

Silent Night

By Lou Bisignani

Time: Christmas Eve, 1917. Near Midnight.

Scene: No-man's Land. Somewhere between the Allied and German lines. There are three small bomb craters. These are located stage left, center, and stage right.

Characters: A young American soldier (A), and an older, seasoned German soldier (G). The American is asleep in crater at stage right. The German is in the stage left crater. At rise the stage should be in blackness. As the play begins, the lights should slowly come up to a dim blue. We never should be in bright light.

- A. (Stirs from sleep. We hear some clanking noises from his equipment.) "Christ... that's it...why not just send up a white flag? Oh, God...help me! Where am I? How long have I been asleep? Oh, mamma...I need a smoke..." (He rummages and produces cigarettes and matches, and lights the cigarette.)
- G. "Hello, over zere! I vas vondering when you vould vake up! Its been at least an hour...I didn't vant to schtartle you"
- A. "What...who the hell...Hey! whoever you are...kraut! Don't try nothin' ...I can..."
- G. "Calm yourself! I haf my own problems...I don't intend to bahzer you!"
- A. "Well...you better not try nothin'. I've got a lot of...I've got a couple of friends over here...we can blow you away, Kraut!"
- G. "Ja...Ja...I see zat...but zhe reason vhy I don't kill you vwhile you are schleeping like a baby...It's zhe Christmas. Zere's a cease-fire in zis sector. Chust like last year. Zhe Brits and us, ve shared zume food und zing zume carols... zhen, zhe next day...ve go back to killing each other."
- A. "You must think I'm easy pickin's...like some guy, just got over here and don't know the ropes..."
- G. " Look... I don't vant to argue...I chust smelled your zigarette...ve are a little short of luxuries lately, und I vas thinking..."
- A. "I bet I know what you was thinkin'...you figure you'd con me with that stuff

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- A. "I bet I know what you was thinkin'...you figure you'd con me with that stuff

about Christmas...and then you 'd shoot me and take my cigs...Huh?"

- G. "I vas thinking zhat I vould do chust about anyzhing for a zigarette...Zo...
I'm going to put my rifle down und crawl over zhere..."
- A. "Hey! Hey! That vould be just the dumbest thing you did today...If I see you
comin' this way, I just got to shoot you! So, why don't you just..."
- G. "Look!...See!...Here iss my rifle...und my bayonette...I'm putting zhem down
where you can zee zhem..."
- A. "Uh...looka here, Kraut...you might think I won't do it...but you better keep
your head down or I'll..."
- G. "First, you should tell me vhat you are doing alone in no-man's land. Do you
efen know which vay is to your lines? I don't zhink you do."
- A. "Uhh...course I know, you dirty kraut! They warned us you vas like snakes!
That you'd try every which way to trick us...and that we shouldn't talk to you,
or listen to anything you got to say!"
- G. "Very good advice! Ve tell our young recruits zhe same zhing! Now listen to
me! I am in zhe same problem as you. I am separated from my lines, allzo!"
- A. "I'm not listening! I'm not listening! So just shut up!"
- G. "If I shut up, as you say, I vill have no chance for a zigarette! Now listen, und
stop being so schtupid!"
- A. "I ain't stupid!"
- G. "I'm zorry! I'm zorry! Now, listen to me...I haf zume sausages, but no
bread, or efen hardtack! If you haf zume bread, I'll share vith you...but by
God! I've got to haf a zigarette!"
- A. "I'm tellin' you, I swear I'll shoot...now, you stay there or else..."
- G. "I think I vould be villing to die for a schmoke...zo...here I'm comink..."
(He begins to crawl toward the center stage crater)
- A. "Hey! Kraut...you the one that better listen! I mean vhat I said! You go on
back, or I'm gonna have to shoot..."
(He is aiming his rifle at the German who has reached the center stage crater)
- G. (The German raises up in the center stage crater and is an easy target)

"Vell? Are you going to invite me ofer, or not?"

A. "Jesus! You are some kind of a crazy loon, ain't you? What makes you think I won't shoot you now?"

G. "I zhink that you schtill haf a spark of humanity in you. You haf not been here long enough to lose it, like zume of zhe others. I also zhink zhat maybe you haf never killed anyvon. Und when you try, you vill see how difficult it iss!"

A. "All's I know is you think you know an awful lot about me...and you don't know nothin' about me! And that can get you killed! Don't they teach you Krauts anything?"

G. "Look, vhy don't you schtop sinking about killing for a little wWhile. It's Christmas in an hour. Zhe fighting hass schtopped. Can you hear how qviet it iss? We can share a bit of food...and a zigarette. I even have a bit of brandy in my canteen. So...what do you say? Can I come over there?"

A. "No! No, you stay right there! I'll come over and meet you half way. You left your rifle and bayonette, but I still frisk you when I get there, understand?... Did you say you got some brandy?" (He begins to crawl toward center crater)

G. "Ja! I got brandy! Don't forget your zigarettes!"

A. (He stops at the center crater, points his rifle at the German) "Open your coat! O.K., I guess you're clean!" (He moves into the crater) "Now, where's that brandy?"

G. "My! My! What a piggy boy! Where's the zigarette?" (They exchange)

A. "God! That brandy is sure good!"

G. "It's lousy brandy! But if you haf enough, it's not zo bad!" (He drags on cigarette) "You Americans make zhe best zigarettes in zhe vorld! Did you know zhat? I haf been all ofer Europe, und nobody makes a zigarette like zhe Americans! Vhy is that, I vonder?"

A. "Maybe, 'cause what you're smokin' is the finest Virginia tobacco. All you Krauts is good for is cabbage and beer...at least that's what I hear! 'Course, I guess beer is a pretty good thing to be good at...huh?"

G. "Ja! Beer! Our beer iss like nozhing you efer tasted in your life! You Americans don't underschtand beer! What you make iss like dishvater! But...your zigarettes!" (He has smoked it down to almost nothing) "Can I haf another?"

A. "Yeah, sure! But first let's see some of that sausage you was talkin' about!"

I sure am hungry, right now!"

G. "Ja! Ja! Here! Here is zume zausage...but do you haf any bread?"

A. "Sure!" (He digs bread from his pocket and shares it) "Here!" (They eat for several minutes. Dialogue can continue while they eat) " So...how come you know how to talk English so good? You a spy, or somethin'?"

G. "Vhen I vas younger, I schpent zume time in America. English iss not zo hard to learn. You should keep at it. You vill get it one day, yourself! (He chuckles at his own joke. The American doesn't react)

A. "Boy, this sure hits the spot! I was sure hungry! I didn't eat since I was separated from my..." (He looks at the German) "I suppose I better not give you any information?"

G. "You better not zay any more! I haf a direct line to zhe Kaiser!" (He laughs) Now...iss comink zhat zigarette?"

A. (Also laughing) "Sure, sure! Here!" (He digs an empty packet from his pocket) "Shoot! Wait a minute! I got another box in my kit." (He crawls back to his original position) "I got to tell you, Kraut! You sure ain't like what I expected. Hell! We heard you had horns...you know, like devils!" (He finds the packet of cigarettes) "Here we go! I got 'em!" (He starts to crawl back to center)

(In the distance we can just make out singing. It is a German Christmas carol)

G. "Can you hear zhat? Zhey're zinging..."

A. "Yeah! I can hear it! But what...I don't know that song. Is it a carol? For Christmas?" (He has reached the edge of the center crater. He sits on the edge of the crater and opens the packet of cigarettes.)

G. "Ja! It iss a carol...it iss von zhat I haf not heard since... a long time...a long time..." (He is obviously affected by the singing)

A. (He passes a cigarette to the German, puts one in his mouth, and then strikes a match) "I don't know it, but it sure sounds nice. It sure does..."

G. (The German lunges toward him) "No! No! Get down!"

A. (He stops his motion. The match is still lit. We hear the sound of a distant rifle shot. The American slowly sinks down onto his side)

G. "Bastards! Bastards! Zhere iss a cease fire! You...Bastards! (He touches the dead American, shakes his head and begins to crawl back to his original

position. After he gets part way, he stops, goes back and fishes out the box of cigarettes from the Americans' pocket. He crawls back to his crater, and lights one) "American tobacco! It iss zhe best in zhe world!"

(The distant singing can still be heard, as the lights go to black)

Finis

This may be fleshed out by having the German explain the events of the previous Christmas day of truce. They might converse about the meaning of peace in the madness of war! Or if time is short in a evening of short plays, it may be done as presented.