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Beneath Hill 60

By David Roach

(GENTLE MUSIC)
(DRAMATIC MUSIC)
(FOOTSTEPS APPROACH)
(MAN BREATHES HEAVILY)
(CONTINUES BREATHING HEAVILY)
(DISTANT CLATTERING)
(SCRAPING AND CLATTERING)
(MAN GROANS)

Dad... Dad!

(WHISPERS) Lieutenant Woodward.
I'm your new commanding officer.
I'm looking for Sergeant Simpson.
You'll need to talk to Corporal
Fraser. He's up top.
I can't seem to find my way out.
Follow the lateral. 30 yards on,
it forks. Take the right.
It's pretty narrow but you'll make
it.
You'll find a shaft. Left at the top.
that'll take you up to daylight.
Thank you.

VOICE:

What's your name, sapper?
Tiffin, sir.
I heard something - just through
there.

TIFFIN:

Listen.
You can hear 'em digging, sir.
- (MUFFLED TAPPING)
- There. Fritz.
They're gonna break through.
I swear to God,
they're bloody breaking through.
Shh, shh!
That sound that you heard,
was it like this?
(TAPS TWICE RAPIDLY
AND REPEATS)
That's it.
That's your heart.

What?

Feel it.

You're hearing your own heartbeat.

(BIRD TWEETS)

Make sure you clip

that little fella's claws.

Otherwise the bugger can be dead

and still sitting on its perch.

(BIRD TWEETS)

When does your shift end?

- Don't make me stay.

- (TWEETS)

Please.

(SAWING)

We'll put the billiard room

through there, eh?

You ever play billiards, Tom?

(DISTANT SHOUTING)

Best bloody billiard players

in the world, Australians.

- Says who?

- Well, ask anyone.

Best billiard players,

best horsemen, miners...

Bullshitters?

Keep a lid on it, you blokes.

Percy, Ginger, go down

and relieve the Sneddons.

Righto.

Dug through to China by now.

Well, I'll bring you back

some chopsticks, then, eh?

(CHUCKLES)

(DISTANT SHOUTING CONTINUES)

(SHELL EXPLODES)

(SHOUTING CONTINUES)

(BIRD TWEETS)

Who are you?

I'm Lieutenant Woodward.

I'm your new C.O.

WOODWARD:

I'm looking for Sergeant Simpson.

He's dead.

Sapper?

Norm Morris, sir.

Except we call him Pull Through'
or sometimes His Lankiness'.

- Tom Dwyer, sir.

- Billy Bacon, sir.

- Answers to Streaky'.

- (LAUGHS)

Morris, I want you to take over
the listening post at...

Where were we?

WOODWARD:

Sir.

WOODWARD:

Dwyer.

Sir.

(BIRD TWEETS)

Show me to the officers' dugout.

(SHELL EXPLODES)

(ARTILLERY SHELL WHISTLES)

(SHELL EXPLODES)

(ARTILLERY SHELL WHISTLES)

- (EXPLOSION)

- (MAN CRIES OUT)

(BOMBARDMENT CONTINUES)

TIFFIN:

- (EXPLOSION)

- **MAN:**

- Three, two...

- (ARTILLERY SHELL WHISTLES)

(EXPLOSION)

- **MAN:**

- **MAN 2:**

MAN:

Make way.

(GUNSHOTS AND BOMBARDMEN CONTINUE)

MAN:

Walking wounded and blind.

- **MAN 2:**

- **MAN:**

Come on, sir.

(ARTILLERY SHELL WHISTLES)

(SHELL EXPLODES)

(MEN BELLOW IN PAIN)

(PANICKED VOICES OVERLAP)

MAN:

(SHRIEKS IN PAIN)

(CONTINUES SHRIEKING)

(BOMBARDMENT INTENSIFIES)

(TIFFIN WAILS)

SOLDIER:

(MACHINE-GUN FIRE)

(SHELL EXPLODES)

TIFFIN:

Tiffin! Hey, get up!

Get up.

- (GASPS)

- Come on, son.

(SHELL EXPLODES)

(TIFFIN BREATHES RAPIDLY)

(UPPER-CLASS BRITISH ACCENT)

For God's sake, Australia.

This is an officer's dugout.

Woodward?

Bill McBride. I was wondering
when I'd see you here.

Went to mining school together.

Charters Towers boys.

Bob Clayton, Northumberland

Fusiliers.

Oliver Woodward,

An explosive man, right, Woody?

Could blow up at any time. (LAUGHS)

(TIFFIN CRIES OUT)

McBRIDE:

Two days. It feels like a year.

CLAYTON:

it will feel like a bloody lifetime.

(TIFFIN SOBS QUIETLY)

WOODWARD:

A Fritz machine gunner

got a bead on us.

Yeah, it's Boris. It's a farm
building.

They call it the Red House.

CLAYTON:

Our artillery's been blasting
away at it for a week.

Well, a direct hit'd
make a bloody difference.

- (BOMBARDMENT CONTINUES)

- TIFFIN:

(CRIES LOUDLY)

They have their own dugouts, you
know.

A bit of air will see him right.

You got a home, son?

Wollongong, sir.

Coal miner?

- Gold, right?

- Silver, lead. Broken Hill.

- (LOUD EXPLOSION)

- (TIFFIN SOBS)

Sweetheart?

Wife.

Wife?

Sweetheart.

You got a photograph, Tiffin?

She's, um...

TIFFIN:

(McBRIDE LAUGHS)

(McBRIDE AND WOODWARD LAUGH)

You're not even real soldiers, are

you?

I mean, what in God's name
are you doing here?

Tunnelling under German lines.
Protecting your trenches.

- **CLAYTON:**

- **WOODWARD:**

CLAYTON:

until you arrived
and who are now attempting to do
the exact same bloody thing.

Your point being?

That it was bad enough
my men being shelled from above
and shot at from in front.

Now they're being mined
from underneath.

(TIFFIN CRIES)

If the man is wounded, Woodward,
then for Christ's sake send him
to the dressing station.

If he's not, then he should be
back on duty.

Either way, he shouldn't be here.

If you want my opinion,
neither should you.

(TIFFIN CONTINUES CRYING)

Good to feel wanted, eh, Tiffin?
Wouldn't like to think we were over
here

putting our arses on the line
for nothing.

Clayton's alright. He's just got
the wind up him, that's all.

Hides it well.

People do.

Seems a shame to waste this.

(SHELL EXPLODES)

(CRIES OUT)

(IMITATES CLAYTON)

Spot of tea, old man?

(CHUCKLES) Oh, rather!

- (EXPLOSION)

- (CRIES) Mama!

It's alright, Tiffin. It's alright,
son.

(CICADAS HUM)

(WHIP BIRD CALLS)

Hello? Is anybody home?

I found these two little rascals
down by the creek.

They don't belong to you, do they?

Oliver, is that you?

Mrs Waddell.

Colin, Gordon, round the back.

Clean yourselves up before
your father gets home. Now, please.

BOY:

That's not fair!

I was hoping I might catch Moffat.

Ah. Well, you're too late,

I'm afraid. He's joined up.

Light Horse?

MRS WADDELL:

How was Papua? You know, we thought
the headhunters might have got you.

They took one look at my head
and ran away.

(LAUGHS)

Tell you something, though, Mrs
Waddell,

I could have stayed there forever.

Just... why don't you put the nag
in the stable and come inside?

We want to hear all your stories.

WOODWARD:

Is that you, Isabel?

- **MR WADDELL:**

- **WOODWARD:**

At school, we called him Captain'.

- He was captain of everything.

- (LAUGHS)

And were there complaints?

- No, sir.

- No.

- We wouldn't dare.

- Well, that's our Moffat.

- Woody, Woody, Woody!

- Yes?

Gordon reckons he can hold his breath
for one minute and thirteen seconds.

- Can he really?

- Watch.

One, two, three, four, five,
six, seven, eight, nine, ten...

Where's he posted now.

Well, we don't know. Egypt, we think.

...sixteen, seventeen...

It'll be the engineers for you,
now, I'd imagine.

I'd hate to think I wasted my time
training you up.

They've asked me not to join up, sir.

They need to keep the mine running.

Well, it's copper for the war effort.

We can't get it out of the ground
fast enough.

God knows how many shells
they think they'll need.

- **COLIN:**

- Well, an army needs munitions.

No, an army needs good men,
first and foremost.

...38, 39...

- **GIRL:**

When did you get back?

How was Papua?

What are you doing now.

Are you going to stay with us again?

- Are you? Oh, can he, Mama?

- Just slow down a minute, Marjorie.

And it's Mr Woodward.

- (BIRD SHRIEKS)
- Go and play with Gordon, little man.
- Come on, let's have a battle.

- GORDON:

- Marjorie.
- Mr Woodward.

The answers to your questions are -
two days ago, hot,
I'll be working at Mt Morgan mine
and, thank you, but I have
my own accommodation in town.

(LAUGHS)

- Is this for me?
- Oh, yes, but it's very silly.
- They make them for kids.
- No, it's beautiful.

I love it. Thank you.

Doesn't he look wonderful?
Some men are just born to be
in uniform, don't you think, Woody?

- EMMA:

- Mr Woodward.

Yes.

May I have some tea, please, Mama?

Yes, if you refill the milk jug
first.

And you can re-tie that ribbon,
young lady.

MARJORIE:

She's so grown-up.

Well, she thinks so

but, between you and me,

I think she still has a long way to go.

(GLASS SHATTERS)

MARJORIE:

What now.

- GORDON:

- COLIN:

Actually, I believe that Colin
has outflanked yours, see?
And my left flank moves forward...

- Mr Woodward?

- Yes?

- Do women ever go down mines?

- I don't think so.

Bad luck, they reckon.

Well, that's good

because I don't know that I'd like
to be so deep underground.

It must feel awfully claustrophobic.

It's funny. I quite like it down
there.

Really? Why?

Snug.

Hmm. Snug.

- (SPITS LOUDLY)

- Marjorie!

- Sorry, I...

- Are you OK?

Yes, I just...

Just go and clean yourself up
immediately.

I'm so sorry.

One moment she's an adult,
the next minute she's a child.

Now, while Moffat's away,
I want you to visit whenever you can.

- You promise me?

- I promise.

Right.

Mr Woodward, I hope you'll forgive
my silly indiscretion at the table.

Of course. Think nothing of it.

Well, goodbye, all.

Oh!

(HORSE WHINNIES)

(LAUGHS)

Marjorie Waddell, did you have
something to do with this?

WOODWARD:

It's my own stupid fault, I'm afraid.

He got into the lucerne this morning
and suffered terrible flatulence
on the ride over.
I think that's perhaps
how we got here so quickly.
(LAUGHS)
So, when I arrived I loosened the
girth.
Must've forgotten to cinch it up.
Stupid of me.
Are you sure you're not injured?
No, I'm fine, honestly.
Thank you for the tea, Mrs Waddell.
Mr Waddell.
Oliver.
Isabel.
(BIRD CHIRPS)
Anything?
There's something wrong
with this bloody candle.
It's just making it darker.
It's not the candle, Pull Through.
It's the air.
Not enough oxygen for it to burn.
(BREATHES HEAVILY)
Oh, Jesus Christ!
Could be worse.
Oh, Tommo, how could it
possibly be worse?
Well, they could send us to Hill 60.
What's Hill 60?
Messines Ridge, just across the
border, near Wipers'.
Blokes from the 40th
were sent off yesterday.
Fritz has got the high ground.
Our blokes are trying to fight in
bogs - bloody marshland.
Trenches running like
rivers of blood, they say.
That's just talk, probably.
(BIRD CHIRPS)
Shush, you little bugger.
You'll get us all killed.

Norm...

- (TIMBER SNAPS)
- (MAN GASPS FOR BREATH)
- (GUNSHOT)
- Aarggh!
(GUNFIRE)
Aarggh!
Aaaarggh!
- (LANTERN SMASHES)
- (MEN GRUNT AND STRUGGLE)
(MAN GURGLES)
(MAN SOBS)

TOM:

Howd you know it wasn't me?
Lucky guess.
Jesus Christ.
Is he dead?
Call it even, eh, Tommo?
(CHUCKLES)
(PIGEON COOS)
(EXPLOSION)
- Shit!
- (PHONE RINGS)
McBride.
(MAN ON TELEPHONE
SPEAKS INDISTINCTLY)
Location?
Say again.
How many?
Right.
Casualties?
Two missing - um, Morris and Dwyer.
(BREATHES NOISILY)
Hows the air?
(BIRD CHIRPS)
If they were near the face...
Not a chance. Not a fucking chance
in the world.
...they may have found an air pocket.
This strata holds up sometimes.
We struck some in Papua.
It's kind of... dense...
(SNIFFS AND SPITS LOUDLY)

It's pointless -
the whole miserable stunt.
- (BIRD CHIRPS)
- Lively, boys.
Steel soles.
German.
Stupid pricks.
Hear 'em coming a mile off.
(BREATHES HEAVILY AND COUGHS)

- MAN:

- I need you to move back.
Mate, are you alright?
(BREATHES NOISILY)
Help me here.

MAN:

It's Tommo.
(MAN COUGHS)
Shh!
(MAN COUGHS)
- Boys, it's Pull Through.
- Boys? Is that you, boys?
Hang on, Pull Through. We'll just...
Easy.
Can you get me out?
I thought I was a goner.
Watch out for your specs.
- Easy. Easy.
- (COUGHS)
(VOMITS)
Didn't think you'd get out of the
bloody war that easy, did you, old son?
(SPEAKS INAUDIBLY)

WOODWARD:

can you hear me?
(SPEAKS INAUDIBLY)
(BREATHES RAPIDLY) Tommo?
- Tommo!
- Morris, can you hear me?
Tommo! Tommo's in there.
There's a man buried.
Tommo! Tommo! No!

(PULL THROUGH COUGHS)

Take Morris up
to the dressing station, Fraser.
Come on, Pull Through.
One arrives nearly every day -
no stamp, no return address,
of course.
But what do they mean?
That I'm a coward.
But you're not. You're staying here
and doing your duty.
Shush now, Marjorie.
Mr Woodward knows
how to stop the feathers.

MARJORIE:

Well, let's just hope
that there won't be any more.
On the contrary,
just a few more feathers
and I'll have a whole chicken.
- (LAUGHS)

- WADDELL:

MARJORIE:

I worry about the local workers.
Bougainville is just up the coast.
It's a German colony.
If they send the German fleet down...
Good Lord, man! What would
the Germans want with Papua?
They've bitten off
more than they can chew in Europe.
(KNOCK ON DOOR)
Anyway, the word is the whole thing
will be over by Christmas.
Marjorie, clear away the plates now.
Yes, Mama.
Best put those back, Woody.
(BOY SPEAKS INDISTINCTLY)
William...
It's Moffat.

MARJORIE:

Take the children to their rooms,
please, Marjorie.
Isabel, boys, come on. Now, please.
William, tell me.
It's not good news, I'm afraid.
Why would they send the Light Horse
to Gallipoli, Oliver?
It's just cliffs, isn't it?
Is it not all just cliffs?
I don't know, sir.
I don't know.
Marjorie.
You don't have to go.
Just because Moffat, you know...
You don't have to go to the war.
I just couldn't bear it.
(SOBS)
(MAN YELLS INDISTINCTLY)

FRASER:

The point is I was kaput, finished,
and he got me out.
The point, Pull Through,
is you shouldn't have
been there in the bloody first place.

TIFFIN:

what I heard, but.
Maybe it really was me heart.
Maybe I never heard no Germans.
Of course you heard 'em.
Don't make no difference.
(FOOTSTEPS TREAD HEAVILY)
- Oh, fuck, man.
- (ALL LAUGH)
Good on you, Streaky.
Courtesy of
the Northumberland Fusiliers.
- Oh, bloody generous of 'em.
- Send 'em our regards.
Probably not a good idea, Corp.
(ALL LAUGH)

MAN:

Tiffin?

WALT:

to give up on you, Pull Through.

- We wasn't.

- Well, we was.

Well, you was. You said.

Finish your letter, Walt,

or get some more shut-eye.

But the Lieutenant knew about
the strata, Dad. How it holds up, like.

And that's why we kept digging.

The fact is Tom Dwyer's dead because
Woodward made a blue - a bad one.

Won't be the last either.

- He's alright, he is.

- Yeah?

Then why'd he join late?

Does anyone want

the last of the axle grease?

I was over here, killing Germans,
months before

his fuckin' number was dry.

Evening.

WOODWARD:

Surprised to see you here.

Me hearing came back.

Tommy doctor checked me out, couldn't
find a bloody thing wrong with me.

Too bad.

- Smoke?

- Yeah, thanks.

It's bad luck.

Bad luck lighting three smokes
with one match.

First one, Fritz sniper sees you.

Second one, he gets an aim.

Third one, he blows

your fuckin' head off.

Well, he'd be a crack shot

if he could get me down here.

(SCATTERED LAUGHTER)

Well, you never know
who's watchin', do you, sir?
I'll be writing to Tom Dwyer's
family.
If he had any possessions to send
back, bring them to my dugout.
Officer approaching! Attention!
- Woodward?
- Yes, sir?
I understand you're a demolition man.
I'm trained in mining explosives,
sir, not...
You're aware that the Germans
have placed a machine gun
in the Red House,
such that they can enfilade our
trench?
En... enfilade?
Fire down it lengthwise.
Oh, yes, sir.
And how much explosive charge would
you need to demolish that building?
Depends where you placed it, sir.
How much would you need
to do the job properly?
(MEN SHOUT IN THE DISTANCE)
Do we have that in the stores
or do we have to requisition it?

- CLAYTON:

- There's a listening post at 105 Drive.
That'd put you about 70 foot from
Boris.
If we drove north from there,
we could be under it in, what?
Oh, three shifts, 30 foot a day -
we could do it in two or three days.
Let's have it done before sun-up,
Clayton, you'll have to cut
a gap in the wire.
I'll have the artillery
give you one hour.
- Sir.
- Sir!

MAN:

get out of here fast enough.
Word is that bastard won't catch a
train in case it's going down a tunnel.
(MEN LAUGH)

WOODWARD:

going over the bags...
...crossing no-man's-land,
setting a charge.
I'll need two men.
I'll go, sir.
- You don't have to, Morris.
- Want to, sir.

FRASER:

I'll go.
(EXPLOSIONS AND GUNFIRE)
Here.
your element, aren't you, Australia?
I heard you tunnelling chaps
were wombats.
Come up for some air, have you?
Actually, we've been invited
to blow up the Red House.
Apparently you blokes keep missing.
(BOTH LAUGH)
(MACHINE GUN FIRES)
Set the exploder up over there.
Right. That's us.
They'll start up again at dawn.
You've never been over the bags
before, have you?
Christ.
When you get over the top,
stay low, don't bunch up.
If a flare goes up, freeze.
Don't bloody go to ground. Fritz
machine-gunners look for movement.
Keep one eye closed
until the flare drops -
then you'll see better
when it's dark again.

Thank you.

- Did your boys cut the wire?

- Yeah.

Lieutenant Clayton took
a couple of lads out earlier.
He ain't back yet. I'll cover you.
Let's go.

(FIRES GUN)

(FLARE HISSES)

- (GUN FIRES)

- **MAN:**

FRASER:

He hasn't spotted us, but.
The bastard's just trying his luck.

WOODWARD:

(FLARE HISSES)

(GUN FIRES)

Ready?

(SOLDIERS SPEAK GERMAN)

We'll have to go under.

There must be a cellar.

(GUN FIRES)

(SOLDIERS SPEAK GERMAN)

(GUN FIRES)

(SOLDIERS CONTINUE

SPEAKING GERMAN)

- (BRICK FALLS)

- (SOLDIERS SHOUT IN GERMAN)

(GUN FIRES)

(SOLDIERS SPEAK GERMAN)

Corp!

FRASER:

- **WOODWARD:**

- We're short.

WOODWARD:

you can get the exploder?
Sir, we could try again tonight.
They'll have found the charge

by then. Can you get it?

PULL THROUGH:

Stay on your bloody stomach
and when you get close, give
a low whistle to identify yourself.

The Tommies see any movement.

(GUN FIRES)

Oh!

(BOTH PANT)

(FLARE HISSES)

Who's the fastest man in our company?

You need a runner?

Yes.

Yeah, Streaky's bloody quick.

(MAN GRUNTS)

Christ.

FRASER:

WOODWARD:

There's no way of knowing.

Poor bastard.

Stay here.

Morris will be back any minute now.

FRASER:

Wait, sir!

Who are you?

- Clayton?

- (GRUNTS)

- Where did they get you?

- (GRUNTS)

- Mary, Mary.

- (MACHINE GUN FIRES)

You're set now, mate. We're gonna
get you home to your Mary.

- (GRUNTS)

- OK? Everything's OK.

Come on. Come on, Captain.

Come on.

WOODWARD:

(GRUNTS)

(MACHINE GUN FIRES)

Field dressing.

- Where is he injured?
- Left leg, above the knee.

(YELLS)

(MACHINE GUN FIRES)

Christ.

No! Wait.

- Bastard's got a pattern.
- Thanks, mate.

Captain.

Just pray they haven't broken.

(LAUGHS)

(GRUNTS) Thank you.

Sir, are you wounded?

I don't think so.

- Hello, Mr Woodward.
- Marjorie.

How is everything at home?

We're coping.

They've formed a mining battalion.

It's a secret, I think.

They're looking for miners
and engineers.

I've joined up.

In a few weeks,

I'll be leaving for training,
and after that, I expect

I'll be sent off to the war.

I see.

Marjorie, I'm nearly 10 years
your senior.

You're only 16.

I'll be 17 in a month.

I signed the papers this morning.

I would like to ask you if I could
write to you while I was away.

I would be happy

if you wrote to me...

...but if you're asking me

to wait for your return,

then you must first ask my father.

Thank you for taking

the trouble to see me.

Come in close.

If they're going to put on a big
push, it'll happen right now.

They're gonna hit us
where we're most vulnerable.

FRASER:

Whatever happens, we need
to hold our line, understand?
You convicts gonna play or what?

MAN:

Three points all. Next to score wins.

- **MAN 2:**

- (WHISTLE BLOWS)

MAN:

MAN:

Tiffin, get in there!
Boom, boom, out right!
Go, go, go, go!

- **MAN:**

- **MAN 2:**

- (WHISTLE BLOWS)

- **MAN:**

Come on. Turn it up. Get back.

- (MAN SHOUTS)

- **MAN 2:**

(MEN YELL INDISTINCTLY)

MAN:

here!

- Get onside!

- Get in there! Come on! Tackle!

(BLOWS WHISTLE)

MAN:

MAN:

Scrum down. Tiffin in the middle here.

MAN 2:

hard.

MAN:

- **MAN 2:**

- **MEN:**

- Where's my runner?

- **MAN:**

- Come on, Billy!

- **MAN:**

- (MEN YELL)

- **MAN:**

- Billy, go!

- Go, Streaky!

(MEN CHEER)

MAN:

the 1st Australian Tunnellers,
six points to three.

(ALL SING) d Parlez-vous?

D Mademoiselle from Armentieres,
parlez-vous?

D They'll do it for wine,
they'll do it for rum

d They'll stick your finger
up your bum... d

(LAUGHTER)

D Hinky-dinky, parlez-vous?

D Oh, Mademoiselle from Armentieres,
parlez-vous?

D Mademoiselle
from Armentieres, parlez-vous?

D We're the boys from Townsville
and Dandenong

d We're coming for you
with our donkey dongs

d Hinky-dinky, parlez-vous?
D Oh, Mademoiselle from Armentieres,
parlez-vous?
D Mademoiselle
from Armentieres, parlez-vous?

MAN:

and she's got big ears... d
- What's up, Lieutenant?
- It's Captain, actually.
Well done, sir.
Thank you, Sergeant Fraser.
- (MEN LAUGH)

- **MAN:**

As you were!
We're moving up the line.
We load up at midnight.
How come you bastards get to leave
this shithole before us?
(PLUMMY ACCENT)
Because only real soldiers
get to move up the line. (LAUGHS)
Where we heading, sir?
Belgium.
Hill 60.
Better get your gear.
Righto, you blokes. Let's go.
Keep your heads down, lads.
I nearly forgot - a present from
Fritz.
He said to say,
Thanks for all your help."
Cheers, mate.
lads.
AUSTRALIAN SOLDIER: Thanks, mate.
(DISTANT EXPLOSION)
(BABY CRIES)
(EXPLOSIONS)
Too early for the grey hen, sir?
Never too early.
(SHIVERS)
- I'm right.
- Take 'em.

You're just skin and bones.

Come on, son.

She'll send me another parcel
tomorrow, more than likely.

(EXPLOSION)

Decent fit.

My Elsa's a first-rate knitter.

When we get back, she'll have
probably knitted herself a new husband.

(LAUGHS)

Want to be a bit better-looking
than the old one.

(LAUGHTER)

Your boy's gonna make
a great prop forward.

Don't I know it? And he's still
growing.

You join up together?

One of them recruiting blokes
came through town.

Gets the young fella all excited
with his stories of adventure
and seeing the Pyramids
and what have you.

Never spent one bloody night
away from home

and he's quit the pits and joined up.

Elsa's nearly had bloody kittens,
hasn't she, Walt?

Yep. (CHUCKLES)

Well, you can't unjoin.

So, after Walt went to bed,

I said to Elsa,

I've looked after him all his life.

I'm not gonna stop now."

I told her if I joined up,

I could bring him back safe.

Elsa didn't know what was worse -
her boy going off to the war by
himself, or both of us going.

And she's been knitting like buggery
ever since.

(SHELL EXPLODES)

MAN:

Douse them flaming lights!
Stay low! Stay low!
(SHELLS EXPLODE, MEN SHOUT)
Stay here!
- Where's Fosse Way?
- It's north, that way!
He said that way!
Or south to Hill 60?
Fraser! This way!
(ARTILLERY SHELL WHINES)
(SHELL EXPLODES)

FRASER:

Keep down!
Come on, boys!
(ARTILLERY SHELL WHISTLES)
(MAN YELLS)
You alright, Walt?
Come on, come on, get up!
Get up! Go!
(ARTILLERY SHELLS WHISTLE)
Where are the others?
(COUGHING)

FRASER:

We left the bloody kids behind.
Who's missing?
Young Sneddon, Tiffin and Bacon.
Walter!
(SCREAMS) Walt!
(DISTANT ARTILLERY FIRE)
(DISTANT EXPLOSIONS)
- (MACHINE-GUN FIRE)
- Arggh!
(MACHINE-GUN FIRE)
(MEN YELL)
(GRUNTS)
(WALT GRUNTS AND SOBS)
(MACHINE GUN FIRES)
(WALT SCREAMS, SOBS)
How can Fritz get to us?
We're behind the line, ain't we?
He's got the high ground.

(WALT WEEPS)
(FLARE HISSES)

JIM:

Over here!
Oh, fuck!
We've missed it.
(WALT SOBS)
Sap's over to the right. About 25
yards.
You ready?
(MACHINE-GUN FIRE)
(SCREAMS AND CRIES)
Walt, we can't stay here, mate.
(WEEPS CONTINUOUSLY)
Tell you what,
I'll go to the left and draw crabs.
Soon as you hear that MG open up,
you run like buggery.
Don't bloody stop
until you get to the sap!
(WHISPERS) No.
I'm twice as fast as you blokes.
Probably make it before youse do.
Come on, Walt!
- (MACHINE GUN FIRES)
- (WALT YELPS)
(REPEATED MACHINE-GUN FIRE)
(MACHINE-GUN FIRE)
- Stay low!
- Tiffin!
Walt!
Over here, mate!
Come on.

TIFFIN:

Billy!
Billy Bacon!
Streaky!

BACON:

Did they get home?!
They're home!
- Streaky!

- Streaky!
- Run!
- (MACHINE-GUN FIRE)
- Billy!
- Go on, Billy!
- Billy!
- Come on, Billy!
- (MACHINE-GUN FIRE)
- Come on, Streaky!
- Run, Billy!
- Come on!

Arggh!

(MOANS)

Stretcher!

Stretcher bearers!

Streaky?

Oh, this is God's
flamin' handiwork, is it?
Grab his disc and pay book.
We'll bury him in the morning.
Come on, Frank.

(MAN YELLS IN DISTANCE)

MAN:

(BANGS TIN)

Captain Woodward.

- McBride!
- Captain McBride, actually.

Where you been?

Been waiting for hours.

(GUNFIRE)

Hell of a place, eh?

Your men can bunk down in there.

Stow your kits.

Get a couple of hours' sleep.

Couple of hours?

Gee, sir. They'll turn soft on you.

Come on!

Have you seen the tunnels?

You've got a big surprise
in store for you.

Come on.

Officers' dugout's down this way.

I might just bunk down here

for the time being.

TIFFIN:

than it is out there.

WALT:

France.

FRASER:

rats.

Change is as good as a holiday.

WOODWARD:

within reach.

At least we're back underground.

(EXPLOSION)

And we'll be staying underground.

One way or another.

What's that supposed to mean?

This is how it goes from now on.

We'll be dodging shells and shrapnel

and out of the blue,

you cop a bullet in the guts

like poor old Streaky.

And it's no game of skill

down here, neither.

Get eaten by rats,

get murdered by Fritz in the dark,

or buried alive

for our fucking troubles.

Well, that cheered us all up.

(KNOCKS ON DOOR)

Mr Waddell.

Oliver.

When do you set off?

About three weeks.

Right, well... you'd better come in,
then.

Actually...

...I'd like to ask you something.

I would like your permission to write
to Marjorie while I'm overseas.

And...

...I'd like to spend some time with

her before I leave.

- I know.

- Damn it.

(SIGHS) Oh.

- Emma.

- What?

I'm gonna take my walk now,
if you'd care to come.

Your walk?

Aye.

If you'd care to come?

Oh... of course.

They've never taken
a walk together in their lives.

When I get back...

...I'll take you walking every day.

(SPEAKS GERMAN)

Ja.

SOLDIER:

(FIRES GUN)

Keep going.

Mate, can I have a bo-peep?

- Yeah, help yourself.

- Thanks.

Hey, Pull Through.

Hill 60 - take a look.

(GUNSHOT)

Is that it?

What were you expecting, Morris?

The fuckin' Matterhorn?

(GUNSHOT)

I was expecting something bigger
than a railway cuttin'.

(BOTH LAUGH)

(FIRES GUN)

(FIRES MACHINE GUN)

(WATER SLOSHES)

WOODWARD:

McBRIDE:

under German lines,
they reckon it almost reaches Berlin.

WOODWARD:

Like sinking a mine in a bog.

McBRIDE:

further down.

This whole area is below sea level.

McBRIDE:

was their main problem.

Was?

McBRIDE:

(WHISPERS) We're 90 feet down now.

Right below German lines.

Hill 60 is directly above us.

Eh, eh, eh? Shh-shh. Shh.

The blue clay of Flanders.

Beautiful.

Major North, 3rd Canadian Tunnellers.

Fritz has set up in the swim sand.

He can't get at us. Oh, no, no, no.

If you will.

ammonal high explosive.

WOODWARD:

anything like this before.

No, nobody has. Nobody.

is a caterpillar mine.

That one's 70,000 pounds.

There's 21 of them.

We've undermined the whole

of the Messines Ridge,

nearly a million pounds of ammonal.

NORTH:

You know, when this thing blows,

it'll be the biggest explosion

the world's ever seen.

Each mine has detonators and leads

running to the surface.

WOODWARD:

McBRIDE:

is keep the bloody thing dry
and keep it secret from Fritz.
No, no, no. No. Fritz has got no
idea.

He thinks we're digging wells.

(LAUGHS HOARSELY)

Well, this'll finish the war.

End it altogether.

Think of that, huh?

When do they plan to detonate?

(BREATHES DEEPLY)

They're pulling me out.

It's up to you now.

It's all up to you.

Poor bugger.

Yeah, he sleeps down here.

He hasn't been to the surface
in three months.

So, when are they gonna blow them?

No-one knows.

- Could be months away.

- What are they waiting for?

Well, I'm a miner not a general...

...but I reckon it's simple
arithmetic.

If we blow the mines now,
we'll kill a few hundred Fritz at best.

But if they think
there's an attack coming,
they will stack those trenches
above us like bloody sardines.

And kill thousands.

Time it right,
tens of thousands.

(SCRAPES LOUDLY)

(BANGING ECHOES)

Nein.

Ja.

Jim, check every prop and every stay,
starting here, all the way
to the bottom of the Berlin Sap.

- Take Walter and Ginger.

- **JIM:**

- I'll do the same for Caterpillar.

- Righto.

Pull Through, there are

- Take Percy.

- Righto.

Fraser, you check the water line.

I want to know the depth

from the surface.

I want to know

where the water is ending up.

I want to know at exactly what depth

the sand becomes clay.

- Take Tiffin with you.

- Sir.

FRASER:

(GUNSHOT)

(MACHINE-GUN FIRE)

- **MAN:**

- **MAN 2:**

MAN:

That's good. You got it.

(GUNSHOT)

MAN 3:

(INDISTINCT SHOUTING)

(GUNSHOT)

(MACHINE-GUN FIRE)

(GUNSHOT)

(DISTANT SHOUTING)

(GUNSHOT)

(MAN SHOUTS ORDER IN GERMAN)

(INHALES DEEPLY)

(MUFFLED GUNFIRE)

(MUFFLED MACHINE-GUN FIRE)

- Nah. No, you're alright.

- (MACHINE-GUN FIRE SHARPENS)

(GUNSHOTS CONTINUE)

Bit bloody close.

Sniper shell, by the size of it.

Would have made a mess
of your melon.

Saw one bloke hit by one of them -
half his head blown off.
Only his smile left.

(LAUGHS)

(GUNSHOTS CONTINUE)

How old are you?

When they found out,
they made me a stretcher bearer.
Keep me away from the horrors of war.

(LAUGHS)

(BOTH LAUGH)

MAN:

Stretcher bearers!
Over here.

MAN:

- (FIRES GUN)
- Alright, come on. Let's go.
It's like trying to stop the tide
with a bloody sandcastle.

FRASER:

Clay starts around 30 feet.
Water seeps down,
pools above the clay.
Where it finds a tunnel,
it funnels down like a bloody creek.
We have 60 blokes manning the pumps
night and day
just to keep the water level down.
If we lose even a few of those men,
bloody mines'll be useless.
(WATER TRICKLES STEADILY)
(WHISPERS)
Where did they get this lot?
The sappers are getting it
wherever they can find it now, sir.
All the forests have been cut down
or stonkered by shellin'.
That's oak.
Me dad's a carpenter.

After the war, I'm gonna
get me apprenticeship.
Get out of them bloody pits.
More 'an likely, it came from
that ruined church in town.
Church?
Cathedral. Ypres Cathedral.
Probably.
- That's the lowest point in the sap.
- 90 feet, yeah.
What if we sink a shaft
directly to that point
and get the water out that way?
Canadians have tried it.
So have the Tommies.
The whole middle section is unstable.
Shaft walls collapse
after about six feet.
Besides, 90 feet vertical
is a bloody long way to move water.
We've got electricity
down there, don't we?
We propose sinking a shaft
down to a gallery
beneath the Berlin Sap, right here.
- Install electric pumps.
- Should free up 60 men at least.
Rutledge?
This is over 90 feet deep.
I shouldn't have thought an electric
pump would lift water that high...

WOODWARD:

COLONEL:

simply isn't feasible.
This is not a new idea, sir.
It's impossible to go through the wet
sand without the walls collapsing.
Have you been down there, Colonel?
Alright. That will be all.
Thank you, sir, and I apologise
for taking up your valuable time.
General, our plans differ

from the ones previously tried.

- How.

- We don't dig from the surface, sir.

We build the shaft head

We construct galleries large enough

to house all the tunnellers

and hide the blue clay.

Captain Woodward, 20 feet down

will put you right in the middle

of the quicksand.

You are wrong, Colonel!

It would set us just above

the wet sand. That's the point.

We'll use steel sections

to control the water

and stop the walls collapsing.

We use jacks from the roof

of the gallery

to force the steel sections

downwards.

And how many months or years

do we imagine that this folly will take?

- Rough estimate?

- GENERAL:

Three weeks, give or take.

(ARTILLERY SHELL

WHISTLES AND EXPLODES)

MAN:

(ARTILLERY SHELL

WHISTLES AND EXPLODES)

(SOLDIERS SHOUT AND SCREAM)

(ARTILLERY SHELL

WHISTLES AND EXPLODES)

MAN:

Aarggh!

MAN:

Come on!

(EXPLOSIONS AND SHOUTING)

- (EXPLOSION)

- Aarggh!

One more.

Yep.

(CLANGING AND CLATTERING)

Shh. Shh.

We're nearly there.

Bucket it out. Get those jacks back up.

Have that steel section ready to go on my order.

Drive it further into the clay.

(MACHINE RATTLES)

It's going, sir.

(GUNSHOT)

GENERAL:

What's happening, Tiffin?

- (MACHINE TICKS OVER)

- I don't know, sir.

It seems to be working.

- (GUNSHOT)

- No idea. It's working at that end.

(GUNSHOT)

COLONEL:

Must be too much pressure.

I'm sure we...

Full report by the morning.

(SIGHS)

(WATER GURGLES)

- (ALL LAUGH)

- MAN:

(CLEARS THROAT)

(MACHINE CHUGS QUIETLY)

- What if the pump fails?

- We have backups standing by, sir.

Off the shaft head,

we've built two listening posts and two diversion tunnels.

- What diversion tunnels?

- I'll show you, sir.

There's no need.

- It's no trouble.

- There is no need.

There's more activity
in the second diversion, sir.
I think Fritz is coming at us again.

WOODWARD:

He's been quiet for four minutes.
I reckon he could be ready to blow.
Let them.
Is it just the two of you down there?
- Just me, sir.
- Where's Walt?
He's up getting me a billy of tea.
What? He abandoned his post?
- No, he just...
- Put it on the report.
Why aren't you at your post?
- As I said, I think Fritz...
- Have you been ordered out?
Sir, the listeners have permission...
I know the orders, Captain!
Get back down there.
If you see Walt, you tell him...
you tell him not to...
Sir...
My dad likes a cup of tea
around now. (LAUGHS)
Jim.

WOODWARD:

Dad!

WALT:

WALT:

WOODWARD:

- (BREATHES HEAVILY)
- Dad!
(BREATHES HEAVILY)

WALT:

(WALT CRIES LOUDLY)
Restore, establish and strengthen you
forever and ever, amen.

ALL:

(POIGNANT VIOLIN MUSIC)

Sir?

I've been wanting to give you this...

...for that girl of yours, sir.

I made it from that wood you liked...

...from the cathedral.

It's beautiful.

WOODWARD:

from the timbers of Ypres Cathedral

by a nice young chap named Frank

Tiffin.

I'm sure you'll get to meet him

after this is over

and thank him for his handiwork.

(SPEAKS GERMAN)

- What is it?

- Not sure.

Nothing.

(COUGHS LOUDLY)

An attack tunnel?

No, it's different.

- I think it's some kind of shaft.

- Through the wet sand?

No. Can't be.

(COUGHS LIGHTLY)

(COUGHS)

- (COUGHS)

- (GUNFIRE)

(COUGHS)

MAN:

(GUNSHOT)

MAN:

(MAN YELLS INDISTINCTLY)

(SPEAKS GERMAN)

Du, nach oben.

Woodward? Woodward?

Woodward!

Captain Woodward, get up!

We're firing the mines Thursday

morning, just before dawn.

COLONEL:

You'll be firing the Hill 60
and caterpillar mines.

McBride, you'll have
the back-up exploders.

Sir.

There'll be 21 blasts in all.

Yours will be the final two
in the sequence.

It's critical to the entire operation
that each mine goes off
precisely in the right order.

Yes, sir.

Firing orders.

MAN:

WOODWARD:

You were on listening duty?

All quiet, sir,
apart from a few squeaks.

- Rats?

- Probably.

Probably rats mating, sir,
by the sound of them.

Why do you say that?

They were kind of regular squeaks,
if you get my drift.

Where?

Lower listening post, Berlin Sap.
Windlass.

(SQUEAKING)

It's a shaft.

Right here.

That's right on top of the mine
at Hill 60.

We've been counting the squeaks
for 15 minutes now.

- I've calculated the depth...

- Yes.

We blow in 10 hours.

When do you predict they'd hit the

mine?

At their current rate of progress,
nine hours, sir.

I hold you personally responsible.
Do what you have to do, Woodward.

- We're driving an attack tunnel.

- From where, sir?

Lower Berlin Sap listening post
to position 6-0.

- That's just above the mine.

- Yes.

That's suicidal.

That's an order, Sergeant.

Let's go.

Come on, let's go!

(SPEAKS GERMAN)

They're 10 feet forward, 15 feet up.

Morris.

- (EXPLOSIONS)

- McBRIDE:

Check it again.

Were the leads reconnected
after the last test?

Mm-hm.

(CONTINUOUS ARTILLERY FIRE)

I'm going back down.

Clear, please.

MAN:

(CONTINUOUS ARTILLERY FIRE)

MAN:

(ARTILLERY SHELL WHISTLES)

(SHELL EXPLODES)

(SPEAKS GERMAN)

(WHISPERS) On three.

One...

...two...

...three.

(ALL INHALE)

(SILENCE)

(FAINT SCRATCHING)

(WHISPERS)

They're almost on top of us.
I've gotta set the charge.
No. That'll set off the main mine.
Wait till they're a few feet away.
Then use the camouflet.
A few feet?
Another four feet forward.
There's no time.
Four feet forward, Fraser.
Then set the charge.
(SPEAKS GERMAN)
(WHISPERS) Set the charge.
Finish the backing, boys.
(EXPLOSION)
They did it.
(IMITATES GERMAN ACCENT)
Guess what, Mutter?
I'm coming home. (LAUGHS)
Voomp!
(WHISTLES)
- Splat!
- (ALL LAUGH)
Go easy, boys.
Load up. Let's get out of here.
(LAUGHS)
Nein, nein! Schnell! Schnell!
Fritz will be landing
in Berlin right about now.
(LAUGHTER)
(DISTANT EXPLOSIONS CONTINUE)
- All clear below.
- Yes, sir.
The German shaft has been crumped.
All circuits are complete.
Five minutes!

MAN:

(MEN SHOUT DOWN THE LINE)
Five minutes! Five minutes!
Five minutes!
(MUTTERS QUIETLY)
(MEN MURMUR QUIETLY)
This is our great occasion.
- Yes, sir.

- Yes, sir.

Good luck.

(HEAVY BREATHING)

Four minutes to go.

- Did it easy.

- Yeah.

(RUMBLING)

Man buried!

- Who is it?

- It's Tiffin! He's back there!

Fuck.

Go! Go!

Tiffin!

Tiffin!

TIFFIN:

FRASER:

some time to shift this.

I'll get them to hold the mine.

Well, what do we do?

Tiffin!

TIFFIN:

No point in all of us dying.

Fraser will get them to stop!

We'll come back when we know!

Righto!

'Bye, Tiffin!

Come on, Walt! Come on!

Cheerio, lads.

One minute!

Out of the way, please! Move!

(SHOUTS) Fuckin' move!

Fix bayonets!

FRASER:

Out of the way! Make way!

Out of the fuckin' way!

(SHOUTS ORDERS)

Out of the way! Move! Out of the way!

- Out of the fuckin' way!

- 15 seconds!

Tiffin's still in there.

- What happened?

- Collapse.

Sir, please.

- He's still alive.

- Nine!

Eight!

We'd have him out in a few minutes.

Seven!

Six!

Five!

Four!

Three!

- FRASER:

- Two!

(SHOUTS) For Christ's sake! It's
Tiffin!

Fire!

(EXPLOSION)

(CICADAS BUZZ, BIRDS CHIRP)

(MELANCHOLY MUSIC)

WOODWARD:

(WHISPERS) That's your heart.

Feel it?

(DISTANT EXPLOSION)

You're hearing your own heartbeat.

(RUMBLING INTENSIFIES)

(LOUD RUMBLING)

(SNIFFS)

(KNOCK ON DOOR)

McBRIDE:

People are waiting.

Woody, are you alright?

- (DOORKNOB TURNS)

- I'm fine.

I'll be out shortly.

You right?

(GENTLE PIANO MUSIC)

(PIANO MUSIC CONTINUES)

Subtitle By mika