

Tommies

7th October 1914

Series 1 Episode 1

By Michael Chaplin

Commentator

Mickey Bliss, Sergeant, Signals Section, Lahore Division, Indian Army

Horace Greenwood, 24, Sergeant, Signals Section, 2nd Division, British Expeditionary Force (BEF). Formerly a Post Office Engineer from Cheshunt.

Maberley Dunster, Lieutenant, B Troop, 15th King's Hussars. Attached to 2nd Division, BEF (and his horse, Bucephalus)

Walter Oddy, Sergeant, Signals Section, 2nd Div, BEF. Born in Hull, now lives in London. (He and his wife Gladys moved away to London after Walter was involved in anti-German rioting at the outbreak of war.)

Sister Catherine O'Neill (Katie), born on Clydeside, daughter of a shipyard plater, now a nun in the convent in Beaulne

Billy Seymour, Private, 2nd Battalion, Durham Light Infantry

Alphonse Minet, farmer, Aisne valley / **Hussars Sergeant**

SCENE 1EXT. FIELD, NORTHERN FRANCEDAYFX: THE SONG OF A NIGHTINGALE, FOLLOWED BY A FEMALE VOICE...

1. **COMMENTATOR:** A patch of earth in northern France. In the half-light of dawn a nightingale sings its final aria from the edge of an ancient wood.

FX: A PAIR OF HORSES PULLING A PLOUGH, DRIVEN BY A FARMER,
ALPHONSE MINET.

2. **ALPHONSE:** Allez, allez!

3. **COMMENTATOR:** After the night's rain, Alphonse Minet is ploughing the remnants of his wheat crop into the rich, loamy soil. The field slopes uphill to the wood. The sun rises. In this brief Indian summer, it's going to be another perfect day.

4. **ALPHONSE:** À gauche, à gauche.

FX: ALPHONSE TURNS THE HORSES. WE MIGHT BLEED IN THE TUNE
OF GEORGE BUTTERWORTH VERSION OF IS MY TEAM PLOUGHING?....

1. COMMENTATOR: For 150 years the Minets have grown cereals for the bakeries of Reims 20 miles away. In that time very little has changed in the valley of the Aisne.

FX: FINAL NIGHTINGALE

2. COMMENTATOR: It is 6.48 on the morning of October 7th, 1914.

SCENE 3

EXT. FIELD, NORTHERN FRANCE- MORNING

FX: ALPHONSE PLOUGHS ON.

2. **COMMENTATOR:** Monsieur Minet pays no attention to the lorry.
Lost in the richness of his soil, he wonders if the harvest of 1915 can match this year's record.
3. **ALPHONSE:** Allez! Allez!
4. **COMMENTATOR:** In fact the field has been harvested for the last time in six years. Alphonse Minet won't live to see the next. He will be killed by a stray bullet fired by one of his own countrymen in January 1917.

SCENE 4**INT. ROAD, NORTHERN FRANCE****DAY****FX: THE LORRY GRINDS ON, WITH THE SINGING...**

1. ODDY/GREENWOOD: Uncle Jock, he had a sock, up the pleat of his kilt, When he was sleepin', we were peepin', To see how well he was built...

FX: THE LORRY ENGINE COUGHS, FALTERS AND DIES.

2. MICKEY BLISS: Not again.

3. COMMENTATOR: **The lorry's fuel line is faulty. No minor inconvenience, as its driver has an appointment. Mickey Bliss is going to war for the first time.**

4. ODDY: What you gonna do now, Sergeant?

5. GREENWOOD: Stick your finger where you didn't oughta?

(HE TITTERS. HORACE IS HOME COUNTIES, ODDY YORKSHIRE.)

6. ODDY: Yeah. Can't exactly carry yon contraption, can we?

7. GREENWOOD: Looks like your little mission's over before it began, Sergeant Bliss.

8. MICKEY BLISS: I'll fix it.

(ODDY AND GREENWOOD LAUGH.)

1. **COMMENTATOR:** **Sergeants Walter Oddy and Horace Greenwood are comparative veterans, with seven weeks' experience of conflict.**

FX: AS MICKEY GETS OUT AND LIFTS THE HOOD, A TROOP OF HORSES CANTER TOWARDS THE LORRY, LED BY LIEUTENANT MABERLEY DUNSTER.

2. **DUNSTER:** Morning, Sergeant! Problem?
3. **MICKEY BLISS:** Sir.
4. **DUNSTER:** That's it, you see, the average horse doesn't break down!

(LAUGHTER AND JEERS FROM DUNSTER'S MEN AS THEY PASS.)

5. **MICKEY BLISS:** Yes, just like your average lorry doesn't get shot from under you.

FX: DUNSTER SUDDENLY WHEELS AND RETURNS TO MICKEY.

6. **GREENWOOD:** Now you're for it! He heard you.
7. **DUNSTER:** Your name?
8. **BLISS:** Sergeant Michael Bliss, Signals Section, Lahore Division, Indian Army.

1. DUNSTER: Ah, Bliss! Don't suppose you've heard that one before.

2. MICKEY BLISS: If I'd a pound for every time, sir.

3. DUNSTER: Didn't know you chaps were over here already.

4. MICKEY BLISS: Everyone but me isn't, sir. On troopships in the Indian Ocean, last I heard. If you'll excuse me...

5.COMMENTATOR: Unlike normal soldiers, signallers find themselves seconded to other units whenever and wherever they're required.

6. DUNSTER: So I'm playing nursemaid to your operation today.

7. MICKEY BLISS: Lieutenant Dunster?

8. DUNSTER: It is he. Would you like a tow?

9.COMMENTATOR: This proves unnecessary.

FX: (ENGINE COUGHS INTO LIFE)

Mickey Bliss is a consummate fixer.

(IRONIC CHEERS FROM ODDY AND GREENWOOD)

But not as skilled a map reader.

1. MICKEY BLISS: Now then, where are we?

2. ODDY: Don't tell me you're lost.

3. COMMENTATOR: **In fact the party is two miles north of the village of Bourg-et-Comin, which straddles the River Aisne and its accompanying Canal.**

4. DUNSTER: Follow me, Sergeant. Lead on!

FX: THE HORSES MOVE OFF, HOOVES CLATTERING ON THE ROAD.

5. COMMENTATOR: **B Troop of the 15th King's Hussars have been in France since the outbreak of war, acting variously as probing attack force and rear-guard, picking up German stragglers and British deserters, riding nearly 200 miles in the pell-mell retreat from Mons and the counter-attack on the Marne. The eyes and ears of 2nd Division.**

SCENE 5 EXT. LANE, NEAR SOUPIR A LITTLE LATER

(THE LITTLE PROCESSION MOVES ALONG ANOTHER ROAD.)

1. DUNSTER: Rendezvous point, Sergeant.
2. HUSSARS SERGEANT: Dismount!
3. COMMENTATOR: Now the front has settled just north of the Aisne.
The horsemen of Lieutenant Dunster's troop have
barely slept for six weeks.

FX: THE HUSSARS DISMOUNT. DUNSTER HEADS FOR THE LORRY.

**MICKEY CLIMBS ONTO THE LORRY AND WRESTLES WITH A
TARPAULIN.**

4. DUNSTER: You signals wallahs here for a spot of lamp flashing and flag waving, are you?
5. MICKEY BLISS: Something rather more sophisticated, sir. This.
6. DUNSTER: And what is that?
7. MICKEY BLISS: One Motor Lorry Set, straight from the factory.
8. COMMENTATOR: Or in British Army backwards-speak, a Wireless
Telegraphy Set Service Lorry.

1. DUNSTER: Let me have a look.

FX: INTRIGUED, DUNSTER CLIMBS ONTO THE LORRY.

2. COMMENTATOR: Until now the British Expeditionary Force has mostly used the telegraph to convey information at the front, which involved riders on horseback laying lines from carts over trees, buildings and other high points, all at the gallop.

3. DUNSTER: Rather large, isn't it?

4. COMMENTATOR: Indeed it is. The components of the wireless set - transmitter, mast and receiver – weigh 600 pounds.

5. MICKEY BLISS: Transmits Morse via a spark gap, it receives on Long Wave Mark II tuner.

6. DUNSTER: Range?

7. MICKEY BLISS: 100 miles.

8. DUNSTER: Good heavens.

9. ODDY: Yeah, If it works.

1. MICKEY BLISS: It could make such a difference, sir. I mean - It's beautiful.
2. DUNSTER: True believer, are you Bliss?
3. MICKEY BLISS: Fast, effective communication will win the war, sir.
4. DUNSTER: Not men on horseback, I presume.
5. MICKEY BLISS: I didn't say that, sir.
6. DUNSTER: And the point of today's exercise?
7. MICKEY BLISS: Well we test the set under field conditions, sir. Acquiring vital intelligence in the process.
(GREENWOOD CLEARS HIS THROAT.)
8. DUNSTER: What about you two? Are you trained to use the wireless like Sergeant Bliss here?
9. GREENWOOD: No, sir.
10. ODDY: Here to observe, sir. And help with the humping.
11. DUNSTER: Well Sergeant Bliss, your show. Best get on with it.

SCENE 6EXT. STREAM, NEAR SOUPIRDAY

FX: WATER RUNS QUICKLY OVER GRAVEL. MICKEY, WALTER,
HORACE AND DUNSTER SPLASH THROUGH THE SHALLOWS.

Music IN: 5' 46" approx

1. **COMMENTATOR:** The clear waters of the Moussy tumble quickly from the heights of an escarpment to join the Aisne. Before the war, Sunday anglers caught trout in the Moussy and carp in the Aisne, and the artist Camille Pissaro painted the trees of the valley in autumn.
2. **ODDY:** Be careful, Bliss! Don't lose cover of them trees.
3. **GREENWOOD:** Bet some German's got his glasses on us right now.
4. **COMMENTATOR:** It's now 7.55 am.
5. **DUNSTER:** Fire away then, Bliss.
6. **MICKEY BLISS:** So the enemy occupy the high ground up there.
7. **DUNSTER:** Along the Chemin des Dames. The ladies' path, but don't get too excited. The dames have long gone.

8. GREENWOOD: And the bastards have moved in, haven't they, sir?

1. DUNSTER: So daintily put. And well established with artillery.

2. MICKEY BLISS: Well that's the thing. We're to establish the position of their guns on that ridge, and send the coordinates back to our artillery.

3. ODDY: Sounds so bloody easy, doesn't it?

4. DUNSTER: Y'see Sergeant, your devilish Hun don't actually put his guns on the skyline...

5. MICKEY BLISS: I realise that...

6. DUNSTER: But below it, on the other side.

7. ODDY: So how do you reckon on peering through a bank of earth?

8. MICKEY BLISS: We'd have a chance further up the hillside. See the dip in the ridge? If we could find a vantage point and look at an angle through that dip, we might spot their guns...

9. ODDY: But they'd see us, wouldn't they?

1. MICKEY BLISS: Look. According to the map, there's a tongue of woodland going almost all the way up to that ridge. If we could get up there...

2. ODDY: What... in that lorry?

3. MICKEY BLISS: There's a track leading through the wood, see? Past a house or farm. We'd be hidden.

FX: HE SHOWS THEM THE MAP. HE SEEKS TO HAVE CONVINCED THEM.

4. DUNSTER: Just one thing wrong with your plan, Sergeant Bliss.

5. MICKEY BLISS: What's that, sir?

6. DUNSTER: Look downstream. The bridge taking us where you want to go.

7. ODDY: In plain sight of the enemy.

8. GREENWOOD: Try crossing that and you'd be sending your last message.

9. ODDY: They'd blow us to little bits.

1. MICKEY BLISS: Yes, yes. I see that.

2. GREENWOOD: Well what now then, Sergeant?

(DUNSTER'S SERGEANT APPEARS BEHIND THEM.)

3. HUSSARS SERGEANT: Sir?

4. DUNSTER: Be with you Sergeant. What's the problem?

(DUNSTER GOES WITH HIM. ODDY AND GREENWOOD MAKE TO FOLLOW.)

4. MICKEY BLISS: Look just... Look... Take it easy, you two.

5. ODDY: Eh?

6. MICKEY BLISS: Your bloody sniping in front of an officer.

7. GREENWOOD: Hark at him, Walter.

8. ODDY: Stow it, Horace. So... how long have you been in that Indian Army of yours then, Bliss?

9. GREENWOOD: Thought there was a bit of a niff round here.

1. MICKEY BLISS: I signed up in 1900. So?
2. ODDY: So you'll win the long service medal.
4. ODDY: So tell us, any of your brown chums actually try to kill you in last 14 years?
5. MICKEY BLISS: What's your point?
6. ODDY: Me point is, me and him have done more soldiering in two months than you've ever dreamed of, sunshine.
7. GREENWOOD: Yeah, that's right.
8. ODDY: Horace were a Post Office engineer before this started. I bet he's forgotten more than they ever taught you at Aldershot.
9. MICKEY BLISS: Yeah, well, not about a wireless set he hasn't.
10. GREENWOOD: Cheeky sod...

1. MICKEY BLISS: Look, look, look, I'm just here to do a job the best I can. It's signals versus the rest, remember? And I need your help to get it done. (NO REPLY)

Come on... you wanna smoke?

3. GREENWOOD: Thanks!

2. ODDY: Yeah go on.

FX: HE LIGHTS A MATCH FOR ALL THREE OF THEM. THEY INHALE....

4. MICKEY BLISS: Right then.

(THE HUSSARS SERGEANT RETURNS.)

5. SERGEANT: Lieutenant's compliments, Sergeant. Would you join him?

SCENE 7 **EXT. LANE, NEAR SOUPIR** **DAY.**
FX: AN ANCIENT FARM CART PULLED BY A OLD HORSE PLODS
ALONG, A YOUNG WOMAN DRIVING, CATHERINE O'NEILL, SINGING
THE SCOTS SONG BONIE BELL (BY BURNS).

(DUNSTER SUDDENLY APPEARS.)

MUSIC IN: 8'41"

1. DUNSTER: Attendez s'il vous plait, mamselle!

2. CATHERINE: Whoa, Camille! You gave me a right start there!

3. DUNSTER: You're English?

4. CATHERINE: I am not. Scots and proud of it.

(MICKEY JOINS DUNSTER, THEN ODDY, GREENWOOD AND THE TROOPERS.)

5. MICKEY BLISS: Do you... live near here, miss?

6. CATHERINE: Sister Catherine, if you please.

7. MICKEY BLISS: Uh – sorry - Excuse me. You're a...nun?

8. CATHERINE: Our convent's up the lane here.

9. MICKEY BLISS: Ah. The house on the map.

1. CATHERINE: Look at you all! I don't know which looks grander,
Lieutenant - your men or their horses!

(THIS GOES DOWN WELL. THE TROOPERS LAUGH.)

2. DUNSTER: Have you encountered the enemy?

3. CATHERINE: Oh, I saw plenty of the German lads before you pushed
them up the hill.

4. MICKEY BLISS: Did they treat you with respect?

5. CATHERINE: Oh aye.

6. MICKEY BLISS: It's just... you know...you hear stories.

7. CATHERINE: They're good Catholic farm boys, from a place called
Worms.

8. DUNSTER: As in the Diet. (NOBODY UNDERSTANDS)

9. MICKEY BLISS: Sir?

10. DUNSTER: The Rhineland.

1. GREENWOOD: Swineland, you mean, sir.

(NOW THE MEN LAUGH.)

2. CATHERINE: They helped Monsieur Minet get his harvest in.

5. MICKEY BLISS: You're still here, between the lines?

6. CATHERINE: We left when the fighting started, but Sister Therèse and I came back to see to the garden. The orchard's hanging with fruit and I'm manuring the vegetable beds before winter... as you mebbes noticed.

7. MICKEY BLISS: So, you come and go across this bridge?

(SHE ASSENTS)

And they never bother you??

8. CATHERINE: Why should they? It's peaceful here.

9. MICKEY BLISS: Sister, is there another way of crossing this stream?

SCENE 8**EXT. STREAM, NEAR SOUPIR A LITTLE LATER**

1. COMMENTATOR: Aged 18, the youngest of five children of a shipyard plater, Katie O'Neill is from Clydeside. When she was 13 her mother died of TB, and the family priest suggested her future might lie in the church. Since February 1913 she has lived at the isolated convent of Beaulne, which after 210 years of quiet devotion is now hemmed between two vast armies in no-man's land.

(CATHERINE LEADS MICKEY AND DUNSTER DOWN TO THE EDGE OF THE WATER, FOLLOWED BY ODDY AND GREENWOOD.)

1. CATHERINE Here's the ford. How folk crossed the stream before they built the bridge.
2. MICKEY BLISS: Well, the surface is broken up, I'd have to take it slow to have a chance.
3. ODDY: Not much tree cover.
5. MICKEY BLISS: No but... it's better than the bridge though.
6. ODDY: Yeah, but if owt happened to the lorry, how would you get your wireless back?

1. GREENWOOD: Damn sure we can't carry the thing.
2. ODDY: I know you don't want to go back to HQ with your tail between your legs, but it's a hell of a risk if you ask me....
3. MICKEY BLISS: You two don't have to come, do you. You could cross under cover with the Lieutenant and his men.
4. ODDY: No, that's not what I was getting at...
5. DUNSTER: Your decision, Sergeant Bliss.
6. MICKEY BLISS: I'll give it a go, sir.
7. CATHERINE: Why don't I cross the bridge at the same time? Give them a wave. To put them off the scent.
8. MICKEY BLISS: Nah, I don't want to put you in any danger.
9. CATHERINE: No! They watch me all the time.
10. GREENWOOD: I bet they do.
11. DUNSTER: Plucky girl! Off you go, Sergeant.

1. MICKEY BLISS: I appreciate your help, sister.
2. CATHERINE: My brother Tam's a soldier. Haven't seen any Black Watch, have you?
3. MICKEY BLISS: I'm sorry. I've only been in France a week.

SCENE 9 **EXT. BANK OF STREAM, NEAR SOUPIR** **DAY**

FX: MICKEY IS REVVING HIS ENGINE. HE THUMPS IT INTO GEAR.

Music in: 11'34" approx

4. MICKEY BLISS: Going! Come on now... come on... come on.

WE INTERCUT BETWEEN STREAM AND BRIDGE:

SCENE 10**EXT. BRIDGE OVER STREAM****DAY**

(KATIE IS READY TO GO. WALTER AND HORACE CLIMB ON THE CART.)

1. ODDY: Right, Miss - me and Horace'll get squat here in all this horse muck.
2. CATHERINE: Hup, Camille!
3. CATHERINE: Is he over yet?
4. ODDY: Is he hell! Sorry, Miss.
5. CATHERINE: I've heard that word before, Sergeant. In the odd sermon.
6. CATHERINE: I wonder if they're watching... Hallo, boys!

1. COMMENTATOR: In fact the cart's progress is observed from the ridge by a 19 year old private named Joachim Mayer, who's also reading a letter from his mother and eating a slice of her delicious plum cake. He smiles at the waving girl, notes the cart's movement in the observation post log and lowers his Abbe and Schott binoculars to cut another piece of cake. He doesn't see Mickey's lorry pass uncertainly over the ford.

FX: THE ROARING OF THE LORRY AS IT LEAVES THE WATER.

SCENE 11**EXT. CONVENT, BEAULNE - A LITTLE LATER****FX: MICKEY'S LORRY APPROACHES THE OTHERS.**

1. CATHERINE: Oh, here he is. You made it then?
2. MICKEY BLISS: With your help, sister. Thank you.
3. CATHERINE: More fun than spreading cow muck! Can I ask, what are you doing here?
4. GREENWOOD: Reconnaissance.
5. CATHERINE: Beg pardon?
6. MICKEY BLISS: Looking at the enemy. That's all.
7. CATHERINE: Oh. That's all right then.
8. MICKEY BLISS: The track carries on up the hill?
9. CATHERINE: To the top wood. Then there's open meadow to the ridge.

1. MICKEY BLISS: Could you uh... could you perhaps show us where the trees give out?
2. CATHERINE: Well, I...I'd better go and...
3. MICKEY BLISS: Yeah?
4. CATHERINE: ...tell Sister Therèse.
5. MICKEY BLISS: Quick as you can.
6. CATHERINE: I won't be long!

FX: CATHERINE JUMPS DOWN AND RUNS OFF.

3. ODDY: Push your luck, don't you?
4. MICKEY BLISS: Just doing my job.

SCENE 12

EXT. GARDEN, CONVENT

DAY

FX: SUDDENLY AGITATED, CATHERINE RUNS TO THE CONVENT GARDEN.

SCENE 13

INT. SHED, GARDEN

DAY

(OUT OF BREATH, CATHERINE APPEARS IN THE DOORWAY OF THE SHED.)

MUSIC IN: 13'59" APPROX

1. CATHERINE: Where are you? Are you there?
2. MAN: Yes?
3. CATHERINE: Stay out of sight. There are British soldiers here!

SCENE 14**EXT. WOOD, NEAR CONVENT****DAY**

(MICKEY, DUNSTER, WALTER AND HORACE CLIMB THROUGH THE WOOD.)

1. GREENWOOD: Wasted in a convent, eh Walter? Wonder what she looks like under that uniform.
2. ODDY: All right, Horace.
3. DUNSTER: That you will never know, Sergeant. But there's one thing of which we can be entirely sure.
4. GREENWOOD: Sir?
5. DUNSTER: Sister Catherine isn't speculating what *you* look like under your soiled khaki. Here we are, Bliss. Let's see if your hunch is correct.
6. ODDY: It's not. Nowt.
7. DUNSTER: You can see their forward line, but not the guns, even where the ridge dips to its lowest point, see?
8. MICKEY BLISS: Yeah, we're not high enough.
9. ODDY: So... what now then, Sergeant Bliss?

1. DUNSTER: This one, I think.
2. MICKEY BLISS: Climb the tree?
3. DUNSTER: Boys will be boys!

FX: HE STARTS CLIMBING, MICKEY TOO, BUT STRUGGLING TO KEEP UP. THE CONVERSATION IS PUNCTUATED BY MICKEY'S GRUNTS OF EFFORT.

4. DUNSTER: Hurry up. War to win here.
5. MICKEY BLISS: I'm not as good as you, sir.
6. DUNSTER: Left foot there, reach for that branch – that branch with your right hand...

FX: MICKEY ALMOST FALLS

Word of advice - think of something else as you climb...

7. MICKEY BLISS: Not sure I can, sir.
8. DUNSTER: That branch won't bear you. So what took you to India?
9. MICKEY BLISS: Seemed a good idea at the time.

1. DUNSTER: Terrible country. Wonderful country.
2. MICKEY BLISS: You know it?
3. DUNSTER: I climb. Not just trees.
4. MICKEY BLISS: The Himalayas?
5. DUNSTER: Trekked through Tibet in '12. Saw Everest and was consumed by a longing to stand on its summit. Perhaps after all this nonsense, God willing. Want to come?
6. MICKEY BLISS: Getting to the top of this tree'll do me, sir.
7. DUNSTER: Right... here. Don't want to show ourselves to their snipers, do we?
8. MICKEY BLISS: I can see the road now...
9. DUNSTER: Military traffic on it, but sadly...
10. MICKEY BLISS: No. They must have put the guns a good way down the other side.
11. DUNSTER: To echo Sergeant Oddy, what now?

1. MICKEY BLISS: I don't know, sir.

(DUNSTER GRUNTS)

You know, if only we could make the guns fire, we'd see the smoke and hence their position.

2. DUNSTER: But how to persuade them to open up? I wonder...

3. MICKEY BLISS: What, sir?

4. DUNSTER: How long to get your bells and whistles up and running, Sergeant?

MUSIC IN: 16' 15" APPROX

SCENE 15**EXT. CLEARING, WOOD****A LITTLE LATER**

FX: MICKEY'S ASSEMBLING THE WIRELESS EQUIPMENT, WITH THE GRUDGING HELP OF ODDY AND GREENWOOD.

1. GREENWOOD: What a palaver.
2. MICKEY BLISS: The base is always a bit stiff.
4. **COMMENTATOR:** The Wireless Telegraphy Set comes with a 12-spoke aerial mounted on a 70-feet long sectional mast. It can be erected by trained men in 12 minutes. That at least is the theory. It's 10 past 10.

(WALTER AND HORACE ARE STILL STRUGGLING. FINALLY...)

5. ODDY: Finally! That's it!
6. MICKEY BLISS: Right – you start climbing, Oddy.
7. ODDY: You want me up that tree?
8. MICKEY BLISS: Yeah, to call me down the numbers. But first attach this line near the top. Chuck the other end down.
1. ODDY: What for?

2. MICKEY BLISS: And pull the loose end of the aerial as high as you can.
The more copper I can get in the air the better.

3. ODDY: (STARTS CLIMBING)
I did not join the Army to climb bloody trees...

4. MICKEY BLISS: Now, Greenwood. You dig a hole for the earth. Deep,
as far from the lorry as it'll go.

5. GREENWOOD: And I'm not a bloody sapper either.

6. MICKEY BLISS: The less resistance in the circuit the more juice in the air.
If you don't mind.

(HORACE GRUMBLES.)

Are you there yet, Oddy?

**7.COMMENTATOR: Meanwhile Maberley Dunster sits with his back
against a beech tree watching Alphonse Minet and
horse making perfect lines in the field below...**

9. MICKEY BLISS: Right! Pull up the aerial!

FX: WE RETURN TO MICKEY AT THE SET WE HEAR A FILING NOISE.

1. GREENWOOD: Earth buried. What you doing with the emery paper?

2. MICKEY BLISS: I'm cleaning the cup contact on the Perikon detector.
And now... I am making sure the gap for the spark is the right width to jump.

3. **COMMENTATOR:** That is, between a quarter and three-sixteenths of an inch.

4. MICKEY BLISS: You see the moisture on the contact? Well that's not good. Touch of paraffin'll sort that out.
5. MICKEY BLISS: The Perikon detector, the receiver, we need to clean that too.....

6. **COMMENTATOR:** With carbon bisulphide, an insecticide used to ensure a good harvest in the vineyards not far away. It's a trick he learnt with his home-built set - one of thousands in pre-war India.

7. GREENWOOD: Never mind a signaller. You're a bloody chemist!

8. **COMMENTATOR:** Precisely so. As well as many other things.

1. MICKEY BLISS: Here goes.

FX: WE HEAR THE CLICKING OF MICKEY ESTABLISHING CONTACT WITH BASE. (HE SENDS: "VE CD CD V AB QRU AR" SEVERAL TIMES. THEY THEN SEND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: "VE AB V CD R7". HIS SEND WOULD BE HEARD AS THE RASPING SPARK ABOVE THE WHIRR OF THE KIT, BUT THE REPLY WOULD BE HEARD AS THE MORE TRADITIONAL DOT-DASH BLEEPs IN HIS HEADPHONES THAT WE KNOW FROM THE MOVIES).

WE RETURN TO MABERLEY'S SONG...

2. **COMMENTATOR:** Watching the ploughing, Dunster is taken back to the fertile rust-red fields of the Eden Valley in his native Westmorland, and wonders idly if he will ever see them again...

3. MICKEY BLISS: Sir? Test message sent and acknowledged.

4. DUNSTER: Very well. On with the show then!

5. **COMMENTATOR:** Mickey joins Walter at the top of an 80 foot beech tree.

SCENE 16 EXT. TOP OF TREE, WOOD, NORTHERN FRANCE DAY

(WALTER'S IN THE VANTAGE POINT, MICKEY CLIMBS UP TO JOIN HIM.)

1. MICKEY BLISS: Aerial all right?
2. ODDY: I can tie a bloody knot!
3. MICKEY BLISS: Thanks for doing this. You got a light?
4. ODDY: So what you up to anyway?
5. MICKEY BLISS: It's not me. The Lieutenant's got something up his beautifully tailored sleeve.
6. WALTER ODDY: Like a bloody expensive watch.
(HE LAUGHS)
Look here. Left of the big oak to the right of the dip. No need to ask what he's up to, with his bloody pants round his ankles!
7. MICKEY BLISS: Hun with the runs, eh?
8. ODDY: Fritz with the shits! (THEY LAUGH TOGETHER.)

FX: ODDY SHOULDER HIS RIFLE.

9. MICKEY BLISS: What you doing?

8. ODDY: What am I doing? I'm having a pot-shot.

1. MICKY BLISS: Have you lost your senses?

2. ODDY: I could blow his bell end off from 'ere.

3. MICKY BLISS: Don't be bloody stupid...

4. ODDY: Come on! Let's kill some Germans. That's what we're here for, in't it?

5. MICKY BLISS: No, we're here to test the wireless set.

6. ODDY: It's a lot of faffin' about -

7. MICKEY BLISS: You'd give our position away, man!

(ODDY CURSES AND GRUMBLES.)

8.COMMENTATOR: **In fact the soldier is the same Joachim Mayer who watched Catherine's cart an hour ago, now cursing the progress of his mother's plum cake through his fragile guts.**

9. MICKEY BLISS: You put that rifle to your shoulder, and the next thing you know you'll be on your way down the quick way.

1. ODDY: Thought we were supposed to be fighting a bloody war.

Music in: 20'23" approx

SCENE 17 EXT. MEADOWS, NEAR SOUPIR - DAY

(DUNSTER GIVES ORDERS TO SERGEANT AS THE HUSSARS WAIT.)

1. DUNSTER: Over the meadow, jump the fence, cross the field into that copse.

2. SERGEANT: In view of the enemy, sir?

3. DUNSTER: Precisely the point. Let's show them what the 15th Hussars can do.

4. SERGEANT: Swords drawn, sir?

5. DUNSTER: Why not? Oh look, see what I see? After him!

6. SERGEANT: Charge!

FX: THE TROOP SET OFF ACROSS THE MEADOW AT A GALLOP.

6.COMMENTATOR: At 10.43, Lieutenant Maberley Dunster, eldest son of Viscount and Lady Appleby, leads his troop of Hussars in a breakneck charge across a meadow, scattering Alphonse Minet's cows in pursuit of a rather startled fox.

8. DUNSTER: View halloo!

1. COMMENTATOR: A stirring sight that will soon go out of military fashion.

SCENE 18 EXT. TOP OF TREE, WOOD, NORTHERN FRANCE **DAY**

(MICKEY WATCHES THE CHARGE WITH ODDY.)

1. MICKEY BLISS: Look at them!

2. ODDY: Well the daft bugger!

FX: THE SCREAM OF AN INCOMING SHELL, AND ITS EXPLOSION.

**GERMAN FIELD-GUNS FIRING SHRAPNEL SHELLS IN RAPID
SUCCESSION.**

3. MICKEY BLISS: It's working! You see the smoke?
Give me the map. I'll mark the positions.

SCENE 19EXT. MEADOWS, NEAR SOUPIRDAY

(THE TROOP REACH COVER, DUNSTER STILL LAUGHING AS HE REINS IN.)

1.COMMENTATOR: Dunster's sally is short, its goals modest, ending more happily than the charge of their Hussar forebears on the field of Balaclava.

2. DUNSTER: Well done, boys! Any casualties?

3. SERGEANT: None, sir.

4. DUNSTER: Very well. Through the trees to the Aisne and work our way back.

SCENE 20EXT. WOOD, NEAR CONVENTDAY

(BACK ON THE GROUND. MURMURING TO HIMSELF, MICKEY TAPS THE CO-ORDINATES OF THE ARTILLERY POSITIONS IN MORSE. WALTER AND HORACE ARE WITH HIM.)

1. MICKEY BLISS: There. Gone.
2. ODDY: Sure?
3. MICKEY BLISS: When can you be sure? I've sent it twice.
4. ODDY: Could have laid a telegraph line. No fuss and hell of a lot quicker.
5. MICKEY BLISS: But we didn't. We're trying something new. We're signals – the future, yes? Why don't you give it a chance?
6. ODDY: I'll tell you. Cos I don't reckon it's up to much.
7. GREENWOOD: Now we wait till our guns open up.
6. ODDY: I'll tell you. Cos I don't reckon it's up to much.

(WALTER GRUNTS)

7. GREENWOOD: I'm starving, Walter.

1. ODDY: See what you can rustle up then, old lad. Go and forage.
2. MICKEY BLISS: Get thee to a nunnery.
3. GREENWOOD: Eh?
4. MICKEY BLISS: The fruit in the convent orchard. Sister Catherine'll give you something.
5. GREENWOOD: She might, mightn't she?

MUSIC IN: 22' 31" APPROX

SCENE 21**EXT. GARDEN, CONVENT****DAY**

(CATHERINE IS WORKING IN THE GARDEN, SINGING AS SHE DIGS. SHE DOESN'T NOTICE HORACE COMING UP BEHIND HER.)

1. GREENWOOD: Hallo.
2. CATHERINE: Oh. You gave me a surprise.
3. GREENWOOD: Nice one, I hope.
4. CATHERINE: Why were the guns firing?
5. GREENWOOD: Oh, just trying them out, I reckon.
(HE LAUGHS AWKWARDLY)
Um... hope you don't mind me saying. I'm not trying to be forward, but you're very...pretty.
6. CATHERINE: Thank you. Now, if you'll excuse me I...
7. GREENWOOD: I don't have a sweetheart. Girls don't seem interested in Horace Greenwood.
8. CATHERINE: I'm sorry.

1. GREENWOOD: Can I write you? After we're gone? Would you write a line back? I'm not trying to be funny.
2. CATHERINE: If you like.
3. GREENWOOD: Yes. I should like that very much.
4. CATHERINE: Was there...something else?
5. GREENWOOD: The boys are getting peckish. Could you spare some apples and plums?
6. CATHERINE: I can do better than fruit. I've bread and sausage in the kitchen...
7. GREENWOOD: (HEADING OFF)
Got a sack? In the shed maybe?
8. CATHERINE: (FOLLOWING, ANXIOUS)
I'll get you a sack. Don't go in there!

SCENE 22**INT. SHED, CONVENT GARDEN****DAY**

(HORACE ENTERS THE SHED. CATHERINE FOLLOWS.)

1. GREENWOOD: Oh, dark in here, isn't it?
2. CATHERINE: Here's a bag for you. Let's go.
3. GREENWOOD: Would you mind awfully, miss, could I just hold your hand?
4. CATHERINE: No, you can't...
5. GREENWOOD: Just for a minute. (TAKING HER HAND)
There. Isn't that nice?
6. CATHERINE: No. (HE LAUGHS) Get off me!

(SHE SLAPS HIM, HE HOWLS. A FIGURE APPEARS FROM THE DARKNESS.)

5. GREENWOOD: That bloody hurt!
7. SEYMORE: Leave her alone.
8. GREENWOOD: Who... the bloody hell are you?

1. SEYMOUR: Back away I said.
2. CATHERINE: It's all right, he's...
3. SEYMOUR: I'm warning you.
4. GREENWOOD: I get it. Bloody deserter!
5. CATHERINE: Watch out - his rifle!

FX: SEYMOUR JUMPS HORACE AND CLUBS HIM WITH HIS OWN RIFLE.
HORACE FALLS TO THE FLOOR, GROANING.

6. CATHERINE: You've hurt him. You can't stay here now Billy.
7. SEYMOUR: No.
8. CATHERINE: Come with me. I know a place.
music in: 24' 21" approx

(THEY HURRY OFF, LEAVING HORACE, GROANING.)

9.COMMENTATOR: It's just past 11am. With the unexpected appearance of a private in the Durham Light Infantry, Mickey's operation has just become somewhat messier.

SCENE 23**EXT. WOOD, NEAR CONVENT****DAY**

(DUNSTER AND HIS MEN RETURN TO MICKEY AT THE SET.)

1. DUNSTER: All well, Sergeant?
2. MICKEY BLISS: No. I got the message away, but haven't had an acknowledgement.
3. DUNSTER: Meaning?
4. MICKEY BLISS: Any number of things. Enemy jamming our signal, sun-spots, the set's gone phut ...
5. DUNSTER: As I said before, machines never seem to be wholly reliable do they?
6. MICKEY BLISS: The kit's very new, sir. But it's my job to make it work. Give it a good revving, Oddy!

FX: THE LORRY ENGINE STARTS

Powering from the lorry rather than batteries gives the signal a boost.

FX: RE-SENDING THE MESSAGE, “VE CD CD V AB P 1500X S CC1 1 SH F AR”

But it risks burning out the kit.

1. DUNSTER: And if this doesn't work? Rather a shame if our gallop was in vain.

FX: ODDY STOPS REVVING THE ENGINE.

Hallo, what are those two up to?

2. MICKEY BLISS: Sir?

3. DUNSTER: Bottom of the meadow, heading east, making a tempting target for a sniper.

FX: DISTANT RIFLE FIRE BEGINS

There they go. The one in front... that isn't our nun, is it?

SCENE 24**EXT. FIELD, NEAR SOUPIR****DAY**

FX: CATHERINE AND BILLY RUN PELL-MELL ACROSS THE FIELD. THE SOUND OF BULLETS PASSING CLOSE.

MUSIC IN:

1. SEYMOUR: Keep running! The trees...
2. CATHERINE: Why are they shooting? They've never shot at me before...
3. **COMMENTATOR:** The watchers on the hill have seen many people moving below them in recent weeks, but agitated by the sight of cavalry, they're laying down a withering fire on the running figures, one of whom suddenly stops.
4. SEYMOUR: Nearly... What you doing?
5. **COMMENTATOR:** Catherine waves at her friends on the ridge, but soon discovers they're friends no more...

FX: CATHERINE'S HIT. SHE CRIES AND FALLS. BILLY RETURNS TO HER.

6. CATHERINE: I'm all right. Go, just go.
7. SEYMOUR: Can't do that. Put your arm around me neck. Come on.

FX: BILLY LIFTS CATHERINE AND RUNS WITH HER. DUNSTER APPROACHES ON HIS HORSE.

1. DUNSTER: Here - let me take her!

FX: NOW WE HEAR THE SCREAM OF INCOMING SHELL-FIRE

2. SEYMOUR: Where's that from?

SCENE 25**EXT. WOOD, NORTHERN FRANCE****DAY**

(THE TRIUMPHANT MICKEY IS AT THE WIRELESS, ODDY UP THE TREE.)

1. MICKEY BLISS: It worked! It bloody worked!

(ODDY BELLOWS DOWN INSTRUCTIONS.)

2. ODDY: Up one eight hundred, right five hundred. Can you hear me?

3. MICKEY BLISS: Up one eight hundred, right five hundred!

FX: HE SENDS ANOTHER MESSAGE: “VE CD CD V AB P UP1800X R500X S FFE AR”. THE BRITISH FIRE IS INTENSE.

4. GREENWOOD: (APPROACHING) What's going on? Are they ours?

5. MICKEY BLISS: What do you think Horace?

FX: A FRESH SOUND - GERMAN ARTILLERY OPENING UP.

6. GREENWOOD: That's them starting up. Our lads'll get it now.

1.COMMENTATOR: It's a maxim of military strategy that the purpose of artillery is not so much to destroy the enemy's infantry as *his* artillery. By firing at the ridge, the British gunners have alerted the German batteries to their positions, and it's now a question of who will knock out who first. This is unlikely to be the British, since their misfiring hasn't been corrected, for the simple reason that Mickey Bliss' brand-new wireless set has stopped working.

(WALTER RETURNS, FROM THE TOP OF THE TREE.)

2. ODDY: Dammit man, didn't you hear me? I gave you new coordinates.

3. MICKEY BLISS: I sent them.

4. ODDY: Knackered, isn't it? Your precious bloody wireless!

FX: A SHELL LANDS NEARBY.

5. MICKEY BLISS: Have you got any chocolate?

6. GREENWOOD: Eh?

7. MICKEY BLISS: Chocolate, silver paper, that's all I want.

1. GREENWOOD: I've got a Fry's bar.

2. MICKEY BLISS: Hand it over.

FX: MICKEY GETS TO WORK. A SHELL LANDS NEARBY.

3. GREENWOOD: Bloody Ada!

4.COMMENTATOR: While most of the German batteries ranged along the Chemin des Dames direct their fire at the British artillery, some are now targeting the interlopers in no-man's-land. At 12.15, the wireless party thus find themselves being shelled by both sides.

5. ODDY: What you doing anyway?

6. MICKEY BLISS: I am replacing the contact strip in the transmitter, to improve the spark.

7. ODDY: Yeah, you hope.

FX: ANOTHER SHELL LANDS

Jesus. That was close.

8. GREENWOOD: I'm not liking this, Walter. I'm not liking this at all.

(HE STARTS HUMMING LOUDLY, OUT OF TUNE. MICKEY WORKS.)

1. ODDY: It's time we weren't here, Bliss. Hey up - what's this?

FX: DUNSTER'S HORSE APPROACHES WITH CATHERINE, AND BILLY BEHIND

2. DUNSTER: The girl's taken a bullet.
3. ODDY: And who the hell are you?
4. SEYMOUR: Private William Seymour, 2nd Battalion, DLI.
5. GREENWOOD: She was hiding him. He attacked me! You coward!

FX: GREENWOOD GOES FOR BILLY. THE HORSE WHINNIES AND SHIES

6. ODDY: Horace!
7. DUNSTER: That's enough, Sergeant!

(CATHERINE MURMURS IN PAIN.)

8. CATHERINE: Holy mother of Jesus, that hurts.
9. DUNSTER: Are you done here, Sergeant?

1. MICKEY BLISS: Nearly with you, sir.

FX: TRANSMITTER CLICKS: “VE CD CD V AB P UP1800X R500X S FFE AR”.

2.COMMENTATOR: Mickey Bliss will remember the skirmish on the Aisne for the rest of his life, not because he calmly put his training to good use in difficult circumstances, but because in the end his cool expertise was of no consequence whatsoever.

FX: THE MORSE GOES ON TAPPING. THE SHELLING GETS CLOSER AND CLOSER. THE HORSES START WHINNYING WITH FEAR.

3. ODDY: Hell's teeth. They're giving us plenty of hate.

4. GREENWOOD: Can we go now, Walter? Home to Mother?

5. MICKEY BLISS: Quiet!

FX: FINAL TAPPING

Corrected co-ordinates sent, sir.

7. DUNSTER: But apparently not received.

FX: FURTHER SHELLS LAND – THE NOISE IS TERRIFYING.

1. GREENWOOD: I... got to go, Walter!
2. ODDY: Just stay, lad. Your marvellous new wireless, it's knackered, right?
3. DUNSTER: Is he right?
4. MICKEY BLISS: Maybe.
5. DUNSTER: You can't fix it?
6. MICKEY BLISS: Look I'm sorry, sir. I have tried.

(WALTER GRUNTS.)
7. DUNSTER: So undignified withdrawal must be the order of the day. Dismantle your equipment. Give me your coordinates. I'll get them to our guns the old way.
8. MICKEY BLISS: Sir?
9. DUNSTER: Man on galloping horse. Come with me, Seymour.

FX: DUNSTER RIDES AWAY, WITH CATHERINE, BILLY FOLLOWING.
MICKEY SIGNS OFF: "VE CD V AB X119 VA".

SCENE 26 EXT. TOP OF TREE, WOOD NEAR CONVENT - A LITTLE LATER

FX: MICKEY'S CLIMBING THE TREE, OUT OF BREATH. THE BARRAGE IS EVEN MORE INTENSE.

1.COMMENTATOR: The signallers dismantle the Wireless Set. While Oddy and Greenwood pack away the kit on the ground, Mickey climbs the tree to un-tether the aerial.

2. MICKEY BLISS: Line coming!

3.COMMENTATOR: Before descending, Mickey looks around. The view is very different to the peaceful scene of a few hours earlier. On the ridge, columns of smoke drift eastwards from the intense fire of the German artillery. There are similar clues to the positions of British guns to the south. In the patch of earth where the shells of both sides have been falling, all is changed. Ancient trees have been destroyed, Alphonse Minet and his Percheron horses have hurried to safety, and the convent of Beaulne is on fire.

4. MICKEY BLISS: (AWE) My good God...

1.COMMENTATOR: Mickey Bliss can't help himself. He feels an intense exhilaration at this first experience of war, but a simultaneous frustration at his inability to influence its conduct.

FX: WE HEAR THE SOUND OF A BI-PLANE PASSING OVERHEAD.

2. MICKEY BLISS: Hallo!

3.COMMENTATOR: Especially when he sees a bi-plane of the Royal Flying Corps making towards enemy lines.

FX: IT PASSES OVERHEAD

Mickey knows that three BE2a planes of 4 Squadron, operating from Fère-en-Tardenoise aerodrome, are equipped with wireless sets. The pilot wagging his wings at Mickey could therefore give him precise artillery positions - if only his set was working.

4. MICKEY BLISS: Dammit!

FX: A GERMAN SHRAPNEL SHELL EXPLODES RIGHT ABOVE MICKEY.

1.COMMENTATOR: The shrapnel shell from a German field gun bursts 30 feet above Mickey's head, scattering hundreds of red-hot metal balls. The tree trunk saves Mickey's life...

FX: WE HEAR THE METAL RIPPING INTO THE TREE, MICKEY'S REACTION AND THE DISTANT WHINNYING OF A HORSE.

2. ODDY: (FROM THE GROUND) Christ's sake, hurry up!

3. MICKEY BLISS: Coming down!

FX: MICKEY STARTS DESCENDING QUICKLY.

4.COMMENTATOR: Mickey Bliss has just had a brainwave.
He has found a purpose. It's almost 2pm.

Music iN: 31' 32" approx.

SCENE 27**EXT. WOOD, NEAR CONVENT DAY**

FX: IN THE EYE OF THE STORM, WALTER AND HORACE FINISH

PACKING UP THE LORRY,

(HORACE JUST KEEPING CONTROL OF HIMSELF.)

1. ODDY: That everything, Horace lad?
2. GREENWOOD: Yeah, can we go now please?
3. ODDY: Yeah, in the cab then. Bliss!
4. MICKEY BLISS: With you!

FX: HE JUMPS DOWN FROM THE TREE AND RUNS TO THE LORRY.

WALTER CRANKS THE ENGINE AND IT STARTS. HORACE'S HUMMING GOES ON.

5. ODDY: Get in. I'll drive.
6. MICKEY BLISS: Wait!
7. ODDY: That's enough. Let's go!

1. MICKEY BLISS: Listen. Those last few shells...
2. ODDY: Nearly did for us, aye.
3. MICKEY BLISS: No, but one was a dud. I saw where it fell. We could use it...
4. ODDY: For what?
5. MICKEY BLISS: The angle of alignment will tell where it's come from. We'll dig it out.
6. ODDY: Have you got summit up with ya?
7. MICKEY BLISS: The fuse timer – that's gonna show how long it's run. If we did the maths we could get spot-on co-ordinates back to our guns.
8. ODDY: Listen Bliss, thanks to you, today's been a complete bloody shambles...
9. MICKEY BLISS: We could turn it round!

FX: ANOTHER SHELL LANDS...

1.COMMENTATOR: In the literal heat of the moment, Mickey can think of nothing but the pure brilliance of his idea.

2. ODDY: If we'd used our telegraph kit instead, we'd be back safe now wouldn't we. With our feet up, having us nice mug of cocoa.
3. MICKEY BLISS: Don't you want to get the job done, then? Come on, we'll do our duty.
4. ODDY: Don't you preach to me about duty, sonny. I were doing mine while you were on your pleasure cruise.

FX: A SHELL LANDS NEARBY.

(HORACE JUMPS A MILE, STARTS MUMBLING THE COLLECT FOR GRACE.)

5. GREENWOOD: O God who art the author of peace and lover of concord...
6. MICKEY BLISS: What's up with him?
7. ODDY: What's up with him? His duty nearly finished him off.
8. GREENWOOD: Defend us thy humble servants in all assaults of our enemies...

1. ODDY: Look, are you coming or not? Let's go!
2. MICKEY BLISS: Pass me the shovel from under the seat.
3. GREENWOOD: That we may not fear the power of any adversaries...
4. ODDY: Don't be daft! You can't.
5. MICKEY BLISS: The shovel!
6. ODDY: It'll be buried deep, you won't be able to lug it on your own. They'll get you before you're started...
7. MICKEY BLISS: It's my job.
8. ODDY: (GENTLE NOW)
Listen lad, I'm saying this for your own good. Don't do it.
Leave it Bliss!
9. GREENWOOD: Through the might of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(MICKEY GETS THE SHOVEL AND GOES.)

SCENE 28**EXT. FIELD, NEAR SOUPIR****DAY**

(MICKEY RUNS INTO THE FIELD.)

1.COMMENTATOR: So it is that Mickey makes his way into an unremarkable field in northern France. But this day, October 7 1914, Sergeant Bliss is doing something else: running, willingly, almost exultantly, into the flame of war.

2. MICKEY BLISS: Yes. Yes!

SCENE 29**INT. WOOD, NEAR CONVENT****DAY**

(WALTER AND ODDY WATCH.)

1. ODDY: Oh. Bloody hell.

FX: WALTER GETS OUT AND FOLLOWS.

2. GREENWOOD: Where you going, Walter?

3. ODDY: Back in a jiffy. Stay there.

4. GREENWOOD: Don't leave me, Walter! Wait!

(WALTER AND THEN HORACE FOLLOW MICKEY.)

SCENE 30**EXT. FIELD, NEAR SOUPIR -****DAY**

MICKEY RUNS INTO THE FIELD, FOLLOWED BY WALTER AND HORACE.

1. ODDY: Bliss! Wait!

2.COMMENTATOR: The field in which the dud shell has landed was ploughed just a few hours before by Farmer Minet and his horses, but there's little left now of their immaculate straight lines, more or less obliterated by the British and German guns. Mickey dodges the divots and holes and finds the place where the shell fell to earth. Calculating the angle of entry, he digs gingerly down to find the unexploded shell.

FX: WE HEAR THE SOUND OF THIS. WALTER JOINS HIM.

3. MICKEY BLISS: Thanks.

4. ODDY: I don't want your thanks. (HE SEES HORACE COMING) Get back, Horace! Get back son!

5.COMMENTATOR: But Horace is beyond reason. For him, Walter represents safety. But not here, not now, for the three men have been spotted...

FX: BULLETS THUD INTO EARTH AROUND THEM.

1. ODDY: Snipers! Get down, Horace! Get down!

2. MICKEY BLISS: Here it is! Don't touch it!

**3.COMMENTATOR: The shell lies steaming in a tunnel of scorched earth
two feet down. Mickey examines it closely.**

4. MICKEY BLISS: Now then. Let's see. Oh yes...

5. ODDY: Bloody hurry up will ya?

6. MICKEY BLISS: We need to get it back.

7. ODDY: It'll be red hot!

8. MICKEY BLISS: Wrap it in my tunic.

FX: HE TAKES HIS TUNIC OFF

You got it?

9. WALTER ODDY: Come on, Horace.

**FX: MICKEY AND WALTER START RUNNING. THE BARRAGE
CONTINUES.**

1.COMMENTATOR: Carrying a 15-pound shell, Mickey and Walter run for the safety of the trees, spurred on by their watching comrades.

2. HUSSARS (OFF): Run, lads! Run for it!

3. GREENWOOD: Don't leave me, Walter...

(WALTER STOPS AND TURNS.)

4. ODDY: What you doing, Horace! You hit?

5.COMMENTATOR: In fact Horace is merely burying himself into the remnants of a furrow, but Walter assumes otherwise.

6. GREENWOOD: Help me, Wally!

7. ODDY: I'm coming! I'm coming!

8.COMMENTATOR: Walter drops the shell. And runs to his friend - and his destiny.

9. ODDY: I'm coming, old lad!

10. MICKEY BLISS: Don't!

FX: FROM THE NOISE OF BULLETS, THE HIGHER-PITCHED NOISE OF A SHRAPNEL SHELL. IT EXPLODES ABOVE ODDY. FROM THE SILENCE...

1. MICKEY BLISS: Oddy?

2. GREENWOOD: Wally?

3. ODDY: (OFF) Help me! Oh Christ! Help me, Ingrid!

(MICKEY RUNS TO ODDY, CROUCHING OVER HIM. HE'S OBVIOUSLY IN GREAT PAIN, GROANING AND CALLING OUT.)

4. MICKEY BLISS: It's all right. I'll get you out.

5. GREENWOOD: Has he...copped it?

6. MICKEY BLISS: Stay there Greenwood, and you'll get one too. Come and help me! Help me get him up! Help me.

7. GREENWOOD: Wally don't leave me!

(WALTER CRIES IN PAIN AS MICKEY LIFTS HIM.)

7.COMMENTATOR: Mickey hoists the injured man onto his shoulder and staggers to the wood, troubled no more by the enemy, whose firing stops, perhaps in tribute to his bravery.

1. GREENWOOD: Don't leave, Wally! Don't leave me.

2.COMMENTATOR: Horace Greenwood hugs the furrow till nightfall, then walks the three miles back to divisional HQ. As for the fateful shell dropped by Oddy, that remains in the field until uncovered by a tractor driven by Monsieur Minet's grandson in March 1953.

SCENE 31EXT. ROAD, VALLEY -DAY

FX: THE LORRY TRUNDLES DOWN HILL, MICKEY DRIVES, WALTER LAID IN THE BACK. CATHERINE APPROACHES AS THE LORRY STOPS.

1. CATHERINE: Sergeant Bliss!
2. MICKEY BLISS: Are you all right, Sister?
2. CATHERINE: Hurts like billy-o, but it should heal right enough if I look after it. Won't be doing any gardening for a bit, not that we can go back to the convent, not much of it left.

(A MOANING FROM THE LORRY)

Your friend. Is he all right?

3. MICKEY BLISS: Shrapnel. Stomach and leg.

(CATHERINE INSPECTS THE LORRY. SHE GASPS AT THE SIGHT.)

4. CATHERINE: Oh my, poor man.
5. ODDY: Ingrid? Are you there, pet lamb?
6. CATHERINE: His wife?

7. MICKEY BLISS: I suppose. I'm sorry - about everything.

1. CATHERINE: Not your fault, was it? What'll happen to Billy, Sergeant?

2. MICKEY BLISS: That's not my decision, I'm glad to say.

3. CATHERINE: He could have run away but he came back to help me.

4. MICKEY BLISS: I saw.

5. CATHERINE: He'd never have been found if...if the Sergeant
hadn't...tried to take advantage of me...

6. MICKEY BLISS: I see. I'm sorry.

7. CATHERINE: Billy tried to protect me. I took pity on him. He's the
same age as my brother Tam.

FX: A HORSE WHINNIES IN FEAR NEARBY.

6. DUNSTER (OFF): There, Bue. There lad.

7. CATHERINE: The Lieutenant's poor horse is hit.

MUSIC: 37' APPROX

SCENE 32 **EXT. ANOTHER PART OF THE WOOD -** **DAY**

DUNSTER WITH HIS DISTRESSED HORSE, HIS MEN STANDING
AROUND.

1. DUNSTER: I know, I know. Easy now, easy now.

(HE STANDS)

Someone get me a bag of hay.

2. SERGEANT: What you going to do, sir?

3. DUNSTER: Hold his head for me.

4. CATHERINE: Look at him, the poor beast.

5.COMMENTATOR: A fine grey, Bue - short for Bucephalus, the horse ridden by Alexander the Great - has been Dunster's since he was 15. They joined the Hussars together. Bue is grievously wounded. A piece of shell has penetrated his chest. Dunster knows only one thing can save him...

6. DUNSTER: Steady now, steady now.

(THE WATCHING SOLDIERS GASP, SOME WITH HORROR.)

1.COMMENTATOR: He plunges his hand past the wrist into Bue's wound, finds the fist-sized piece of still hot shell case and pulls it out...

FX: BUE WHINNIES.

2. SERGEANT: My God, sir!
3. DUNSTER: Quick! The straw!

4.COMMENTATOR: ...then plugs the wound with handfuls of straw.

FX: HE DOES THIS...

5. DUNSTER: All right, lad. Well done, well done.

(MICKEY APPROACHES.)

6. MICKEY BLISS: Need to get Sergeant Oddy seen to, sir.
7. DUNSTER: Hand over our deserter to the appropriate authority, will you?
8. MICKEY BLISS: Sir. Will he...?

1. DUNSTER: For the high jump, I fear. Quite literally. Your responsibility now. Odd sort of day, wasn't it?
2. MICKEY BLISS: 14 years a soldier, never seen anything like it.
3. DUNSTER: You did all right. Way you ran across that field...
4. MICKEY BLISS: Like a moth to the flame.
5. DUNSTER: Admirable. What's that?
6. MICKEY BLISS: Not important, sir.
music in: 39'02"
7. DUNSTER: One thing I learned on the mountain, Sergeant. Everyone dies, but not everyone lives. Goodbye.

SCENE 33 EXT. BACK OF LORRY, WOOD, NEAR SOUPIR – DAY

CATHERINE IS BANDAGING ODDY AS BEST SHE CAN. HE ACKNOWLEDGES HER BUT DOESN'T REALLY KNOW WHO SHE IS.

1. CATHERINE: There you go, my man. I've bandaged you good and proper. You'll be fine. Just you see.

2. ODDY: Thank you, Ingrid. Thank you so much.

3. CATHERINE: Goodbye, dear.

(SHE KISSES HIM)

That's it, Sergeant Bliss!

FX: MICKEY CRASHES THE LORRY INTO GEAR AND IT MOVES.

4. ODDY: When will I see you again, Ingrid?

5.COMMENTATOR: Long after she has left holy orders and returned to Clydeside to work eventually as a district nurse, Katie O'Neill will wonder what happened to Walter Oddy, and who the elusive Ingrid was. She could never have guessed. Ingrid was the daughter of a German butcher in Hull who hired, then fired Walter after he had the temerity to ask for her hand in marriage. Ingrid was packed off home to Hamburg and Walter never saw her again.

1. ODDY: I love you, my lass.

2.COMMENTATOR: On the outbreak of war the shop was wrecked and its owner badly beaten. Walter Oddy led the mob.

3. MICKEY BLISS: (CALLING) Thank you, Sister. Good luck.

4.COMMENTATOR: As the lorry moves slowly downhill towards the Aisne, the guns of both sides fall silent. They have inflicted minimal damage on each other.

SCENE 34**INT. LORRY, ROAD, NEAR SOUPIR – DAY****FX: THE LORRY BOUNCES ALONG, MICKEY DRIVING, BILLY NEXT TO HIM. MICKEY BRAKES AND STOPS.**

1. MICKEY BLISS: So what happened? With you?
2. SEYMOUR: I... what do you want to know?
3. MICKEY BLISS: Well you just make it good.
4. SEYMOUR: They overran us. I couldn't get back to my lot. Sister Katie hid me, in her shed. I slept for three days straight.
5. MICKEY BLISS: Well, we pushed them back two weeks ago. You weren't behind their lines any more. It was your duty to... do your duty.
6. SEYMOUR: I don't feel good about it.
7. MICKEY BLISS: Then why?
8. SEYMOUR: Our Fred...I seen him die. I couldn't go back right off. I needed a bit a peace. I'm all right now.
9. MICKEY BLISS: Get going.

1. SEYMOUR: Beg pardon?
2. MICKEY BLISS: But change your story. When you reach your battalion, tell them you got stranded the other side of that ridge, and last night you slipped through their lines in the dark.
3. SEYMOUR: Thank you, Sergeant.
4. MICKEY BLISS: Don't thank me. You thank Sergeant Oddy there.
5. SEYMOUR: What was it all about anyway? What were you trying to do?
6. MICKEY BLISS: Go before I change my mind.

FX: BILLY JUMPS DOWN. HIS BOOTS CLATTER AWAY. MICKEY SIGHS.

7.COMMENTATOR: Billy Seymour's reprieve is temporary. He will die three months later, near Armentières.

MUSIC IN: 41'38"

FX: MICKEY STARTS THE ENGINE. IT SLOWLY DRIVES AWAY.

1.COMMENTATOR: It's almost four when Mickey Bliss quits the valley of the Aisne. An hour later as dusk falls, Maberley Dunster coaxes Bue onto his feet and the Hussars leave the shattered woods and fields of Beaulne. As darkness comes, it's time for the nightingale to sing, but it remains silent. It's gone, never to return.

The End.