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Battleground

By Robert Pirosh

To the rear, march! To the rear, freeze!
Forward! To the right flank, freeze!
Forward! Platoon, halt.
At ease.
What was that number in Paris?
All heads up. Right face.
Forward march.
Extend. Hut!
Swing right. Hut!
"Merry Christmas." That's a crock.
Beats those replacement camps.
You said the war would be over
by Christmas.
What do you want, egg in your beer?
Here we are, two hours from Paris.
The spitting image
of Camp Wolters, Texas.
You know, they got a man in the army.
A two-star general.
But all he does is fly around
in a private plane looking for ugly places.
Flat, sandy places. No trees, no water.
Then he checks up on the climate.
If it's too hot in summer for human life
and too cold in winter...
and if it has more rain, fog, wind,
and snow...
than any other spot he can find,
then he plants the American flag...
and proclaims it a US Army camp.
Did they drill that way at Camp Wolters?
Bombshell.
Box steps.
To the rear, freeze! Forward!
To the right flank, freeze!
Forward! Platoon, halt!
At ease!
Forty-two sixty what?
- Forty-two sixty-ten.
- Seventy!
Platoon, attention. Right face.
Forward march!
The Screaming Eagle.
They know who you are

when you wear that on your sleeve.
It wasn't bad enough
being in Infantry Replacement.
We have to volunteer
for the 101st Airborne.
You go in gliders instead of trucks.
That's the only difference.
There must be a difference
or they wouldn't give you extra pay.
Hooper, I don't think
I'll take in that movie tonight.
I'll be kind of busy getting acquainted
and sewing on shoulder patches.
Why did they have to put us
in different companies?
- Lf we ask them, they might do something.
- No. There's another major general.
His job is to find out who your buddy is
and then to split you up.
- Don't forget, I'm in K Company.
- I won't.
And don't you forget, I'm in I Company.
Third platoon, second squad.
So long, Hooper.
Thanks.
Remember that lieutenant in Normandy...
who said he'd court-martial the first man
who tossed his gas mask away?
We ripped out the masks...
and used the carriers
for toting that cognac we liberated.
"Take care of that gas mask, soldier.
It might save your life someday."
- Hiya. How did you make out?
- The lights were pretty bad...
but I was really flipping them in there.
Six completed passes.
- I'll be hot in that game tomorrow.
- Tomorrow? You ain't going to Paris?
Him? He'd rather play football than eat.
With the chow we've been getting,
I don't blame him. But Paris...
It's gonna be lonesome here.
The whole platoon's going.

All except the replacements.

- Sgt. Wolowicz?

- Yeah?

My name is Layton.

I've been assigned to your squad.

Make yourself at home,
but on some other sack.

- That one's mine.

- I'm sorry, I didn't know.

Li'I Abner in Paris.

Boy, that's gonna be something.

Daisy Mae won't know you
when you get back to Dogpatch.

That's for dang sure.

Abner, will you please stop saying that?

Fellows, look what I found.

- Holley.

- The Purple Heart kid.

At ease, men.

I heard the war was on its last legs,
so I thought I'd come back.

Rough in the ETO.

A little scratch on his leg...

and a month later he comes back in time
for a three-day pass to Paris.

It was misery in that hospital, Kipp.

Passes every night, champagne, I'amour.

And me brooding all the time
about my dear buddies back there...

defending the Republic.

Will you look at that girl bait.

I'm getting me a mess of that fruit salad
just as soon as we hit Paris.

You can have the sack next to me.

Nobody's got it, have they?

No, I was just sitting here.

- That's a nice-looking little girl.

- It's a boy.

What's it like, Holley?

- Paris?

- Yeah.

I spent my spare time in the art galleries.

But I happened to hear about a place
that might interest you. Place Pigalle.

Pig Alley.
Be sure to bring your dog tags,
because one night in Pig Alley...
Excuse me.
Because you're going to think
you're the Caliph of Baghdad.
You guys talk about Piccadilly Circus.
Compared to Pig Alley,
it's like the quiet room in a limey YMCA.
How about you and me
boarding up in Paris?
What's the matter,
did Pop Stazak disown you?
Pop can't go on account of his arthritis.
I love you, Roderigues. I love all of you.
But I'm getting me a private room
and private bath in Paris...
if I have to get it at the point of a gun.
The big brain wants to get away
from us common people.
He hasn't got anybody around here
to chat with about the Einstein Theory.
What do you mean? He's got me.
There ain't nothing
we like to talk about better.
What happened to Lt. Belwick?
He was just your speed, Joe College.
He got hit in Holland.
It's all right, kid. Go right ahead.
Just brush me off when you're through.
- Holley, my boy, bonjour.
- Hiya. What are you busting out about?
It's nothing at all, son.
It's hardly worth mentioning.
They're just making me a civilian,
that's all.
- They what?
- I wish I had arthritis.
It ain't the arthritis.
They got a report from the Red Cross...
that my wife is too sick
to take care of the kids.
So I let them talk me into accepting
a dependency discharge.

Glad you made it, Pop.
Who's gonna adopt Roderigues?
He'd be lost without his Popsy Wopsy.
One of these days
you're going to get a GI bootsie wootsie...
right square in those GI teeth.
Such language. You should have
learned him better manners, Pop.
- Knock it off, will you?
- When do you leave?
Any day now. I have to sweat out
a letter of confirmation...
from our higher headquarters.
You'll be in Paris.
No, I decided to catch that football game.
That's swell. It'll be rugged
waiting around here all alone.
See you in the morning, Johnny.
You gonna miss me, Abner?
That's for dang sure.
I'm glad to see you guys
finally got the junk off my cot.
How about dousing that light?
Paris trucks are leaving early.
Okay, douse it.
All right, roll out of them sacks.
Hit it.
Leave your cots and grab your socks.
Let's go, men. You're slow.
Get them up, Wolowicz.
- I ain't going to Paris.
- Nobody's going to Paris.
- We're moving up. On trucks.
- Moving up? Where to?
Beats me. The Krauts
made a breakthrough someplace.
They tell me it's gonna be cold...
so wear your long johns and two pairs
of pants. Three, if you can get them on.
But they told us yesterday
we'd be off the line for good.
They didn't get the order
till after midnight.
There's trucks this time instead of gliders.

That's a good sign, anyway.
This is strictly for the birds, brother.
Beats anything
ever I stuck my finger in before.
"General, I need a crack division
to plug up that gap."
"A crack division, General?
I'd be honored if you'd use the 101st."
"Awfully nice of you, old boy.
Thanks a lot."
"Not at all, General."
Maybe the adjutant
can put in a phone call.
Yeah. It's only a technicality.
- I forgot to tell you, men...
- Shut up!
It's a secret move,
so rip off your shoulder patches.
Sarge, you got any of them
rubber overshoes, them galoshes?
Can't fit you, Abner. Your feet's too small.
Take care of that gas mask, soldier.
It might save your life someday.
Yeah, if you can find some cognac.
- No dice?
- I gotta wait for the letter. Regulations.
It's gonna be a cold trip.
Maybe you can ride in the driver's cab.
Wind it up.
Let's get this show on the road.
- That the new platoon leader?
- Yeah, fresh off the boat.
I understand your problems, men.
- I used to be an enlisted man myself.
- For six months, maybe.
And 17 weeks at OCS,
and he's an officer and gentleman...
- by special act of Congress.
- Sound off!
Shut up!
- What did he say? Where are we?
- Are you kidding?
Do you speak French, sir?
Yes. Immediately.

- Cigarette?
- Thank you very much.
I don't smoke, but thanks anyway.
Thanks a lot.
What time is it, Hansan?

- 11:

- What?
It can't be that late. We left at 2:00.
- Near lunchtime in Springfield.
- You never changed your watch?
What's the use of changing your watch?
What's the use? You're here,
you're not in Springfield, Illinois.
I hear you.
This is what I like about the infantry.
You always know just what's going on.
How do you like this guy?
He don't like the infantry.
- Must be off his nut.
- He never had it so good.
He found a home in the Army.
Chewing gum? Cigarette for mama?
Chocolate, please.
Isn't she cute?
Chewing gum? Cigarette for mama?
Here.
Get a load of mama!
I'd like to keep her in chocolate
for about a week.
What's she saying, Jarvess?
She wants to know
if we'd like to come inside and warm up.
- Yes. Warm up, please.
- Oh, brother!
- I like these secret moves.
- We sure slipped one over on the Krauts.
How do they find out these things?
Who tells them?
- I keep them posted. Short wave.
- Somebody does.
They only occupied France for four years.
Naturally they left a few spies
when they pulled out.

That's an idea.
Why don't us GIs hire some spies...
so we'll know what's going on
once in a while?
Get them inside! Come on!
On the double!
Kinnie, how about getting
these men in out of the hot sun?
Wolowicz, Garby,
in there with the second platoon.
This corner house.
I forgot to tell you.
Put those shoulder patches back on.
- Pop, I hear we're bedding down here.
- Overnight?
Yeah. Looks like a good house, too.
Smoke coming out of the chimney.
For once, we get a break.
Bastogne. I won't be forgetting
this place in a hurry.
I wouldn't mind holing up here
till Christmas.
I hear tell we might.
All the rumors is good ones.
This is the United States Armed Forces
Radio Service broadcasting from London.
Let's see if we can get some news.
- What's he selling?
- Wait till he slows down.
Ask her. I'll guarantee you
she can sprechen sie Deutsch.
Let's live a little, Jarvess.
- Come on, mama, get yourself in gear.
- No, not mama.
These two little children,
they live with me, but...
Slowly, please.
She said she's not the mother
of the two little girls.
They're from a town near here.
Bombed out, both parents killed.
They all got a sob story.
- Let's cut a rug, Denise. Danser?
- No, we've cut enough.

You gotta keep paying these taxi dancers.
Fork over another chocolate bar.
What you say, please?
I said do you think
the rain'll hurt the rhubarb?
What he say?
Is there any coffee left?
- Yes, plenty of coffee. Immediately.
- Thank you.
Anything you want.
Sure, as long as you pay for it.
They're all alike here.
Yes, they're all alike, Kipp.
Scared, hungry, lonely.
Come on, stop beating your gums.
Let a guy get some sleep.
Yeah, it's about that time.
We sure come a far piece today.
- You okay, Kipp?
- Okay.
Poor tired soldiers.
- You want?
- Thank you.
I go now?
I guess so. I'm all beat-up.
It never fails.
Every time you meet a pretty babe...
you're either out on your feet
or you get the order to move.
- What you say, please?
- Nothing.
- Thank you very much.
- All right.
Good night.
- Where are you going?
- Guard.
What did she say?
She said she's gonna hide the chocolate
from the kids till Christmas.
I wish I knew for sure
we'd be here tomorrow.
- You'll be here.
- Are you sure?
All we do is lie around till the fog lifts...

so the air corps can come out
and win the war for us.
In that case, I guess I'll take a chance.
This may go down in history
as the greatest gamble of the war.
- Good night, Denise.
- Good night, soldier.
Wolowicz, are you absolutely sure?
Yeah, the C.O. Told us himself.
Wake me up early, will you?
Maybe.
I ought to report this
to the Inspector General.
There's supposed to be 18 inches
between bunks.
This is dangerous, spreads germs.
There's some hot coffee on the stove.
I can use it.
Don't worry about that plane.
It's one of ours, I think.
Halt. Password.
- Hamburgers.
- Onions.
I thought the 101st
was the only division here.
They will be
as soon as the rest of us can get out.
- What's up?
- We were a little over to the east.
Been there for weeks without firing a shot.
Then they started coming.
Tanks, planes. Everything
you ever heard of and then some.
A Jerry plane turned on a loudspeaker
in English.
It said Hitler will give Paris
to the Germans for a Christmas present.
But they told us
it was just a weak little counterattack.
They'll probably tell you
that this is a strategic withdrawal.
- Good morning, soldier.
- Bonjour.
I'll be back in a minute.

Keep an eye on... What's going on?
Me and Gen. McAuliffe decided to move
I Company up on the line.
- That is, if you agree.
- I should have known better.
Maybe she'll give you a refund
on those chocolate bars.
How much time have I got?
Ten minutes? Five minutes?
Anything you gotta do,
you better do in 30 seconds.
Saddle up. Let's go, Holley.
Drop your packs and rolls.
Third platoon, on your feet.
We've got that patch of woods to clear.
Third platoon,
any time there's a dirty detail.
Let's not be having
any talk like that, soldier.
Let's go.
Keep sight of the man on each side of you.
Watch out for snipers.
Snipers, the man says.
Second squad, over here. Dig in.
You're in charge till I get back.
I'm going to see the Lieutenant.
- Don't go volunteer for any patrols.
- Who do I dig with, Sergeant?
That's right, we've got an odd man.
You can triple up with me and Hansan.
- Thanks. You want me to go with you?
- No, you stay and get the hole started.
Come on, Hansan, let's go.
Take ten, Jarvess.
Time for me to spare you.
Get out of here.
I'm sorry.
Let's not try to reach China this time.
There's no sense digging
if you don't go deep.
Last time we dug one together...
you went so deep that when I climbed out
I got the bends.
- How does it look?

- Great.

Only one thing wrong. We're moving.

- What?

- You heard me. It ain't my idea.

Saddle up, everybody, let's go.

Oh, no!

Just once I'd like to dig a foxhole...

and find out that's the one I'm sleeping in.

Will you stop yapping?

First and third squads

gotta run patrols all night.

- All we gotta do is...

- Standiferd, take over.

- I'm pulling the first shift on the roadblock.

- Okay.

You better take a blanket with you.

This fog...

really gets to you.

I feel kind of woozy myself.

Let's go, Hansan.

Just get it started. We'll finish it up.

When you were in that camp

in New York...

- did you ever phone your wife?

- Sure.

- What did it cost?

- A nickel. What did you think?

That's right. She came there to see you.

Did you phone your kids long distance?

Yeah, just before we shipped out.

- Why?

- What did that cost?

\$2 for three minutes.

- Why, Johnny?

- I was thinking...

it's probably about as far from New York

to Wichita, where your kids were...

as it is from Wichita to Los Angeles,

where my folks are.

And when you get back home...

what would that be, about 200 francs?

I'll send you a bill, Johnny.

Tell them that I...

Well, you'll think of something.

And if it runs over three minutes, it's okay.
Put out that fire. It's getting dark, Holley.
Put on that steel pot
and get over to the roadblock.
Three on a shift at night:
You, Kipp, and the new man.
They said to look out
for Krauts wearing GI uniforms.
What about the password?
That might be nice to know,
in case somebody thinks we're Krauts.
- Bug-jitter.
- Thanks.
Here, don't get any dirt in these eggs.
Okay, you get half of them.
- How do you feel, Standiferd?
- Terrible.
It's settling down in my chest.
I'm almost sure I have a fever.
I had a fever in Holland, but the medics
wouldn't let me off the line.
You have to have 102. That's a regulation.
Listen to that voice. I can hardly talk.
Yeah, it sounds good.
Halt! Password!
- Bug.
- Jitter.
- What is this, Charlie Company?
- No, sir, I am.
I am Company?
This must be the road to Neufchateau.
- I think it is.
- You want to be sure of things, soldier.
- Is there a bridge up ahead?
- Yes, about half a mile out.
Good. Let's go.
Smart cookie. Wearing his bars on patrol.
Must be a new replacement.
Don't let that happen again.
Speak English.
Yes, sir.
Oh, no!
Look, Pop, it's snowing!
I never saw snow up close before.

It's beautiful.
You didn't, by any chance hear...
that it's kind of cold
and a little on the wet side, did you?
Man, it's really coming down.
Well, close the window, Johnny,
and fix that hole in the roof.
You should know better
than to take off your boots in a foxhole.
You might want to start running fast.
- I can't sleep with wet boots on.
- Then wear your galoshes until they dry.
I ain't got no galoshes.
- Where did you get those branches?
- Where do you generally get branches?
- I didn't know if the woods were cleared.
- Yeah, sure. K Company's in there.
- K Company?
- Yeah.
I got a buddy in K Company.
- Is this K Company?
- Yeah.
- Where will I find Hooper?
- Hooper? Never heard of him.
Bill Hooper. I know he's in K Company.
He's not in my platoon.
That first hole is the company C.P.
- They'll know where he is.
- Thanks.
What platoon is Hooper in,
William J. Hooper?
Nobody by that name in K Company.
Yes, there is. He came in with
the new replacements just the other day.
That was his name? Hey, Sergeant.
What's up?
That kid they got at last night,
name is Hooper. William J. Hooper.
Now I can finish
making out my morning report. Thanks.
Direct hit on his foxhole. A mortar.
You don't hear them coming.
You don't know what hit you.
You didn't even know his name.

We didn't even find his dog tags.
Chatsburg News.
Li'I Abner gets one: The Dogpatch Gazette.
I'll take it.
- Sorry, Pop.
- It'll probably come up in the next batch.
You act as if I want a discharge.
Man, I like it here.
Stick around, Kinnie. We're going
to choose up sides for a snowball fight.
Hand these letters out
with the rations, Hansan.
They're all dinner, for once without coffee.
Dinner rations, with that vitamin-packed

lemonade powder:

"Simply add water
and serve ice-cold. Delicious."
- About that patrol, Kinnie...
- I can't let you go on it, Wolowicz.
I want to be sure you'll be around to take
over the platoon if I have to go back.
My feet froze up pretty bad last night.
I want three volunteers
to go out on a patrol.
You, you, and you.
You're in charge, Holley.
Why am I always volunteering for patrol?
- I'm just a cowboy.
- All right, this is the deal, Holley.
G-2 says the Krauts
dropped some paratroops last night.
And they might be hiding in that patch
of woods on the other side of that farm.
G-2. Wonderful how
they always know what's cooking.
Well, I can tell you something
they do know.
Last night, some Krauts in GI uniforms
infiltrated right through this area.
They blew up a bridge
on the road to Neufchateau.
Was one of them wearing lieutenant bars?
- How did you know?

- We get all the latest rumors.
Rumor, my eye.
They captured one of them.
Spoke English perfect. Knew our
password, plan of deployment, everything.
Kinnie, how about showing me
the way to the aid station?
I'm freezing.
- Feeling any better?
- Worse. Much worse.
Never felt so sick in my life.
Maybe I've even got pneumonia.
He's really bad.
Yeah, he's a cinch to go back
to the field hospital. Maybe even to Paris.
I don't know. That penicillin...
He's liable to be back in a day.
Yeah, a good, clean flesh wound is better.
Then they got to send you back.
No, thanks. I don't smoke.
Guys get sick, guys get wounded,
and nothing ever happens to me.
Nothing except that time
you broke your faux choppers.
It was when you were back. Kipp found
out you can't keep a man on the line...
unless he's got
at least six teeth of his own.
I didn't know about that.
So he broke his GI teeth
with the butt of his rifle.
I ran into a tree trunk in the dark.
He was off the line for two weeks
getting a new set made.
Let's get this patrol on the road.
That's incoming mail.
Holley, I think your eggs are about done.
We've had good deals before,
but this is the best one yet.
This is great. I don't ever wanna go back.
I found a home in the Army.
Of course, you can see snow from LA.
Way off in the mountains.
They got us zeroed in.

I'm getting out of here.

I hope he makes it. They should never have sent him back on the line.

Some guys just can't take it.

Wolowicz, there's something

I want you to know.

My name is Layton.

- I know it is.

- I just wanted to be sure.

Thanks.

This is what G-2 calls a patch of woods.

A whole division

could be hiding in that forest.

Nice job for a three-man patrol.

Yeah, if we don't get back, that's how they'll know we ran into some Krauts.

- What's the password?

- Texas.

Keep them covered. They may be German.

- Any line on these woods, Major?

- I didn't hear the countersign.

Leaguer. Texas Leaguer.

Will this road take us to Third Bat headquarters?

- Straight ahead.

- Get going.

- Just a minute. What is a Texas leaguer?

- How's that?

- I said what's a Texas leaguer?

- It's some kind of baseball term.

- What kind?

- A safe hit just over the infielder's head...

Nobody asked you.

How'd the Dodgers make out?

- Who's your commanding officer?

- He knows how the Dodgers made out.

- Let's see your dog tags.

- What?

We're not taking any chances.

What is this?

What kind of nonsense...

Drop those rifles.

- Who's Betty Grable going with?

- Cesar Romero.

- Quiet. Who's the Dragon Lady?
- She's in Terry and the Pirates.
- What's a hotrod?
- A hopped-up jalopy.
- Joe, what do you know?
- Just got back from a vaudeville show.
- I guess they're okay.
- Thank you, Sergeant.

PFC, Major. Praying For Civilian.

That's why I believe in being careful.

May I suggest, sir,
that you study up on baseball?

I guess I'd better.

By the way, you might tell your buddy
that Cesar Romero is out.

She's married to Harry James.

Let's go.

They really should have sent out
a bigger patrol.

- Lf you want to goof off...
- Who said anything about goofing off?

Nobody.

I'm just saying
the best way is to tell them...
you heard voices talking in German.
Let's say we heard voices talking
in Japanese and let G-2 figure that out.
That paper any good?

Best in the world. Sedalia News.

Keep your gloves off for two minutes and
you'd have Popsicles instead of fingers.
Get a load of this.

"Our Changing Times,
by Mrs. Donald Jarvess...

"pinch-hitting for your favorite columnist
and her favorite husband...

"now on active duty, US Army."

You knew I worked on a newspaper.

Yeah, but a column?

You must be pretty good.

I was too good. I wrote a piece
about the real meaning of the war...
the fight against Fascism, why every
American had to get in there and pitch in.

The logic was magnificent.
You couldn't resist it.
The next thing I knew,
I was in a troop train...
waving bye-bye to my wife.
- Came the dawn?
- Yeah.
Only one thing gets me.
When you work on a newspaper...
I'd get those wire releases...
and know that I was the first person
in town who had the news. All the news.
I'll guarantee you, my wife knows
what's going on in Bastogne.
All I know is
what's happening to the second squad...
in the third platoon of I Company.
Watch this one.
Strike!
Can't hit them if you can't see them.
Now the count's three and two.
Man on first and third.
Two out. This is the one that counts.
Foul ball. Come on, let's have a fast one.
Burn it in, boy. Come on.
A hit right over second base.
There, the center fielder
made a shoestring catch. You're out.
- How about it, ump?
- Sound off, pal. Password?
Don't you get it? Right over second base.
- Texas.
- Leaguer.
- You in charge?
- No, the lieutenant.
Hiya, fellows.
What's the situation, Lieutenant?
Nothing but pine trees in these woods.
We've been through them.
- I guess our mission's accomplished.
- Courtesy of K Company.
You can tell them to stop worrying
about this area.
Them and us both, Lieutenant. Thanks.

- I guess we might as well partie.

- So long.

- So long.

- So long, fellows.

Come on, on the double. They're Krauts.

Come on!

Kraut tanks!

No. Take off, will you?

If they think we're all getting away,
maybe I've got a chance.

- Go on.

- We'll send a patrol back.

- Don't forget the sulfa powder.

- Go on, get in there.

Let's go.

- You're sure they were enemy tanks?

- We saw them, Lieutenant.

Think we've got enough
antitank grenades to do any good?

We ain't got any.

Mind if I make a suggestion, Lieutenant?

What?

Sir, our usual defense against tanks
is to call for artillery...
and then run like a jackrabbit.

We've got orders to hold these positions.

All right, sir, but let's call for artillery
and keep our heads down.

We could send out some bazooka men,
if we had any bazookas.

- Put in a call for artillery.

- Yes, sir.

What a break.

Artillery's got that farmhouse zeroed in.
Concentration 17.

Item three to ltem:

Kraut tanks by burning farmhouse.

Concentration 17.

Roger. Start the fireworks.

That's great. Artillery can't miss.

They've got Roderigues to use
for an aiming stick.

Tell Wolowicz to send out for Roderigues
as soon as this barrage lifts.

With what, a sponge?
I've got to get me a rifle.
Any extra ones, Garby?
No, we haven't had any casualties yet.
There's a rifle waiting for you, Holley.
Your squad sent for the meat wagon
after the last shelling.
- Who was hit, Doc?
- Wolowicz.
Is he bad?
A shell landed
right on the edge of his foxhole.
His shoulder's like a sieve.
- Where's your steel pot, soldier?
- I lost it, Sergeant.
You can try mine on for size... Sergeant.
You're in charge now.
Leadership. That's what I got.
Where's Roderigues?
He'll be along, Pop.
Should have worn my shoulder pads.
In a couple of months you'll be flipping
those forward passes as good as ever.
Yeah, left-handed.
He's a good man, Holley...
but still a little jumpy.
He can move in with me.
You could do worse.
He sleeps warm and quiet.
His name's Layton. Jim Layton.
- So long, Wolowicz.
- Take it easy.
Say hello to Standiferd.
- Hansan, you can move in with Pop.
- What about Roderigues?
Is that incoming mail?
No, it's outgoing.
There'll be plenty more of it.
- What time is it, Hansan?

- 10:

Where's Roderigues?
Let's take a walk, Pop.
How much longer

are they going to leave him out there?

Let's partie.

We can carry him back in this blanket.

I want three volunteers.

It's a long walk, Pop.

- I need a fourth for bridge.

- I'll be the dummy.

You don't have to, Layton.

Maybe you'll find some more eggs.

What are you looking for, Kipp,
your discharge?

- I lost my teeth.

- You lost them?

They were searching me on
a roadblock, so I put them in my pocket.

- And they jumped out?

- Dropped out.

I hope it's nice and warm
back where you're going.

I can't chew on K rations with my gums.

No! Keep your eye open.

He used to see snow
way off in the mountains.

They say it's just like going to sleep.

He was a religious kid.

When anyone got hit...

he used to say it was God's will.

- What's the Bulge?

- Search me.

"Hitler's mighty counteroffensive swept on
yesterday under a news eclipse...

"from which filtered the fact that German
armor had plunged 20 miles into Belgium."

We're in Belgium, aren't we?

Thought it was Luxembourg.

Let's see that.

"War Department authorities report
that morale is high all along the front.

"Battle-hardened doughboys
fresh from epic-making triumphs..."

Skip the commercial, Jarvess.

"Air activity was halted by
thick, swirling fog.

"At Bastogne, the 101st Airborne..."

Hey, that's us.
Then you'll be proud to know
that you are making a heroic stand...
"hurling back the best
that Von Rundstedt can throw at you."
- Who's Von Rundstedt?
- A Kraut general. The best they've got.
Is the 101st the only division up here?
It doesn't say.
We'll have to wait for the next edition.
- Where's Pop Stazak?
- Him and Hansan are on a roadblock.
Well, this might be it. It looks official.
Chatsburg News.
And The Dogpatch Gazette.
Get back to the aid station, Kinnie,
before those feet of yours get any worse.
They won't take frozen feet
unless they start to change color.
No combat fatigue, no fever cases.
You have to be bleeding from a wound.
All they got at the aid station
is aspirin and iodine.
- What about the field hospital?
- Captured.
Medics, casualties, equipment, the works.
It must have been after the meat wagon
got there with Wolowicz.
I guess Standiferd was there, too.
Some of the walking wounded were killed.
They say the fight they put up
was one for the book.
Layton, you're learning too fast.
How about spelling me for a bit?
The dreams are getting better all the time.
I was back home in Baltimore...
Loading up on hard-shell crabs and beer.
That dream's against regulation, soldier.
You know what our boys overseas
always dream about.
- Mom's blueberry pie.
- Why, certainly!
That's what we're fighting for.
Boy, when I get home...

just give me a hot dog
and a slice of that pie.
Am I gonna kick if I don't get my job back?
No sirree. All I want is a...
So long, Holley.
So long, Pop.
- Au revoir.
- I found them!
I found them in another pocket!
You're just in time to work Pop's shift.
Go up and get Hansan.
- Where you going?
- Special Orders, Number 1437:
"Private Ernest J. Stazak
will proceed to Paris...
"where transportation to the US
will be arranged."
- Relax, chum. You ain't going no place.
- I ain't?
Here, read it yourself.
I don't care what it says.
Nobody's leaving Bastogne,
and nobody's coming in...
except maybe some Krauts riding tanks.
We're surrounded.
Surrounded?
If this is one of your crummy jokes...
I'll knock those GI teeth
right down your throat.
Take it easy, Pop.
He wouldn't have those teeth back
in his mouth if there was any way out.
Tough break, Pop.
You know,
I can get them in a lot of trouble for this.
It's against the rules of war
to shoot at civilians.
I'm sorry, Kipp.
Them poor devils
in the footslogging infantry...
nothing but walk, walk, walk.
The airborne, that's the life.
It's great up here in these gliders,
drifting along over the clouds.

They're liable to have you up
in juvenile court for smoking.
This your first time
away from home, Layton?
Basic training was.
That wasn't quite the same.
My folks stayed for a while
at a town near camp.
Did Mama rub your little footsies
after those nasty 20-mile hikes?
She made me brush my teeth
twice a day...
so I wouldn't have to
have them all pulled out.
- Hey, look at that.
- What?
I thought it was a shadow.
It's just some burnt-out powder.
You'll die of old age
before you see a shadow around here.
This fog ain't never gonna lift.
Did the planes have to wait?
Haven't they ever heard of flying blind?
Nobody cares. They just don't care.
I don't believe that, Kipp.
Reverend Layton
will now lead us in prayer.
Might not be a bad idea.
The C.O. Says you're to dig in
at that railroad embankment.
The rest of the company's
moving back 500 yards.
Right.
Third platoon,
whenever there's a dirty detail.
Let's go, men. On your feet.
Check your rifles. See if they're froze up.
Listen to Holley,
making a noise like a sergeant.
He's really GI now since he took over
the squad. Right on the ball.
Yeah. Strictly chicken, that's me.
Let's be chicken those bolts.
Check your rifles.

Why can't they pass down
some information?
If a man gets hit, he must at least know
what country he's dying in.
Now, that's for sure. That's for dang sure.
I've asked you 800 times...
I won't say that no more, Jarvess.
That's for sure.
Can't see them.
I'm with you, Holley.
Come on.
Second squad! You, too, Mac! Follow me!
Let's go, Abner!
Mama.
Wait till it clears.
Hold your fire.
Tell them to come out with their hands up.
Layton, you and Joe
check them for maps and papers.
See if any of them are still kicking.
Get the prisoners and wounded
back to Bastogne, Sergeant.
See if we've got enough men left, Holley.
I'm going to put this man in
for a Silver Star.
You know, a guy ought to be able to get
\$100 for this back in Paris.
I thought Holley was running away.
That's why I ran after him.
How do you know
what Holley was thinking?
How do you know if he was thinking at all?
Things just happen.
Afterwards you try to figure out
why you acted the way you did.
I know why I ran. I was scared to death.
You just joined the biggest club
in the Army. Everybody belongs.
Just drop me off at the psycho ward.
Why did I have to get up and start firing?
A good thing somebody did.
Yeah. It didn't have to be me. A volunteer.
It happened so fast,
you had no time to look at your watch.

Yeah, sure forgot what time it was
in Springfield.

- Hansan, I hate to ask you, but...

- You can have it.

Let's get out of here, chum.

Thanks, Pop.

I'll drop back later.

Just don't get carried back.

Say, miss, how about giving him a shot?

Morphine. Him.

No more morphine?

That's great.

She pours him one more,

I'm gonna get myself shot.

They're way too big.

I wished we'd found them yesterday.

Let's go, men. Chow!

- What?

- You heard me. Hot chow!

I've been pulling KP ever since.

We was bombed out twice.

I'm telling you,

I never saw so much incoming mail.

Yeah, things are getting rough all over.

I wanted to go back on the line.

But they're short-handed

in the kitchen, see.

A couple more KPs got hit this morning.

I wouldn't mind a little action

for a change.

How about you and me switching?

Oh, no. They'd never let me go.

I've been learning how to cook.

- Bettis, anything left?

- No.

But it's clean. It's only leftovers.

I don't even see those things.

I wanna see them.

I wanna remember them.

We'll start back in about an hour.

Better stick around this area.

Where's the kid?

Who, Layton? He's in the barn, I guess,
putting on those dry clothes.

Bettis, how about breaking loose
with a bottle of cognac?
We ain't got any.
I'll settle for some hot water
to wash my feet in.
Coming right up.
Bettis, you got any trading material?
The belly robber keeps everything locked.
But there's half a loaf of bread.
A half a loaf is...
Where is it?
I could have sworn it was on that table.
Hello, soldier.
Pull up a chair, Holley.
Today you are a man.
This is Antwerp, up here.
To the north and the east
are the British and the Canadians.
Down at Belfort, over 300 miles away,
is the French First Army.
The Americans are stretched out
all the way in between.
If the supply line to Antwerp is cut...
at least 20 Allied divisions
will be strictly out on a limb.
- Where's Bastogne?
- There.
This is where the Krauts
found a soft spot in our line.
You see why Bastogne is so important.
It's at the main intersection
of seven main highways...
one of them leading straight to Antwerp.
Don't know if we can hold out.
That sounds like ours.
It is ours!
Can't see a thing.
The supplies they've got to drop,
we wouldn't want.
A crate of eggs for Berlin.
If bombers can get through,
why can't C-47s?
In this pea soup?
- They're flying way over, you know that.

- The air corps.
London this morning,
Berlin this afternoon. Headlines tomorrow.
Fellows, come on back.
It's getting lonesome here!
Nobody cares. They just don't care.
You can say that again.
I thought they had us surrounded.
Halt.
I speak English. Who is here in command?
I am here in command.
We have a message
for the commanding general.
I'll get a jeep and take the officers back.
Blindfold them.
Try it again, Jarvess.
All I can get out of them
is their name and rank.
Loosen up, chum. Give us the lowdown.
You can talk now. Hitler kaput.
How would you like some nice K rations?
Now we're getting somewhere.
He says he'll talk for a pack of cigarettes.
What did he say?
They want us to surrender.
"Surrender or be killed," he says.
Us?
Tell him to go take a flying leap
at a rolling doughnut.
The Major thinks General McAuliffe
must have misunderstood.
We've appealed
to the well-known American humanity...
to save the people of Bastogne
from further suffering.
We have given you two hours to consider
before raining destruction upon you.
We do not understand
General McAuliffe's answer.
I'll be glad to repeat it.
The answer is, "Nuts!"
Is that a negative or an affirmative reply?
"Nuts" is strictly negative.
We will kill many Americans.

On your way, bud.
I feel better. For once we know
what's going on around here.
For once we get the story...
before my wife writes it up
and it's the daily news.
Here goes my last butt.
Don't tell me your problems.
Tell the chaplain.
Chaplain. I forgot.
We've got nothing to worry about.
Holy Joe is going to pray for us
at the Christmas services.
"They that wait upon the Lord
shall renew their strength.
"They shall mount up
with wings as eagles."
If the fog lifts.
"They shall run, and not be weary."
Unless they have frozen feet.
"And they shall walk, and not faint."
If they don't lose too much blood
before the medics come up.
Another airmail message from the Krauts.
"Merry Christmas, soldier,
and our deepest sympathy.
"It's tough being away from home
at this time of year...
"especially when you're surrounded
and outnumbered 10-to-1.
"Don't you feel your loved ones
worrying about you, praying for you?
"Yes, old boy, praying and hoping
you'll come home again.
"Man, have you thought about it?
What if you don't come back?
"Just remember this:
Where there's a will, there's a way.
"Hot chow and safety are waiting for you
only 300 yards away."
Anybody here from Ohio?
- Buckeye Lake, sir.
- Cincinnati.
- Maple Heights, sir.

- Tippecanoe City, sir.

I'm from Chillicothe.

Any of you men Lutherans?

Here, sir.

- I am, sir.

- My wife is, sir.

So am I.

These services aren't just for Lutherans,
any more than just for men from Ohio.

I merely happen to be in your area.

In other areas, there are other chaplains
of various denominations and religions.

All of us Holy Joes are switch-hitters.

Earlier this month in Holland,

I held Hanukkah services...

for some of the men of the Jewish faith.

How did I do, Levenstein?

Not bad for a beginner, sir.

Now it's nearly Christmas...

and here we are in beautiful Bastogne
enjoying the winter sports.

And the \$64 question is:

"Was this trip necessary?"

I'll try to answer that.

But my sermons,

like everything else in the army...

depend on the situation and the terrain.

So I assure you

this is going to be a quickie.

Was this trip necessary?

Let's look at the facts.

Nobody wanted this war but the Nazis.

A great many people tried to deal
with them, and a lot of them are dead.

Millions have died...

for no other reason

except that the Nazis wanted them dead.

So, in the final showdown,

there was nothing left to do except fight.

There's a great lesson in this.

Those of us who've learned it
the hard way aren't going to forget it.

We must never again

let any force dedicated to a super-race...

or a super-idea, or super-anything...
become strong enough
to impose itself upon a free world.
We must be smart enough
and tough enough in the beginning...
to put out the fire
before it starts spreading.
So my answer to the \$64 question is:
Yes, this trip was necessary.
As the years go by,
a lot of people are going to forget.
But you won't.
And don't ever let anybody tell you...
you were a sucker
to fight in the war against Fascism.
And now, Jerry permitting, let us pray.
Let us pray for this fog to lift.
Almighty God...
The organist is hitting those bass notes
a little too loud for me to be heard.
So let us each pray in his own way,
to his own God.
When you hear planes, men,
don't bother to look up.
They'll be ours.
Yeah, they'll all be going to Berlin.
Layton, you haven't got
a beat-up, old chocolate bar, have you?
I'm on that new lemonade diet.
Drop another nickel in the jukebox,
will you, chum?
We interrupt this program
with an important announcement.
A careful study of the most
scientific instruments and maps...
lead to the following weather forecast.
Continued cold, more snow,
and no sign of the fog lifting.
And now an old favorite,
which is growing more and more popular...
with the men of the 101st:
I Surrender, Dear.
Krauts walking around down there.
Tanks, too.

What am I supposed to use
for ammunition? Spitballs?
We've got 10 rounds left for Old Betsy.
- What about the tank at the roadblock?
- Can't move up. They're out of gas.
Try and get some news on that radio.
Krauts have got it jammed up,
everything except their own wavelength.
I'll try again.
They ain't even dug in.
- Holley.
- What?
Is there anything to those stories
about Krauts shooting prisoners?
- Where'd you get that?
- It's going around.
I heard that if you've got a Kraut pistol
on you when you're captured...
they blow your brains out with it.
Don't fall for them rumors, Layton.
Anybody want a Luger?
It's worth \$100 in Paris.
Thanks a lot.
It's a violation of the Sullivan Act
for a civilian to carry firearms.
If I was you, Lieutenant,
I'd hightail it out of here.
Other side of the hill! Dig in!
A careful study of the most
scientific instruments and maps...
leads me to believe
that German bombers are over Bastogne...
fog or no fog.
Kind of rough on rear echelon tonight.
Yeah, I've been thinking...
the Mess Sergeant, the Supply Sergeant...
the pill roller who gives us those shots
with a square needle...
I'm bleeding for them.
... let me avoid death...
let me have forgiveness...
the eternal farewell.
Fall out in and draw a rifle!
- A rifle?

- They just made you a rifleman. Me, too.
The medics told me I wasn't supposed
to go up anymore. You can check.
Get your blanket.
Fall out. Draw rifles and ammo right now!

- Chow?

- You ain't even warm.

Follow me, all of you, on the double!
That's all, brother.
Hey, you! Front and center!
Good thing they didn't send me up.
I never even fired an M-1 rifle.
Last time I was out on the range,
they were still using the .03.
All litter cases will prepare
to be evacuated immediately...
to air raid shelters.
All walking wounded
will fall out and draw rifles.
This is a .30-caliber, gas-operated,
clip-fed, semiautomatic rifle.
Look, you ain't selling it to me.
You're only showing me how it works.
To load it, you just pull the bolt back
like this, and stick the clip in.

- What's up, Smitty?

- Battalion says to pull back.

- Go ahead.

- You, too, sir. They said to tell you.
It's a cinch we ain't pulling back that way.
I guess maybe we ain't pulling back at all.
Lieutenant, take the second squad.
First squad! Third squad! Over here.
Save it, Layton.
They'll be getting a lot closer,
and we'll still be here.
It's shining!
How have you been?
Jarvess, look at them! They got here!
Drive them out of there! Blast them!
C-47s!
What was that about eagles?
"They shall mount up
with wings as eagles."

"They shall run and not be weary."
- Well, what are we waiting for?
- Let's go!
- Save me a couple of drops for my lighter.
- Lighter?
I got a little old lamp I got to fill
back in Bastogne.
K rations.
All dinners.
Hey, fellows, here it is.
Hey, fellows, come and get it.
Here, take your watch.
Daddy, what are them things?
It's a new kind of warfare, son.
Mechanized, I think they call it.
Read about it in the Stars and Stripes.
What will they think of next?
Tank job, cigarette for papa?
Got a Stars and Stripes?
It's two days old.
Heard it's been pretty rugged up here.
That's for sure. That's for dang sure.
Hey, handsome.
Good luck!
The folks back home
knew we'd get out of this.
They heard relief was breaking through
two days ago.
Fine. I'd hate to think
they'd been worrying.
You'll be happy to know we're in Belgium,
not Luxembourg.
Just so we're going back.
That's all that counts.
You mean you're not happy in the service?
I didn't say that. I love it.
You found a home in the Army, chum.
Me, too. Never had it so good in my life.
Third platoon, on your feet.
Fall in.
Oh, no!
About face.
Forward march.
Whatever happened to Jody?

All right. Come on.

What do you want these guys to think,
you're a bunch of WACs?

All right. Pick it up. Hut, two, three.
English