

Just a rat.

I could've wiped you  
and your slackers out.

My boys never sniffle, cough'  
or get snagged on the wire.

Warn us next time'

or you may get shot like rabbits.

20 minutes to get up before  
the moon clears the ridge.

You mucked up the ravine  
with your patrols again.

I've got to use the left gully now.

Going up Socrates?

I sent a runner over  
to Hill 915 yesterday.

He never arrived.

If you spot the body, let me know.

Send up

as many flares as usual tonight.

If any man fires a shot  
too many, he answers to me!

You making that racket?

Malaria, sir. It'll pass.

Stay here.

Stay here!

That's rotten!

De Scve...

Where's Conan?

Went up 20 minutes ago.

He forgot me!

He likes you. He didn't want  
to turn you down.

- I look dumb.

- You look dumb.

Did the mess get any mutton in?

My men got dysentery  
from that frozen Aussie rabbit.  
What's Conan up to?  
Takes time to get up there, sir.  
The Senegalese moan  
they eat too much mutton.  
And us, nothing since Christmas!  
The niggers have it better than us!  
Where are the prisoners?  
You'll pay for this!  
C'mon, you bastards!  
What? We're going back?  
You took a while, but bravo!  
Yeah, congratulate 'em...  
The buzzards!  
I'd like to re-arrange a few mugs!  
Fuckin, bastards!  
We forgot to take prisoners!  
Aren't those two there Bulgars?  
Sure. We went back for 'em.  
He'll chew me out!  
You lucky. War over.  
Drink this.  
I don't get you, but I can guess...  
Shut up!  
Here, Rouzic... It's his loss.  
A bit late for guinine, Mahut!  
We got our wires crossed.  
Watch how you clods hold him!  
Keep his head up!  
Easy, son! We'll take care of you.  
I'll see to it.  
Carry him like the Holy Grail.  
How do you say "disinfectant"?  
Really, it's the same?  
And "antiseptic"?  
Rouzic can bring your mail.  
Thanks, sir.  
Don't thank me. Mail doesn't  
automatically mean good news.  
Why, only last week  
I got dumped by a fiancée.  
Only got six left now!  
Here's to you, old man!

I can't use him now.  
He'll be soldiering in a month.  
So?  
My job's not fighting'  
it's butchery.  
A bum shoulder and you're out.  
You go to staff college?  
No loss. A lot of shirkers  
who bust your chops!  
If our hours don't suit you'  
gentlemen, please let us know.  
We'll be honored  
to conform to yours.  
Sir, I...  
My fault, sir.  
I was visiting my wounded.  
But our young friend wasn't.  
I took him along.  
He's good with words.  
I get into a muddle.  
You don't do so badly.  
Well, sit down.  
Your wounded...?  
OK, but Perrin's got to transfer.  
Good soldier?  
Try him. First-rate.  
Major?  
Work it out between you.  
Don't let it get cold.  
Ageing potatoes'  
like bashful virgins'  
need to be warmed up  
for consumption.  
Sorry, sir, but the hospital visit  
upset our stomachs.  
Smell of ether, likely.  
Sure, he knows I'm riding him'  
but I won't pretend their glop  
tastes like chocolate.  
We're getting eggs.  
When they grow wings.  
That's just like you, sir!  
Watch the wire.  
It either rings or it explodes.

No scream.  
It's rabbit stew tonight!  
And a scream?  
Depends... Boche or Bulgar.  
I've got the runs, sir!  
Try some Pernod.  
Ass down, Rabier!  
Come eat now, sir'  
before it's overcooked.  
Be right in. We have a guest.  
Hey, boys, this is Lt. Norbert!  
I added stuffing: Olives and onions'  
breadcrumbs and bacon.  
Some wine! Don't speak Breton  
with our friend here.  
Rouzic...  
If they were all like him'  
we'd still be living in caves.  
But he's a real fighter!  
Know Hill 818?  
The little stream?  
He went to wash my socks  
and came back  
nudging a Bulgar! He wanted to give  
him a drink. Took him for a Greek!  
How could I tell he wasn't Greek?  
Cushy, no?  
Not for all tastes, though.  
De Scve calls this place...  
the barbarian's cave.  
Bordeaux. Real Bordeaux!  
Courtesy of the Brits.  
I wanted to buy a case... No way.  
So I swiped two without paying.  
There's a nibble of stew left...  
Let's have it.  
No, it's too much.  
It's venison!  
Big fat General Berthelot would give  
his kepi just to suck the bones!  
A taste, then.  
How do you manage?  
The army's starved.  
Special diet, you mean?

But our work's special.  
You'd find it hard to stomach.

**My father said:**

"Use what God puts in your pack."  
Me, I strike hard and fast. Always!  
While you...  
Say, let me see your pistol.  
I'll take a leak.  
The trigger's slack.  
You go with that redhead?  
Smart-ass!  
The farm near the Turks...  
Oh, right! I think I've seen her.  
Seen her? She gave two  
of my boys the clap.  
The clap? Oh, yeah?  
So maybe that's why...  
Your nose runs. Get her treated  
before she sinks the division.  
So that's why she's so cheap!  
The one I really wanted  
was the Greek girl from the bar.  
And...?  
She threw my money in my face.  
Leave this with me until tomorrow.  
We may move out.  
Lend him a gun.  
Anything beats a slingshot.  
I've got a Mauser in perfect shape.  
Perfect.  
Speak any Greek?  
Ancient Greek. Literary.  
Better than nothing...  
Tell her she resembles my sister.  
It puts 'em at ease.  
Nothing smutty, OK?  
My Greek won't do.  
Try English.  
Skip it, sonny.  
If she can manage, so can I.  
Midnight leave's up, lads.  
Back to camp. On the double!  
Sir, is it true about the big push?

Artillery's moving up  
and they're saying...  
I get it! The usual rubbish.  
Sorry to interrupt, sir...  
Just a minute.  
I'm paying my respects to the lady.  
Sit your pretty little ass  
down here.  
Got a room here?  
What happened?  
An attack on De Scve's sector.  
Pretty nasty.  
Shit! Conan!  
Lt. Norbert, 2nd Company.  
Get me the attack group.  
Send a man out to find Conan  
on the double!  
You can hang up.  
That knocked you for a loop, eh?  
They sent a motorbike  
while you were having kittens.  
Just when I was learning Greek!  
Better equipped than us!  
The Boche supplied 'em  
with new gear.  
Half our privates have holes  
in their trousers. Not these guys!  
There aren't only Buls...  
Must've been Boches too.  
Nasty show!  
De Scve didn't cop it with them.  
Must be a prisoner.  
We looked all over for him.  
You looked, but I'll find him.  
Sorry, Conan, but you're no longer  
on your own.  
The rumor was right:  
It's the big push.  
- Matter of hours.  
- Meaning?  
Your men join  
a machine-gun unit.  
You fight with the buddies.  
The buddies will have to adapt!

It's hell up there!  
Your helmet!  
Get that phone line up. Faster!  
Keep going!  
Orders, sir!  
From the Colonel, sir!  
- Your name?  
- Riguious, sir.  
You never saw me.  
What?  
Not seen, not found.  
If the Colonel ever says otherwise'  
you'll answer to me!  
I didn't see you?  
So I go back? Is that it?  
That's it, Riguious, my boy.  
You go back.  
Hey, where you from?  
Paris suburbs.  
Go home.  
"Hold ridge and await orders."  
While the others run for it! My ass!  
Still there, Riguious?  
Brandy and hot coffee ahead!  
Took your guinine?  
Careful, sir.  
They'll get you.  
I lost two brothers, sir!  
Go get 'em, Rouzic!  
Kill the bastards!  
Caboulet!  
Over here, sir! We lost two men.  
Kill 'em all!  
No prisoners!  
If I heard him right...  
He said "capitulato."  
Does that mean we go home?  
Who knows!  
My friends'  
I have a momentous  
announcement to make:  
Victory is ours on all fronts!  
Since the 11th of this month'  
the war has been over!



It's about time!  
It was drying in the latrines, sir.  
That'll do!  
From General Ptain:  
"In the 52nd month of a war  
unprecedented in History'  
"the French army'  
with the aid of its allies'  
"vanguished the enemy..."  
Sir!  
Royer's got the runs  
worse than ever!  
OK, let him go. But on the sly!  
"...setting the example..."  
"of sublime endurance  
and daily heroism"'  
"thus fulfilling the task entrusted  
to them by the Motherland."  
Despatch from Foch'  
of 12 November...  
Don't forget.  
The main thing's the attack!  
We can't work miracles, but...  
Put your guts into it!  
Let's hear it!  
Don't make me look stupid!  
"...the greatest battle in History.  
"Take pride in it!  
"It is with immortal glory  
"that you have bedecked your flag.  
"Posterity shall remember you  
with gratitude."

**Signed:**

"Commander-in-Chief  
of the Allied Forces."

**And may I add:**

Forces triumphant!  
And now, what?  
The regimental band, sir.  
Sir...  
I don't see Conan or his men.  
I exempted them. They're ill.

What do you say to that'  
Rouzic, my boy?  
A bit of a muck-up, sir'  
but it's still victory.  
What's victory mean to you?  
Being able to lift my head  
without stopping a bullet.  
There's hope for you, Pop'  
if they don't eat you alive.  
Christ! Don't tell me you lost  
the ink pads!  
And the rubber stamps!  
This army mislays everything!  
But remember, sir...  
the Sokol Pass...  
2 mules in the river!  
I don't give a damn!  
How can I sign anything now?  
There are duplicates at HQ.  
Fetch them, dammit!  
And bring me clean puttees  
while you're at it.  
Sir, I found the movement orders  
and unit records.  
Right.  
I want a list of wounded'  
killed in action, by malaria...  
The War Office will decide  
on pensions later.  
And this?  
"Administration" is all done.  
Crates 34, 36...  
And 37, check!  
For "Stock", 3 crates: A'B'C...  
"Transfers and Promotions":  
Two red boxes.  
Here's one.  
There's the other!  
Citations. Died for France...  
"Granted" and "Rejected".  
One wood file, one metal file...  
Those go in the front car.  
- What is it?  
- Trainee drivers?

This is archives, not personnel.  
- So what do I do?  
- Buzz off.  
Hey! Got any bread?  
"The neighbor's boy  
is taking this down.  
"I asked him to write  
in big letters..." I'm glad he did!  
"He was demobilized  
after being gassed.  
"He'd already been wounded twice.  
"Henriette's gotten thin as a rail.  
"She does a man's job  
and longs for you.  
"But we get by, which is a lot'  
seeing all the woe in the world.  
"Try not to fight too much.  
Leave it to your buddies.  
"You did your share in the Argonne.  
"I send you all my love.  
"Don't forget Henriette's birthday'  
the 23rd."  
Never waste water on washing.  
You drink...  
Spit...  
Face!  
Drink...  
Spit...  
Chest!  
Drink...  
Spit...  
Feet!  
Then, swallow what's left.  
It's my first leave in 28 months.  
I had my last one back in '16.  
But since the last 2 ships  
were torpedoed, nix!  
I hear we're going to Egypt.  
To see the Brits?  
I think  
we're in for a swell surprise.  
Look, Bulgaria's here.  
Sofia, our starting point.  
If we were headed for Greece'

the sun'd be there.  
It's not Turkey, or it'd be there.  
The sun's back there!  
Right behind us!  
So we're headed west...  
Northwest... Belgrade...  
Italy by tomorrow night.  
After Italy...  
After Italy, Brittany!  
I'm cold and hungry.  
It's De Scve! C'mon!  
De Scve! Conan here!  
No detraining!  
Go tell it to you Momma!  
Come with us!  
I'll join up with you later.  
I'm staying with them.  
Wait!  
He's an odd one!  
He is what he is.  
He's not odd'  
he's saving face.  
Take it while it's hot.  
He'd wax his boots in the trench.  
We've seen him in rags!  
He's one of the rare  
career officers you respect.  
True.  
He had it easy in the Cavalry'  
well-connected and all.  
But he joins infantry!  
He comes from landed nobility.  
A viscount... in the infantry!  
A real soldier!  
Just like you.  
No, he's a soldier. I'm a warrior.  
Any difference?  
A wolf-dog's not a wolf.  
We may be going back to Salonika.  
Mnard says  
there's even ships waiting.  
What's Mnard know?  
Well... he's a cook!  
Bucharest!

- You hear what I hear?  
- Bucharest!  
Bucharest... Romania, no?  
Nowhere near home!  
Didn't we lay bets?  
So, where's the sun now?  
You slug!  
What's a rifleman doing here?  
Lost his company?  
Lost your specs, Sergeant?  
Sorry, sir, I didn't...  
Drop it! And Bucharest?  
No food or drink...  
And the skirts?  
From that angle, can't complain!  
See? It was worth the trip!  
Hey, boys! Shut it!  
Where's the receipt box?  
Under the expired IDs.  
- Expired?  
- The killed don't draw pay.  
Nitwit!  
Sir...  
We're waiting for the band.  
We're to parade for the King  
and chiefs of staff.  
What assholes!  
Tell the guys to watch it!  
And no bullshit, Grenais!  
This time I agree with you.  
End 4 years of butchery  
with a fanfare... What a farce!  
I'll see you at the French Lyce.  
Champagne's on me!  
No. It's on me. I insist.  
I don't care for toy soldiers.  
Gentlemen...  
First'  
our thanks to the Lyce's principal  
for his warm welcome.  
We'll try to be inconspicuous.  
I've no doubt.  
And now I raise my glass  
to Lieutenant De Scve.

Twice captured'  
he twice braved escape...  
But he was twice retaken, alas!  
Yes, but with what panache...  
Sir, like Napoleon'  
I see no honor in being captured.  
So if you don't mind...  
To friendship!  
He shut his trap good with Napoleon.

**I like that too:**

He says what he has to.  
Lieutenant Norbert?  
From the Major.  
I smell a rat.  
He didn't pipe up at dinner.  
Town detail patrol!  
Strada Serindar, Strada Lipscani...  
Here, look!  
He's using you to get at me.  
He knows I can't  
whoop it up on my own.  
But if it's a red-light district'  
you can get an eyeful.  
"Soldiers must salute both  
French and Romanian officers."  
In that case, they may as well glue  
their paws to their eyebrows!  
"Proper dress...  
All misconduct will be punished..."  
So much for the post-war!  
I'll let you off this time.  
Now beat it! On the double!  
I can't believe my luck!  
Green eyes and you speak French!  
Not speak good.  
Good enough.  
I learn one year only, in school...  
Then I do conversation.  
There you go! Conversation. Perfect!  
Did you do conversation  
with the Germans?  
When no more money.  
But Germans, they have

more pretty costumes  
and more pretty music.  
More pretty music and costumes'  
maybe'  
but we still kicked their asses.  
Skip it...  
Cucumber, "cachcaval"...  
Enough is enough.  
Let's get some real grub.  
Hey, Norbert!  
I'm learning Romanian!  
So I see.  
It's amazing!  
Come back. It's not worth it!  
Despite what you may think'  
we're still at war.  
With whom?  
What the hell does it matter?  
The ones we have to shoot:  
Hungarians, Trotsky's Bolsheviks...  
For now, we're in an Allied country.  
So, no misconduct, no brawling'  
no drunkenness, no looting.  
And the Armistice?  
What about it?  
Armistice isn't peace.  
What's keeping you?  
Berthelot's worked up! We can't let  
the Brits open the ball alone!  
Wait up!  
Careful of the ladies.  
Gallantry'  
the French spirit - right!  
But no familiarities.  
Avoid those dark ones.  
You fell for one, Fidli.  
Like a ton of bricks, sir.  
How I understand youth!  
I myself once...  
Beware the dark ones!  
The women...  
here.  
Men, on right.  
My report can break you, Sergeant!

Go on and report me!  
Lt. Conan will fix it up.  
But I'll fix you, buddy!  
So the general says: Yes or no'  
why are you on the stairs?

**So I answer:**

If our hours don't suit you'  
dear colleague'  
please let us know.  
It'll be an honor  
to conform to yours.  
Town detail, sir!  
Meals are also part of duty.  
At the exact hour.  
Yes, sir.  
Three days, suspension!  
Fidli will replace for you.  
I need you elsewhere.  
We need an advocate  
for the next court martial sessions.  
Someone who honors the battalion.  
I appointed you.  
I don't understand, sir.  
I never studied law.  
Your education will compensate.  
In literature?  
Look here!  
Not that I belittle defense'  
but I don't see the point.  
Excuse me?  
Either the guilt is patent  
and you get so much...  
or the guilt's unproven and you  
get so much even so. On principle.  
I don't understand, sir!  
How can we accept that?  
You sound like a chorus  
of outraged virgins!  
A little vocabulary, gentlemen...  
What are imprisoned soldiers  
called before trial?  
- The accused.  
- Exactly!



Thus, suspicion of guilt exists.  
Suspicion is not conviction.  
Poppycock!  
In my experience'  
the accused is never a good soldier.  
He's just asking for it.  
If not this time'  
he was guilty a dozen other times.  
- Not my idea of justice.  
- No, wait.  
I'll bet 1000 francs  
against a trouser button  
that not one of you - not one! -  
can say he never came close  
to being court-martialed.  
Say you take 3 days'  
extra leave... Desertion!  
Or a bogus pass...  
The unit seal traced on a copy.  
Forged documents!  
Correct me if I'm wrong...  
5 to 10 years.  
Still, sir...  
10 years for fake leave?  
When you asked  
that artillery captain  
if he'd trained in a straitjacket...  
He was shelling our lines!  
I lost 3 men!  
Insulting a superior.  
And on active duty...  
5 to 10 years.  
So, for the handful  
of wronged innocents'  
there are 100'000 guilty  
who get away!  
I couldn't agree more, sir.  
Those shot as an example  
deserve to be.  
Sure! Shoot a few'  
so the rest think twice!  
We haven't the choice of arms.  
A firing squad is one.  
Your men's knives, another.

No offense, sir...  
but I recruited lots of my boys  
from the brig.  
I don't know many who'd go  
where they've gone! Not many!  
So?  
Before making an example'  
follow their example!  
So you've gone over to the enemy?  
How you talk!  
There's no more enemy!  
Don't believe it!  
The enemy's changed, that's all.  
No Bulgars, Turks or Boches now, OK'  
but one false move and the brass  
hats will fix your wagon good.  
You heard the Major!  
Even De Scve!  
It's not our world, Norbert.  
If you join their circus'  
they'll eat you raw.  
May I?  
"Caillaux, Ren. 5th Fusiliers.

**"Cited twice:**

"Captured machine-gun...  
Retrieved wounded sergeant..."  
So what's the charge?  
"Theft of gear."  
Two blankets? Some prick  
nailed him for two blankets!  
He's the one they should shoot!  
Funny, these thefts: All privates!  
I saw colonels steal their stripes!  
Never on the list!  
Come in.  
All of it?  
Just half. Leave the pail.  
I don't doss here now, Rouzic.  
I found something in town.  
My little Romanian tutor...  
This is parguetry!  
Maybe so.  
- Where'd you get this?

- So long as it burns!  
There's nothing to this!  
A crock!  
I've done 10 times worse.  
And this colonial?  
3 days to find his regiment...  
Get the picture? A Bedouin  
lost among the Gypsies!  
At least he looked for his regiment.  
The model student!  
Memorize it all.  
Shoulder to the wheel.  
Brownnose!  
Cut it out!  
How are you as a teacher?  
Good egg or scumbag?  
Always trying to understand:  
A good egg, for sure!  
Well, there's no shame in that.  
Ah, an officer!  
Mr. Officer...  
Mr. Principal... Anything wrong?  
Wrong? Everything's wrong!  
Your men fought  
and smashed the furniture!  
The dorm reeks of cooking!  
I'll take care of it tomorrow.  
You'd be advised to.  
If I report it, this could...  
And my advice is: Keep it  
under your hat. No report, clear?  
I understand.  
But a whole side of pork  
for your mess vanished.  
And there's a smell upstairs...  
grilled pig.  
What's the game here?  
I turn my back and you get  
Fart-Face all riled!  
You've got the brains of a slug!  
Shut your trap, Grenais!  
Fighting among yourselves?  
Confined to quarters, sir.  
We're bored!

Bored?

In a nice girl's school'  
with God watching over you?

It may be nice...

Save your breath...

Pack your gear. On the double!

And pilfering the kitchen!

Why not? But cooking it  
under the principal's nose?

- Pork's no good raw.

- Don't get smart!

I wanted the window fixed and  
a side of pork by noon tomorrow.

Jump to it!

Faster! I'm running late!

You, shut up!

Parade in the yard in one minute!

Company, halt!

Punitive drill, Sergeant!

Punitive drill, sir. For rowdiness.

Fine, fine.

Regulation weight?

15 Ibs., sir. I even added  
sand for good measure.

15 Ibs.!

Very well.

Good drilling, gentlemen.

It's really cold.

Company, halt!

Midnight leave! Dump packs!

The morons who started the brawl  
can stand guard.

We'll have new billets  
tomorrow night.

Have fun and stay out of trouble!

Shut up!

Retrieve packs at 11:50 pm!

Beuillard, you're in charge.

Make sure you look whacked out.

To the cathouse!

I'm not asking for the moon, doc.

Just put 'em in quarantine.

I have no room.

There are 50 of you.

I'll find the room.  
You find the bug.  
How about flu?  
No! The Major  
would laugh in my face.  
Spanish flu! Extra-deadly...  
Got anything better? Something  
to give 'em a scare.  
They won't be  
patting you on the head with flu!  
How about cholera?  
Just what I need!  
I'm looking for...  
- This the military prison?  
- Yes, sir. Annex 2.  
Looks like a brothel.  
That, too. In theory'  
the ladies stay upstairs.  
In theory.  
There are twice too many.  
We had no name list, sir.  
We brought everyone out.  
I'll see you each alone.  
The others, outside.  
Jump to it!  
Fourrier, Raoul.  
Why me?  
So you stole...  
No, no! Easy to say!  
Try to understand. I'm not  
your enemy. I'm here to defend you.  
I have to know the whole truth.  
You stole that sheep?  
An exchange, sir! Paid in full.  
A 5-franc piece'  
2 packs of tobacco... and premium!  
And a cooked hen.  
The farmer claims  
the hen was stolen, too.  
But I paid him back!

**And I mean:**

Even the bones were cooked.  
Anyway, the sheep

was no bigger than a puppy.  
And there were 7 of us!  
Why is it only me that cops it?  
You fought at the Marne?  
I'm a walking injustice.  
You're next, Slimane.  
He may turn out okay after all.  
Slimane's story is simple.  
I heard him at length.  
At the station in Videle'  
his chief, Captain De Jussieu  
- whom he reveres -  
used the stopover to have him  
post some letters.  
He accomplished his task'  
but on the way back'  
he met some tribesmen, cousins'  
who talked about home'  
which he longs for.  
Time, for these desert dwellers'  
is not like time for us.  
Did 10 minutes go by  
- as he thought - or 20, 30?  
So he returned to the station  
serenely.  
The train ready to go.  
He jumped blithely aboard.  
But it wasn't the same train!  
They were changed...  
without delay, for once!  
Suddenly, he's headed for Trgu Jiu'  
in the Carpathians'  
125 miles from his regiment and  
chief, not speaking the language.  
One more! The Arab'll get off.  
The Lieutenant...  
had 'em all in stitches.  
So, you nasty piece of work...  
you gave it to 'em good.  
What a jerk, that cook!  
Biking in the snow!  
He's not home free.  
Want your fortune told?  
For the young man...

It's in Romanian!  
This way, you can imagine  
what you want.  
And your men? The cholera...  
It was just an ordinary case  
of the shits.  
The thing was to get out  
of that rat trap.  
What happened?  
Some stupid Irish lug...  
It was on a narrow sidewalk.  
He expected me to step aside...  
How'd you know he was Irish?  
We had a drink afterwards.  
- I'm too broke to buy you dinner.  
- I'm tied up, anyway.  
A girl from back home, Frhel.  
She sings.  
You might run away with her!  
He has a cabbie's voice. Noticed?  
Noticed what?  
The cabmen. They're all castrated.  
It's a Russian sect.  
After the 2nd child, snip!  
Nice idea!  
Paris cabbies would love it.  
Ladies...  
and Gentlemen...  
Civilians and soldiers...  
Couples legal...  
and illegal...  
Before we bring on  
the dance act... Oh so artistic!  
Of Miss Fraulein Frida...  
whom you'll see in just a moment...  
I'd like you to welcome...  
a great artist  
of the French music hall...  
I refer to  
Mademoiselle Frhel...  
of the Eldorado!  
Oh, yes!  
Is this your doing?  
I can't here, gentlemen...

To hear me sing  
where I'm paid to'  
rendezvous in the Rose Room  
in a half-hour!  
Quick! Two men!  
The woman's hurt!  
Well, I didn't come for nothing!  
Neither did they.  
Take the suitcases.  
We'll see to everything, Madam.  
Thank you.  
The soldiers will take our bags.  
Yes, Madam.  
I need a carriage.  
Where can I find a carriage?  
I forget where  
I stayed before the war.  
We'll see to the vehicle, Madam.  
There's a trunk among the luggage.  
And my son's suitcase.  
Go help them. Take the hat boxes  
and Jean's suitcase.  
Thank you, Captain.  
At your service.  
Lt. Neubout, suite 34.  
So I need a replacement  
before I leave'  
and I thought of you.  
Me? To replace you?  
I saw you in court. You're bright'  
you can think on your feet.  
Hold on! I was court-appointed.  
I got caught up in it.  
Anyway, defense doesn't require  
any serious legal training'  
just some compassion  
for my comrades-in-arms.  
What you say only convinces me  
you'd make  
an "accuser" - as we're called -  
who's fair'  
preferring the spirit to the letter.  
The very word terrifies me!  
"Accuser"...I can't!



You dismay me.  
Now the other fellow will win out.  
So? You have another candidate.  
Yes. A vicious brute.  
A veterinarian.  
I'm not joking.  
Relishes the idea  
of inflicting punishment.  
I'm sorry. I can't.  
Conan... You know him?  
He's a friend. Why?  
Nasty business... A Romanian  
officer in the hospital.  
A bit impulsive'  
but an amazing fellow.  
His file is amazing, too.  
Reported 10 times...  
Brawling, drunkenness...  
Burned the parguetry  
of the French Lyce library...  
You see him doing that?  
No. But he's taking the rap.  
He could even get Life for this.  
- Can I think it over?  
- No time.  
But still, technically...  
Elementary. You can pick up  
procedure within hours.  
The basics are all here.  
Military code 1857.  
I made comments  
and notes.  
But this is terrifying!  
Loubrac! Just the man...!  
Sir...  
I have a cousin from Paris...  
Mme Erlane.  
She's looking for her missing son.  
Imagine'  
if they all start doing that!  
Find her a room.  
Get her off my back!  
She's napping... A chatterbox!  
I'll see to it, sir.

I want you to meet my successor...  
General! Where are you, Felix?  
I took a nap. We can go now.  
I have the man for you.  
Just a moment, dear cousin.  
Fine.  
See a family resemblance?  
She says there is...  
just to draw me in.  
And she calls me Felix!  
You have a replacement'  
so take her round the hospitals.  
I doubt you'll find the kid.  
He must be lying low  
with the broads.  
Then, stick her on a train and shool  
Very well, sir.  
So is Lt. Norbert...?  
Yes. He'll do!  
I had a thought, Felix...  
Hear that?  
Quick! Before she starts!  
Lieutenant'  
you'll have your hands full.  
So, you're the horse  
and surgery fellow?  
I'd like to heal animals, too.  
No, sir. I'm not the veterinarian.  
I'm the literature graduate.  
Fine, literature's nice, too.  
Here's your assignment.  
Red tape...  
You can fill it in later.  
Ah, yes!  
A nightmare.  
The Crystal Palace raid!  
Find them and hupl -  
the firing sguad!  
Two women at death's door.  
Sure, the dancer's a Boche'  
but still...!  
So you're at it again!  
You like this bullshit?  
"When bad soldiers are the regular

court martial defendants..."  
"Bad soldiers!"  
What's the author of this crap know?

**Say, now:**

It takes at least 2 stars  
to whip this up! And you take notes!  
I'm learning procedure'  
to prevent the worst.  
Prevent the worst?  
You'll be in the dark!  
Your "fairness" will send dozens  
of boys to the wall.  
Don't be a cop! Shut your books  
and let's go get drunk.  
Piotr Romescu... Ring a bell?  
A Romanian officer.  
He came home suddenly  
to find his wife "well in hand."  
French hands threw him  
down the stairs.  
Oh, that guy!  
Yes, that guy!  
Double concussion, broken leg...  
Were you there?  
He came at me, bellowing!  
I have his complaint.  
And 10 others...  
The bastard who nearly got this job  
would've had your hide.  
Mind your business.  
I can stand up for myself.  
The Crystal Palace... Your 2 boys...  
Dammit, we're friends!  
We're not gonna start fighting.  
So lay off my boys.  
And the Romanian...  
What happened?  
Tomorrow.  
I've had it for tonight.  
I followed the broad.  
She was delighted.  
And then he showed up!  
Dammit, Conan, it was his wife!

If they're so touchy'  
why ask for our help?  
I'm here, she's here. I help myself.  
So long!  
You've declared that on  
the evening of the 16th'  
the evening of the crime  
for which you've been arraigned:  
"After a stroll, I got back  
to quarters for roll call.  
"I did some reading  
and then turned in."  
- Right?  
- Yes, sir.  
"Judge Advocate."

**Answer:**

How is it that you were seen  
an hour later at the Crystal Palace?  
Crystal Palace? Me?  
Among the armed attackers.  
Me, recognized?  
By your height.  
In my batallion alone, there are  
a dozen my size - even bigger.  
Also, you're often seen in a cafe  
behind the artillery barracks.  
It's cold out...  
The owner is called Valko.  
He has a limp.  
Two days later, you paid him  
with a 100-franc note. From where?  
Oh, yes! I sold Boche  
field-glasses to civvies.  
Any point in asking  
for the names of the buyers?  
It's all done on the sly, you know.  
But one of them was short and fat...  
Let's say, medium...  
with black eyes...  
Black-brown...  
That's enough, Beuillard!  
Don't lay it on.  
Know how to drive a motor-car?

You were heard to say:  
"They'll never nab those guys!"  
So you know them?  
No! Everybody said it.  
Don't have to know 'em.  
- But you know one of them.  
- From the attack group?  
No, poker partner. Gunner Forgeol.  
Pharmacy student. Handsome.  
A gambler. Like you...  
I'll get you! You or Grenais'  
or the other one...  
You cracked the cashier's skull  
as if she were an enemy sentry.  
A poor woman of 49  
who took a week to die'  
moaning in pain the whole time.  
Very sad, sir, but it wasn't me!  
Take him away!  
Very well, sir.  
And Sergeant Grenais?  
Don't bother.  
These two know their parts.  
We'll get the pharmacist yet.  
I must have stolen this, too!  
The hour of revenge is at hand  
Against us of the clan  
Officers, chiefs and priest  
Some of them are just asking for it!  
You!  
It's about time!  
I'm prisoner Erlane's mother.  
Jean Erlane.  
Once again, Lieutenant...  
I'm an officer's widow.  
You are a Lt.?  
Parcels I sent my son  
were stolen again.  
First, a Swiss knife.  
Now, mouthwash.  
Sorry, Madam...  
You're sorry but do nothing  
to improve the situation.  
My son is the victim

of a monstrous error'  
and nothing is done.  
Nothing!  
It's him!  
You! Yes, you!  
My parcel  
contained a bottle of mouthwash.  
Who took it?  
By what right?  
But, Madam, it contains alcohol!  
You're allowed to visit'  
send parcels. I can't do more!  
I'll see Pitard de Lauzier!  
The general is my cousin.  
I know, Madam...  
See him, then! What can I say?  
If your family gets  
preferential treatment, I submit.  
Can she speak?  
Hard as wood.  
General peritonitis.  
Operating  
would be a pointless butchery.  
Care to see the cashier?  
Since she's dead...  
You summoned me'  
Mr Judge Advocate?  
- Want to see the corpse?  
- I know stiffs.  
Take a look! Attacked  
and battered by sick brutes!  
You can't protect murderers!  
There's no one I admire  
more than you'  
but there's a limit.  
I came to tell you...

**I remember now:**

The night of the attack...  
I'd assigned Beuillard  
and Grenais to sentry duty.  
You have to let 'em go.  
I brought you the duty roster.  
Don't do this, Conan!

It's a forgery, for sure.  
You'll go down with them.  
The cashier's dead! The gunner  
will talk. I'll get the evidence.  
I taught my boys not to get killed  
or screwed by pricks like you!  
You know they fucked up.  
They have to pay!  
You're not their nurse.  
They'll go back  
to their fields and factories.  
What'll you do? Whistle them up  
Sundays for a raid?  
A swell idea, that.  
Sure, a swell idea.  
What'd you do in civilian life?  
Civilian life?  
That's ages ago.  
Sewing notions.  
Shirts, too...  
My dad and I did the markets.  
This one, too?  
Well, why not...  
You like dropping charges?  
When necessary, sir.  
Case closed.  
Clear the decks!  
But not when it's flagrant.  
The Crystal Palace, for instance...  
I have some suspects, sir.  
Don't wear kid gloves!  
"Come clean! It's you!"  
Baml Get a confession!  
The best is to scare them.  
They don't scare easily, sir.  
Personally, I have nothing against  
the English. They're...  
not very bright but very practical.  
Sensational with simple stuff.  
Some leaves, hot water, a pot...  
Tea!  
A round ball'  
rolls it with your foot... Soccer!  
Pick it up in your hands... Rugby!

Excuse me, sir.  
I put in for special leave...  
I'd like to know.  
I was told.  
5 days?  
I need a cast-iron excuse.  
I want to defend my men  
at the court martial, sir.  
Yes, well, if you think...  
Affirmative.  
Sorry, sir, but I'm afraid  
that's impossible.  
The General  
needs a competent officer  
for the border control mission.  
I recommended Lt. Conan.  
The posting's come through.  
Well, if the General  
appointed you...  
Nice stunt!  
I oughta bust your head!  
It wouldn't help.  
I'd feel better.  
From now on, watch your step!  
So you prefer your thugs.  
No laws! No morality!  
I'm serious! To each his own!  
So watch your ass!  
That what you teach your students?  
To be a cop?  
Inspector Stefanescu...  
Deputy Inspector Romesco.  
Lt. Norbert, Judge Advocate.  
- Shall we go?  
- Now?  
It's best now. We'll surprise them.  
- We won't understand them.  
- So?  
Insist they speak French.  
Try another solution, M. Loisy:  
Trust.  
Hurry before we lose them.  
What pitiful creatures!  
At night, they create an illusion.



What's he doing?  
Searching! This isn't a tea room!  
Thanks! I noticed!  
He says there's a Frenchman  
down the hall.  
We expected you, Lt.  
"We"? I don't understand, miss.  
Sure you do!  
She and I make "We."  
You made a racket coming up.  
You should've left by now!  
I did leave! I stopped off  
to say goodbye to a friend.  
You have to bug my girl, too?  
House search, Mr. Officer!  
This is your home.  
Tell them to piss off!  
Go on, tell them!  
Tell him to get his paws off!  
A real pack of scum...  
But you take the cake!  
Nice, that chair trick!  
Tell your pal to stand aside.  
Shut up, fart! Salute and shut up.  
See you, angel.  
As for you...  
You let him go like that?  
He's off on a mission.  
More reason to stop him!  
I had the General appoint him.  
If he showed in court'  
he could get his men acquitted.  
And that, never!  
There's a compatriot of yours'  
Miss Georgette...  
Excuse me. I have a slight fever  
and must stay in bed.  
But don't stand there, Lieutenant...  
Do sit down.  
These Romanian officers  
are helping me  
on the Crystal Palace case.  
I never set foot in there'  
young man.

When I first got here'  
in Feb. 1912...  
...God, how time flies!  
I'd just got my diploma.  
There was a post as French tutor...  
Know this one?  
Him neither!  
When misfortune strikes'  
you think it's once and for all.  
But it's only the beginning  
of your troubles...  
The bastard!  
You know him?  
A real thug!  
A brute.  
Forgeot.  
Forgeol!  
He'd extort money from the girls.  
I sure gave it to him!  
But some girls give in right away.  
They still beat you up.  
They knock you teeth out'  
give you cigarette burns.

**I told them:**

For Frenchmen, you're vile!  
And that gunner'  
the worst of the lot!  
But you know...  
he was well fixed.  
How's that?  
Money!  
Pockets full!  
He wanted 3 of us at once:  
Teresa, Nina and me'  
Georgette, because I speak French.  
Remember the precise day?  
3 weeks ago. It was a Sunday.  
At Caspa's. I go Sundays.  
So, Sunday, the 21st.  
Just after the hold-up!  
And he had large bank notes...  
He got the picture. He's clever.  
What else do you know about him?

As if I tried to see him again!  
Who did he hang out with?  
Wait! I remember him boasting  
he had a hideaway'  
that he had it easy...  
But where?  
Yes! An army eye hospital!  
He made up some sight problems.  
It's in a convent near... Cot...  
Cotroceni.  
That's it!  
Thank you, Madam.  
You've been most helpful.  
We'll meet again...  
I hope.  
Soon.  
Glasses off, Forgeol!  
You can't fool me.  
On the 16th, you took a girl  
to Valko's. For the night?  
A whole night costs a lot.  
I bargained.  
You chatted with her?  
They're not French.  
Speaking of French...  
Georgette Raynaud...  
She saw you with lots of cash...  
For several girls at once.  
Not at all!  
I wanted her to interpret.  
But she turned them against me.  
So you went to this girl's place.  
You had her address.  
No, we went to a hotel.  
Which hotel?  
Streets, hotels... How do  
you manage, sir? In Romanian...  
- Which area?  
- Behind the cathedral.  
Together? From Valko's?  
That's quite a haul!  
She'd have been pinched  
for soliciting soldiers...  
Quite a gutsy girl!

We went separately!  
We were to meet there.  
Not knowing the name  
of the hotel or the street...  
At the time, I knew!  
Her name? You knew that?  
Nini. I call 'em all Nini.  
As long as you pay them'  
their names...

**So you said:**

"meet me in 15 minutes'  
on whatsit street, by the cathedral."  
Something like that.  
OK. Let's hear it in Romanian.  
That's no proof.  
There's always a way...  
And explain this, too...  
The Crystal Palace thugs  
removed their stripes.  
Yours have just been resewn!  
You sure cornered him!  
A fish! He was gaping like a fish!  
Run the files down to HQ.  
Not to your billets?  
Look! I don't enjoy nailing them.  
And what I enjoy even less  
is you enjoying it.  
I did not wish to play this role  
before you today'  
without quite understanding why.  
Only now do I understand.  
I will try to express myself simply:  
How can we condemn these men'  
all admirable comrades-in-arms?  
How can we acquit these men'  
all ruthless murderers of women?  
I have no answer.  
Don't sulk.  
You got them off light.  
Conan will be thrilled.  
I don't follow you.  
I appreciated your tactical cunning'  
the way you played both sides...

"...condemn these heroes  
if you dare, I cannot!"  
Sure, they're guilty, but you  
pushed the right button:  
Execute these heroes?  
I'm sure we can, but...  
Good for them.  
She's a nurse. English.  
We couldn't talk, but in bed'  
she shrieks like a banshee!  
- I'll miss her.  
- She's going?  
Not her! Us!  
You didn't know?  
Back to Sofia  
to replace the colonials  
and then we go fight the Russians.  
You seem displeased.  
You civilians are funny.  
Don't like the theatre  
of foreign operations?  
That's what it's called now.  
Want a lift?  
Nivelle and Mangin'  
off with their heads!  
Butchers!  
5000 dead a day, comrades!  
The population of a small city.  
An entire city, wiped off the map!  
Swine! Murderers!  
Save it for the judges!  
Jesus, what luxury!  
If I was rich'  
I'd piss all day long!  
So they all got 3 years?  
Yes, sir. 3 years.  
With time off, they'll do...  
6 months?  
More like 10... I'd say a year.  
What's a year?  
A blink of the eye.  
But we have to shoot one  
now and then.  
Case closed!

The Crystal Palace, fini!  
Where are we? Going back north!  
15 minutes later, south.  
Then west...  
We stop, we start!  
Problem's the Danube.  
Only 2 bridges left.  
Madam Erlane's in Sofia!  
She found out we'd be there'  
even before I did!  
What a leech!  
She commandeered my phone  
to call all the brass hats.  
She went after everyone!  
She demands his release.  
"I know my son.  
"It's a mistake.  
He even volunteered." Etcetera...  
You work it out, on the double!  
Not again!  
Send me the conductor!  
Bring me that horse's ass!  
What the hell is this?  
Who said to get off?  
The General wants our position.  
I'd like to know myself!  
He won't stop badgering me  
to keep him posted.  
Go on. He's in a bad mood!  
I'm going, I'm going.  
I should've been demobilized  
6 months ago. So what's 15 minutes?  
What a business!  
Who's shooting? They nuts or what?  
Get back aboard!  
Who's in charge here?  
What was that?  
We're being sniped at?  
I think the shots  
came from the train.  
Shots at what?  
Shots from my train! At what?  
Sir! Boars!  
I think they bagged 1 or 2.

I adore game!  
Have the cooks carve us a filet!  
If it's thin'  
the ribs will be tasty.  
And some boar's head brawn!  
They won't know how.  
Send them in. I'll explain how.  
- Brawn's tasty.  
- Delicious!  
What're you doing here?  
Let's get moving!  
It's the Danube, sir.  
No excuses! Get a move on!  
Yes, sir.  
Bouvier!  
A filet, the ribs...  
and the brawn!  
Greetings, Lieutenant.  
See? As sharp-eyed as ever.  
Still muckraking?  
Since '14, they tell my boys:  
"Nice work!  
Cut their throats! Keep it up!"  
Now that nobody needs 'em'  
any clown has rights.  
Now that they don't shit

**in their pants:**

Just for looting a cathouse!  
A bit stiff!  
They sent 80'000 to the slaughter  
in 20 minutes!  
Everyone fought.  
Not everyone!  
Squeezing the trigger'  
that's easy!  
Bombs, cannons... Blind killing!  
Anybody can!  
We went at 'em with knives'  
eye to eye!  
A soldier will face down  
an armoured train but not a knife.  
We cut throats  
to scare a whole regiment.

We won the war. 3000 of us.  
- And the rest?  
- They only fought it.  
There are new rules.  
You have to adapt.  
Right! Adapt...  
Ask a dog to adapt to salad!  
I can light a fire'  
I just can't relight it.  
Jughead! Pretend it went out  
and you're lighting it.  
But that's relighting!  
C'mon, c'mon, you outcasts  
The cops, the wealthy  
Will hang one day.  
Where are we?  
What can you see?  
Nothing!  
Can't see a thing! Not a thing!  
Where are we?  
Sofia, sir.  
No one warned me!  
I'm stark naked!  
Who's in charge?  
Put them under arrest!  
You've time, sir.  
I'm still naked!  
Sofia!  
Cars 8 and 12, detrain!  
The others back aboard!  
Why only the first 4 cars?  
Dunno. Some go on to Gorna-Banja.  
Is it far?  
3 miles!  
It's a spa with hot baths...  
If the girls are like the baths'  
okay by me!  
Lt. Norbert, I'm...  
I know. We met in Bucharest.  
The prison in Bucharest.  
Why do you insist  
on condemning my son?  
I'm just prosecuting, Madam'  
that's all.



Explain the difference.  
This way, please.  
He never weighed his proper weight.  
I mean, for his height.  
That's what Dr. Gilet-Pons  
told me on each visit:  
"He's underweight."  
I sent him to Roscoff  
for the calcium.  
It gave him nose bleeds.  
Right off! Every day!  
The air was too strong.  
He came home even thinner.  
And then he volunteered!  
He was turned down  
for officer's school'  
but, suddenly, good enough  
for this butchery!  
He came home elated:  
"Mother, I signed up!"  
I thought I'd faint.  
Faint!  
I moved heaven and earth'  
fasted, prayed night and day.  
His father, a navy commander'  
died in combat.  
Like my brother, in his plane.  
And the husband of...  
My family's done its share, no?  
I saw everyone...  
cabinet ministers, chiefs of staff'  
the Lord Bishop Pelletier...  
Empty promises!  
Promises?  
To discharge him...  
annul this nonsense!  
My only choice  
was the Eastern Front.  
I should have helped him  
become a priest'  
like so many other  
over-sensitive adolescents.  
His father protested.  
I gave in.

I was a fool!  
We have chaplains  
at the front.  
They don't shoot guns!  
In any case, they're not shot at!  
You're like Pitard..."Chatter on!"  
He's a perfect imbecile!  
Felix. Your general.  
You can tell him from me.  
Your general is a cretin.  
Liautey called him "Pitiful Pitard".  
One word from him  
and Jean would be free.  
But no! He spouts on.  
What bombast!  
While my poor little boy...  
I'll show you his letters.  
In one he writes how he took refuge  
in a church during a patrol.  
He was so exhausted, so worn out'  
that he hadn't the strength to pray.  
Him!  
What wrong did he ever commit?  
Tell me!  
What has he done?  
I see from your file  
that you volunteered.  
On a whim?  
Well, no.  
All my class signed up the same day.  
And you went along?  
You signed up... and deserted?  
I didn't desert. I got lost.  
De Scve  
is your company commander?  
Your opinion of him?  
Mr. Loisy'  
fetch 2 clean blankets  
for the prisoner.  
2 blankets? Me?  
Yes, please! Stop looking shocked  
at my every order. It's irritating!  
Cigarette?  
It makes me cough.

Get along with De Scve?  
"The Excuser"!  
That's what Bouvier calls you.  
Coming from him, it's nice.  
From Accuser to Excuser.  
He thinks you give the guilty  
a way out.  
What do you think?  
I'm a career officer.  
Stubborn, brutal... like him!  
Are you?  
I think after all these men  
have gone through, you're right.  
I'm touched. All the more so  
because I have a problem.  
What are you doing?  
My saddle's slipping.  
I'm listening. Your problem?  
It concerns one of your men'  
Jean Erlane.  
He's in a very bad fix.  
What? They found Erlane?  
I questioned him.  
That little prick's alive?  
He says he got lost running orders.  
The bastard deserted!  
Yet he's from a family  
of soldiers and seamen.  
I know them better than you.  
We're related.  
So?  
So this boy is the blot'  
the failure!  
The one to smother at birth.  
Sadly, cowards develop late.  
If a shell burst a mile off'  
he'd dive for cover!  
You had to kick him back  
on his feet!  
In fact, he was  
a perpetual deserter!  
Deserter to the enemy?  
I'd head the firing squad.  
You're not listening to me!

I need your help, Conan.  
You asked for it and now...  
Cut it out! We got along, didn't we?  
All right. Spit it out.  
What d'you want to know?  
The prisoners you'd take...  
You questioned them yourself?  
Naturally!  
Did they talk? I mean...  
All of them? Right off?  
You'd like that!  
No. Even if I beat 'em up, I'd only  
learn what I knew already.  
He may not have talked.  
Not a milksop like that.  
You show him the map:  
- "Guns here?"  
- "Yes!"  
- "Not here?"  
- "Uh, yes."  
- "And this is a bed of begonias?"  
- "Sure!"  
How can you know?  
Sure you can.  
I'd have to see  
the chickenshit myself.  
Captain?  
So what?  
And I still deign to talk to you!  
They give me 3 stripes but still  
want to shoot me! Pack of...!  
You don't relight a cigar, but me...  
Erlane...  
That's Breton, isn't it?  
From Dinan?  
So you turned up at a Bulgar outpost  
like a babe in the woods!  
I can picture it.  
You throw your gun down'

**raise your arms:**

They take you into an officer's sap.  
Right?  
Yes, sir.

He questioned you?  
Yes, but later, in the rear.  
Wrong move!  
Gotta interrogate in the field!  
An on-the-spot review's best!  
So you're behind the lines  
at their HQ in Gevgelija.  
They laughed at you.  
They laughed, right?  
Suddenly, a major appears.  
Something-chev.  
Furnachev.  
But he's not alone.  
No. There was someone else.  
He was a little more...  
More cruel? Right?  
I'll tell you what happened.  
This Furnachev says to you:  
"Here's the sector map.  
"Now talk'  
"or I'll kill you!"  
Admit you talked, you creep'  
or I'll blow you away!  
I'll count to 3!  
Get some brandy before he croaks!  
What'd I tell you?  
The chickenshit  
couldn't give away a thing.  
Not even a map of Paris!  
Drink this.  
He has no defense.  
Would you do it?  
You're joking.  
You're joking.  
She comes every day.  
You have to talk to her.  
A woman like that...  
And tell her what?  
That her son hasn't a chance?  
You didn't handle De Scve right.  
You may think  
it's none of my business.  
Yes and no. You know my exploits.  
I knew my boys, fear capacity'

and the enemy's, as well.  
Your Erlane is a pure, 100% coward.  
I'm convinced of it! So?  
So drop it.  
He's sick... among the sick.  
It's simple as pie.  
He goes over to the enemy  
and I send him home to Mama?  
You let yourself off easy!  
- Me?  
- Sure!  
Medics weed out the unfit.  
You should've weeded out  
the cowards.  
Who else could have?  
You saw them at work.  
You didn't do it.  
Erlane was predictable!  
You are responsible!  
Snuffing him is disgusting!  
He's thick as a brick!  
The kid's a blue blood. He betrayed  
not only his army, but his class!  
- He's done for.  
- Not at all.  
The padre's pleading?  
We'll give him  
an on-the-spot briefing'  
between De Scve's dugout  
and Hill 915.  
We may find something.  
I haven't lost my flair:  
This is the spot!  
You won't find anything of value.  
The peasants already cleaned it out.  
Funny feeling, no?  
De Scve's dugout...  
Jittery Johnny's starting point.  
And mine.  
Here!  
Socrates hill...  
He was to deliver a despatch  
to the gunners there.  
I read the section report.

So did I. Routine stuff.  
Hold on!  
2 Boche batteries start pounding  
around about 7 p.m.  
As recorded by adjutant Perdrix.  
Correct.  
7 pm... Erlane arrives  
at the height of fireworks.  
Perdrix controls Hill 915.  
But he's being hammered at.  
Hill 915 is there.  
Shells falling there... there...  
There, where you are. Sheer hell!  
The poor chap legs it for  
where the shelling's lightest.  
Straight to the Bulgars!  
Is it far to go?  
The worst is over.  
I may be imagining things...  
It still smells of gunpowder, no?  
The Bulgar patrols came this far.  
Maybe the kid was taken.  
A simple prisoner!  
He never said that.  
Chauchat cartridge...  
I finished off a few in these parts!  
With grenades.  
We made a nice hash of 'em!  
Here. A great big Bulgar...  
Holding his guts'  
hands full of blood and shit...  
I shot him point-blank.  
Out of pity!  
Your darkies really had  
several wives?  
Polygamous, yes.  
They're simple folk who do  
in full view what we conceal.  
I'm for starting a fad!  
Still, it's a bit shocking, no?  
You get used to it.  
How right we were to go there!  
To teach 'em prudery?  
No, to cure them.

Shots. Against syphilis.  
The peasants are home again.  
Smoke in the chimneys...  
Life goes on.  
Not for everyone.  
True enough, Captain.  
An hour's march...  
Erlane's scared shitless.  
It's a moonless night - I checked.  
There's still some shooting.  
He doesn't know the sector.  
If you're bushed'  
imagine his fatigue!  
Stumbling, half dead...  
He sees a helmet'  
raises his hands: "me prizonir"!  
Maybe in Boche talk.  
Reveal our positions?  
He can't. And it's pointless.  
Why?  
His despatch was marked  
with all the machine-gun positions.  
Those guys know how to read!  
You've given me a defense  
for the poor boy.  
And hope.  
I'll cite you as a witness.  
Character witness?  
That'll cook his goose.  
Those 5 generals  
won't see it like that.  
Not one ever saw battle  
close enough to get the jitters.  
And if I say that...  
As Erlane's superior'  
your report on his conduct  
shows you had little esteem for him.  
None at all. He's not a soldier.  
Can you be more specific?  
Was he guilty of insubordination?  
No. He was the ideal subordinate.  
Subordinate to everybody.  
A servant's mentality.  
Item dismissed.



When you say, "He's no soldier."  
Do you mean he's unfit  
physically? Or morally?  
I see where you're trying  
to lead me.  
Leave that kind of argument  
to the defense. That's his role.  
Since you refer to me, Lt. De Scve'  
I have one question:  
When you entrusted Erlane  
with that despatch'  
was he aware of its content?  
Or its importance?  
Nor had he a sense of his role.  
If he didn't know  
our gun placements'  
which the Bulgarians  
could easily decipher'  
then he's no longer  
a conscious, deliberate deserter  
to the enemy'  
but a mere boy of 20'  
weakened and vulnerable'  
lost in a situation  
beyond his limits  
and understanding.  
There are the strong and the weak.  
You want me to say  
that Erlane is sick'  
an oversensitive and morbid soul'  
paralysed by his emotions  
and deprived of all will.  
Thus, in certain cases'  
irresponsible.  
That's the word you want  
to hear from my lips.  
No!  
Where is he from?  
From a world I know. My world.  
A world of highborn privilege  
and wealth.  
He had it all, enjoyed it all.  
The counterpart is valor.  
The gravity of an action

depends on one's will  
to accomplish it.  
I know a venial sin  
from a mortal one, Father.  
He is guilty of treason'  
as he did not destroy the despatch.  
The enemy surprised us  
without a single casualty.  
While we lost 37 men!  
37!  
You have no pity for this wretch!  
You make declarations  
that none can ever prove!  
Or even refute! Not even him.  
I wouldn't like to be in your place.  
Neither do I. But I am.  
I did many things these years  
I didn't care to do.  
Between this officer'  
certainly brave, and battle-trained'  
and this youth, a stranger  
to violence and fear'  
you have a choice to make'  
without proof or certainty.  
Yet we ask for justice.  
One day the judges, too'  
shall be judged.  
They will not be asked'  
"Were you just?"  
But...  
"Were you good?"  
Head high, comrade!  
There's still the plea for clemency.  
Here's what I think  
of your menu, Mr. Mnard!  
I want whiting la Colbert.  
No more boar!  
You had me eat it all by myself.  
I'm sure of it! I'm fed up!  
A la Colbert's easy.  
It's a whiting...  
fried, floured...  
Colbert, what!  
Whiting

doesn't walk the streets here!  
Work it out!  
Now what?  
We're on manoeuvres again?  
Sofia, Bucharest, Sofia!  
And now the Danube delta!  
What the hell for?  
And the men are asking why  
they haven't been demobilized.  
Because we're an Expeditionary Force  
now, my boy.  
Expeditionary meaning peace  
on a war footing!  
I'm listening.  
You didn't come to chitchat?  
No, sir. I wish to be relieved  
of my judicial functions.  
Relieved? You're resigning?  
You dare bother me in the midst  
of the umpteenth packing!  
You take me for  
a five-and-ten floorwalker?  
You can't quit. I dismiss you!  
Back to your unit!

**Destination:**

I've got it!  
I've got the missing file!  
Hey, warden'  
we're freezing our butts off!  
So which car is ours?  
- What's happening?  
- That Romanian officer...  
I filed a request for dismissal.  
He died!  
So your request's kaput, too!  
In a hurry? OK. Forward, march!  
Class of '11! Eight years away  
from home! Goddam!  
7 years for me. Enough!  
We fought for France. Even here.  
Now they want us to fight an enemy  
who isn't our enemy anymore...  
The Hungarians.

Even a former ally, the Russians!  
Our families are waiting'  
our wives'  
kids we hardly know'  
our jobs, our land. Life, what!  
It can't go on like this.  
We gotta put our foot down.  
I do, anyway.  
War at home ended a year ago!

**I say:**

And I raise you 300...  
What a bluffer!  
A regular cathouse card shark!  
I'm cleaned out! Finished!  
You had nothing?  
Own up... you had nothing.  
And no shit, y'hear?  
Or I'll take your belts  
and suspenders!  
Hey, warden, I didn't know  
you were such an ass!  
Beyond the river, the Bolsheviks.  
You, here.  
Me, behind the hill.  
And then what?  
We wait for them.  
I've just seen Erlane.  
His execution is in three days.  
No remorse?  
Ground arms!  
At ease!  
Sergeant Lanzec...  
Front and center!  
You refused sentry duty?  
Sentry duty against whom, sir?  
The war's been over for 7 months.  
I have no more enemies now.  
My comrades and I  
request our return to France.  
Those who agree, step forward!  
Gendarmes!  
Take them away!  
To the stockade, with the others!

Those who broke rank...  
Left!  
Lanzec'  
you'd be with me  
if not for your asthma.  
If it was to do all over'  
I wonder...  
This all seems so stupid  
and pointless.  
You believe the war's over, too?  
The war, no. All wars!  
You're wrong, my boy.  
It's only the start.  
Red vs. White'  
anarchy vs. Law'  
believers vs. Cynics'  
good vs. Evil...  
"The final combat..."  
that's their anthem!  
They have nothing:  
No arms, no food, no chiefs...  
They have hope. It's terrifying.  
The Old Man planned it all?  
You can tell.  
We defend the road.  
No access, that way.  
- Oh, yeah?  
- Too deep.  
The dodo who decided that  
just dipped his toe in.  
"General, I'm sinking..."  
"It's up to my ankle!"  
What a bunch of...!  
I'd come this way!  
Lying low on rafts, skiffs...  
And suddenly...!  
Up there, you'll only mow  
down the frogs!  
He's right.  
So?  
You position there and cover.  
But that's desertion of post...  
3 years in the keep!  
Do as you like, boys.

But a word of advice:  
Keep the machine-guns mobile.  
Coming, warden?  
Something moved!  
- Seen anything?  
- Nope...  
But something moved!  
1st and 2nd companies, follow me!  
Set up heavy machine-guns  
facing the marsh!  
We're not the enemy!  
Those muzhiks are!  
The command post's not answering!  
They're in the latrine!  
You oughta know!  
Do a good deed, Lt.!  
2 cases of grenades!  
Grenais, Beuillard, the grenades!  
I'll take responsibility!  
Let's go, boys!  
Machine-guns! Bring the gunners'  
if they like it or not!  
If there're rifles in reserve'  
help yourselves!  
Take these and move it - or else!  
I've never used grenades!  
It's high time you learned!  
Beats the firing squad!  
Bastards! Scumbags!  
Stop, Conan!  
They're retreating!  
Keep going, old man!  
C'mon, Rouzic!  
We'll get you, you buzzards!  
Kill 'em all!  
He got it in the back  
of the neck.  
"And thus Jean Erlane met his death,  
facing the enemy,  
"redeeming his past behavior  
with heroic conduct.  
"I can assure you, Madam,  
that he did not suffer.  
"He will be remembered

with gratitude by the regiment,  
"for his part in the action  
led by the group of prisoners.  
"I know that even the sincerest  
of words cannot alleviate the pain.  
"Yet I wish to express  
my deepest sympathy..."  
A beer, please.  
Is Mr. Conan here?  
- Someone for you!  
- Has he got a name?  
Lt. Norbert, sir.  
For Christ's sake!  
In here, Lieutenant.  
Who asked for lights?  
I was passing through.  
Me, too...  
I'm passing.  
Passing away, even... bit by bit.  
You haven't changed much.  
Just enough.  
What d'you do?

**You know:**

Understand?  
My pupils.  
Oh, yeah...  
That's good.  
You shouldn't've come.  
I think about you a lot.  
I think'  
"At least, he knew me alive."  
You look fine.  
Don't give me that!  
I've made arrangements.  
You'll get my cross and ribbons'  
some odds and ends'  
a photo... You'll see.  
The doc gave me 6 months.  
6 months...  
He's just being polite.  
A nice guy.  
A fool, but a nice guy.  
No, you shouldn't've come.

But I'm damn glad you did.  
You all right here?  
You kidding?  
A bunch of slugs.  
No one to talk to.  
The best are inscribed  
on the war monument.  
The rest are swill!  
I'm married, too.  
I know.  
Your wife told me where to find you.  
So you know why I can't invite you.  
Anyway, I haven't the time.  
You're still a rotten liar'  
Lieutenant.  
Remember on the train  
to Bucharest, when I said...  
there were 3000 of us?  
Sofia.  
On the train to Sofia.  
It was snowing.  
3000 of us at most  
who won this fucking war...  
Of course!  
Of course, I remember.  
We only fought it.  
You won it.  
Well, if you get around'  
you'll likely meet up  
with one or two.  
Take a good look at 'em, old man...  
A good look.  
They're like me.  
All of 'em!  
Nina Bogin - Lenny Borger