

Night of the Zeppelin

Andy Barrett

Other than the Introduction and the Conclusion these scenes can be performed in any order and in any location. The audience can see as few or as many as they wish.

The Opening

The Dome is built in Queens Park. The erection of this should be done in a highly performative way with those who are involved being dressed as though they are members of a military unit. Areas should be taped off; trolleys carrying tables and chairs should be wheeled in; large pot plants and maps and decanters and laptops should all arrive in trunks and cases.

The HQ – at this stage – is not open to the audience. At a couple of minutes before the start time from inside we begin to hear – and this should be very loud – crackling as though from a short wave radio. Millard – the leader of this particular operation and of the Centenary Troupe, of which all of the cast are members or associates – is inside listening to this. There are scraps of interference, fragments of other languages – as though Millard is trying to tune this device in. Eventually we hear a voice:

Voice: Millard. Millard! Can you read me; over?

Millard: *(and this should be amplified as well)* Yes sir.

Voice: Has the HQ been set up?

Millard: Yes sir.

Voice: Location?

Millard: SK536195.

Voice: I know it well. Met a girl there once; but that's another story. And are the team briefed and ready for action?

Millard: As always sir.

Voice: A fine bunch you have there Millard.

Millard: Indeed sir.

Voice: Do you know, I envy you man. Out there, in the field, doing this vital work.

Millard: What number are we on now sir?

Voice: This is the fiftieth.

Millard: We've been busy.

Voice: You have. But the work you have been doing has been invaluable.

Millard: We've all learnt a lot sir.

Voice: And you are confident that you will get the attention of the people there?

Millard: I have assembled a band specifically for the operation. Slightly shambolic but I hope to draw attention to our work.

Voice: Then let's hope the people of that town are ready for what you have to offer them.

Millard: I'm sure they will sir. They seem a very inquisitive bunch. Most of them.

Voice: And is your team standing up to the strain?

Millard: I've worked them hard but they're ready sir. As always. Their lines are learnt; their costumes are on; their props are ready and they can't wait to get started.

Voice: Then let the work begin. Good luck. Over and out.

Millard: Over and out.

There is a moment and then the Billy Atkins band appear from inside the HQ and begin to play some music. After a while Millard appears and instructs them to stop. There is a small platform with a microphone.

Millard: Hello. Hello! Can you hear me? Is this working? Madam? Am I audible to you? Good good. Your attention please everyone. Yes, that's right gather round. Closer still please, you have nothing to fear and this is important. Very, very important.

Now I am sure that many of you have been aware of our presence here in your town over the last weeks. And have wondered who we are and what we are doing here. Well, we have been gathering evidence. Testimonies and stories and memories about the appalling aerial bombardment that took place in this town just over one hundred years ago on the 31st of January 1916.

And why have we been doing this? Well we are the Centenary Troupe. A crack team assembled and trained under highly secret conditions that has been tasked with travelling the land to unearth, commemorate and celebrate stories that occurred exactly one hundred years ago. And now we are here, in your town, which has a most incredible story to tell. And we will tell it. Over the next few hours, both here in our HQ, and in other rooms and places across Loughborough, we will bring that story, your story to life. In all sorts of unexpected and unusual ways. Because it is vital that we gain your attention. And we have licence to do whatever we want to get that. Like this.

A loud explosion – a maroon. To make everyone jump.

So; let us begin. Let us roll the clock back one hundred years. What do we know? Well there are twenty three thousand people here in your town. And can I now please ask each and every one of you to imagine that you are one of them. Your name is the same; your age is the same; and if you look around this park that too will appear the same. But it is not the same. For it is 1916. If you are old enough you work in a factory perhaps. Hosiery or heavy engineering; with war work of course taking over some of the plant. And most of these factories, though not all, are on the newly developing eastern side of the town. That way.

Maybe you are one of the more recent families to this expanding habitation. Your landlord perhaps the factory owner himself. Arriving to settle down in one of the many streets that ring with the glories of Empire. Regent, Leopold, Gladstone, Wellington, Victoria, Paget. Communal yards for many of you and cold, cold privies. And the sky smeared with smoke; thick with it; rich with it; black with it. Factory chimneys; household fires; heating, cooking, washing; more coal, more coal; cough, cough, cough.

And listen. Listen! What else is there?

These sounds now build up underneath Millard's speech.

The rumbling of horses and carts. The cries of the newspaper vendors. The market traders. The bugle boys in the Square, 4pm on the dot, 'Come and join His Majesty's Forces!' The songs of those who are still lucky enough to work in the fields. And then ... one day a new sound. A gentle whirring, that is almost impossible to place. But we will come that that presently.

And how does your week unfold Madam? Monday morning off you run – catch it!

One of the Billy Atkins band throws a brown parcel at a female member of the audience.

Off to the pawnshop. Mr J.H. Clarke Ltd next to the Windmill Public House, 64 Sparrow Hill; or maybe Broughton's Clothiers, number 7 Churchgate. A few more pennies to get you through the week; to put food on the table, for your husband, dragging himself back from his daily grind, and the children returning from school. But at least they are here, with you. At least they are not there. In France. Like so many. But that is about to change any moment now. For an announcement has just been made ...

One of the Billy Atkins band gets up and speaks through a loudhailer.

- Conscription of those eligible for war service will come into force from next week. All men between the ages of 18 to 41 are liable to be called up for service in the army unless widowed with children, serving in the Royal Navy, a minister of religion, or working in reserved occupations.

Millard: And they said it would all be over by Christmas! But a year and a half has passed since those terrible headlines of August 4th 1914 ...

Billy: *(Through the loudhailer)* It was officially stated at the Foreign Office last night that Great Britain declared war against Germany at 7pm. The British Ambassador in Berlin has been handed his passport.

Millard: And now it is the last week of January. 1916. A snowstorm has struck the town. Telegraph poles have come crashing down under the weight of the thick white stuff. It is dark and it is cold and it is miserable. And yet another year of war beckons.

But cheer up! This is Loughborough! A thriving non-conformist town that is on the up and up. Sunday chapels and church schools. The Girls Club and Church Lads Brigade; three full companies of those. The Band of Hope. And couples promenading around the market place. It is chock full of neighbourliness and has a clean bill of moral health; your souls scoured by the word of the good Lord and the entertainments his servants serve up for you.

And it is about to experience something that nobody here in this town had ever imagined possible.

And now from out of the HQ we see a collection of people. These should all move through the audience in different directions.

This is accompanied by live music.

As many of the Troupe as possible come out of the HQ, but it should definitely include (unless there are double casting issues): Billy Adcock (with banjo) / Elizabeth Adkin / Lizzie Askew and Ethel Higgs, arm in arm / Rosa Bartholomuch with her ice cream cart / Beatrice Smith and Ernest Stublely / Alfred Coleman (with shaving foam all over his face and wearing a barber's gown) / The Mayor (with his bell) / Joseph Gilbert carrying a large wooden box of groceries / Inspector Payne / Elsie Page in her bedclothes / Arthur Turnall in oily overalls / the Editor / The Coroner

Millard: What an assortment of humanity. A banjo teacher, a lathe worker, factory girls, a cinema manager, a shop keeper, a coroner. All innocent people going about their daily business on this late January evening here in Loughborough. One is off to meet their husband of ten weeks from his shift at Morris's; one to get a haircut and shave at Trussells in Ashby Square; one about to get a slightly worrying phone call which will mean that he is in for a very busy night; and one who is writing a letter to her husband at the front.

And now they have all vanished.

Millard: And where are they going, I hear you ask? Back to their factories, their homes, their cinemas, their colleges, their fields, their shops, their friends, their family. Back to those places where their stories will begin. Where their lives will collide.

And your job now – like ours – is to seek out these stories. To help us make sense of that terrible day. That day that has brought our Troupe to your town to share these stories with you.

In a moment our HQ will be open to you all. And inside you will be given instructions from our team on what is to unfold today. Maps, timetables, guides; everything you need to take part in this event will be made available to you; and at no cost whatsoever. And then, when our many tales have been told, we will congregate at the Parish Church where we will gather up the many threads of this momentous story. A story that began not here, but in Tondern, North Germany. At 12.06pm.

We hear the whirring of a zeppelin which should grow as loud as we can make it.

As Zeppelin L20, with Kapitanleutnant Franz Stabbert in command, slipped its moorings and set course for Britain. One of nine ships that were to form the largest force yet to fly against this country. The fleet of the Imperial German Navy's 6th squadron. The largest air armada ever to have been launched. Each loaded with 5000kg of fuel, 4000kg of oil and 2000kg of bombs.

The sound of the zeppelin is held for a moment and then suddenly cuts off.

Millard: Give them another song Atkins! H.Q will be open in five minutes everyone. So call your friends, tell them that something incredible is taking place, and let's begin. It's going to be a very exciting day!

Millard walks off into the dome as the Billy Atkins band play another tune.

Inside the HQ we need a small team of volunteers who give out maps and programmes. Each member of the audience should also be given some kind of signifier of participation – maybe something along the lines of a zeppelin shaped badge.

Alfred Coleman

A barber's chair is situated in Ashby Square. A man – Alfred – comes and sits down. The Barber enters and places a gown over Alfred and begins to set about shaving him with a cut throat razor. Much slopping of foam, sharpening of razor on a strop etc.

Alfred talks directly to the audience.

Alfred: It's important for a man to be well groomed. And there are here, in our town, many places to ensure that your appearance is as it should be. But this is my favourite. Trussell's. 26 and 27 Ashby Square. I've been coming here for years. Ever since I was old enough to have a proper shave.

And of course you meet people in a place like this. You can't really speak when the razor is at your throat; you prefer not to; but when you are waiting then conversations sometimes arise.

And we get a lot of soldiers here, those on leave. Because to sit down and have a man such as Mr Trussell give you a good shave with a warm brush and a sharp blade is nothing short of a delight. For those poor souls who find themselves released from the torment of trench warfare for a few fleeting days.

And as you may know it is a statutory requirement for all members of the British Army to wear a moustache. "The hair of the head will be kept short. The chin and the under-lip will be shaved, but not the upper lip". Although I have been told that a blind eye is often turned, on account of the age of the men ... the boys ... that are going out there now.

'I saw one lad in the reserve lines', this man told me, the one waiting with me, that day, for a shave 'and do you know that he wasn't able to grow a moustache, not a proper one, just a bit of bum fluff; and yet his hair had gone totally grey from what he had seen the first day he had arrived in the trenches'.

Mesopotamia he was being sent to, the one waiting with me. I looked it up on a map a few days later to find it. And yes, it is as far away as it sounds.

I can see that Mr. Trussell finds it difficult though; when they come in, in their uniforms. He smiles at them and then ... well I know who he's thinking of. His son you see. Only nineteen. Killed at the battle of Aubers Ridge last May. An unmitigated disaster. The Germans dug in good and proper. The British without enough ammunition. Eleven thousand and more killed, most within a few yards of their own trench. Terrible.

But ... a good shave. Essential. I mean you just look at the amount of stuff that gets sent off in the post. Razors and shaving cream and lathering brushes. If you're an officer I know for a fact that your toilette kit is just as important as your rifle. You can't go over the top unless you look respectable.

Not that razors are easy to come by these days. And they get rusty so quickly, he told me, the man waiting with me that day, for a shave. 'And however much you try to sharpen them they just end up cutting huge chunks out of your face, which isn't the worst thing to worry about by any stretch. But when you're going through hell you at least want to start the day with a good, clean shave'. A close shave.

And I know all about them. And it's moments like that ... experiences like that ... because that's what it is isn't it? ... an experience ... that makes you realise how easy it is to take the simplest things for granted.

Like water. For a shave. A muddy puddle, that's what he told me. 'My last shave was from a muddy puddle; so this here is a bloody luxury. And quite often we shave each other you know'. 'Really?' I said. I couldn't imagine it. And he pointed at the barber and the cut throat razor in his hand and said 'watch how steady he is; watch how he glides that blade across that throat with absolute calm and precision'. And then he held up his hands, his own hands, and they were shaking something terrible.

But look at mine; now.

He raises his hands and they are shaking.

Not as bad as his, but still. And I'm not the only one in this town like it.

I was blown clean out of my chair. Out of this chair. I'd only climbed into it long enough for the lather to be brushed onto my face. And I could see it; through the window. And I ran out to get a clearer look and it was incredible. I mean you're told about these things aren't you; but you never really expect to see it. Not here. The war is over there. In the trenches. Amongst the mud and the bomb craters and the rats and the wounded and the dead.

That's war. That's what it's always been. In a place where war is meant to happen. On a battlefield. Not waiting for a shave at the barbers in a market town. A market town that had all the bloody lights on.

I shinned up the nearest lamppost. Always been a good climber ever since I used to collect birds eggs at the back of the Manor House down Sparrow Hill. And I turned off the gas and the light went out. And then I shinned down, and I wasn't dawdling I can tell you that. Straight over to the next one, crunching through the broken glass that covered the pavements; up and down that and all the way through' til this Square was in absolute darkness.

But it had gone by then, the zep. Although you could hear the sound of the other bombs that it was dropping. And you wondered. Where had they landed? Who had they hit? And I still had the lather on my face ... on my chin ... that was the thing. As I was running around and shinning up and down those gaslights. I didn't realise until someone pointed it out.

And he'd gone. That soldier who was sat in the chair next to me waiting, that day, for a shave. I don't know what happened to him. Hopefully he's still in Mesopotamia and wasn't one of the six Loughborough men that were killed there only a month or so ago.

It went on to Burton, the zep. Killed even more there. And just like me some chap went up and down the lampposts turning off the gas. A conchie apparently. The white feather brigade. Not a popular man in Burton at all; despised in fact by many. And yet he was the one.

By this time the barber has finished and is wiping the foam from Alfred's face.

It just shows you, doesn't it? You don't really know how you're going to act until you're really faced with it. And you should be very, very careful when you call people cowards just because they have views that are very different from your own.

Barber: That'll be tuppence sir.

Alfred: There you are. Keep the change. *(To the audience)* And ever since then a shave has never felt so good. In fact everything in life feels a little better now.

Arthur Christian Turnall

A door (which can be moved around the town). A little bit forward of this door there is a small table and a stool and a mug. Behind the door there will need to be another small table on which the props will be kept.

Maybe there is some live music that begins this scene and helps to draw an audience. Eventually Arthur – dressed in factory overalls – walks through the door.

Arthur: Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls; this is a door. One of many that exists in the world. Because they do. You yourselves probably have a good number of them where you live; where you work. But they're not really the kind of things that we take notice of. That we count. I mean how many different doors do you think that you have walked through in your life? And how many of those had something unexpected waiting for you as you walked through it?

My name is Arthur. Arthur Christian Turnall. My mother was a good God fearing woman. And I live – I lived – on Station Street. Number 83. Red door. And I work – I worked – on a lathe at the Empress works. Making cranes. Hard work; noisy work.

Interesting things to look at though aren't they; cranes? Like flamingos somehow I think. The way they move around and then reach down. Always seem to be inquisitive things. Maybe that's what gives them their lifelike qualities. That sense of inquisitiveness.

So what is on the other side of that door?

Knocking.

Arthur: Come in.

The woman opens the door. She stands – and will always stand – in the doorway or will just take half a step into the 'room'.

Arthur: That's my wife.

Woman: Hello husband.

Arthur: Hello wife.

Woman: I'm off to Hallams for a bit of cod.

Arthur: You make sure he gives you nothing but the very best.

Woman: I'm sure he will. And you have a good day at work.

Arthur: I will love.

The woman shuts the door. If she has to leave the room to do this (because she has stepped into it) she will walk backwards.

Arthur: My second wife. First one didn't work out. Lovely lady, four children, but ... you know.

The woman opens the door. She is now dressed slightly differently.

Woman: I just need some more help with the babbies Arthur.

Arthur: I'm sorry love I'm off for a game with the lads ...

Woman: Why did I marry you? You're nothing but a big lazy lump!

Arthur shuts the door.

Arthur: And I play football. I love football. Game of the Gods.

The door opens again and the woman blows a whistle at him.

Arthur: That was never a penalty!

The woman shuts the door.

Arthur: I've got seven children by the second wife. So that's thirteen in all. You would have thought I'd learnt my lesson.

The door opens and a babies bottle is handed to him.

Arthur: But I'm afraid I'm not that type. Someone who learns their lesson.

He puts the bottle on the table; or maybe he opens it and pours out the contents into his mug.

Arthur: Now I have to be honest and tell you that I've been – I'd been – on a good run of luck recently. I was one of those – one of the many – who'd backed Tom Tyler's Sunloch in the Grand National last year.

The door opens and the woman is standing there with a pair of coconuts which she uses to make galloping sounds as Arthur continues.

Arthur: Trained in the fields at the back of the Brush and one hundred to one no less. Come on! Come oooooonnnn! Well I don't think this town has ever had so much money flowing into it in a single day.

The woman hands over some old bank notes which Arthur stuffs into his pocket. She shuts the door.

Arthur: The next day my wife was able to get everything we'd ever pawned out of Clarke's pawnshop.

The door is opened and the woman hands over a big pile of clothes to Arthur. She shuts the door. Arthur moves across to put the clothes on the table, continuing as he does so:

Arthur: And two weeks later I moved us all out of Pudding Bag Street, which stank. That's the only way to put it. And everyone would agree with me. Pudding Bag Street stank. Too close to the Cattle Market you see. And all the ... you know what.

The door opens and a shovelful of dung is handed over.

Arthur: And it's not even good for the roses.

Arthur hands this over to a member of the audience or places it on the table.

Arthur: So now, as I said I live on Station Street. I lived on Station Street. Eighty three. Red door. And we all want to know don't we? When someone knocks.

Knocking.

Arthur: Who is on the other side?

Knocking.

Arthur: Is it someone you know?

Knocking.

Arthur: Someone you were expecting?

Knocking.

Arthur: Or someone or something that is going to change your life for ever?

Knocking.

Arthur: No, not this time. I've learnt. To be a little more cautious. Although to be honest that's just daft isn't it? Closing the stable door after the horse has bolted.

Arthur now sits and begins to drink his tea.

Arthur: Right now I work nights. I was working nights. Only been put on them for a couple of weeks. And I don't like it, but what can you do? A streak of good luck can only last so long. And it does work like that. It does. Good luck; bad luck, good luck; bad luck. Only

some lucky bleeders just get more of one than the other. It started with an argument over a bit of cod, at the market with Arthur Hallam.

The door opens and the woman is holding a fish and wearing an apron.

Woman: How much did you offer me for this? How much!

Arthur gets up and shuts the door.

Arthur: It all got out of hand and before I knew it he started effing and blinding.

From behind the door we hear some kind of muffled swearing.

Arthur: The police were called and Arthur got a choice of a hefty fine or seven days in jail. And my wife insisted that I pay half. Because his fish is the best in town.

Arthur opens the door and hands over some money to the woman who is still holding the fish.

Arthur: There you go Arthur. Sorry.

The woman hands over the fish.

Arthur: And then I had a bad run of form on the football pitch; had a problem with my drains at Station Street, eighty three, red door; and my machine at work – here – kept breaking down. I went and complained to the foreman, told him that they needed to keep things in better order if they wanted us to help the war effort. And I wanted to, of course I did. If it wasn't for this job I'd be fighting over there. But he was a miserable sod.

The door opens. The woman, now with a different apron, is holding some kind of clipboard.

Woman: You stop worrying about the machines and just get your head down.

She shuts the door.

Arthur: What kind of phrase is that? Getting your head down? If you have your head down you don't really see much do you? Other than your feet. Or the floor. And there's not much that happens down there really.

Knocking.

Arthur: I was always told by my mother that an inquisitive mind is a healthy mind. And someone with one of them isn't normally the sort to just keep their head down.

Knocking.

Arthur: I mean with hindsight, and isn't that a lovely thing, I wish now that I wasn't someone who liked to know what was going on. That I was someone who just let life pass them by. Someone who said no rather than someone who said yes.

Knocking.

Arthur: But it's the ones that say yes that have the adventures isn't it?

Knocking.

Arthur: Although not every adventure ends well.

Knocking.

Arthur: But what would you do? You hear a noise. You wonder what it is. You look at the door. And it's in the way isn't it? This door is blocking you. It's stopping you seeing what's out there. You need to get through it don't you? You need to get through to the other side.

Knocking.

Arthur looks at it again and this time he gets up and opens it. The woman walks into the room. Arthur stands behind her watching.

Woman: I'm ever so sorry Mrs Turnall. It's Arthur. He heard a noise and you know what he's like and he just ran out of the door ... to see what was going on I suppose. And that's when it happened. The bomb from the zeppelin. It just landed in the road and ... he's at the hospital but it's pretty bad. If he'd only stayed inside. I'm sorry. He was a lovely man.

Arthur goes up to the woman and embraces her before walking through the door and shutting it. The woman sits down at the small table with her head in her hands.

Music.

Icons

Two market traders, George and Henry (although they can be of either sex) walk into the centre of the space carrying a small collapsible table. They also have a suitcase. They set up the table and then open the case, which contains broken crockery and other artefacts from the bombing. They begin to set this up carefully. Alongside this they set up a gramophone and suitable music is played as though from this. As this is happening they are calling out to people:

- Come and get a memento of the terrible raid of the zeppelin!
- Crockery touched by the hand of tragedy!
- Genuine historical artefacts to pass down to your offspring!
- A little piece of war on the home front to own at a very reasonable price!
- Airship mementos!
- Shrapnel from the bombs of the baby killers!

Hilda enters.

Hilda: Excuse me, but what do you think you are doing?

George: Selling mementos madam. Of the terrible zeppelin raid that was visited upon this town.

Hilda: And who has given you permission to do this?

Henry. We are market traders madam, and our speciality is in responding to current trends in demand.

George. And right now there is a lot of interest in objects that have a connection with this historic raid.

Hilda: What do you mean historic? The funerals for those that died were only held last week.

Henry: And a very moving occasion it was madam. I've never seen so many people come out to pay their respects.

George: I think sombre is the word George.

Henry: That's right George. The flags at half-mast. The mourning shutters put up at the shops. The horse drawn hearses bedecked in black.

George. *(To Hilda)* And why do you think so many people lined the streets?

Hilda: To pay their respect to the poor innocent victims of that appalling attack.

Henry: There is that, of course. But there is perhaps a little more to it ...

George: Such as an innate understanding that they – the people of this town – were witnesses to, and players in, a dramatic and important historical moment.

Henry: That will be talked about for years to come.

George: Which means that this plate here for instance, taken from the wreckage that spilled out onto the Rushes, and yet which miraculously survived the blast without a crack ...

Henry: There is a very small one but nothing to worry about ...

George: ... is now an object of historical importance.

Hilda: It's just a plate.

Henry: No it's not. It's a plate that's been touched by the hand of history.

Hilda: And how did you acquire it?

George: Everything that has come into our possession has done so through legitimate means.

Hilda: You're nothing but scavengers. Feeding on the misery of others.

Henry: We are no such thing.

Hilda: That plate, if what you are saying is correct, may have come from the house of the Adcocks; as it was their house that took the brunt of the explosion. And if that is the case you should return it to Mr Adcock immediately.

George: Having only just buried his wife madam I do not think that he would like to be reminded of that evening.

Hilda picks up a bit of charred wood.

Hilda: And what is this?

George: A piece of charred wood ...

Henry: You'd be surprised at what people are interested in owning.

George: ... from an arbour that was destroyed on Thomas Street when one of the bombs dropped in the orchard of Mr Thomas Cattell.

Hilda: And praise the Lord that it did no damage to anybody's person.

Henry: I couldn't have put it better myself.

Hilda: I believe that in the fourteenth century Loughborough would have had people like you selling nails from the true cross, or crumbs from the Last Supper. False icons!

George: That's a very interesting way of thinking about it. About these objects. As icons.

Henry: I'm sure it would add a bit of value.

Hilda: You're grotesque.

And now another person enters and starts looking at things.

George: War is grotesque madam. This is just business.

Henry: You should see the stuff we've got from Burton.

Customer: It was very bad there.

Hilda: It was bad here.

Henry: How many was it that died?

Customer: Fifteen. All of whom were at a meeting to hear a missionary speak. And another seventy two were injured.

Hilda: If the Salvation Army hadn't returned from the Rushes a few moments earlier who knows how many of them may have been killed?

George: It's not a competition madam.

Hilda: I'm not saying it is.

George: But then again it sometimes does one good to remember that there are always people worse off than you.

Henry: This is a bit of shrapnel madam. Pulled out of the wall of number 83 Empress Road.

Customer: From one of the bombs that the zeppelin dropped?

Henry: Absolutely sir. That is German shrapnel from a German bomb.

Hilda: That killed five people. Including Mrs Page and her two children. Her husband, who was serving in the Medical Corps, had only been sent back a couple of weeks previously. And I saw him sir, when he returned; when he was called back. And the look on

his face was the most terrible thing I have ever seen. They said that at the inquest he could do nothing but shed tears.

Customer: Really?

George: It is a terrible story. And that piece of shrapnel is a part of it sir.

Customer: How much is it?

Hilda: You are not seriously thinking of acquiring that are you?

Customer: It depends how much it costs.

Henry: I'm sure we can come to some arrangement.

Hilda: I cannot see how anyone from this town could even countenance such a thing.

Customer: I'm not from Loughborough. I'm from Anstey.

Hilda: Say no more.

George: What do you mean?

Hilda: The factories in Anstey gave their workers a half day holiday so that they could come here and see the bomb damage. And I presume you were one of them.

Customer: I was. It was a historic moment.

George: You see.

Hilda: There were hordes of them at the train station. The whole town full of people pointing and whispering. Queueing up to see how badly damaged the houses were.

Customer: It was a bit of a let-down to be honest.

Henry: In what way?

Customer: We were told a bomb had hit a house on the Rushes and expected it to be blown to smithereens. But it was just like someone had dropped a big stone on it.

Hilda: Three people were killed there!

George: And this plate belonged to one of them.

Customer: How much is it?

Hilda grabs it

Hilda: You're not having it. None of you. I'm taking it back to where it belongs. I know Mr Billy Adcock! He taught my nephew banjo.

Henry: You'll have to buy it madam.

Hilda: I will not.

Customer: Actually I was looking at that.

Hilda: You're not having it. You're disgraceful!

Customer: How dare you? You have no idea why I may desire such an object? I may be a collector of antiquities for museums.

Hilda: It's not an antiquity!

Customer: Not yet. But one day it may be ...

They grapple for the plate which falls and breaks. Everyone looks at it.

Henry: We can always sell the fragments.

Hilda: What else have you got there? A tooth from Martha Shipman perhaps, pulled from her mouth as she lay dying!

George: There's no need for that.

Hilda: Police! Police!

George: I'm sure the authorities have got better things to do. Keeping us all safe from any future attacks for one thing.

Hilda: *(To the audience)* And what are you lot staring at! Why haven't you run them out of town? How can you stand there and let this happen? Let them profit from war? I bet half of you will be looking through this lot in a moment; won't you? Wondering who it might have belonged to. Whether it's genuine or not? You should be ashamed of yourselves. All of you! And I bet most of you are from Anstey!

Hilda exits.

Henry: Sorry about that everyone. Some people just cannot control themselves.

George: Come along ladies and gentlemen. Come and have a closer look. Every object smeared by the awful hand of history.

If the audience do come up and look then Henry and George will start to talk about the objects before we hear a police whistle:

Henry: Ah I think we may have attracted the attention of the boys in blue.

George: Can you see them?

Henry: Over there. I reckon if we move with some haste we may just get away.

George: 'Scuse me ladies and gentlemen.

Maybe they get the audience to help them pack up before they run off.

And if the audience don't come up to look at the objects on their table:

Henry: No? No-one.

George: Suit yourself. Your loss.

Henry: I think it's time to move on George, don't you?

George: Absolutely.

And off they go.

Sarah and Martha

This scene takes place around the table at the back of Peters which represents the kitchen of The Crown and Cushion. Two women are preparing sandwiches: Sarah Oram, the wife of the landlord William Oram, and Martha Coleman. Martha does not talk at any point in the scene. Sarah should encourage the audience to help, indicating to them to hand over bread, or butter, or plates etc. This should not interrupt the rhythm of her monologue. (I have marked where this may best occur).

Sarah: Can you hear them? Always the same. Every night, since we re-opened. Just like before. And me, stuck back here in the kitchen. A woman's place.

Sometimes I wish that bomb had landed right there, in the bar, rather than out in the back yard. Given them all something to think about whilst they chunter on putting the world to rights with their highly intelligent and addled minds.

I know that some say that everything's going to change. Now that we've lost so many men. Now that the women are manning the Home Front, producing the munitions, driving the transport and constructing the machinery. And everyone knows that if the women in the factories stopped work for twenty minutes, the Allies would lose this war. But will they be grateful? Will they thank us all when the war finally does end? Will they say 'by Jove we never realised how capable you all were. So you carry on and we'll just have to find a way to work alongside you'. I have my doubts. That's all I'm saying.

(Sandwich work / help)

But maybe they're right. Those that say that a woman's place in the world will never be the same again. I mean you think about the Technical College behind us. Since they brought in conscription there's been hundreds of women there. Proper jobs. Highly skilled. Not that they like to let on. 'Machine minders', that's what a lot of the chaps say. The men are training to be 'engineers', but the women are just going to become 'machine minders'. It makes me sick.

They come here for a drink sometimes, after they've finished. One or two of them; the women. And we'd talk with them sometimes. Me and Martha.

Martha looks at Sarah and smiles.

They come from all over apparently and most lodge here in town. Some in hostels, some in private houses. And they do all sorts. Gauge-making, draughtsmanship, welding, pattern-making and aero-engine testing. One of them told me that she was making the fuselage and the wings for planes which they then sent over to the Brush to be manufactured. Another that she'd learnt how to use micrometers and Vernier callipers. 'How do you know words like that?' my husband said when I told him. 'Vernier callipers'. Bloody nincompoop.

I wish I could have done that when I was their age. I wish I could do it now. I wish I could be there now. With the women. Over there. Rather than in here. In the pub. With the men.

(Sandwich work / help)

You do wonder if they were aiming for that college, given the work it does. But I can't see it. Some of them out there (***indicating the bar***) swear that it was an engineer that lead the zeppelin here. Mr Bastert, the German who used to be at Morris's and who left just before the war started. Which seems a very sensible thing to do in my book, because what would have happened to him otherwise? Interned like the rest of them.

Billy and Jim even reckon they saw him; leaning out of the zeppelin. I mean it really does make you wonder doesn't it? How daft people can get when they've got a hatchet to bury. Because none of them who worked for him liked the chap. Always standing at the gate and sending them home if they were late. Which they could be if they'd been in here too long the night before.

And I told them. That's right. It was Mr Bastert. He went back to Germany and he got a zeppelin so he could come and bomb the factory he worked in to get his own back on you lot moaning about him. And to make sure he got you all he headed here first. And of course the German High Command thought that striking a mortal blow at the enemy by bombing The Crown and Cushion to smithereens would be just the thing to win the war.

They didn't like it. I thought it were quite good. And William went as red as a beetroot. I thought he was going to explode, never mind no bomb.

(Sandwich work / help)

Bloody zeppelin. If it weren't for the fact that the back yard hadn't been concreted over then it would have been a lot worse. And maybe rather than just a little injury I wouldn't be here now. Making sandwiches for that lot that got away scot-free. Because they were in the front. And I was in the back.

A woman's life, eh. But at least I didn't end up like poor old Martha.

Martha and Sarah smile at each other again.

It's lucky though. That it didn't hit that institute. I mean there were glass everywhere they told me. Lots of the women, and the men there too of course, got cut. But nothing serious.

They came in early and cleared it up the next day. Brought in flowers too; snowdrops, nothing else in bloom at that time. Especially with it being as cold as it was.

Martha smiles at Sara.

Half a pint she had, most evenings; Martha. And we'd put the world to rights. Her husband was like mine really. Only he was in the Medical Corps so he had some use. The funny thing was the night before she'd said to me how wonderful it was to see all those women up there working away. 'Some of them will end up doing marvellous things' she said. 'They'll be the first woman to run a factory; or the first woman to design a new machine. Can you imagine what that must be like? Being a woman and being the first'.

(Sandwich work / help)

She must have been standing at the back door. Perhaps she was looking up at the windows to see the women there, wishing that she could be with them. Perhaps it was the whirring of the zeppelin that caused her to come out.

Martha now reaches down to her leg.

She was found by a police officer. Just sitting there. On a chair. By the back door. Bleeding heavily. A fragment of the bomb had embedded itself in her leg. That's what they said.

Martha places her hand back on the table. It is covered in blood.

She didn't last long.

Sara goes to collect a towel which she gives to Martha who wipes the blood away.

I've never heard a sound like it. The crater was still there when I got back from hospital. Like a comet had fallen to earth.

My husband hadn't filled it up; hadn't asked the men to help him do that. The men who were talking and talking and talking in the front. The men who didn't have a scratch on any of them. Though they still go on about it. How terrible it was. A shock to the system. How they were lucky to escape with their lives. That's right. Mr Bastert must have been furious that he missed them.

They didn't put any snowdrops out in the yard either. Nor me. I put them by the back door. Her back door. Number Five.

I still can't believe she's gone. Still see her sometimes, in the corner of my eye.

It's typical really. It's men that start wars and men that fight wars and when they decide to bring it here it's a woman that's the first to get killed.

Poor Martha.

Martha exits through the back door. Sara is oblivious to this.

Thanks for your help. It's for them. Of course. They're all off fishing. It'll give me some peace. You can go out into the yard if you like. See where it fell. A lot of people do, even now.

Martha exits.

The Coroner

The Coroner enters. He is wearing his apron and has gloves on. He comes up to a table and sits down. On the table is a lunch box. He will proceed to carefully lay out his lunch as he talks to the audience.

Coroner: I hope you don't mind me preparing my lunch whilst I talk to you. I didn't have much breakfast this morning ... couldn't ... rather nervous I suppose over what was ahead of me. Which is rather silly. I mean when you live in a town where a good percentage of the population earn their living using heavy machinery then you do, unfortunately, get to see some rather nasty sights.

But this is all new. I mean we've seen it of course, the wounded coming back from the front, bandaged up, limbs missing. Terrible. But here. In the middle of the town. What a truly strange thing.

He opens the lunchbox and takes out a pork pie. He looks at it in wonder before placing it on the table. He then takes out a pickled onion. He smiles.

My wife. She knew that it was going to be a difficult day so she's rather spoilt me. The dear thing.

He takes out the rest of the contents and carefully lays them out.

So ... the details. That's why you're all here. The grisly details; although medical language does mercifully manage to hide it all rather well. I will go through the causes of death starting from what we now presume to be the last bomb and then move backwards in time as it were to the first. But you must understand that what killed these poor people, all of them, was sheer misfortune. That is what I would like to write on these records; if I could. That they died not just of their injuries but of bad luck, of misplaced inquisitiveness, of the random nature of life.

And you'd think, wouldn't you, that if anyone would be aware of such a thing, of the fragility of existence, that it would be a coroner. And that therefore I would seize the day. Ensure that when I returned home that I used my life as fully as possible, as we all surely should. The

moment we are born is the moment that we must be ready to die. A sobering thought. And, of course, one that we hide from ourselves. But perhaps we shouldn't. It often takes a tragedy, such as this, to make us see things more clearly. To jolt us out of our complacency.

Perhaps in any other time this awful occurrence would do such a thing. But of course at this moment we are drenched in death and you do wonder if we will all ever recover.

War. Oh dear. Maybe the fact that it has arrived in front of our very eyes will help us make more of an effort to stop it next time it appears to be gathering shape on the horizon.

But what do we ever see? Us poor mortals. We know so little both about what is happening inside our skin and outside of our reach.

He looks again at the contents of the table. He picks up a small pot of chutney.

Home-made chutney. Made from my father's tomatoes. A keen gardener. 'There's nothing like watching things grow' he always tells me. 'You and I Thomas, funny how we ended up ...' (***he is going to say 'dealing with such different things'***)

So. The casualties. Are you ready?

The fourth bomb. The last.

Josiah Gilbert, aged 49, of 77 Empress Road, died of a lacerated chest and abdominal injuries. He also had a broken arm.

Arthur Christian Turnall, aged 51, of 83 Station Street Loughborough died in hospital from the laceration of the left leg and right side causing a haemorrhage.

And then the Page family. A truly terrible sight I have to say. But ... Mary Anne Page, aged 47 of 87 Empress Road, died on Empress Road from a fractured skull and other terrible injuries. Joseph Frederick Page, aged 18, died of the same. As did Elsie Page, aged 16.

The body you see. It is a fragile thing. We fall, we strike our head, and all kinds of injuries may occur. Maybe that's why I am so careful ... cautious. Maybe rather than realising that

adventures must be had because of the potential brevity of life the opposite has occurred; and I have become cocooned by a desire to escape danger. Not to take any risks. But then ... this happens.

I mean who knows what kind of people these were – some of you may I suppose – but all I see is a collection of bodies. I have no understanding of who they truly were. One may have been someone for whom swinging across the river on a rotting branch was their first memory. And another, a person who would never go near a horse in case of a sudden kick.

But how can you protect yourself against this? And if you cannot then how do you cope with that as an individual?

I'm sorry.

He takes out a pen knife and begins to chop up an apple. Again losing himself in thought.

There. I'm sorry. Where was I?

He looks down at his notes.

The second bomb. The third apparently landing in an orchard and causing no harm to anyone.

Ethel Alice Higgs, aged 25, of 104 Station Street, died in hospital of serious internal injuries caused by metal fragments.

Joseph Williamson Adkin, aged 27, of Knightthorpe Road, died in hospital of badly lacerated legs. The left arm also being torn.

Ann Adkin, aged 28, also of Knightthorpe Road, died from wounds on her right hand side and abdomen causing haemorrhage.

Annie Adcock, aged 42, of 13 The Rushes, died from lacerated wounds to both sides of the head. I am convinced that she died instantaneously.

He pours himself a drink.

I am convinced about that. I hoped that there would be another word that I could find. Not because instantaneously is a bad word, it's not, it's a good one, one that allows you to imagine something being shut off; just like that. A switch from life to death, which of course brings salve. But it is the fact, I hate to say, that the word has become so common, in the letters from the front that are delivered day after day on the streets of this town. The knock on the door. The pale face. The words from the pal or the member of the battalion. 'He died instantaneously, and without pain'.

And you have to believe that, don't you? You just have to.

So ... well ... the first bomb, I believe. And mercifully only one casualty.

Martha Shipman, aged 50, of 5 Orchard Street, had shrapnel injuries to her left leg but died from what can perhaps only be described as shock. And that is the word that I have written in the records. Shock.

The look on her face. Frozen into her.

Because how could this have been so? How could a war that was happening in the papers; in the postman's bag; on the platforms of the train station; have found its way to her. Because that is the thing isn't it? Somehow these events have moved from there to here. And once they've arrived you see, once something gets inside you, it's very difficult to get rid of it. We try; we try desperately; our bodies rush into action; building up antibodies, blood cells reproducing at an incredible rate; it's difficult to imagine but think of ants and maybe ... And that's perhaps what we need to do. To work like ants. Together. To try and stop this escalating.

Excuse me. I'm talking nonsense. It's been a very long day already.

It's the metal that killed them all. The fragments. The shrapnel. Bits of metal flying off in all directions and embedding itself in the soft skin of the human body.

Terrible.

Anyway. That's it.

Well; I've rather lost my appetite. Oh dear. And she made such an effort as well. My dear, dear wife. Mary.

The coroner gets

Please, see yourselves out. I'll come back to this later. Unless any of you would like some.

The coroner exits.

The Council Meeting

The Council Office. There is a small table with a phone on it. The phone rings. It rings and rings. From off stage we hear 'will somebody get that!'

A woman enters and picks up it up.

Woman: I see. I'll tell the Mayor immediately.

She leaves.

A moment.

And then a group of around ten people enter energetically all at once carrying an assortment of bags and satchels and briefcases and papers and newspapers. They all have stick on moustaches and hats (the women are all playing men): Payne, the policeman; Alan, a worrier; Brian, a toady; Clive, a man of few words; Edward, hoping to be the next Mayor; Fred, convinced that no zeppelin will ever arrive anywhere near the town; George convinced that it is on its way; Harry, a rather cynical type.

Everyone is talking animatedly. The Mayor enters.

Mayor: Can I have your attention please?

Immediate silence. Immediate.

Mayor: The reason that I have called this emergency meeting of the town council is because four zeppelins have been sighted over Norwich and are travelling in a westerly direction.

And now everyone starts to talk again. In a highly excitable manner. Waving things around

Mayor: Quiet please.

No response.

Mayor: Can I have your attention?

No response. He picks up a bell and rings it. Everyone immediately shuts up. Immediately.

Brian: What time was the sighting Mr Mayor?

Mayor: About an hour ago.

And once again everyone starts to talk.

Mayor: If I may?

They carry on, oblivious to his demands.

Mayor: Excuse me.

This is getting nowhere and so once again the Mayor rings the bell. And once again there is immediate silence. Immediate.

Mayor: Which means that they may only be an hour away.

And once again everyone starts to talk. And once again the Mayor rings the bell. And once again there is immediate silence. Immediate.

Mayor: Look we can't carry on like this.

Clive: He's absolutely right.

Brian: Sorry Mr Mayor.

Alan: It's just that we don't know the correct protocol for a situation like this. I mean what are we all to do?

Mayor: We have been advised that it may be wise to enforce a strict blackout.

Edward: It's too late for that Mr Mayor.

Mayor: What do you mean?

Edward: Well we may be able to turn some lights off but we'll never get round the whole of the town in an hour.

Fred: And there's no need too.

Mayor: I'm sorry.

Fred: Just because they've sighted zeppelins over Norwich it does not mean that they will get anywhere near Loughborough. Nor do they probably intend to. Can we all just calm down and think rationally about this. How many times have zeppelins been spotted over or in fact anywhere near Loughborough since this war began?

Silence

Fred: Exactly. Not once. Because it is simply too far for them to travel. And extraordinarily risky now that we have incendiary bullets.

George: But you'd never get a bullet near them at the height they travel!

Fred: There is no chance at all that a German airship will come anywhere near us.

Mayor: I have been informed that other towns have instilled blackouts. Nottingham. Derby. Leicester.

Fred: Then they are merely putting their citizens under undue trouble and are letting the Germans dictate the way we go about our daily business. In which case you could argue that they have already won the war.

Which once again precipitates much heated conversation and much waving of papers.

Mayor: Please everyone.

They ignore him.

Mayor: I said please.

They still ignore him. And so – after watching this cacophony for another moment or so he rings the bell once again. Immediate quiet. Immediate.

Harry: May I ask a question?

Mayor: Of course.

Harry: Why would a zeppelin want to come here?

Alan: Why wouldn't it?

Harry: Well surely there are much more valuable targets?

Alan: Are you saying that Loughborough isn't worth bombing?

And here goes that heated conversation again! And there goes the ringing of the bell again. And the immediate silence. Immediate.

Mayor: Go on Harry. Explain yourself.

Harry: If a zeppelin is going to come all the way over from Germany carrying a finite number of bombs, I do wonder if we can honestly say that we are the intended target.

Payne: There's the Munitions Training College.

Brian: The Brush.

Edward: Morris's.

Alan: This town is as worthy as being bombed as any!

Hear hear!

Mayor: What is the situation regarding lights Inspector Payne?

Payne: They're on.

Mayor: Can you please be more precise?

Payne: All the lights are on Mayor. The gas lights, the lights in the factories and of course, as of today, the new electric lighting in the square and on Leicester Road.

Brian: And if I may say so I do think we should congratulate ourselves on what I, for one, think is a truly wonderful achievement.

Hear hear!

Mayor: They've come on today you say?

Payne: You must have noticed sir!

Mayor: I have been exceptionally busy!

Payne: Well, may I humbly suggest that you have a look.

Brian: You must; it's wonderful.

Mayor: I think we have more pressing matters to discuss.

Brian: It'll only take a moment Mr Mayor.

Mayor: Maybe later ...

Brian: Just a quick peek.

The Mayor is unsure what to do. Everyone in the room appears to be wanting him to have a look at these lights. A pregnant pause and ...

Mayor: Alright! Alright! I'll look at the lights.

***The Mayor vanishes. Everyone is quiet. This is held for as long as possible.
The Mayor re-enters.***

Mayor: It's very bright.

Brian: As I said Mayor it's a wonderful achievement.

Hear hear!

Mayor: Didn't any of you hear a word I said! Zeppelins are on their way! And we're lit up like Christmas!

Fred: But we're much too far inland Mr Mayor. As I have already indicated. With all due respect.

Clive: He's absolutely right.

Alan: He may not be. I mean it is possible that the Germans have something up their sleeve. Isn't it?

And uproar breaks out again. Until the Mayor – once again – rings the bell.

Brian: Can I ask what the situation is regarding aliens Mr Mayor?

Mayor: I have no idea. And why is that pertinent?

Alan: Perhaps there are spies in our midst.

Uproar. Bell.

Edward: I can give a full briefing about the alien situation Mr Mayor. My newspaper has been keeping a careful eye on that front.

Mayor: Then if you would be so kind.

Edward: Of course. *(Referring to his notes)* Annie Green, a Loughborough widow, who lost her husband in the Boer War and a son in the present war, on Wednesday, at Loughborough, pleaded guilty to not keeping a register of aliens at her boarding house in Clarence Street. P.C. Mee spoke of visiting the house with respect to a Belgian engaged at the Brush Electrical Engineering Works, and lodging on the premises. She produced a number of papers containing the names of several lodgers but she had not got a register of aliens. A Portuguese gentleman had been living in the house for about two years, and the Belgian only a few days. The defendant admitted having received printed instructions, but she had not read the same carefully.

Having finished he looks around the room with some pride.

Mayor: Is that it?

Edward: Yes.

Mayor: I was thinking specifically of Germans Edward.

Edward: I'm afraid we don't have anything on those. Although I may have something on the Italian family that sell the ice cream. What are they called again?

Payne: Bartholomuch.

Edward: Bartholomuch.

Harry: Lovely stuff that.

Brian: Best I've ever tasted.

Clive: I don't know how they do it.

Payne: Top secret apparently.

Alan: Excuse me but I really do think we're wasting time here Mr Mayor. If the zeppelins are heading for Loughborough we need to get as many lights turned off as possible. Especially in the factories.

Payne: Which may cause a problem. At Morris's.

Mayor: Why?

Payne: Well ever since the workers complained about the lack of decent artificial light hampering their work in the evenings, the blackout curtains on the north light roof have been removed in an effort to try and help them get as much light into the place as possible.

George: If light can get in then it can also get out.

Clive: He's absolutely right.

Payne: Well of course. It's a glass roof.

George: As is the one at the Technical College! If a zeppelin did fly over then it couldn't have a clearer target than Loughborough.

Chaos. Bell.

Mayor: We should get a message out to every institution in the town as soon as possible.

Edward: But we do need to proceed with diligence Mr Mayor. Military production is vital and if we turn the lights off at the factory then the workers there won't be able to carry on. And if that is the case then all the enemy has to do is send the odd zeppelin over and productivity will be crippled.

George: Not if the blackout curtains were still covering the roof! What were you thinking of man!

Payne: I never imagined a zeppelin could get this far inland.

Fred: It won't.

Alan: It might. And if the wind is in the right direction it could be here at any moment.

Uproar. Bell.

Mayor: There is no chance of it arriving here yet.

Fred: Or at all.

Alan: Are you certain Mr Mayor?

Mayor: Yes. I think so.

George: It's the sound we need to listen for

Alan: What sound?

George: If it's that high up we won't see it. But we might be able to hear it.

A shout of 'quiet!' goes round the room. Everyone is quiet for a moment ..

Mayor: But it won't be here yet!

Sssshhh!

The Mayor, obviously frustrated keeps quiet as well. Eventually he rings his bell again.

Mayor: Right I've had enough; this is ridiculous.

Clive: He's absolutely right.

Mayor: I want all of the Special Constables called out in case of an emergency.

Fred: There won't be an emergency. They won't come anywhere near here.

George: They're already near here!

Alan: Then let's get our heads down!

Mayor: Calm down man! Inspector Payne can you please send your men across town to tell the owners of well-lit properties to douse their lights.

Payne: That won't go down well with some of them.

Edward: Just tell them that you have explicit instructions from the Town Council.

Payne: That'll make it worse.

Mayor: How long will it take to get the message out?

Payne: I think Sergeant Agar's bicycle has a puncture so we'll have to mend that first.

George: We haven't got time to mend a puncture!

Payne: He can't cycle round on a flat tyre. He's rather a portly gentleman.

Clive: He's absolutely right.

Mayor: Just do what you have to do man. Knock on windows; ring round to all of those establishments that you can contact by telephone ...

Harry: If they can hear the telephone ringing over the sound of the machinery.

Fred: There really is no need to make any telephone calls or knock on anybody's window.

Brian: The Mayor has spoken and we must respect his authority.

The phone rings. Everyone looks at it.

Fred: Finally. Someone letting us know it's a false alarm.

George: Unless they're nearer than they thought.

Uproar. Bell. The Mayor picks up the phone. Silence as everyone looks at the Mayor.

Mayor: Well I'm afraid that I can't do that.

George: What do they want him to do?

Sssshhhh!

Mayor: We're all here. The entire town council. And Inspector Payne.

George: And we're sitting ducks in this light.

Harry: I wonder what the protocol is if we're all wiped out.

Sssshhhh!

Mayor: I understand that's it very important. But I'm just going to have to let you down.
Forgive me.

He puts the phone down.

Mayor: The wife's birthday. I was meant to be taking her to the picture house.

Brian: I went last night. The Rosary. Very effective.

Harry: I didn't like it.

Fred: Me neither. Much too melodramatic. Especially when the house catches fire.

Alan: Whose house is on fire?

Uproar! Bell.

Mayor: Gentlemen; please. Now can I ask you all to leave this room and to do whatever you see fit to assist in the situation. God willing the zeppelins will come nowhere near us.

Fred: If they were ever seen at all.

Mayor: But if they do then I fear that we may come to regret some of our recent decisions. And perhaps even the way that we have conducted ourselves in this meeting.

Clive: He's absolutely right.

The Mayor turns and leaves and the others all follow, talking to each other animatedly again.

The Reporters

A group of four journalists - Alan (anti-council) / Barbara (keen) / Cyril (anti-German) / Florence (pacifist) - are sitting round a table.

Cyril: It's going to be a long night.

Barbara: I'm quite looking forward to it to be honest. I know it's terrible what's happened but it's time we got stuck into some real news.

Florence: It's people's lives we're talking about Barbara!

Barbara: I know; I do, really. But all I've been writing about for the last two weeks is the effect of the snowstorms and the break in at the cinema by those Shakespeare School children.

Cyril: All that fuss over a bag of sugar, a tin of condensed milk and a jar of pickles.

Florence: They damaged the organ as well. Some of the more romantic movies have been decidedly off key ever since.

Alan: Well I know that some of you have been critical of my decision to keep writing about the council's decision to turn on more lights rather than less, but I do feel that an I Told You So column might be brewing.

The Editor enters.

Editor: Is everyone alright?

General muttering that they are.

Editor: Anyone have any relatives or friends caught up in what happened?

Florence: The organist at my chapel was pretty badly injured.

Alan: I didn't realise you went to chapel.

Florence: Woodgate.

Cyril: Arthur Bowler? The haberdasher?

Florence: Yes.

Cyril: Poor chap. I was only in his shop earlier today buying some buttons for my wife.

Barbara: We should follow it up. Is he in the hospital?

Florence: He is.

Barbara: Perhaps I could go along after we've finished here.

Editor: There are a dozen or so injured people in the hospital. The Doctors and indeed all of the staff will be very busy. So just a few enquiries please; nothing more. We cannot, in any way, obstruct those who are dealing with the victims or who are working to clear up this appalling mess.

Barbara: Of course sir.

Editor: So ... first of all. How about a headline? The next edition may be one of those that people store in their attic for years to come.

Alan: Zeppelin Bombs Rain on Loughborough.

Editor: Not bad. Although there were only three bombs I believe.

Alan: Four. One fell in an orchard up behind Thomas Street.

Florence: Mercifully.

Barbara: But still; can you rain with just four bombs.

Florence: How many did you want to fall Barbara? To justify the use of the word 'rain'?

Editor: Anyone else? Cyril?

Cyril: Night of Terror, Destruction and Death.

Editor: That's very dramatic.

Cyril: It's been very dramatic.

Editor: I just wonder if ...

Cyril: Yes sir?

Editor: (*reaching for the words*) ... there is ... in situations like this ... a tendency to reach for the most extreme language we can find. And I wonder if that is helpful.

Barbara: Night of the Zeppelin.

Editor: Say that again.

Barbara: Night of the Zeppelin.

Editor: Yes; yes I think so. Well done Barbara. We'll go with that. Accurate, concise and ... dramatic. Yes; still dramatic but without the hyperbole.

Barbara: Thank you sir. And do we refer to the zeppelin throughout as a zeppelin?

Alan: I'm not sure we've got enough z's.

Florence: What else would we call it?

Barbara: We could use a number of terms. German airship.

Editor: Perfectly acceptable.

Barbara: Dirigible.

Editor: Too clinical.

Cyril: Baby Killer.

Everyone looks at Cyril for a moment.

Cyril: Why not? That's what a lot of people call them.

Editor: Well to be strictly accurate no babies died in this raid ...

Cyril: Two young people did though sir. Joseph and Elsie Page. They had their whole lives in front of them.

Florence: Everyone has their whole life in front of them Cyril. We just never know how short it may be.

Cyril: So it's alright to kill the young is it? Because we've all got to die sometime?

Florence: I'm not saying that.

Cyril: And that young Gilbert lad. Had to stand and watch his father die. In their own shop. I hope this paper is going to come out and call them what they are. Murderers. We should go over and do the same to them. Tenfold.

Florence: And what would that achieve?

Cyril: It would teach them a bloody good lesson.

Florence: Then we'd be as bad as them.

Cyril: They started it.

Florence: Tell that to the children that would die in German towns just like this one.

Cyril: There are no German towns just like this one.

Editor: Please! Please! That's enough. Both of you. I know that emotions are high but we are reporters; journalists. We have a very important role to play. Especially at times like this. We have to be clear, calm and accurate in everything that we say. We cannot inflame public opinion. So where do we go from here?

Barbara: I've been doing some work on previous attacks.

Editor: You've been moving quickly.

Barbara: It's helpful to be prepared.

Alan: Unlike this town.

Editor: We'll come to that. Go on.

Barbara: Right ... well ... just over a year ago the first attack happened. Five died and eight injured.

Editor: Where?

Barbara: Great Yarmouth and Kings Lynn. There were two of them apparently; two zeppelins ...

Alan: Can we just say zeps?

Cyril: Baby killers ...

Barbara: ... and they also dropped bombs on Sheringham; but no-one was hurt. Apparently one of the bombs didn't explode and was picked up by a local resident who put it in a bucket and took it away.

Alan: He walked around with a bomb in a bucket?

Barbara: According to the papers.

Alan: Then it must be true.

Barbara: By the end of last year there had been twenty five zeppelin raids ...

The Editor puts his hand up to stop Cyril interrupting

Barbara: ... in all. Mainly coastal areas in the south and the east; although also some in London. Fifty six people killed in total. One hundred and fourteen injured. Including a three year old in Stoke Newington.

Cyril: You see.

Editor: Very good. Anything else?

Barbara: They have lost a few. Zeppelins ... dirigibles ...

Alan: ... it doesn't work.

Barbara: From ground fire mainly. And bombing the sheds where they're housed in Germany. Although one went down when a pilot managed to fly above the thing and drop his bombs, causing it to burst into flames.

Cyril: Good man.

Barbara: Unfortunately the burning wreckage fell onto a convent in Bruges and killed four people.

Cyril: The crew died too I hope.

Barbara: All I know is that one of them fell one hundred feet, crashed through an attic skylight and landed on a nun's feather bed.

Florence: I'm not sure that people will want to hear about the miraculous escape of a German zeppelin pilot.

Barbara: No of course not. I'll just get rid of that.

Editor: And now these things are beginning to head inland. And no-one is safe.

Alan: I thought you said we needed to try and calm people's fears sir.

Editor: Sorry; just thinking aloud. It's a dreadful thing. Dreadful. All this death and injury.

There is a moment's pause as the journalists look around at each other, unsure how to continue.

Florence: There were some lucky escapes too sir. Perhaps we could mention those.

Editor: Like what?

Florence: I was talking to one of the cleaners at Gray's Lodging House in the Rushes. Apparently a labourer and his wife and child had only arrived in the town a couple of hours before. He was caught by flying glass.

Editor: Perhaps we should concentrate on stories from people who live here.

Alan: The Salvation Army were playing outside the Rising Sun ten minutes or so before the second bomb dropped. There was a bit of a crowd as usual. They could have been cut to bits.

Barbara: And it's a miracle that they didn't hit the gas or the electricity works. Can you imagine the chaos if that had happened?

Cyril: We should offer a reward.

Editor: What for?

Cyril: For shooting down a zep. I've heard that some papers have been.

Editor: That is exactly the kind of thing that we shouldn't be doing. We need people to act in a rational manner; not run around looking for rifles to point up into the sky.

Alan: How can anyone shoot down a zep?

Cyril: That's not the point.

Alan: It is the point.

Cyril: It shows our outrage! That we speak for the people of this town. That we will do whatever it takes to keep them and Loughborough safe.

Florence: We're not the police Cyril.

Alan: If you're so intent on killing a German then why don't you sign up?

Cyril: You know I have a problem with my leg. I'd have been the first to go if I was fully fit.

Florence: Well I'm sure that many more will want to fight now.

Alan: Everyone of a fighting age has started to be enlisted anyway.

Editor: I wonder how many of us will end up over there.

A pause again as all look at each other and take this in.

Florence: Can I ask what we were going to lead on sir? Before ...

Editor: The installation and turning on of the new electric lights in the Market Square. We've got some wonderful photographs apparently.

Alan: We're going to have to talk about the lights.

Editor: It's no good closing the stable door after the horse has bolted.

Alan: But why wasn't this town better prepared? Why wasn't the alarm raised sooner?

Florence: We can ask those questions Alan, in good time. But surely our job now is to honour the dead and to make sure that people are better prepared. That they have somewhere to shelter.

Alan: And how are they going to do that?

Florence: Many people have cellars. They should get them ready in case they are needed. Organise with their neighbours so that everyone has a place to go.

Alan: And make sure that they turn off their lights.

Editor: Excellent Florence. Barbara you work up a piece on the background to the attack from your excellent notes, without the nun's bed story obviously. And you Florence provide information on what to do if the alarm is raised again. Although making sure that you mention that it is unlikely. Highly unlikely.

Cyril: We don't know that. They could be getting ready to come back tomorrow night.

Editor: And we won't say too much about the lights. For now.

Barbara: Have you started on the editorial sir?

Editor: No.

Barbara: Only if you need any ...

Editor: You have plenty to do Barbara. You all have. It's my responsibility and one that I shall carry out with pride and prudence.

Alan: I imagine that every vicar and preacher in the town is thinking the same thing.

Florence: What kind of war will it become now? When bombs are dropped on innocent civilians? What kind of world has this become? What can we do in the face of that?

Editor: We can use the power of our words. For that is what we have. And we have to make sure that we use them well. When the enemy strikes at the very heart of our way of life he knows that the first thing that may occur is that we act rashly. That we seek instant revenge; that our worst instincts are unleashed; and that in our temper we turn away from those things that have served us so well in the past. This is a decent country and we will continue to act decently even in the face of such terror. For if we do not then the enemy has already won.

Barbara starts to clap. The others look around and realise that they should join in.

Editor: Right then; get to work. It's going to be a long night. We'll meet again in two hours to see how we're all getting on.

Everyone leaves.

The Zeppelin

As the audience enter they see three German zeppelin pilots – Karl, Max and Per – standing in a zeppelin car. This is the rear car. They are all wearing hats, scarves, gloves, goggles and have bottles of liquid air, along with a breathing tube and a mouthpiece hanging from their necks. They appear very cold.

Karl is looking through binoculars at the ground and making sketches. Per is taking readings from a variety of meters and gauges (thermometer/ barometer / altimeter / fuel gauge) and writing these down in a small book (he will move around the car during the scene). Max – whose job is to look after and provide any spare materials from a large casket – is clapping his hands to try and keep warm.

The sound of the zeppelin's engines underscores the entire scene.

Max: It's freezing.

Per: What did you expect?

Max: Not this. I can feel it inside my bones.

Karl: Look up there.

Max looks up.

Karl: Ice.

Per: There will be two tons of it by the time we get to Liverpool.

Max: We will all freeze to death by then.

Karl: If we ever get there.

Max: What do you mean?

Karl: Look at the clouds. We always get lost. Do you think that we will find where we are going in this weather?

Per: We have the best steersman in the fleet up ahead in the front car. We will get to Liverpool.

Karl: You say this every time Per.

Max: Do you always bomb Liverpool?

Karl: No. But wherever we are heading we end up somewhere else.

Max: Not this time. Kapitanleutnant Stabbert said that this will be the greatest raid on Britain in the entire war. That it will bring panic to the cities. That the government will fall and the British troops will retreat from France.

Karl: Kapitanleutnant Stabbert gets excited.

Per: Be careful what you are saying Karl.

Karl: Maybe we will get there and maybe we won't. Think about it. Half, a quarter, an eighth of a degree out; extend that over all these miles and who knows where we will end up.

Per: Ignore him. And fetch me a torch. I cannot take the thermometer reading.

Max goes to a large trunk.

Max: How freezing does it need to be?

Karl: Per likes to keep exemplary records.

Per: It is important that every detail of our flight is analysed correctly.

Karl: There is competition amongst all of the ships.

Per: And D20 is respected for having the finest records of all.

Karl: That is right. We know everything except for where we are going.

Max: We are going to Liverp...

Per: Ignore him! And do you have woollen underwear?

Max: No.

Per: You should not be on a zeppelin without woollen underwear.

Karl: It will get so cold that it will snap off like an icicle.

Max: Will it?

Per: No Max. It will not. Here have some of this.

He hands a thermos flask to Max who looks at it, wondering exactly what it is.

Per: A thermos flask. To keep coffee warm.

Max: This is a miracle!

Karl: No; this is a miracle. ***He reaches into his pocket and pulls out a tin which he waves in front of Max.*** A self- heating tin of meat. ***He places it back in his pocket.***
Have you one of those?

Max: No. But I have some sandwiches.

Karl: Which will be frozen.

Max: Will they?

Karl: Have a look.

Max goes to get his lunchbox. He opens it up and takes out a sandwich which is frozen.

Max: Yes; it is.

Karl grabs it and starts striking it against the girder.

Max: What are you doing?

Karl: This is how we defrost sandwiches up here.

Per: I did it with my gloves off on my first flight because I was scared of dropping it. I will never do that again.

Max: Why?

Per: My hand caught the girder.

Max: And?

Per: It is not just high temperatures that give you burns.

Karl: There.

Max: I think I will leave it. I am not hungry.

Beat

Karl: What must we look like to them down there?

Max: They can't see us can they?

Per: No. We're above the clouds. As long as we keep all our lights off.

Karl: But when they do? When they catch a tiny glimpse. What must they think?

Max: They will shake in terror.

Karl: You can imagine them, down there, standing outside their houses, looking up in awe, their children waving up at us. And then we drop the bombs. Do you know that my father is a concert violinist? That he was asked to play in one of the first zeppelin flights. That is what you want to see. A gondola full of musicians up amongst the clouds.

Max: Is he always like this?

Per: Artistic temperament.

Karl: Did you not both feel how beautiful it was? As the armada headed out to sea; the sun disappearing over the horizon. All these giant ships pushing into the dying light.

Max: Will we see the others when we get to Liverpool?

Karl: We will not get to Liverpool!

Per: Be quiet man. And do your job.

Max: What is your job?

Karl: The easiest one of all.

Per: He sketches the ground below. To help us understand where we have been and where we are going.

Karl: But I also have to release the bomb mechanism. When the bell rings from the front car. So it is a very varied occupation.

Max: Can I help?

Karl: With the drawings?

Max: With the bombing?

Karl: No.

Max: And you can see what to draw?

Karl: Yes. There is always something.

Per: That is why we always fly as far as possible in sight of land; so that we can determine our position more accurately.

Karl: It does not work.

Max: We can't we just use the wireless and call through to the Direction Finding Ship?

Karl: Mein gott! Only room for a crew of sixteen men and yet we can still fit in an idiot.

Per: The wireless gives out electrical signals. Which draws attention to our presence.

Karl: And we do not want them to see us Max. Because they do not like us. Because we drop bombs on them.

Max now takes a small torch from his pocket which he turns on.

Per: Be careful with that! Aren't you listening to a word that Karl is saying!

Max comes over and looks at what Per is doing.

Max: Is everything as it should be?

Per: The fuel gauge is lower than I would like.

Max: And what does that mean?

Karl: Only that we will plummet to our death before we ever get back to the fatherland.

Per: We will be alright. The more bombs we take the less petrol we have. It is a careful balance. And this is the furthest inland we have ever attempted to reach.

Karl: We just have to pray they have got their maths right.

Per: As long as we don't spend too much time over England.

Max: But we will get to Liverpool?

Karl: Max. Whenever we return from a mission we inspect our records and look at our maps and talk with the steersman and look at my sketches and we consider the matter from every point of view. And then we come to a conclusion, every single time. Always the same conclusion. That we do not really know where we have been.

Max: But in training we were shown maps of all the cities we have hit in every previous raid.

Karl: We have to fill in the paperwork. We have to write down somewhere. The only time I think that we may have got it right was when someone came in with an English newspaper which reported that at 11.15am that day a zeppelin raid had taken place over the town of Maldon.

Per: And we had never heard of Maldon.

Max looks out over the side.

Max: It is so dark down there.

Karl: It is always the same. The darkness of the night spread over the sea. The first lights of the English coast beginning to gleam in the distance before suddenly plunging itself into the deepest gloom the moment they are aware we are coming.

Max: But nothing will stop us destroying them.

Karl: Max. I understand that you are a young soldier. But you must try to be a little less bloodthirsty. It is not good for the soul or the brain. There will come a moment when you have to be clear and rational.

Max: Why do you talk like a pacifist?

Karl: Because I have seen it Max. I have seen the war. A huge gleaming gash. The Western Front. Shots, explosions, star-shells, light rockets, a huge terrible streak that is constantly glowing. A place that has known no night for years. And when you see that, from up

Per: Karl! You are a failed artist not a failed poet. Be quiet! And Max get me a small strap.

Max: Why do you ...

Per: Just do it!

Per goes over to the trunk.

Per: And you be careful what you say to him. He has family in high places. How do you think we ended up with such a fool?

Per holds up an incendiary.

Max: When can we drop these?

Per: Put those down!

Max: But we will get to throw them on the enemy?

Karl: Maybe.

Max: Then I will be doing something useful rather than being an errand boy.

Karl: You will have started a fire that is all.

Per: Everyone has a part to play.

Karl: If you want to kill somebody so much then throw your sandwich overboard. It may hit someone and split their head open.

Per raises his hand to stop the argument.

Max: Who is that on the machine gun?

Per: Gustav.

Max: That is what I want to be. A gunner.

Karl: Why? What is there to shoot up here? Ducks?

Per: And you shake too much to be a gunner.

Max: I would be fine.

Per: Could you climb the ladder all the way to the very top of the vessel? To the machine gun platform up there? You cannot be a gunner unless you can do that.

Max: Yes, of course. I am not afraid of heights.

Karl: Good. Then you can take these drawings to the steersman in the front car so he can compare them with his maps.

Max: You want me to go across the catwalk to the other car?

Karl: Yes.

Max: Then I will.

Per: There is no need. He is playing with you.

Max: No I am going. Where is the parachute?

Per: We don't have parachutes.

Karl: What use would a parachute be for a descent into a freezing sea or the ship exploding into flames?

Max: He does not think I can do it. But I will.

Per: Just stop it. Both of you.

Karl and Max look at each other. Per moves to take another reading. Karl looks through his binoculars again. As they do this Max starts to breathe very quickly.

Per: What is the matter?

Max: I can't breathe.

Per: Yes you can.

Max: I can't. What's happening?

Per: Did you not listen to anything that you were told in training? We are getting higher that's all. The atmosphere is getting thinner.

Karl reaches over and puts the breathing mask on Max.

Karl: Take a gulp. It tastes terrible but it will put some lead in your pencil. **(To Per)** The air should be thinner than this by now. We are not as high as we are meant to be.

Per: I know. And the engines don't sound right.

Karl: Don't let him know. He'll start panicking.

Per: Maybe there is more ice up there than we thought.

Max: Lights! Look, over there! Lights!

Karl: It's the oxygen playing tricks with you. It does that.

Per: No, he's right. There. Under those clouds. There's a faint glow.

Max: It must be Liverpool!

Karl: Because Liverpool is the only place in England that has lights.

A light flashes from the front car towards them.

Max: What is that?

Per: The sub lieutenant is sending over a message.

Per goes over to a radio set and puts on a pair of headphones. We hear the sound of morse code as Karl and Max continue and Per takes down the message.

Karl: Are you married Max?

Max: Yes. And when this is over I hope to start a family.

Karl: Like those who are somewhere down there.

Max: But if we can terrorize people into submission that maybe that is better than having to kill them.

Karl: Though we have to kill some for the terror to work.

Max: They are the enemy.

Karl: Can a family sitting in a house unaware of what is above them really be considered an enemy?

Per takes the headphones off.

Per: They are certain that the lights below are those of Sheffield.

Karl: I am not so sure.

Per: It doesn't matter what you think.

Karl: We have not been travelling for long enough or in the right direction to reach Sheffield.

Per: You don't know that.

Max: So now what?

Per: Our orders have changed. Kapitanleutnant Stabbert says that we may not make Liverpool with our engine trouble. We will strike here; over Sheffield.

Karl: It isn't Sheffield.

Per: Karl!

Max: And we will not be a part of the attack on Liverpool with all of the others.

Karl: They will be as lost as us.

Per: It does not matter where we are. We have our orders.

Karl: That is right. And when the bell sounds I will release the bombs. One at a time.

Max: And make sure that you do.

Per: He always does.

Karl: Well whoever you are down there; good luck.

Per: We are nearly there.

The three of them look down for a moment. After a short while we hear the ringing of a bell.

Beatrice Smith / Ernest Stubley

Ernest – a young man in his early twenties – is kneeling in front of his tandem with a tool box and oil can. Beatrice – in her twenties – joins him. The scene takes place in front of a screen on which there is a projection of the wall of the Empress Works on Moor Lane.

Beatrice: Have you nearly finished it then Ernest?

Ernest: Final touches Beatrice.

Beatrice: And they've let you make that? Here at the factory.

Ernest: I asked nicely. It's all just bits of scrap that I've bent into place.

Beatrice: It's beautiful.

Ernest: I wouldn't go that far. But she's not bad.

Beatrice: She's a 'she' then is she Ernie?

Ernest: She is; she is.

Beatrice: And have you taken her for a ride yet?

Ernest: It's a tandem. You need two.

Beatrice: How about we launch her together then? If she's ready. I could do with a lift home.

Ernest: Alright; why not? Climb aboard.

Ernest and Beatrice climb up onto the tandem. Over the following section we will see the tandem move from the factory to Hartington Street (where Beatrice lived), a

distance of around half a mile, through a film of this journey being projected onto the screen. Maybe we see people enter every now and again and wave at the couple.

Maybe this is also underscored with some form of music – recorded or live.

Beatrice: So are you ready for the big day?

Ernest: Not really thought about it to be honest.

Beatrice: You must have! I can't stop thinking about it. But I can't find the right hat. And if you're going to meet the nobility you have to have the right hat.

Ernest: I'm not sure a Duke is nobility is it?

Beatrice: Course it is. I've been practising my curtseys too.

Ernest: Well I'm sure my mum will make sure I'm looking my best. Make me clean my shoes up right and proper. Hey, she rides alright doesn't she?

Beatrice: Course she does Ernest. Do you feel guilty at all?

Ernest: About making this in my lunchbreaks?

Beatrice: No! About us getting this thing.

Ernest: I told you I haven't had a thought about it enter me head since the day it happened.

Beatrice: How can you not?

Ernest: I've been busy with the tandem.

Beatrice: You're a funny fella.

Ernest: Maybe I am.

Beatrice: I feel guilty.

Ernest: Why?

Beatrice: Because there were others; lots of them. That did things. That helped people. It seems daft that it's you and me that's going to be there getting that thing pinned to our chest.

Ernest: I'd rather they just sent it in the post.

Beatrice: Aren't you excited at all?

Ernest: If they told me that I could swap it for a new Brooks saddle I'd bite their hand off. Are you comfortable?

Beatrice: Not bad.

Ernest: If I had a Brooks saddle you'd be comfortable. But I'd need two, and I'll never be able to afford two.

Beatrice: Why did you do it Ernest? Why did you come in and turn all the lights off?

Ernest: Why did you?

Beatrice: I'm the one doing the asking!

Ernest: I didn't want the machines to be damaged.

Beatrice: They're not yours.

Ernest: I work on them.

Beatrice: They're just machines.

Ernest: I know they are. But they're clever things. And they deserve to be looked after.

Beatrice: I suppose so.

Ernest: We're lucky that this factory is here. He could have put it anywhere, Mr Morris, but he chose Loughborough and we should all be grateful.

Beatrice: It's just a factory.

Ernest: We make cranes Beatrice.

Beatrice: We have to make something. That's what you do in factories.

Ernest: But don't you think they're ... beautiful.

Beatrice: Beautiful!

Ernest: Yes; why not? And very simple. That's the thing; like all the best machines are.

Beatrice: Well I wouldn't really know. All we see is the parts we're working on.

Ernest: But don't you ever think about the way that it all comes together? And what your work has helped to make? How can we win a war if we don't have cranes to load things up with?

Beatrice: I'm just usually wondering how long it is before I can knock off and go dancing.

Ernest: He's got offices in Paris and Toronto now you know; Mr Morris. And it all started to really move on after he came here. The Empress Works. The finest crane manufacturer in the land.

Beatrice: I don't know why you keep going on about cranes and machines all the time. It's not ...

Ernest: What?

Beatrice: Healthy!

Ernest: We're going to need machines Beatrice, when the war's over. One day we'll realise that man has been made to invent. To invent and to build and not to destroy.

Beatrice: So that's why you did it then? Ran in and turned all the lights off? Because you love machines. And cranes.

Ernest: I suppose so. And it's cranes now that we're making but who knows what it might be in ten years' time.

Beatrice: I don't want to be in that factory in ten years' time.

Ernest: It's adding to the world Beatrice; that's the thing. Adding to it. That's what we're doing there. What good does a bomb do? What good does war do? It's just taking away.

Beatrice: Don't you be saying stuff like that in a couple of days' time. We've got to beat the Kaiser!

Ernest: And we will.

Beat.

Ernest: And what about you Beatrice? What made you run in and shut down the electricity?

Beatrice: I don't know. I just did. The supervisor came round and told us all to leave; that there were reports of a zeppelin; and I got my coat like everyone else and headed up the road. And then I just realised. That it needed to be turned off. And that maybe no-one had done it. So I turned back. Just like you.

Ernest: Just you and me.

Beatrice: Just you and me.

Ernest: And if that zeppelin had been a little bit quicker it could have been you and me that were killed on the road that night.

Beatrice: Poor souls.

Ernest: It was a near miss Beatrice. I do wonder if what we did helped in any way. Probably not to be honest.

Beatrice: Best be on the safe side though, eh?

Ernest: Every time.

Beatrice: Did you see it Ernest? As you were on your way home back to Hathern?

Ernest: I don't know. I think so. But when it's so dark you imagine all sorts.

Beatrice: I did. I swear I did. Is a zeppelin a machine?

Ernest: Course it is. In the same family as this tandem really. If you think about it. If machines had families.

Beatrice: It didn't look like a machine.

Ernest: A bomb is a machine.

Beatrice: Is it?

Ernest: Absolutely. A machine, any machine, is an apparatus which uses mechanical power and has several parts; each with a definite function which, by acting together is able to perform a particular task.

Beatrice: And is blowing things up a particular task?

Ernest: I'm afraid it is.

Beatrice: And now because of those bombs we're both getting the OBE.

Ernest: And it's daft. When you think of all those poor sods being blown to bits over there. That's where I'd be, if this wasn't a reserved occupation. And if I was over there I'd probably be dead by now. So I practically owe my life to Mr. Morris and to his factory.

Beatrice: And to the cranes.

Ernest: Yes.

Beatrice: Do you think we'll get a pay rise?

Ernest: No chance.

Beatrice: Maybe we'll be asked to open official functions; things like that.

Ernest: Don't get ahead of yourself!

Beatrice: I'm just wondering. What it actually means. The Order of the British Empire. I'm proud. I am. But then I feel guilty

Ernest: You said ...

Beatrice: When all those other people did just as much as us.

Ernest: Sometimes I think that night it was like a big machine; this town. Only people didn't realise it until then. How it all works together. And then, when it had to serve its purpose, and all the separate parts had to do what they had to do, they did. It did.

Beatrice: Then it's even more stupid isn't it?

Ernest: What is?

Beatrice: That some parts get more praise than others.

Ernest: If you get the weight wrong in a ball bearing then even a tiny thing like that will cause a machine to eventually malfunction. So maybe it's a good thing that people like you

and me are off to meet the nobility; or whoever they are. Because it's going to be people like us Beatrice that will have to work hard when this is all over.

Beatrice: And the machines.

Ernest: That's right Beatrice. Us and them.

Beatrice: Hey I've got it!

Ernest: What?

Beatrice: I think I know exactly the hat I should wear.

Ernest: Well that's good then.

Beatrice: Come on; one last push. We're nearly there!

They continue to cycle until the film comes to an end – which it does with the wall of a house on Hartington Street fading into the image of them both being given the OBE. Once this image is on the screen they both get off of the tandem and bow to the audience.

Ethel Higgs and Elizabeth Askew

This script has been left reasonably open so that you can play around with choreography within it. It should be a very fluid piece, with the cast moving in and out of each other throughout. I have written in some suggested moments but you should look for others – tableaux and movement – that are suggested here but not written into the stage directions. The use of music and movement is key to this piece. The costume should all be reasonably similar – and suggest girls working in a factory – apart from the named characters who should have additional items of clothing; an apron, a bowler hat, a waistcoat etc.

Modern music. The group are all dancing.

A girl – Anna – comes out from the group to talk to the audience as the others continue to dance.

Anna: I have dancing in my blood; so my mother tells me. Because her mother's mother ...

And now the music changes to period music from the 1920s and the group move fluidly and almost imperceptibly from one dancing style to another. Anna continues to speak over this transition:

Anna: Was a woman who danced ...

She is now joined in saying the next line by half of the group:

Anna: And danced.

And now everyone joins in:

All: And danced!

One of the group turns to the front – this is Lizzie.

Lizzie: And I did so because I knew how lucky I was to be alive.

Anna: She was called Elizabeth. Elizabeth Askew.

Lizzie: Nobody calls me Elizabeth.

And now all of the group call out 'how are you Lizzie?' / 'are you coming dancing tonight Lizzie?' / 'how's your mother Lizzie?' etc. Everyone says something different but the main thing is that we hear the word Lizzie being said by a multitude of voices.

Anna: She lived on Paget Street.

Lizzie: 116.

Anna: And worked here.

And now the music changes to the sound of a bank of sewing machines as the group create a factory scene.

Anna: Like so many young women. Making military uniforms.

The Foreman walks through to the front.

Foreman: Caldwell's Hosiery Factory. 48 Church Gate.

Mildred and Ethel are either side of Lizzie.

Mildred: That's me done then girls.

Ethel: You not doing overtime tonight then Mildred?

Mildred: I'm off to the cinema Ethel.

Lizzie: Who goes to the cinema on a Monday night?

Ethel: It must be a fella.

The entire group all go 'oooooooooh!

Mildred: It's not a fella. I'm meeting Amy.

Ethel: Course you are.

Mildred: I am. So you both enjoy your overtime and I'll see you tomorrow.

Lizzie: And you can tell us all about him!

Mildred leaves the group.

Ethel: Hey! Mr. Jones! How about letting us all get off early as a treat.

Foreman: A treat for what?

Ethel: All being so lovely. Isn't that right girls?

Foreman: There's a war on! Do you want me to call General Haig and tell him that the troops will have to fight the Hun in their underpants because the girls of Loughborough want to go dancing!

Music starts again and the group all begins to dance around the space saying 'go on Mr. Jones' / 'I bet you'll be sad when the war's over and you don't get to spend your days with us' etc.

Foreman: That's enough!

The group stops dancing and go back to work as before.

Ethel: We need to dance Mr. Jones. To take our minds off of what's happening to our brothers and sweethearts over there. Surely you understand that.

Foreman: You need to talk a little bit less and work a little bit more Ethel Higgs.

Lizzie: Don't pick on her.

Foreman: I'll pick on who I like. Get on with it! All of you!

Which they do.

Anna: Ethel and Lizzie lived close to each other.

Ethel: Adjoining streets.

Anna: That's right.

Lizzie: 104 Station Street.

Ethel: Which means we walk to work together.

Lizzie: And we walk back from work together.

The factory scene now dissolves and the group becomes a little more spread out across the space.

Anna: Right then, now I need to introduce some other people into the story. Four of them; well five if you count the friend that Mildred was going to meet. Amy.

From somewhere in the group a girl waves across to Mildred.

Amy: Over here Mildred! Where've you been? The film's about to start.

Gerald now comes forward holding a hammer and a horseshoe.

Anna: This is Gerald ...

Gerald: Gerald Lovett, a blacksmith, and a member of the retained section of the Fire Brigade.

Anna: A very busy man.

Gerald: I wouldn't say that! Work isn't what it was, because a lot of the 'osses aren't here anymore; they've been taken to fight, poor things. And the ground they have to walk on over there. Torn up terrible. It wouldn't matter what kind of shoes you'd put on 'em, they'd struggle alright. And there hasn't been any real fires in town for a while, touch wood. Long may it continue.

Anna: Then there's this man; Will ...

Who comes to the front.

Will: Will Barker. Neighbour to the Askews.

Lizzie: Can I borrow some milk Will?

Will: Course you can Lizzie. Can I borrow some tea?

Lizzie: Course you can Will. What are neighbours for?

Anna: There's Flo.

Who appears.

Flo: Lizzie's sister.

And now the Mother comes forward.

Mum: And me. Their mother.

Will: Can I borrow some sugar Mrs. Askew?

Mum: Course you can Will. Can I borrow some matches?

Will: Course you can Mrs. Askew. What are neighbours for?

Anna: Now there are actually three other people in this story, somewhere amongst all of these (*i.e the scattered group*). But we don't know who they are. Nobody knows. And we don't need them yet. Mercifully.

And now the machine noises build up again and the group go back to work as before.

Anna: So let's return to Caldwell's. Monday night, January 31st 1916. Around eight o' clock.

Foreman: Girls! I've got some good news. I've been told that you're all to get off home.

Ethel: Why's that Mr. Jones?

Foreman: Never you mind why. Just finish off what you're doing and pack up. Quickly mind. And then make sure you head straight back to your houses.

The Foreman leaves and the group disperse again, perhaps talking to each other as they do so ('I wonder what's going on?' / 'Maybe the war's come to an end' etc).

Anna: He never told them why. That a zeppelin had been spotted very close by. That a raid might be possible. That the factory, like every other factory, was to send people home as soon as they could. And that all the lights should be turned off. As Mildred and her friend were finding out.

Mildred: We stopped off to see my brother. At Lloyds Bank in the Market Place. He was the caretaker there.

Amy: And while we were there a man came in. Mr. Hibbins ...

We now set up a small scene between Mildred, Amy, Mildred's brother and Mr. Hibbins:

Hibbins: Turn the lights off. Immediately.

Brother: What?

Hibbins: Just do it! There's a zep on its way.

Amy: A what?

Hibbins: A zeppelin.

Mildred: Are you sure? I don't see why a zeppelin would want to come here.

Hibbins: Yes I am. So we need to turn the lights off. Now. And if I was you I'd get off home as quickly as I could.

Amy: We're going to the cinema.

Brother: I think you should do what Mr. Hibbins says.

Mildred: And what about you?

Brother: I'll have to stay here won't I.

Mildred: All alone, in the dark?

Brother: Yes. Now off you get. Both of you.

This scene dissolves as Ethel and Lizzie walk through it, arm in arm.

Ethel: It's our lucky night Lizzie.

Lizzie: It is. I wonder why they sent us off though.

Ethel: Who cares? As long as they pay us.

Lizzie: Do you think they will?

Ethel: Doubt it.

Lizzie: It's just a shame it's not the weekend so we can go dancing.

Ethel: You and your dancing. I've never known anyone like it.

Lizzie: Sometimes I can hear music you know, even when there's none playing. In my head. And I look at people passing by on the street and I imagine them. All swirling around.

Music begins and the entire group begins to dance with Ethel and Lizzie dancing together in the middle of this.

After a short while we begin to hear the sound of a throbbing engine that comes through the music. Maybe the music begins to move into a different, harsher register. Two different scenes – Mildred / Amy and Ethel / Lizzie – now come together from different parts of the space.

Mildred: What's that sound?

Ethel: Can you hear that?

Amy: Look up there!

Lizzie: What are you on about?

Mildred: I don't believe it!

There is some kind of noise here that indicates that a bomb has fallen; like the crash of a cymbal. Everyone freezes apart from Anna.

Anna: They all heard the first bomb. Dropped into the back yard of the Crown and Cushion pub in Ashby Square. Mildred and her friend were lucky that they'd never made it to

the cinema. It wasn't hit but it was shaken violently. And bits of the ceiling came crashing down on the audience.

The group now become the cinemagoers. There is shouting and confusion.

Anna: The manager, Ethel Brown decided to lock everyone in.

Ethel: Please be calm! You'll all be safer in here!

Anna: And luckily they were. Calm. But out on the streets it was chaos.

The group now all move around in different directions. There is a sense of confusion as people look up the sky, or point in different directions. Constant movement and music of some kind to accompany this.

Mildred: Where shall we go?

Amy: This way.

Mildred: Are you sure?

Amy: I think so.

Anna: Towards the Rushes.

Amy: I think the zeppelin is going the other way.

Mildred: We can take shelter in the toilets in Swan Street. Come on then.

Amy: Over there; look. Aren't those some of the women you work with?

Mildred: How come they've been let out early?

Amy: They must have been sent home.

Mildred: Lizzie! Ethel! Are you alright!

And now there is a noise to represent the second bomb. And again everyone freezes as the music stops.

Anna: They were unlucky; all four of them. They were simply in the wrong place at the wrong time. But there are degrees of bad luck.

And now movement and music again, even more chaotic and frantic than before. This is the aftermath of the second bomb. Mildred and Amy check each other to see if they are alright; Lizzie walks off; and in the middle of this Ethel falls over to be gathered up and carried off by the rest of the group.

Anna: Mildred and her friend were lucky that the glass that was flying around in all directions missed them. Lizzie had vanished. And Ethel, poor old Ethel, was being carried by three men to the infirmary.

Another grouping develops: Mother and Flo.

Mother: Mrs. Hunt says that all the girls from Caldwell's have been sent home. Why isn't she here? What's happening?

Anna: Paget Street, like many others, was full of people who having heard the explosions wondered what was going on.

Flo: She'll be on her way.

Mother: But she should be home by now! What if she's hurt?

Flo: She won't be. She'll be fine. She always is.

Anna: But not this time. She'd been hit in the leg by shrapnel. The shrapnel that had hit Ethel so terribly. But which had missed Mildred and her friend.

Lizzie now appears. Her leg is badly injured.

Mother: Get her something to sit on! Quickly.

A stool is produced and Lizzie sits on it.

Mother: And a basin. I need to clean the wound. Quickly. Oh no look at her! She needs to get to the hospital.

A basin is handed to Flo who takes it to Mother. Mother begins to bathe the wound.

Flo: How are we going to get her to hospital?

Mother: Your grandmothers wheelchair is in the house somewhere. Go and find it.

Flo exits to collect the wheelchair.

Lizzie: Where's Ethel? Didn't she come back with me?

Mother: How did you walk home with your leg in that state?

Lizzie: I don't know. It hurts mother. It really hurts.

Mother: Sssshhhhh! We'll sort you out. You'll be up and running around again in no time.

Lizzie: I don't think so. Where's Ethel? Where is she?

Flo now brings the wheelchair in.

Mother: Are you going to be alright, taking her to the hospital in all this chaos.

Flo: Course I will.

Will now enters into the scene.

Will: I'll take her.

Flo: But it might not be safe Will. There could be more bombs.

Will: I'll do it Flo. Of course I will. What are neighbours for?

The music begins again – hurried, anxious – as Lizzie is placed in the wheelchair. Will pushes her in and out of the group who are moving around as though they are crowds in the street.

Lizzie: What happened to Ethel?

Will: I don't know Lizzie. But try not to worry.

Lizzie: It was terrible Will. And I'm sure I heard her screaming. But it was so loud, the noise. My ears are still ringing. And look at all these people.

Will: Think of something else.

Lizzie: Like what?

Will: I don't know. Something better.

And now the music changes into something rather beautiful and the group begin to dance together, with Will and Liz moving in and out of them.

Anna: Will took Lizzie to the hospital, just as those three unknown men had carried Ethel there. But sadly Ethel did not survive.

Lizzie: No!

The group dissolve again and scatter once more around the room. As this short exchange happens Lizzie is having a caliper put on her leg by members of the group, as though they are doctors.

Anna: But what of Gerald, our blacksmith and fireman?

Gerald: That was a busy night for me. For all us firemen. You don't expect it do you? But it would have been a lot worse if they'd hit the gasworks. And they weren't far off you know. They weren't far off at all.

Anna: Well Gerald is to appear in the next part of our story. But not yet. Not before Lizzie spends months in the hospital. And when she does finally leave ...

We now see Lizzie with a caliper on her leg standing alongside Flo.

Lizzie: Look at it.

Flo: There's nothing wrong with it.

Lizzie: But how can I dance with that thing on my leg?

Flo: If anyone can find a way it'll be you Lizzie Askew.

Lizzie: I'm not so sure. And anyway there won't be a single fella in this town who'll clap eyes on me now. Let alone ask for a dance.

Gerald appears next to Lizzie and Flo.

Gerald: Hello there. You don't happen to know where I can find a Mr. Grant do you? Only he's got a horse that needs shoeing and I was told he lives somewhere on this street.

Anna: And that was how they met. And a few days later they went to the old Fire Brigade together, on Bridge Street to one of many social functions that were held there.

Gerald and Lizzie now stand opposite each other as the rest of the group forms a semi-circle around them and begin to twirl – this should suggest a room full of dancing couples but in a very restrained fashion.

Lizzie: Look at them all. I wish I could do that. I used to love to dance.

Gerald: Then why don't we give it a try?

Lizzie: You don't want to be stumbling around the room with me. I'd be like an horse with a broken leg trying to win the Derby.

Gerald: Well why don't we just give it a go and see?

And from the twirling couples a number of characters, one by one, call out to Lizzie:

Mildred: You can do it Lizzie.

Flo: Just have a try.

Foreman: You know how much you struggled when you started at the factory, but look how quickly you got the hang of it.

Will: I'd offer you a hand Lizzie; I mean what are neighbours for? But I don't think you need one.

And now Ethel comes across to Lizzie. She is unseen by Will.

Ethel: I'd love you to get up on that dancefloor Lizzie. And dance the night away. Just like we were doing. Do you remember?

Lizzie: I do.

Gerald: Are you alright?

Ethel: Do it for me Lizzie. Do it for me.

Lizzie: Yes I'm fine Gerald. Come on then; what are you waiting for?

Lizzie takes Gerald's hand and they begin to dance. The music builds as Ethel stands watches them. Ethel gives a last wave to Lizzie and then exits.

Anna: And they danced together that night, and they danced together on many other nights. Especially on their wedding day.

A confetti cannon is fired over the dancing couple.

Anna: And that is why I have dancing in my blood.

Anna now joins in, taking the place of Gerald, so that Anna and Lizzie dance together as the music and the dance and the scene ends.

Three Pages

This script has been left reasonably open so that you can play around with choreography within it. It should be a very fluid piece, with the cast moving in and out of each other throughout; but with everyone facing the audience as much as possible. I have written in some suggested moments but you should look for others – tableaux and movement – that are suggested here but not written into the stage directions. And the fact that the majority of the group have postbags with them means that they can have a large number of props and costume signifiers hidden within these.

Please Mr. Postman by The Marvelettes plays as the cast – twenty young people – enter onto the performance area; potentially through the audience. They all have (apart from Mary, Joe senior, Joe junior, Elsie and the Teller) postal bags over their shoulders. They line up facing the audience, filling the space and looking straight out.

And then they all start talking at once as though they are writing letters (additional text to be supplied).

At a given point they all stop – all at once – immediately – on a sixpence – and they mime licking an envelope and posting a letter into a postbox.

Teller: During the First World War my Great ...

Half the cast join the Teller with the second 'Great'

Teller/Cast: Great ...

All: Great ...

Teller: Grandmother was a Postman ...

All: Post*man*?

Teller: Postman. Yes.

And now the group weave in and out of each other.

A: With so many men being sent to the Front ...

B: And so much post being sent there as well ...

C: There were thousands of women who delivered the mail.

Teller: And my Great Great Great Grandmother ...

D: What was her name?

Teller: Maud.

One of the group comes to the front to become Maud as someone puts a Postman's hat on her head.

Teller: And Maud was one of them. Getting up at the crack of dawn every morning.

E: Collecting her post bag.

Maud: You wouldn't believe how heavy it is.

F: And walking the streets of Loughborough.

And the following can be done using props that are taken from the bags – a representation of the sun, a spray for rain, and a handful of confetti for snow.

Teller: In all winds and weathers. Be it ...

G: Sunshine ...

H: Rain ...

I: Or snow ...

Teller: And one of the addresses that Maud delivered to was ...

Maud: Gordon Cottage ...

All: 87 Empress Road.

Teller: The home of the Page family.

And now four people come forward to create a family troupe ...

Teller: Joseph Page.

Jo Snr: Call me Joe.

J: Used to work at Morris's ...

K: The factory over the road ...

Jo Snr: The shortest walk to work that anyone could have.

All: Lucky Joe!

Teller: But Joe has joined the Royal Army Medical Corps at the outbreak of the war ...

Which can be shown in some way.

L: And was now serving in France.

Teller: Leaving behind his wife.

Mary: Mary Ann Page

M: Forty four years of age.

Mary: Though I don't look it ...

N: And her two children.

Teller: A son.

All: Joseph Page.

Jo Jnr: I'm eighteen now so I'm hardly a child.

Elsie: Then it won't be long before they take you away to war as well Joe.

Teller: And his sister.

Elsie: Elsie Page.

Teller: Who is fifteen years old.

Elsie: Sixteen!

Teller: Sorry. Sixteen. And like every family in Loughborough who have family and friends at the front ...

All: They write letters.

A: They write to Joe.

Mary: Well Elsie and I do.

Joe Snr: And I write back to them.

And again all start talking at once. And again this is stopped at once.

Teller: Now just as there were postmen here so there were postmen there. In France. Right in the middle of the war.

And now some of the group lay out a table and a queue is formed.

B: This is a post office.

C: It could be in a barn.

D: On a street corner.

E: Behind the trenches.

F: Between the trenches.

G takes a small red and white flag out of her bag and puts it on the table.

G: As long as this flag was here it was official.

Teller: It is almost impossible to imagine it.

H: Just how busy the postal service was.

I: Nineteen thousand mailbags crossed the channel every day.

Teller: How many?

All: Nineteen thousand.

J: Twelve million letters ...

Teller: How many?

All: Twelve million.

K: And one million parcels addressed to ...

All: Somewhere in France ...

L: Were delivered to the front line trenches every week.

Teller: And the incredible thing was that these letters and parcels generally took only two or three days to reach their destination. How wonderful. That a letter, or even a cake ...

Which comes from a postbag and is handed to from person to person

Mary: Can be taken from this cooker.

Elsie: In this kitchen ...

Joe Jnr: In this house ...

All: 87 Empress Road. Loughborough

Teller: And be delivered by horse and cart ...

M: And train ...

N: And ship ...

A: And train ...

B: And truck

C: And horse and cart ...

Teller: Right into the heart of war.

Mary: And then two or three days you get a letter back.

Joe Snr: Thanks for the cake love.

Mary: And you smile to yourself. Whatever else you may fear, however insane the world has become, you have still been able to make a cake for your husband.

Teller: If you think about it from 1914 to 1918 the whole of Britain was reading and writing letters.

And as before everyone starts talking at the same time. And again it stops immediately.

Teller: A few weeks ago, at Christmas, the family were all together.

Joe Jnr: What's it like Dad?

Mary: We said that we wouldn't talk about it.

Elsie: You'll be there soon enough Joe.

Mary: Will you stop saying that Elsie.

Elsie: It's true though.

Joe Jnr: I'd go now if I could.

Joe Snr: Not if you've seen what I've seen.

Mary: We said that we wouldn't talk about it!

Teller: People think that it's telegrams that were sent to people when their son or their husband or the brother had died. But it wasn't. The telegrams were only for Officers. Everyone else received a letter that was marked ...

All: No Charge For Delivery.

Teller: And the Postman who delivers this letter must knock on the door of the addressee before delivering it ...

Everyone does this, stamping their feet to make a knocking sound.

Teller: And, where possible, hand it in person to the recipient.

And now everyone reaches out to take a letter.

Teller: Can you imagine what it must have been like? For Maud, and for all of the others? Putting on the postbag in the morning ...

Maud: Wondering how many letters you were going to have to hand over in person. How many families' lives you would forever become a small part of.

Everyone reaches into their bag and takes out a letter which they look at sadly before putting it back again.

Teller: The men at the front had to be careful what they wrote.

D: No place names.

E: No mention of morale.

All: No talk of battles.

F: And the censors would look at as many of the letters as they could.

Teller: But most of the letters that the postman delivered spoke of simple things and brought joy and comfort to those back home.

Mary: My dearest wife ...

Elsie: Beautiful daughter ...

Joe Jnr: Good son.

Teller: And today it is Elsie that is writing ...

Elsie: Dear Father, thank you for your last letter. It is good to know that you are well. It is not so cold here now as it was before and things here at home are going well.

Teller: But then something distracts her.

Everyone starts to hum, making the sound of a zeppelin.

Elsie: What's that sound?

Joe Jnr: I think it's a zeppelin.

Elsie: A German zeppelin?

Joe Jnr: I reckon so.

Elsie: Mum!

Mary: Yes.

Elsie: Joe says there a German zeppelin outside.

Mary: Of course there is Elsie. And once that's gone by the elephants will start marching up the street.

Joe Jnr: No mum it is. Listen!

The humming gets louder.

Mary: It can't be.

Joe Jnr: It might be.

Mary: I can't see anything.

Elsie: There's a strange glow in the sky.

Mary: Well what's it doing here?

Elsie: Dad won't believe it when I tell him. He'll think I'm having him on.

Mary: I'm sure he will.

Joe Jnr: Are you coming?

Elsie: What?

Joe Jnr: Are you going to come and see the zeppelin?

Mary: I'm not sure we should go out there.

Joe Jnr: Just a quick look.

Elsie: We have to see it so I can tell Dad. I'm just writing to him now.

Mary: Alright! Be quick mind. Then I want you back indoors.

Joe Jnr: Are you coming as well mum? They say they're wonderful things to see.

Mary: Alright. Come on then Elsie!

Teller: Joe was, like everyone else, waiting for the next letter from home.

And again everyone reads out. And again everything ends very quickly.

G: *(Handing over a letter)* There's a letter for you Joe. It looks official.

Joe Snr: What will that be then?

H: Maybe you've been given leave.

I: Perhaps they're moving you to another regiment.

Joe Snr: They wouldn't do that would they?

J: They must have heard that your healing skills are legendary Joe!

K: Maybe General Haig's got a bunion he needs looking at.

Joe reads it silently. Everyone gathers round.

All: We regret to inform you that following a zeppelin raid on your home town that your wife Mary Ann Page ...

Mary: Come on; we shouldn't be out here ...

All: Your son Joseph Page ...

Joe Jnr: It looks like a bomb!

All: And your daughter Elizabeth Page ...

Elsie: Mum!

Joe Snr: Have all been killed.

All: They died instantly.

Joe: You have permission to return home immediately on receipt of this letter.

Joe Senior folds up the letter.

L: Are you alright Joe? Joe?

Joe: Home? What's home now?

Teller: They had only just walked out onto the pavement when the bomb landed.

M: Mr Hancock an off duty policeman ...

N: Who lived at 13 Thomas Street ...

M: Found the bodies.

Teller: Joseph came home immediately for the inquest. It had to be halted when he broke down in tears.

All: The poor man. The poor, poor man.

The group make some form of tableaux here and hold it, breaking out for:

Teller: The Post Office wanted my Great ...

All: Great Great ...

Teller: Grandmother to hand her post bag over when the war ended and the men came back and the postmen all became men again. Well most of them.

Maud: You can't have it. I've spent three years carrying that thing around the streets of Loughborough bringing good news and bringing bad news. And it's stained with everything that each of those letters has had within them. And with my sweat. And with my tears. And I'm not handing them over to anyone.

Teller: It was an incredible thing, the Post Office, during World War One. And it just shows you, doesn't it, what we can achieve. If we really put our minds to it.

I'm Gonna Sit Right Down and Write Myself A Letter by Fats Waller plays (from around 1'15 in) as the cast move around the space as Postmen once again, before moving into position to take a bow as the song fades out after the end of the sung verse.

The Camping

Cast (in order of appearance):

Billy / Clarissa / Jim (injured and scared) / **Jane** (an older girl who thinks that she is in charge) / **Alan / Helen** (another older girl, who also thinks that she is in charge) / **David** (brother to Ernest) / **Ernest** (brother to David) / **Floss / Rose** (the youngest, asleep in the tent for much of the scene)

This scene takes place in Queens Park. There are two tents erected in which some of the cast are hidden.

There are a number of blankets and seats scattered around the camp for the audience to sit on. As they do so Billy gives out beakers and Clarissa pours out mineral water from a Pashley's bottle. As they do so they say 'There you are' / 'This will calm you down' / 'You can't beat a bit of Pashleys' / 'Sit down and don't worry' / 'They'll come to get you soon'

Jane and Jim are inside one of the tents, with Jane putting a bandage on Jims arm. Rose is asleep in the other tent.

Once the audience is settled, and as the last drink is bring poured we hear Jim cry 'Ow! That hurts!' from inside one of the tents; followed by Jane saying 'it's alright. It's nothing serious. It's just a scratch'.

Billy: When's her aunty coming to get her?

Clarissa: She had to go to the hospital. She said she'd be back before midnight.

Jane now comes out of the tent.

Jane: Where are all the others?

Clarissa: They've gone to get a tent from Thomas Street. David and Ernie's dad's got one from the Boys Brigade.

Jane: They were told to stay here.

Billy: They want to stay the night with us now. And there's no room in our tents.

Jane: I'm meant to be looking after everybody. Why didn't you tell me?

Billy: Helen's gone with them, they'll be alright. And it's gone now.

Jane: Did you see it?

Billy: I think so.

Jane: I didn't. I heard it though. I wish I had seen it.

Clarissa: It was enormous.

Jane: My dad showed me pictures of them in the paper when they first started flying. He said that if you lived in America or Germany and had as much money as you could imagine you could fly in them, from city to city. And that one day they'd be here and we'd see all of the posh people up there above us, looking down.

Alan now enters carrying wood.

Alan: I saw it. It was full of Germans. And one of them jumped out.

Clarissa: Why would they have done that?

Alan: He had a parachute didn't he? He's probably running around right now; gathering up all the German spies that have been living amongst us for years. Who knows? Any one of us could be the enemy.

Alan looks round at the audience

Jane: You're talking nonsense as usual Alan. And why have you got that wood?

Alan: To make a fire.

Jane: We can't make a fire!

Alan: But it's cold.

Billy: It is.

Clarissa: I'm freezing.

Alan: See.

Jane comes over and takes the wood from him.

Jane: No! We were told that we had to get in the tents and get to sleep until our parents came to get us.

Alan: No-one can sleep. We're too excited. And we need to keep warm.

Jane: And what happens if it comes back?

Jim now comes out of the tent.

Jim: Is it coming back?

Jane: No.

Jim: You just said it is.

Jane: No I didn't.

Alan: Yes you did.

Jane: I said we shouldn't build a fire.

Jim: But it's cold.

Alan: See.

Jane: But a fire makes light.

Alan: So?

Jane: You know why we're not meant to make any light!

Alan: No.

A pause.

Alan: Why?

Jane: Because of ...

Jim: Because of what?

Jane: Because of the zeppelin!

Jim: So it is coming back!

Jane: I never said that.

Alan: Yes you did! I just heard you!

Jane: That's not what I meant.

Alan: Then why did you say it?

Jane: You made me.

Alan: That's ridiculous.

Jane: You did!

Alan: I didn't!

Clarissa: Just stop it! Both of you! Can't you see that he's scared?

Jane goes over to comfort Jim

Jane: It's gone. It's gone away and it's never going to come back.

Alan: You don't know that. It might come back tomorrow. There might be more of them then.

Jane: Stop it.

Alan: And what happened to that German I saw?

Clarissa: I don't think you did see a German.

Jim: What German?

Alan: He parachuted down.

Billy: I don't think so either.

Jim: Where did he land?

Jane: He didn't land.

Alan: Of course he landed. If you jump out of a zeppelin with a parachute you have to land somewhere.

Clarissa: He could be stuck in a tree.

Billy: There are a lot of trees round here.

Alan: See.

Jim: I want to go home.

Jane: There is no German and there is no zeppelin.

Jim: I saw it.

Jane: Not anymore.

Alan: But he's in hiding. With all the others

Billy: The zeppelin?

Alan: The German.

Jim: What others?

Jane: There are no others.

Jim: Are they all stuck in trees?

Jane: Why don't you just go back to the tent?

Alan: They're not stuck in trees. They're making plans. To bayonet and kill as many people as possible.

Jane: Look just stop it! Can't you see you're frightening him!

Clarissa: And me.

Billy: Me too.

Jim: I can hear it!

Jane: No, you can't. And even if it was up there

Jim: You said it was never coming back.

Jane: And it isn't! But if it was we're invisible to them. That's why we were sent here. Because it's dark and there aren't any lights or houses. Which is why we were told not to make a fire.

Alan: Which means they're invisible to us. So they could be there. Right above us.

Jim: I want to go home.

Jane: You can't. You've to stay here until your aunty comes.

Billy: Sssssshhhhh!

Clarissa: What is it?

Billy: I heard something.

Jim: It's the Germans! They've got out of the trees.

Alan: I told you!

Jim runs back into the tent.

Clarissa: You said they weren't in the trees.

Jane: It's the others.

Helen, David, Ernest and Floss appear in the distance carrying a tent.

Billy: (***shouting***) Did you get it?

Helen: (***shouting back***) Yes; it's here.

Clarissa: (*shouting*) What's it like out there? Have all the houses been knocked down?

Helen: (*shouting back*) What?

Clarissa: (*shouting*) Has the zeppelin destroyed all the houses?

Jim opens up the tent.

Jim: Has it come back?

Jane: Go to sleep. (*to Clarissa*) And stop shouting; they'll be here in a minute. And I'm not helping them put it up.

Alan: And I'm too busy.

Clarissa: Doing what?

Alan: Keeping watch for the Germans.

Jim opens up the tent.

Jim: Are they here?

All: Go to sleep!

Billy: Well I'll help them.

By which time the others have arrived.

Jane: Why didn't you tell me you were going?

Helen: Who said you were in charge?

Jane: I'm the eldest.

Helen: Only just. And my father is in the Brush Guard.

Jane: What's that got to do with anything?

Helen: It means that ... I know how to deal with these situations.

Jane: Why?

Helen: He has training. And he tells us all about it.

Jane: Maybe my father tells me all about his training.

Helen: He wouldn't be allowed to. His letters would be censored.

Ernest: Can you two stop arguing please and help us put this up.

Floss: They're always arguing.

Jane: You got the tent you can put it up. And why have you brought it here anyway?

David: We want to stay the night.

Jane: We're only meant to be here until we've been told that it's safe to go back.

Floss: Well my bedroom window has been blown out by the bombs so I can't go back. My mum said I may as well camp out here for the night whilst she tries to clear up the mess.

Ernest: Mine too.

Clarissa: What was it like out there?

Helen: We couldn't see much. But there are lots of people and there's lots of glass everywhere.

Jane: Which is why we were told to stay here.

Helen: Well we're here now. Come on; who's going to help me with this.

Floss and Helen start to put up the tent.

Billy: Did you bring any food with you? I'm starving.

Ernest: Course we didn't.

David takes a bag from his shoulder.

David: Maybe I did.

They all look at him as he takes out a tin.

Clarissa: What is it?

David: What do you think it is? A cake of course.

Ernest: Where did you get them from?

David: It was in the kitchen.

Billy: Maybe it's got glass in it.

Clarissa: I'm not eating cake with glass in.

David: How can glass get through a tin?

Ernest: Did mum give you that?

David doesn't answer.

Ernest: Well did she?

David: Kind of.

Ernest: What does that mean?

David: It was on the table.

Ernest: That doesn't mean she gave it to you.

David: And there was a note.

Ernest: What did it say?

David takes out a note and hands it to Ernest.

Ernest: I can't read it; it's too dark. Has anyone got a torch?

Jane: We're not allowed torches.

Alan: Then how will we signal to each other when the Germans come?

Floss: What Germans?

Jane: There aren't any Germans.

David: It says 'For my dear son'.

Ernest: That's not for you.

David: It could be. Or it could even be for you.

Ernest: It's for our brother! And you know that! That cake was to be sent off to him at the Front. We can't eat it!

David: I've opened the tin now.

Ernest: So?

David: The gnats might have got to it. They might have laid their eggs in it. And they might grow really big when they're on the ship to France.

Clarissa: I'm not eating cake with gnats in.

Ernest: Just put the lid on and take it back.

Jane: You can't leave. You're staying here.

David: We'll have to eat it then.

Billy: We will.

Jane: We'll have a vote.

Helen: Is anyone going to help us here; or are we going to have to do this on our own?

Clarissa: We can't do anything we're having a vote.

Billy: Girls can't vote.

Jane: Course they can.

Helen: We all know your aunt's a Suffragette.

Jane: There's nothing wrong with that.

Alan: They should lock up all the Suffragettes.

Jane: Why?

Alan: Because they're on the same side as the Germans.

Clarissa: I don't think they are Alan.

Billy: Are we going to have this vote or not? I'm hungry.

Helen: Come on then.

Helen and Floss stop what they're doing and come and join the others.

Floss: How do we do this?

Jane: We should all sit in a circle.

Which they do - and so now we have Helen, Floss, Jane, Billy, Clarissa, David, Ernest and Alan all together. Jim and Rose are still in their tents.

Clarissa: Are we all here?

Ernest: Where's Jim?

Jane: Asleep.

Jim: ***(from inside the tent)*** No I'm not.

Jane: Come on out then.

Jim: Only if you promise we're safe.

Helen: We're safe.

Jim comes out.

Billy: Where's Rose?

Jane: Isn't she with you?

Helen: No.

Jane: Then where is she then?

Alan: Maybe the Germans have taken her prisoner.

Jane: Will you stop going on about the Germans!

Clarissa: Perhaps Alan 's a German. And that's why he keeps going on about them. To hide his true identity.

Helen: Frisk him.

Alan: What are you on about?

Helen: Ernest! David! Grab him and frisk him!

Which they do.

Alan: Stop it! Stop it! If you keep doing that I won't let you come looking for shrapnel with me.

David: I don't want to go looking for shrapnel.

Alan: You won't be saying that when I bring a bit of a German bomb to school!

Jane: Stop it! We're meant to be looking for Rose.

At which they all move off in different directions away from the audience shouting 'Rose! Where are you? Rose!'

Rose comes out of the tent. She is the youngest one there. She is confused and is rubbing her eyes.

Rose: Who's making all that noise?

The others all shout 'there she is!' and run back again.

Rose: What are you all doing in my bedroom?

Jane: It's us Rose!

Helen: You're not in your bedroom.

Floss: You're in the fields.

Billy: By the canal.

Jim: Hiding from the zeppelin.

Alan: And the Germans.

Clarissa: Until our parents come and get us.

David: And we're going to have a vote about whether to eat this cake.

Ernest: Which my mum made for my brother.

They all stop and look at her as she tries to take this all in.

Rose: Is this a dream?

Helen: No; the zeppelin remember.

Jane: It dropped some bombs.

Clarissa: And smashed some houses.

Floss: And injured some people.

Jim: Like me.

Billy: It's only a scratch.

Ernest: And our parents brought us here.

David: And told us to stay until they came to get us.

Again she tries to take it all in.

Rose: And what's all that got to do with a cake?

Helen: Just sit down.

Which she does.

Billy: So now what happens?

Jane: Someone makes a speech for eating the cake and someone makes a speech against eating the cake; and then we all take a vote.

Clarissa: Do you want some cake Rose?

Rose: Yes, please.

Clarissa: Then what's the point in voting? It's only Ernest who says we shouldn't have it.

Ernest: It's for my big brother.

Rose: Why does he want our cake?

Ernest: It's not our cake. It's his. To eat in the trenches when he's not fighting the Germans.

Alan: We're all fighting the Germans now, so we should all have the cake.

David: We're not fighting the Germans.

Helen: You saw what it was like out there. Rubble and glass. You know how many people have been injured.

Floss: Jim has.

Jim: Will I have a scar?

Jane: It was just a little cut.

Billy: And if you do have a scar then they'll give you a medal.

Jim: Will they?

Billy: Yes Jim.

David: But all this ... I mean ... I know it was a bomb, a real bomb but ...

Ernest: What?

David: Well ... it's not really real is it? It's not like France. It's not a real battleground. We're not in the war. Not in it.

Helen: People have been killed.

Jane: Sssshhh!

Rose: What really killed?

Helen: Yes.

Jane: Helen!

Helen: She'll find out soon enough.

Clarissa: We all will.

Jane: Nobody knows what's happened. Everyone's confused.

Alan: Which is what the enemy wants.

Jane: It might not be as bad as we all think.

Billy: You're only saying that because you love zeppelins.

Jane: I don't love zeppelins! I just said that my dad showed me photographs of them in the paper. And that one day they'd be flying over England.

Floss: And he was right.

Helen: I saw Joseph and Elizabeth Page before I came here

Jane: Were they all right?

Helen: They were both lying on Empress Road. They were dead.

Jane: You saw that?

Helen: *(becoming visibly upset)* Yes.

Jane: That's terrible.

Helen: It was.

Jane: I'm sorry.

Alan: We're all sorry.

Jane looks at Alan and nods; thankful to him for his realisation of the situation. There is a moment of silence. No-one knows what to say.

David: Maybe we can make another cake tomorrow. All of us.

Billy: A special cake.

Floss: Yes, we can. You can come round my house.

Clarissa: Are you sure Ernest?

Ernest: We're all hungry aren't we?

They all mumble 'yes'

David: Come on then Ernest. Who's got something to cut it with?

Alan: I've got a penknife.

Ernest takes the cake out.

Ernest: Our brother squeezed us so hard when he left for war that I thought I'd burst.

Alan: He'll be back Ernie.

Rose has gone up to Helen and has taken her hand. Alan starts to cut the cake. Floss hands it out to the audience.

Billy: Will we have to go to war when we're older?

Helen: No. It'll be over by then. It will.

Billy: Good.

Jane: Do you want help putting up the tent?

Helen: Yes please.

They all start to sing a wartime song as they finish putting up the tent and handing out the rest of the cake to the audience.

Joseph Gilbert

Ivy is sitting on a chair facing out. She is dressed in contemporary clothes, it being around the mid 80's. The Interviewer is also sat on a chair with a pad on her lap. She is not looking at her but out at the audience – as though that is where Ivy is situated. (This is how all of the characters speak to each other). Joseph Gilbert is wearing a greengrocer's apron. The Salesman is carrying a large case full of soap. It is 1916. They are both standing (either side of Ivy and Interviewer?)

Interviewer: So Ivy, perhaps you can begin by telling us a little bit about yourself.

Ivy: What would you like to know exactly?

Interviewer: Who you are ... where you live ... where you lived back then. Anything you like.

Ivy: I see. Well my name is Ivy Smith; and I live on Lower Cambridge Street. Number sixty one. Do you need the number?

Interviewer: No that's fine.

Ivy: Shouldn't I have said that then? Do you want to start again?

Interviewer: It's alright Ivy. There aren't really any rules. I'm not from the council.

Ivy: Good. Not that I've got anything against the council.

Interviewer: And where did you used to live?

Ivy: I've lived in a number of places.

Interviewer: Back then? When the attack happened? When you were a little girl? That's why I'm here. To find out a little more about that day.

Ivy: Where do you want me to start?

Interviewer: Anywhere you want.

Salesman: Lovely shop you've got.

Joseph: Thank you.

Salesman: I've never been here before. To the town I mean.

Joseph: Really?

Salesman: No reason to.

Joseph: You think highly of Loughborough then?

Salesman: No .. sorry ... it's ... just that we're all being sent out to different places now. What with the younger men having to go off to fight.

Joseph: Three railway stations and none of them exactly get you here.

Salesman: No.

Joseph: Which means you've had to carry that soap for quite a way then.

Salesman: It's not that heavy. I've had worse things than soap to lug about in my time.

Joseph: I know the feeling. See that old handcart out there?

Salesman: I do.

Joseph: Ever since they took my horse away to war I've been dragging that thing around to do my deliveries. It'll be the death of me.

Salesman: I hope not.

Joseph: It's older than it looks you know.

Salesman: The cart?

Joseph: No; Loughborough. A lot of the thatched cottages are gone. There aren't so many timbered buildings.

Salesman: Your market place looks very nice.

Joseph: And that's changing too. We've just had some new electric lighting put in. It's caused some excitement but I can't see why. Light is light.

Salesman: (*Indicating his case*) Can I?

Joseph: Go on then. Not liver pills I hope.

Salesman: It's soap.

Joseph: I see.

Salesman: (*Opening up the case*) I've got pale soap, blue soap, lilac soap, honey soap.

Joseph: Soap is soap.

Ivy: Little Moor Lane it was. A small house, like most. My mother was off at work at Caldwell's; my father had joined up and was in Mesopotamia of all places. Can you imagine that? A lad from Loughborough ending up in Mesopotamia.

Interviewer: The cradle of civilisation.

Ivy: So they say.

Interviewer: It's called Iraq now. Although I think some of it is in Syria.

Ivy: Very hot my Dad said. He bought me back a fez. I had it for years.

Interviewer: You mentioned earlier that your grandmother was looking after you.

Ivy: That's right. Very strict woman. Unitarian. She used to help at the Robin Breakfast.

Interviewer: And what's that?

Ivy: What?

Interviewer: The Robin Breakfast. I've not heard of it before.

Ivy: They held it at the Corn Exchange at Christmas for the poor children. Hundreds there were. And they all got a mince pie and an orange when they left. And the girls were given a Christmas card.

Interviewer: Only the girls?

Ivy: That's right.

Salesman: There's soap for men and soap for women. You'd think it would all be the same but it isn't. And with the men being away we find that the women who are left behind want something a little bit more romantic. Softer. It makes them feel better I suppose.

Joseph: I get a lot of older customers here. They're not really a romantic bunch. As long as they're clean they're happy.

Salesman: Well we have plain soap too. Perhaps you'd like to smell one of them.

Joseph: I'm not that sure that I would.

Salesman: *(Taking out a bar of soap)* Now this one is very special. Theda Bara uses this one.

Joseph: And who is he?

Salesman: She Mr Gilbert! She! The vamp! One of the greatest stars of the movie screen.

Joseph: Well we don't get many of them either I'm afraid. No romantics and no movie stars. I apologise.

Salesman: But I have noticed that your town does have a number of cinematographs. So people must go and watch films here.

Joseph: That they do. My son for one. Too often for my liking. And one of them took over the roller skating rink, which I wasn't too happy about.

Salesman: You skate?

Joseph: No. But I sold a lot of them. Fancy place it was. Used to do an imitation snowstorm some nights. Very impressive I'm told.

Salesman: There's never any knowing what fashion or fad will take hold next.

Joseph: That's right. Just like the lunacy with the confetti.

Ivy: She'd taken me for a walk in the park earlier that day.

Interviewer: Queens Park?

Ivy: Yes. There was a concert there to raise money for the victims.

Interviewer: What victims would that be? Do you remember?

Ivy: Or was that for the Titanic? When it sunk? I think it was that. I was probably just told about it. I did go to the fair though. With both my parents. That was lovely.

Salesman: Confetti?

Ivy: It was everywhere. The boys carried it around in their pockets.

Joseph: Confetti.

Ivy: And Hall's Galloping Pigs. I remember them. In the Cattle Market. And there was a boxer ready to take on all comers at the Pavilion.

Joseph: I sold bags full of the stuff.

Ivy: Brandy snap and Grantham gingerbread.

Joseph: You see the boys had to cram a handful of confetti into a girl's mouth.

Ivy: You couldn't move for the crush from Forest Road to the Town Hall.

Joseph: You'd see the hawkers sweeping it up and selling it again. The papers said that the sewage works had to deal with seventeen cartloads of it. They had to have an additional stoker employed.

Salesman: How unusual.

Interviewer: There are so many things that happened in the past that we just forget about aren't there? Little things like that.

Ivy: The Medical Aid man had come round earlier. I remember that. He had a very loud knock.

Salesman: Did you hear that?

Joseph: Probably something falling down in the back. I've asked the boy to stack the shelves and he can be a bit of a butter fingers. Josiah! You be careful with my stock!

Interviewer: And who was he Ivy?

Ivy: Didn't know his name. Quiet chap. Big ears. Always put his hat down on the table very gently as though he had bad news to tell. My dad paid a few coppers each week and that meant he could get sickness money. You know; if he had to miss work.

Interviewer: He still paid, your father? Even while he was over in France?

Ivy: Mesopotamia ...

Interviewer: Of course, I'm sorry ...

Ivy: He still sent his money over every week. For my mother and me and his mother I suppose. In case anything happened. Not that he would have been expecting it to. But you never know. I mean who would have thought that a zeppelin would ever come to Loughborough.

Salesman: There it is again. What is it?

Ivy: I was in bed. My grandmother had told me a story I think. It was my Uncle Ernie who came rushing in.

Joseph: Josiah!

Ivy: I didn't know what he was shouting about. He just made me and my grandmother put on a coat and off we went.

Salesman: No I think it's coming from outside.

Ivy: And there were quite a lot of people out in the street; talking to each other, asking what was going on.

Salesman: Do you know what it is?

Ivy: Some ran back into their houses and turned their lights off and I think that some others ran into their cellars. And I do recall that the woman over the road wouldn't go back until she got all her washing in. Her husband was shouting at her ...

Joseph: Josiah! Come out here. There's something going on.

Ivy: It must have been a wash day. There was a lot of washing. Even at that time of night.

Interviewer: It was a Monday.

Ivy: Was it?

Interviewer: Yes. Monday January 31st.

Ivy: Well that would make sense. Lots of people did their washing on a Monday.

Interviewer: And then what happened?

Ivy: Well I know it was cold. I didn't want to be outside. We'd had a lot of snow as well not long before. And then we set off.

Interviewer: Did you see anything? Did you hear anything?

Salesman: Look at all these people coming out onto the streets.

Ivy: Not to start with. Just a lot of folk. Down Empress Road, towards the fields on the far side of the canal.

Interviewer: What did you do there? In the fields? Was there anywhere to hide?

Ivy: We just huddled behind a hedge. Silly really. Looking up at the sky.

Joseph: Something's up alright. Can you hear that? It sounds like a train.

Salesman: It's not a train Mr Gilbert.

Joseph: I don't believe it. Look! Up there!

Ivy: But my Uncle had only gone and made us run towards the zeppelin rather than away from the thing.

Joseph: Josiah! Come on! Hurry up and look at this.

Ivy: You couldn't imagine how big it was.

Salesman: Maybe we should go into the cellar Mr Gilbert.

Ivy: And for a moment I thought it must be some kind of bird. I mean what else could it be? What else could be up there in the sky above us? But it didn't look like a bird; it didn't have any wings. And it was making this whirring sound.

Joseph: It's getting louder.

Ivy: Like a train up in the sky. I couldn't stop looking up at it. It moved quickly because it was so big. But it didn't look hurried. And there was this greenish glow coming from it ...

Joseph: I never thought in all my days ...

Salesman: I wouldn't go out there. Mr Gilbert! Please ... don't ...

Ivy: And then we saw a flash off in the distance ...

Salesman: Mr Gilbert!

Ivy: You could feel it, you could, I swear. You could feel the ground move beneath your feet. Like an earthquake or something.

Salesman: Josiah! Where are you?

Interviewer: And is this still very clear in your mind?

Ivy: Oh yes. I can see it like yesterday. But it was when we walked back after it had moved on that you understood.

Salesman: It's your father.

Ivy: It was a terrible sight. Glass everywhere.

Salesman: Don't look out there! Please don't look.

Ivy: And there he was. This man.

Salesman: There's nothing you can do.

Ivy: A shopkeeper I learned later on. And a father too.

Salesman: I'm sorry.

Ivy: Draped over a handcart.

Interviewer: Dead?

Ivy: Yes.

Salesman: He walked out just as the bomb landed. I told him to stay here...

Ivy: I was only five years old. What a thing to see.

A moment's silence

Ivy: Is there anything else you want to know?

Interviewer: No; I don't think so.

Ivy: It's brought it back. Doing this.

Interviewer: I'm sorry.

Ivy: Just lying there. Awkward like. Over a handcart.

Ivy gets up and goes over to Joseph. They shake hands quietly as the Salesman and the Interviewer watch.

Music.

The Finale

Main speaking roles - Millard / Mayor / Landlord / Tramp / Captain Martin / Lieutenant Loewe

Other roles - Heckler / Suffragette / Alfred Coleman / Ernest Stubley / Beatrice Smith / Rosa Bartholomuch

The dead - Martha Coleman / Joseph Gilbert / Annie Adcock / Joseph Adkin / Alice Adkin / Joe Page / Joseph Page / Elsie Page / Arthur Turnall / Ethel Higgs

Other lines are distributed amongst The Troupe

The Church. Music – live preferably.

As the audience enter they are met by Millard and members of the team – stewards – who shake the hand of everyone that enters. The Troupe are already sitting in place and spread out across the pews (apart from those who will enter from the aisles). Once the audience is in and the music / choir has finished Millard comes up onto a stage at the front of the audience.

Millard: Welcome. It is good to see so many of you gathered here as we reach the conclusion of our work. Over the last few hours our troupe has been hard at it, in all manner of spaces across this town, telling the stories that we have gathered of that tumultuous event of January 31st 1916.

There is a huge explosion and a puff of smoke as all of the cast - who are sitting in and amongst the audience - stand up.

Millard: And what a lot of stories there have been.

The cast all jump up and begin to talk at once, saying lines from their previous scenes. After a short while Millard claps his hands and this stops.

Millard: Enough!

They all stop but they stay standing.

Millard: They're a zealous bunch and we hope that you have been able to see as many of their stories as possible. Stories of bravery; like that of Alfred Coleman who jumped from his barber's chair to climb up and turn off the gaslights whilst the bombs were falling.

Alfred: Mind you it was a bit of a close shave. And that was even before the zep set to work.

Millard: Of Beatrice Smith and Ernest Stubley; who bravely went back to the Empress Works as the zeppelin was racing towards them.

Edward: Again to turn off the lights.

Millard: For which they were awarded the OBE.

Beatrice: Daft really. But it was a lovely day out.

Millard: And there were others, who ignored the peril from above and helped the injured. Such as the three brave souls who carried poor Lizzie Askew to hospital.

The Maria Singers / Church Choir begin to sing a hymn.

Millard: Who was struck by shrapnel from the second bomb, on the Rushes. One of three who were never to recover from their wounds. One of the ten who died on that night.

And now the Troupe sit down as the ten dead – Martha Coleman, Joseph Gilbert, Annie Adcock, Joseph Adkin, Alice Adkin, Joe Page, Joseph Page, Elsie Page, Arthur Turnall, Lizzie Askew – remain standing. They each, in turn, step up onto some kind of small step that allows them to be elevated to a higher position than before, saying their name as they do so:

- Martha Coleman

- Annie Adcock

- Alice Adkin

- Joseph Adkin
- Ethel Higgs
- Joseph Gilbert
- Arthur Turnall
- Joseph Page Senior
- Joseph Page Junior
- Elsie Page

After the last person is standing a man walks down the centre aisle. This is the Mayor (Walter W Coltman) who we saw earlier in the Council Meeting scene.

Millard: And in amongst these stories of the brave and the dead, there have been others too. Like this one – heading here now in the shape of Mr. Walter Coltman, the Mayor of this town; your town; one hundred years ago.

He takes to the stage as Millard moves to one side. A lighting change indicates that we are now back in the past again.

Mayor: If anyone had told you that we would be gathered here today for the purpose in which we now meet then you would have quite rightly said that such a thing was absurd. For we have gone along under the supposition that we were safe here in the Midlands. And that we would always be safe. But now this has been shown to be wrong.

Heckler: You should have been better prepared!

Sssshhhh!

Mayor: I am aware that there may be some amongst you who think that the authorities should have taken more precautions than were taken. And there will be a time and a place in which to air your views.

Heckler: I want to air them now!

- Let him speak woman!

Mayor: This town, like every other town, has been asked to make the sacrifices necessary in times of war. And we have done so proudly. Gathering in the Market Place in our hundreds to send off the troops. The women taking the place of those who have left, in the fields and the factories. Taking in refugees who are fleeing war in their homeland; as any town should that declares itself a Christian place. But for this town there has now been an added burden, shared only by a handful of other places in the land. And I believe that we have not been shown to be wanting.

Hear hear!

Mayor: That our spirit and resolve has never been shown more clearly than in the aftermath of that terrible night.

Hear hear!

Mayor: That the way that we have rallied and supported each other in the face of this appalling onslaught by a vicious enemy has taught us all what it really means to be a neighbour.

Hear hear!

Mayor: And that through this experience we have, and will continue to become, stronger still.

Heckler: That zeppelin should have come nowhere near us! The Town Council should have ensured that the lights were out. Like in Derby. And Nottingham. And Leicester.

Mayor: In hindsight we may not have carried out our duties as diligently as we would have wished. But we responded swiftly by ensuring that full blackout procedures were put into place.

Heckler: But it was too late wasn't it. Too late for those that died!

Uproar!

Mayor: Please! Please! Can I remind you all why we are here. To do some good. To try and rectify some of the terrible damage that was done that night. Please, please can I ask you all to calm down.

Which they do.

Mayor: Thank you. Now, let us get to the work for which we are gathered. To announce the dispensation of the fund that was set up under the honorary secretaryship of Mr C. H. Adams to help those in need. Which I hope we can do in an atmosphere of civility.

The Landlord gets up from the audience.

Landlord: It's an outrage! I've lost as much as anyone as far as property goes. And yet I have been told that I will not be entitled to a penny! Not a single penny!

Mayor: This is not about property.

Landlord: Then why have I heard that you've been giving money to those whose property has been damaged.

Mayor: Those that need it.

Landlord: And I don't need it?

Mayor: Has your own house been destroyed? Your windows blown out perhaps?

Landlord: No.

Mayor: Do you own a shop which has been damaged by this raid?

Landlord: You know I don't!

Mayor: Then unfortunately you do not fit within the criteria that we have set down.

Landlord: This is an attack on landlords!

- Sit down man!

Landlord: Why shouldn't we be remunerated as well as all of you lot!

Be quiet!

Landlord: Where would you be without us? On the streets half of you! This is a Liberal conspiracy!

Mayor: It has nothing to do with our member of parliament!

Landlord: Have you heard of the Bolsheviks over in Russia Mr Coltman! I'm sure that they'd be happy to have you amongst their ranks.

Mayor: I'm sure that any man who reads the papers has heard of the Bolsheviks sir.

A Suffragette gets up.

Suffragette: And women. We read the papers too. And now that this town is relying on us to do the jobs of those who have gone to fight we won't be content until we all get the vote.

Cheers and boos.

Suffragette: It is the women that are keeping this country running! And when the men do come back we won't just crawl back into our aprons!

Landlord: This is what happens when you don't respect landlords! Bolshevism!
Suffragettism! Chaos!

This can break out into a real argument.

Mayor: *(Does he use the bell as in the earlier scene?)* Please! Please remember why we are here!

Sssshhhh!

Mayor: Thank you. Now, the relief fund has so far raised over £500 through subscriptions. Of this sum eighty one pounds and five shillings are to be disbursed in paying the funeral expenses of the victims. One hundred and thirteen pounds, one shilling and threepence will be given as relief or as allowances for wages. Whilst compensation given for damage to furniture, stores, and the premises of local businesses will be paid to the extent of two hundred and fifty five pounds and four shillings. The fund will remain open for a few more days but it has, as I'm sure you'll agree, achieved the purpose for which it was set up. And so I thank you all for your generosity.

The cast applaud. Lighting change as Millard comes across to shakes the Mayor's hand.

Millard: *(To the Mayor)* Well done. *(To the audience)* Well done to you all. You should be proud Loughborough. Proud of the way that you worked together one hundred years ago.

- It's the best centenary story our troupe has told for a long time.

- And we've told a few.

Agreement within the cast.

Millard: But there is always something that lurks in the background. One episode, one chapter, that doesn't quite fit in. That gets left out, placed discretely to one side, forgotten. Only our job is to tell it all.

And now the sound of bombs. This should be very loud. All of the cast should start shouting and screaming and calling for help. Lights should flicker. Projections of flame around the church. Stretcher bearers run in with a covered 'body' and a sheet covered in blood. Rolls of bandages are thrown from all angles so that they unfurl. A Tramp enters and walks through this mayhem. He is very dirty and covered in blood. He goes to the front of the stage or alternatively finds another area in the church to stand. He talks over the continuing noise.

Tramp: Of course you've been told of how everyone rallied. Stretchers and volunteers and make shift bandages torn from cloth and clothing. The injured taken to hospital to be cared for; to be looked after; to have their wounds dressed and their bones set and their pain eased. Quiet!

And now sudden and total silence.

Tramp: But what about me? What about the blood that pours from my head? What about the cuts on my body; from the same glass that has flown through the same evening air on these same streets as yours.

There is a moment's silence. Nobody is sure what to say.

Tramp: Ask me then! Ask me what happened to this tramp.

Again, silence and uncertainty.

Tramp: That's right. You all be quiet. You all look to the ground. Because even then; even in the middle of that rubble and blood they – you – still managed to remember the order of things. To look through my injuries and see me for what I was. Not another victim of war who needed help. But someone without a home. Someone without worth. Someone to be sent, not to the infirmary, along with everyone else, but to the Workhouse. Shame on you! Shame on you Loughborough!

And now the sound of static builds as the Tramp exits.

Millard: You have been rebuked. And not without reason. But let us not dwell on this; for we must widen our gaze a little before we return it to this town for one last time.

Millard turns to an old radio that is on the stage and tunes into a scratchy news report in German. This fades into an English RP translation of the report:

Radio: On the night of January 31st, the sixth Naval Airship Squadron dropped large quantities of explosives on the docks, harbour and factories in Liverpool and Birkenhead and on the iron foundries and smelting furnaces at Nottingham and Sheffield. Everywhere we observed gigantic explosions and serious conflagrations. Our airships, heavily fired on from all directions, were not hit, and returned safely.

Millard: That was how the Germans reported the raid that night. But of course it is not true. In many ways. L20 – the zeppelin that flew right over this church - may have made its way back that night, but not L19. That was forced to ditch into the North Sea. Where it was found by a Grimsby trawler, the King Stephen.

The sound of wind. (If we are using projections in the church to add atmosphere can we use this to convey the sense of water?) Captain William Martin appears from an elevated position.

Martin: Over there! Look! A zeppelin in the water!

Loewe appears from another elevated position.

Loewe: Captain! My crew need your help. As you can see my vessel has come to an unfortunate end. I therefore request, under the universal code of seamanship, that you take us on board.

Martin: How many of you are there?

Loewe: Eighteen.

Martin: Then if I were to do so you would outnumber us, for we are only a crew of nine.

Loewe: But you are honour bound. As a man of the sea. And according to international law.

Martin: Let me consult with my men.

Millard: Which he did.

Martin: Commander ...

Loewe: Lieutenant ... Lieutenant Odo Loewe.

Martin: Lieutenant Loewe, we all agree that the right course of action would be to rescue you. But we also know that we have no weapons aboard our ship, other than a few sticks. And that therefore it would be very simple for you to overpower us. We will not take that chance.

Lieutenant: You should abide by the rules of the sea.

Martin: You have not come from the sea but the sky.

Lieutenant: But the sea has drawn us to her.

Martin: Our decision is made.

Lieutenant: Then our deaths, for die we will, must be placed only at your hands.

Martin: And what deaths have you caused this night? You and the rest of your fleet.

Lieutenant: It is war.

Martin: War too is based on laws and understanding. And dropping bombs onto innocent civilians can be no part of that.

Lieutenant: I beg of you to take mercy on us.

Martin: I am sorry. I am sorry!

On the soundtrack the sound of the wind builds up as the words ‘gott strafe England!’ reverberate.

Millard: ‘God punish England’. None survived. But before those men – all eighteen on them – perished; they wrote letters. Letters which they placed in bottles and which were then washed up upon the shore in Denmark. Heartbreaking messages. Look, under your pews. All of you.

Under a number of the pews there are bottles that have been hidden that have messages in them; all of which are written in German. As the audience do this we hear on the soundtrack a collection of German voices fading in and out of each other, along with English voices which translate this (‘my dear mother ...’ etc).

As this is happening the Indian Ladies choir take their place.

Millard: And Captain Martin became, in the eyes of the whole of Germany, a war criminal.

- What has this got to do with Loughborough?

Millard: It is all connected. And what good is it to tell stories if we cannot see their connections to the world outside? But you are right. Our job is to tell your story and we have done our duty here. Now we have other towns to visit. We must move on, as you have done since that cold night in January.

- The Technical College has become a large university.

- The Empress Works, a victim of economic streamlining, was shut down just over six years ago.

- There are no more brush making shops on The Rushes ...

- Although you can still hear banjo’s being played at The Swan.

- Caldwell's has closed.
- The shop where Joseph Gilbert was killed is still there.
- Ashby Square has more barbers than ever before.
- And the Bartholomuch's are still selling their ice-cream.

Rosa Bartholomuch now enters with an ice cream cart.

Rosa: A little injury from a German zeppelin isn't going to stop this town being treated!

Millard: And just as you once welcomed Belgians to this place so you have welcomed new families here; from every corner of the world. Many of whom will never have heard of this story that we have told today. But let us not talk finally of those who were killed, or injured, or who were singled out for acts of bravery. But for those who just carry on, those who pick up the pieces, those whose stories and lives are never recorded.

The Indian Women's choir now begin to sing their song. The following happens over the top of their song.

Millard: And as the 31st of January 1916 finally passed and the new month of February began, so across the rubble the washing lines were put back up ...

Rosa reaches into her ice cream cart to hand out washing lines which she asks the audience to pass along. These are tied – with the help of the stewards – onto poles at the end of the pews and raised up. Once this is done, and throughout the next section, those who are sitting in and amongst the audience begin to peg up clothing and sheets which are positioned under where they are sitting.

Millard: And clothes were hung up to dry.

One by one members of the cast join in with this as they peg up the clothes.

- We went back to work at Caldwells.

- And the Brush.

- And the Empress Works.

Millard: Men kept joining up to fight.

- The postmen kept knocking on doors ...

- To deliver the terrible news of another man killed at the front.

- Hair was still cut ...

- And beards were still trimmed.

- And the Salvation Army Band drummer still kept a solid beat.

- Men and women still sat in front of their desks at the Technical Institute.

- The midwife still cycled to deliver babies across the town.

- Travelling salesmen still arrived with cases of soap.

- And couples still walked through the Square arm in arm.

- Town councillors still argued.

- The local newspapers kept arriving through the letterbox.

- Children still queued for the Saturday morning film.

- Fish and chips from Gidley's on The Rushes were still served ...

- More vinegar please!

- Pints were still poured

- And songs were still sung ...
- In the snug of The Crown and Cushion.

At which point the Indian Women's Choir song morphs into a suitable First World War song that everybody sings.

Millard: And now, we really have finished. Thank you for inviting us here to work with you. Come on everyone! We've got the packing up to do! Maria! One last song to see us out please!

Maria's Singers. The cast begin to strike the set.

Appendix – Letters for the Three Pages scene

Each performer has one section that they will repeat whenever the letter reading sections occur.

1. Dear Tom, enclosed is your safety razor. You put the blade between the two plates, then squeeze the handle down. You always want a cloth on the table or something soft so if you drop it, it won't hurt you. You'll see the plates have two edges and when you want some more plates you can get them. I tell you what; we'll sort it out when you come home for leave again. Your dad is just going up to fetch me a tongue to send you, then he is going to post it straight away to make sure you get it tomorrow. I did not know anything to send that would suit you better than a tongue.

2. My dear Alan, I am pleased to think you listed without them fetching you. It is the best thing you could have done; they will make a man of you in no time. Be a good boy and try to avoid bad company and make us all proud of you. I know some of the soldiers are not very particular and would be glad to lead a young boy wrong. Harry Lewis is expecting to go to France in two months and he only joined just before Christmas. It seems to me he will only be a target for the Germans. Your loving auntie Maggie.

3. Mother I have at last arrived safely in the trenches and everyone appears quite contented, except the Hun who is strafing away for all he is worth. Anyway I managed to sleep right through it last night until one shell came specially close and awakened me. But it didn't matter as it was breakfast time. We will soon be living in dugouts about thirty feet underground. Then we'll get a rum issue, three table spoonful's each, every night. It's alright to go to bed on. Jimmy has just got his fur coat and he looks like a sheep.

4. My dear wife and children. On Sunday night we moved in the firing line. When we arrived there was a dead German sniper lay within six yards of us. It was found that he only joined up in October last, that his name was Starme. And he had a wife and four children. I and three men dug his grave, wrapped him in his waterproof sheet and lowered him in the mud into his last resting place. I then knelt down with my comrades and committed him to the father of all men and asked God to bless and sustain his dear ones at home who would never see him anymore.

5. Kenny, no doubt many of my old pals are napoo especially with this show on. I haven't a clear idea of what really happened I was so exhausted, though I can remember shooting a big six foot Fritz with my revolver and doing all sorts of mad things. Then I slipped and something went wrong with the works in my ankle so I got away as soon as I could, God knows how. I guess someone else enjoyed that chocolate; good luck to the bounders.

6. Tom, you never said anything about the razor. Did you get it alright? The first of the legions that went to the front from Newark and Southwell got men killed in action. Your mother is in bed and got a daughter this morning, both are well. Your auntie sent us seven and a half pounds of meat for two and six. It is good. Last night Johnnie and me went to the cinema to see Sexton Blake which was very exciting.

7. Dear Mother and Father, just a few lines to let you know I am quite well. I had a parcel the other day from Aunt Maggie; it was all right just as we came out of the trenches. There was plum puddings, socks and lots of other things. Talk about a blow out. You wanted to know if I had picked up with a girl yet but I don't think. In England they call wenches 'Miss'; in France 'Madame Mo'zelle'. I am getting short of writing paper; they say papier in French; a little pad that will go in my haversack would be best.

8. My dearest wife I am here under a tree writing this letter to you. It is simply chuck bang full of wild flowers; you could mow them down and everything in the garden is lovely. I am all by myself eating your nuts and toffees and feel that God has been very good to me. Just think of me lying on a mossy bank with the sun scorching down on me surrounded by flowers, the guns booming away in the distance aeroplanes flying overhead. It's hard to imagine on a day like this that anything bad could happen to anyone.

9. Father, yesterday was a day I shall never forget. It was one long horrid nightmare. The night before the Boche sent over gas shells for two and a half hours. Respirators were of course put on. In the morning we imagined the gas would all be blown away. Unfortunately it wasn't. A very hot sun threw the beastly stuff out of the bushes. And we all happened to be in a ravine. I spent the morning finding cramped and vomiting people. I have never seen so many being sick at the same time in the same way before. And the noise was awful too.

10. Harold you must try to get your clothes well aired. I am sending you a bit of pork pie I made them yesterday and thought you would enjoy a bit. Your dad cleaned your bike but wants to know if it needs greasing and the wind letting out how have you gone on about your rifle? I hope the wool will match your trousers. It has been a very bad week for rain. Your dad has gone to Lincoln races today. Mrs Widdowson says Walter has not been home yet since he went away and her other son is in France. Egypt sounds bad enough but not half as bad as France.

11. Mother I can't write anything of the details of the Battle but I can say that it is the most awful and ghastly affair imaginable and I pray to God that it ends this awful war. Have you heard anything of Ted yet? I have found out a chap that bandaged him up. He said he got hit bad in both legs, somewhere about the knees. When you come to a life like this where someone is being lost to someone almost every minute it makes one realise how foolish it all is; all those petty trivial quarrels at home.

12. My dearest Emma I am having a dreadful struggle to keep my eyes open so you must excuse me not writing much. I am exhausted. Thank you for the cake; it went down lovely. I don't think Frank will have to come up if dad tries to get him off when his papers come. They have put us in groups for returning to work after the war and farm men are in the number one group. p.s. I am sending you a few violets I found in a wood the other day. I am so glad to hear that the crops are doing well; they look lovely out here.

13. Dear Mother. I am laid in a shell hole with two wounds in my hip and through my back. I cannot move or crawl. I have been here for twenty four hours and never seen a living soul. I hope you will receive these few lines as I don't expect anyone will come to take me away, but you will always have the consolation that I died quite happy doing my duty. Please give my best of love to all my cousins who have been so kind to me since I have been out here. And the best of love to Arthur and Harry and all at Swinfleet.

14. Jimmy, I wish the rotten war was over I am about fed up with it. I think Fritz might as well throw the sponge up for what I can see of it he won't stand it much longer. I had the spare rib and sausage for dinner yesterday it was a treat and I had the other sausage for breakfast. I am sorry to tell you the hot weather has made the ham go wrong. I got two or three slices of the outsides and had to throw away the rest which I didn't like to do. It's a shame to waste it.

15. Betty, how are you getting on now? I have not been able to get your letter this last two days as I left the 13th for two days but join them again tomorrow so hope to have one or two letters waiting for me. I had to answer your last rather hurriedly too. By now I suppose you have settled down to being alone again. Lil has perhaps come to live with you again. How is my dear Lilian? I do hope her cough is better. Well love I am going on alright so far, and still in the best of health.

16. Dear Ron. Hope this letter reaches you as it leaves me, in the pink. Don't smash up your new bike before I get home again. I want to test it a bit. The roads round here are level no hills at all but the roads are worse than Clowne Lane. You should see some of the transport, miles of it. I have seen some Indians they are fine looking fellows a lot of them wear beards. I'll bet it has been cold for them this winter. Shall be going in the trenches again in a day or two.

17. Dad, it has been wet here this time out so I expect the trenches will be like dykes. It is worst coming out of the things when we go out for rations or something like that. The bullets don't half whistle around. One will whistle past your head and plough into a tree; it makes you duck for the first time or two. It's hard lines on some poor chaps who come out and the first day they get knocked out. In some places the trenches are only 40 yards apart. It's not safe then to have your head above the trench top for long or else you will get a chip knocked off.

18. My love I am very tired today having walked a long way but got a bed for tonight anyway. I think I can see my leave coming in about three or four weeks' time, perhaps sooner, then for a wonderful time. Shall we know how to spend it I wonder? In a few days I hope to be able to give you some good news so look out dear. Kiss Lilian again for me, and you dear. Always have the best love from yours affectionately Ernest.

19. Dear Mr Brown I am just writing to thank you for your very kind letter to my mother about my brother Frank's death. She was immensely fond of him and is of course very cut up about it. A letter like yours is of very great value and help at such a time. I feel especially grateful as where I am it takes over a month for a letter to come and a reply to get back. My brother was my best pal. I hope when the war is over I have the pleasure of meeting you. 'Til then I wish you the best of luck and a speedy recovery from your wound.