

TOM and SERGEANT YORK

Written by

John Bailey

Author of *The White Divers of Broome, The Lost German Slave Girl & Jefferson's Second Father*

Adapted from *Anzac Cove to Hollywood* by Jeff Brownrigg

Address: 14 Jubilee Avenue  
Mullumbimby, NSW 2482  
Australia

john@jbailey.info  
wwto.jbailey.info

WGAWEST Reg. No. 1849281

EXT. - FOREST IN THE TENNESSEE MOUNTAINS.

About twenty hillbilly farmers, wearing patched overalls and dilapidated felt hats gather for a turkey shoot. Each holds a muzzle-loaded rifle. A flagon of moonshine passes between them. A sign says: "Ten Cents a Shot".

**TITLE: TENNESSEE MOUNTAINS: WEEKS AFTER THE OUTBREAK OF THE GREAT WAR**

Sixty yards away two old-timers drag several struggling wild turkeys to a fallen log and tie them by the legs behind the log.

The shooters prepare their guns. The first shooter steps forward. The heads of the turkeys bob up and down above the log. He fires.

SHOOTER  
(jubilantly)  
I got the shitter.

One of the old-timers hobbles over to examine the turkey.

OLD-TIMER  
(calling)  
A nothin' much singe.

Alvin YORK, aged 28 steps forward. He is a powerful, red-haired giant. (*In the 1941 movie York is played by Gary Cooper*).

York licks his finger and places spit on the sight. Several turkeys bob their heads up and down. York's shot knocks one of the turkeys' heads off to shouts of admiration from the audience.

A man pays his ten cents to the grizzled organizer of the event then hands his gun to York. The man nods in encouragement to York as he squints down the barrel. Several gobbler heads appear. He fires.

EXT. - TRACK IN THE TENNESSEE MOUNTAINS

In the red glow of sunset York and the other man walk home each bearing a turkey slung over their shoulder.

They put the bloodied turkeys on the ground outside a typical Tennessee mountain log cabin. York's Mother, a small stick of a woman walks out of the cabin door holding a small red card.

MOTHER  
 You got something important from  
 the US Government Alvin.

She hands the card to him.

**TITLE: NEW YORK: 1927**

INT. - INSIDE MOVIE THEATER NEW YORK

TOM Skeyhill, aged 32, is at the movies with girlfriend MARIE Adels, aged 26, an actress.

SCREEN INTER-TITLES: *SERGEANT YORK: AMERICAS'S ONE MAN ARMY*

Accompanied by military music York stands in front of his house in the Tennessee Mountains. Two small children stand next to him. A smaller child holds on to his leg.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
 America's Greatest War Hero,  
 Sergeant York, admires the view  
 from his front step.

Screen shows the rugged Tennessee Mountains.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
 He now lives quietly in the  
 mountains with his family.

Screen shows York walking along a track accompanied by his pregnant wife, three children and multiple dogs.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
 But how different in 1919 when New  
 York turned out in their thousands  
 to welcome our most-decorated  
 soldier.

Screen shows archival newsreel of an open car moving through a ticker tape blizzard in New York's canyons.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
 New York celebrating Sergeant York.  
 Just months earlier our most  
 decorated soldier with rifle and  
 pistol destroyed an entire German  
 machine gun battery. He killed 25  
 Germans and captured 132. Single  
 handed. Yes, all my himself. What a  
 man!

Screen shows York in his doughboy army uniform holding a rifle and looking blankly at the camera.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Nowadays the Sarg is a simple farmer. He is an elder of the church and instructs local children in Bible studies.

Screen shows York dressed in overalls holding a Bible as he instructs children seated on grass in an meadow.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Sergeant York, the man who did most to wreck the German killing machine, now a man of peace.

Screen shows York grinning at the camera.

INT. - MOVIE THEATER

The lights come on and the audience begins to depart. TOM remains seated until he is one of the few left in the theater.

MARIE

Aren't you coming.

TOM

I'm thinking.

EXT. - NEW YORK BROOKLYN BRIDGE - NIGHT

Marie and Tom walk across the bridge. Tom is deep in thought.

MARIE

Hello, Hello.

TOM

Sorry.

They walk on.

TOM (CONT'D)

There's something for me there.

EXT. - TENNESSEE MOUNTAINS - DAY

Tom, shaken to the bone, drives his car (a Lexington Tourer or similar) on rough mountain roads. In a three piece suit, Tom is dressed like a New York dandy.

EXT. - TOWN OF PALL MALL, TENNESSEE - DAY

Tom stops his car in a rundown, clapboard town of one street.

A farmer in overalls idly watches.

TOM

Is Sergeant York hereabouts?

FARMER

Could be. You got to ask Mister Bushing first. The Sarg is tired of sticky beaks wanting to know how he mused up all them Germans.

TOM

Where's Mister Bushing?

Farmer points to a nearby house.

EXT. - FRONT DOOR OF BUSHING HOUSE - CONT'D.

Mr. BUSHING stands at the front door.

BUSHING

No, you can't see him.

TOM

I've just driven three hours.

BUSHING

'Spect you have. No other way to get here. You a journalist?

TOM

No. A writer.

BUSHING

Plenty of them come by too.

TOM

I hear he's kept war diaries.

BUSHING

He be very close with them. What you want them for?

Tom hesitates.

BUSHING (CONT'D)

He'll never speak to you unless you is God truthful with me.

EXT. - SAND DUNES ABOVE A BEACH - DAY

A bitterly cold day. On an deserted beach, two police constables stands over the naked body of a youth.

**TITLE: SOUTHERN COAST OF AUSTRALIA**

One of the constables plods from the beach up a sand dune.

The Constable tramps up to a Police SERGEANT who is taking shelter behind a tree from a whipping wind. The sergeant cradles a silver hip-flask.

CONSTABLE  
(to Sergeant)  
He's alive.

SERGEANT  
Did you find the money?

SECOND CONSTABLE  
Couldn't. He's naked.

SERGEANT  
Shit!

They watch the constable on the beach pull the naked boy (TOM Skeyhill, aged just 19) to his feet and walk him up the dune.

The Sergeant swigs rum from the flask.

SERGEANT (CONT'D)  
(to himself)  
That kid was always weird.

The constable arrives with Tom. The other Constable throws a blanket over him.

The youth points to his quivering lips, then in an expression of dismay, shakes his head.

SERGEANT (CONT'D)  
A good bang to the head might get  
you talking.

The sergeant nods for the youth to be dragged away.

EXT. - MAIN STREET OF A SMALL AUSTRALIAN TOWN

The town band is playing loudly next to a recruitment desk where an army major and two other soldiers sit surrounded by patriotic posters.

Several pretty woman dressed in white frocks accost men walking past and attempt to drag them to the recruitment desk. What they are saying can't be heard above the music.

The Police Sergeant arrives to talk to the major while a gormless youth is hauled by one of the women to the desk. Meanwhile the major rises and accompanies the Sergeant through the crowd.

INT. - POLICE CELL - CONT'D

The Police Sergeant and the major enter the cell. Tom, wrapped in a blanket, sits on a bench shivering with cold.

The sergeant drops a paper on the bench.

SERGEANT

Here sign this.

While Tom reads it the Sergeant places an ink pot and a pen on the bench.

SERGEANT (CONT'D)

It's either that or twelve months hard labor.

ARMY MAJOR

I spoke to your Dad. Said it would be the making of you.

SERGEANT

No need to pretend you can't talk any more.

TOM

(struggling to speak)  
Da, Da, Dad?

ARMY MAJOR

He'll come see you once you've done your duty by your country.

The sergeant picks up the pen, dips it in the ink pot and hands it to the youth.

EXT - SMALL RURAL CHURCH TENNESSEE - EVENING

It is snowing. York hurries along a path to a small church with a sign reading: Church of Christ in Christian Union. Hymn singing is heard as York opens a door and slips into a back row.

The congregation of poor farmers, their wives and children listen intently to Pastor PILE. (*In the 1941 movie Pile is played by Walter Brennan*).

PILE

To those doubter amongst you, let me tell you, men and women and boys and girls that those ancients writing the Bible wrote without error. Cause the Spirit of God guided them. The Bible has all the guidance you be needing. The Bible!

Pile thumps his fist on a large bible on a rostrum.

MAN IN CONGREGATION

(calling)

And the Bible says don't it Pastor that we shouldn't kill our fellow man?

PILE

That it does Mister Bind, that it does.

ANOTHER MAN IN CONGREGATION

Even if they be German?

PILE

That's a hard one to figure Mister McCoy, but I think you are not in error. We must love our neighbors. The Bible is clear about that. Even if they be that Hun race of child killers. Even if they don't deserve our love.

MAN IN CONGREGATION

Some of our men are getting cards from the Government, telling them go to war. Aren't they being asked to kill?

PILE

I'm a heap bothered about that. This Church don't do things just because we's ordered. We look at the Bible, don't we?

The congregation murmur their agreement.



EXT. - PILE'S GENERAL STORE - DAY

York enters a shop bearing a sign: *Pile's Quality Dry Goods, Guns and Powder*. Pile, wearing an apron, is standing behind a counter.

York has the red card in his hand. He hands it to Pile. As Pile reads it York says:

YORK

See there, they wants me to go to report to some Draft Board.

PILE

(while reading)

Hmm.

YORK

But I don't want to go anywhere.

Pile looks up.

EXT. - TRACK BESIDE CREEK - DUSK

York and GRACIE Williams (a young woman) run in play and laughter along a track. York turns and she falls into his arms. After a quick cuddle, she pulls back.

YORK

Your hair's looking really pretty today Gracie.

GRACIE

I just combed it out.

YORK

I wish I'd been there when you was doing your combing. Nice to look at that.

GRACIE

So you can, every day, when we's married. January Alvin. So long as you don't have to go to war.

YORK

Sure enough. Sure. Pastor Pile going to write and tell the government that the Bible says they can't make me.

Gracie shows her pleasure by kissing his cheek.

YORK (CONT'D)  
Gracie about time I be speaking to  
your father.

GRACIE  
Oh don't Alvin. Not yet. Please  
don't. He'll only get angry.

YORK  
Hell Gracie!

A short distance away is Asbury WILLIAMS, Gracie's father  
leaning on a fence. He holds a rifle.

YORK (CONT'D)  
Afternoon Mister Williams.

WILLIAMS  
Now Alvin don't you be getting any  
ideas. I'm not letting any daughter  
of mine git involved with you  
Yorks.

YORK  
Hell Mister Williams.

WILLIAMS  
You listen Alvin York: Next time I  
see you buzzing around Gracie I  
might just have to use this.

He raises his rifle. York's face convulses in anger. Gracie's  
hand restrains his arm.

GRACIE  
No Alvin.

York controls himself.

He turns and walks away.

EXT. - PILE'S GENERAL STORE - DAY

York is standing at the counter of Pile's store.

PILE

(reading)

I, Alvin Cullum York respectfully claim discharge from the draft on the grounds that I am a person who is a member of a well recognized sect whose creed and principles forbade its members to participate in war in any form and whose religion principles are against war thereof.

York smiles in pleasure and takes a pen from Pile and signs.

PILE (CONT'D)

That should do it.

EXT. - CAMP GORDON, GEORGIA - DAY

York, in an ill-fitting doughboy uniform, marches across a parade ground under the command of a sergeant.

**TITLE: CAMP GORDON, GEORGIA**

INT. - OFFICE IN CAMP GORDON, GEORGIA - CONT'D

York and the sergeant enter an office where an army officer sits at a desk. As the sergeant leaves, York remains standing at attention. The officer consults a file on his desk then looks up.

OFFICER

A bloody conscious objector! A big lump of a lad like you?

York does not reply. Officer refers to a file on his desk.

OFFICER (CONT'D)

(reading)

The Church of Christ in Christian Union is not a well-recognized religious sect. It has no creed except the Bible which its members more or less interpret for themselves. Objection denied.

Officer looks up.

OFFICER (CONT'D)

But you did not accept that?

York does not answer.

OFFICER (CONT'D)  
(aggressively)  
Well?

YORK  
No.

OFFICER  
(in anger)  
No Sir!

YORK  
No Sir. I couldn't understand cause  
my objection was based on Holy  
Writ.

OFFICER  
So you appealed?

Officer turns over pages of file.

OFFICER (CONT'D)  
Knocked back again. But not content  
with that you wrote - I can hardly  
believe this - you wrote to  
President Wilson.

FLASHBACK

INT.- YORK'S HOUSE - DAY

In a simple log cabin York sits at the kitchen table and writes by the light of a kerosene light. Gracie and York's mother stand behind him watching.

YORK (V.O. READING)  
Dear President Wilson, I am a poor  
mountain boy and I don't want to  
fight anyone. Can I be allowed to  
stay at home to look after my frail  
mother?

GRACIE  
Tell em we is set to marry in  
January.

YORK  
Wouldn't help Gracie. Army don't  
care about people getting married.

As York signs and folds the letter into an envelope Gracie cuddles the back of his head and begins to cry. Now embarrassed she pulls away.

GRACIE

I must get back before my daddy knows.

Gracie rushes out in tears.

BACK TO OFFICE IN CAMP GORDON

The army officer still at his desk. Before him stands York.

OFFICER

Did you really think that the President running a war has time to write to you?

YORK

No he never done.

The officer glares at York.

YORK (CONT'D)

Sir.

EXT. - HALL IN OUTBACK AUSTRALIA - AFTERNOON

A dirt road winds thru arid farmlands, past buggies and parked cars to a hall. In the distance, a woman, led by the plunk of a piano, sings:

WOMAN

*Oh! I do like to be beside the  
seaside,  
I do like to be beside the sea!  
I do like to stroll upon the Prom,  
Prom, Prom!*

**TITLE: OUTBACK AUSTRALIA - DURING THE GREAT WAR**

INT. - RURAL HALL - AFTERNOON

A packed crowd on a hot evening. Soldiers drink booze from bottles. Patriotic posters and bunting line the hall.

Centre stage is DORRIE Dors, a buxom would-be vaudeville diva, bursting out of her dress. She gives the song all she's got.

DORRIE

*Where the brass bands play:  
Tiddely-om-pom-pom!  
So just let me be beside the  
seaside  
I'll be beside myself with glee.*

INT. - BACKSTAGE OF HALL - CONT'D.

TOM, now 18 months older (aged 20), stands nervously in the wings of the hall. Dressed in an Australian army uniform, he is tall, handsome and wearing a pair of dark-glass goggles.

An injured soldier, BOBBY Searce, hobbles over. He is aged 30.

BOBBY

You'll be right.

TOM

I know it.

Tom gulps from a rum bottle.

BOBBY

Steady on mate.

INT. - STAGE OF HALL - CONT'D.

Dorrie bows and leaves the stage to wild applause. A soldier from the audience calls:

SOLDIER

Show us your tits Dorrie.

Dorrie turns and in a tug of her dress shows a glimpse of her cleavage - and stains of perspiration on her dress. Uproar of delight from the audience as the Master of Ceremonies appears.

MASTER OF CEREMONIES

Come on fellers, settle down,  
settle down.

INT. - BACKSTAGE OF HALL - CONT'D.

Meanwhile backstage as the MC announces Tom Skeyhill, Dorrie looks hungrily across at Tom.

MASTER OF CEREMONIES (O.S.)  
 It is with the greatest of pleasure  
 we present the Bard of the  
 Trenches, the Blind Soldier Poet,  
 Signaller Tom Skeyhill.

A hard-faced WOMAN at Dorrie's side says:

WOMAN  
 Kinda cute in those goggles ain't  
 he?

DORRIE  
 Poor kid.

WOMAN  
 Needs looking after eh Dorrie?

INT. - STAGE OF HALL - CONT'D.

To half-hearted applause Bobby leads Skeyhill onto the stage.

SOLDIER IN AUDIENCE  
 (calling)  
 Not another bloody Chaplin.

ANOTHER CALL  
 Christ, he's drunk.

TOM stands mid-stage for many seconds then recites one of his  
 poems: 'Holding of the Line.'

TOM  
*You've heard about the landing,  
 And our deeds of gallantry,  
 Of how we proved our British breed  
 out on Gallipoli.  
 We charge the cruel bayonets,  
 We faced the cannon's roar,*

SOLDIER IN AUDIENCE  
 (calling)  
 Bring back Dorrie's tits.

ANOTHER CALL  
 Give the boy a chance.

TOM  
*We flinched not from the bullets,  
 As through the air they tore ....*

Tom loses confidence and stands in embarrassed silence.

Bobby walks onto the stage. He guides Tom off.

At the edge of the stage Bobby turns and yells to the audience.

BOBBY  
You bloody well should be ashamed  
of yourself. What this kid has been  
through!

Bobby storms off.

INT. - RURAL HOTEL - LATE SAME EVENING

Tom, Bobby and Dorrie enter the hotel lounge. It is empty.  
Dorrie collapses into a sofa.

TOM  
They wouldn't listen. They wouldn't  
fucking listen. Get me a drink  
Bobby.

BOBBY  
Best you go to bed.

TOM  
Bugger off Bobby.

BOBBY  
We'll talk in the morning.

Bobby departs. Tom stands and feels his way along the  
woodwork of the bar.

After watching his pathetic progress Dorrie stand and reaches  
behind the bar to pick up a bottle of whiskey and two  
glasses. She offers Tom a whiskey. He ignores the drink and  
grabs her wrist.

TOM  
Dorrie?

DORRIE  
Elocution. Elocution. Your  
elocution was all wrong.

Tom attempts to pull her closer. She slips free.

DORRIE (CONT'D)  
Pauses in the wrong place. No  
emotion. Listen for the music in  
your poems.



By this time Dorrie has moved across the room.

DORRIE (CONT'D)  
Project with the purity of a  
clarinet.

She hums an imitation of a clarinet. Tom turns in the  
direction of her voice.

DORRIE (CONT'D)  
(she projects her voice)  
My name is Tom Skeyhill. I was  
blinded at Gallipoli.

TOM  
My name is Tom Skeyhill. I was  
blinded at Gallipoli - in the  
service of my country.

Dorrie moves to another part of the room. Tom turns as she  
says:

DORRIE  
From the chest, not shouted from  
the throat.

TOM  
My name is Signaller Skeyhill, 8th  
Division, Australian Army and I was  
blinded at Gallipoli.

Dorrie moves closer, halting inches away. She puffs air into  
his face. She hums:

DORRIE  
Hmm, Hmm. Feel the vibrations  
Mister Skeyhill. Hmm, Hmm. Throat,  
nose, lips.

Dorrie strokes his throat and nose. She runs a finger along  
his lips.

DORRIE (CONT'D)  
Throat, nose, lips.

TOM  
My name is Tom Skeyhill.

His hand is on her breast.

TOM (CONT'D)  
Blinded in the service of my  
country.

DORRIE

Good.

His second hand is on her other breast.

TOM

My name is Tom Skeyhill.

DORRIE

Better.

His hand burrows below.

DORRIE (CONT'D)

(gasps)

Best.

INT. - HOTEL BEDROOM - NEXT MORNING

Dorrie and Tom are naked in bed. Dorrie sits up. She shakes Tom.

DORRIE

I can hear the maid.

TOM

She'd understand a blind man  
stumbling into the wrong room.

Dorrie laughs and pushes the naked Tom out of the bed.

He gropes for his clothes on the floor. She hands him a shirt and his walking stick.

INT. - HOTEL BEDROOM - SOON AFTER

Tom, now dressed, is at the open door to their room. He turns on his stick and twinkles his fingers at Dorrie.

TOM

Best elocution lesson I ever had.

Dorrie throws a pillow at him.

INT. - HOTEL CORRIDOR - IMMEDIATELY AFTER

The hotel maid watches Tom fingering his way along the corridor wall.

Bobby emerges from a room.

BOBBY

Your shirt is inside out.

He guides Tom inside their room.

INT. - ARMY BARRACKS CAMP GORDON, GEORGIA - NIGHT

The barracks are crowded with soldiers from all over US, including street-bred youths from NY mixing with Greek, Polish and Italian migrants, some of who can't speak English. Amongst a buzz of foreign languages, York is an isolated and outsized figure sitting on his bed.

A Greek, Sol CONOMUS offers him swig from a bottle of hard liquor. York waves it away.

CONOMUS

Don't drink?

YORK

Not any more.

CONOMUS

You don't play cards?

OTHER SOLDIER

(sneering)

No he don't. I asked him.

YORK

I's just doing what the Bible says.

OTHER SOLDIER

What's the bloody Bible say about cards?

YORK

I don't rightly remember, but somewhere it says.

CONOMUS

Jesus you're not much fun.

York shrugs his shoulders.

EXT. - RIFLE RANGE, CAMP GORDON, GEORGIA

A detachment of doughboys march to a rifle range under the command of a barking sergeant.

SERGEANT

Here's where you get to learn rifle shooting. Now I know you New York Ities shoot your way out of trouble with handguns, but this is different. This is rifles with a big recoil. And from 100 yards.

Six soldiers lay on the ground.

SERGEANT (CONT'D)

See if you dropouts can miss shooting each other.

Sergeant hands a bullets to the first man. He fires and missed the target entirely.

SERGEANT (CONT'D)

Germans pretty safe with you around.

Next soldier fires and hits the target but not near the bull's-eye.

York is next in line.

SERGEANT (CONT'D)

Suppose Mister Conscientious Objector is scared of guns.

YORK

No Sir.

Sergeant drops a bullet in York's hand.

York licks his finger and places spit on the sight. His back is straight, his head fixed, his firing elbow held high.

York hits the bulls-eye. Everyone is astounded.

SERGEANT

Was that a fluke?

YORK

No Sir. Naturally growed up with guns where's I be from.

Sergeant hands York another two bullets.

SERGEANT

And where is that?

YORK  
 (proudly)  
 Valley of the Three Forks  
 Tennessee, Sarg.

York fires two bullets in quick succession, each taking the center out of the target.

SERGEANT  
 Bugger me. I ain't seen that  
 before.

Sergeant hands York more two bullets.

INT. - HOTEL ROOM - MORNING

Tom stands in the middle of the room. Dorrie and Bobby watch him. Tom and Bobby are in army uniform.

TOM  
 (animated acting)  
*I was sittin' in me dug-out,  
 An' was feeling dinkum good,  
 Chewin' Queensland bully beef,  
 An' biscuits 'ard as wood.*

Tom takes off his goggles.

DORRIE  
 No, keep them on. I like the  
 mystery.

Tom puts goggles on.

TOM  
*When, boom! I nearly choked myself;  
 I spilt me bloomin' tea;  
 I saw a millions stars,  
 An' me dug-out fell on me.*

Tom collapses amidst a pretence of mud and timber falling on him.

DORRIE  
 Now this is where you come in  
 Bobby. Pull your mate to his feet.

Bobby steps forward and drags Tom up.

DORRIE (CONT'D)  
 Good.

TOM

*I was buried to the neck.  
Me mouth were full of bully beef,  
Me eyes were full of dust;*

Bobby uses a handkerchief to clear Tom's eyes.

DORRIE

Now Tom you pretend to forget your lines. So your mate jumps in.

BOBBY

*(stage whisper)  
I rose up to me bloomin' feet.*

CUT TO:

INT. - THEATRE STAGE - NIGHT

Bobby and Tom on stage.

TOM

*I rose up to me bloomin' feet*

Huge cheers from the audience.

TOM (CONT'D)

*An' shook me fist an' cussed.  
Sergeant says:*

Bobby takes over in a deep voice.

BOBBY

*You're a lucky lad,  
It might 'ave got your head;  
You ought to thank your lucky  
stars.*

TOM

*I say, Well strike me dead.*

Tom and Bobby bow amidst thunderous applause. (Both men are accomplished performers.)

Tom steps forward to sing:

TOM (CONT'D)

*I have written these verses far  
Across the rolling sea,  
In the land where our brothers are  
Fighting for Liberty.*

More applause. Bobby lets the applause run, then holds up his hands for silence.

BOBBY  
And what of the landing at  
Gallipoli?

TOM  
Hardly were we in the boats when a  
stream of white death poured from  
the tops of cliffs. The sea turned  
red.

FLASHBACK

EXT. - COMING ASHORE AT CAPE HELLES, GALLIPOLI

The thunderous roar of bombs; the staccato fire of enemy machine guns as swarms of boats head to the beach.

TOM (V.O.)  
Turkish machine guns spitting  
flaming hell.

Tom is in a crowded boat. Suddenly he sees the soldier next to him hit by a bullet in the face. Then another soldier is hit in the chest.

Several soldiers slip overboard to escape. Tom follows only to flounder in choppy seas, weighed down by the kit on his back. Next to him a swimmer's head explodes.

Tom hauls himself onto the beach and collapses on the sand. He sobs in fear as all hell breaks around him.

CUT

INT.- THEATRE STAGE - CONT'D

Tom steps under a spotlight.

TOM  
*We charged the cruel bayonets;  
We faced the cannon's roar;  
We flinched not from the bullets,  
As through the air they tore.*

A Magic Lantern screen shows the rugged hills of the Gallipoli Peninsula.

TOM (CONT'D)

*We thought of little Belgium,  
Of the tyrant on the Rhine,  
And we dug for British freedom,  
And the Holding of the Line.*

FLASHBACK

BACK TO BEACH AT GALLIPOLI

In contrast to the bold bravery of the above poem, Tom is curled in a foetal position with his hands covering his head as bombs explode around him.

INT. - OFFICE IN CAMP GORDON, GEORGIA - NIGHT

A MAJOR sits at his desk in a room with a single drop-light. York stands before him.

YORK

I have obeyed every order the army said and I am going to keep on. And if you order me overseas I'm going. And if you put a rifle in my hands and tell me to kill Germans I'm going to kill them, but I'm warning you Major. God's truth I'm warning you, if you force me to kill anyone, I'm a-going to hold you responsible for their deaths before God in Heaven on Judgment Day.

The Officer looks at York in astonishment.

MAJOR

What is your church that says that?

YORK

The Church of Christ in Christian Union. It don't hold with killing our brother man, even if they be foreigners.

MAJOR

What is its creed?

YORK

The only creed is the Bible. We like our religion plain. Like the old Prophets did.



MAJOR

I know my Bible too, and the Christ who drove the money changers out of the temple was a hell of a fighter.

YORK

Jesus done preached Blessed are the Peacemakers.

MAJOR

But you would be a peacemaker. Doing the Lord's work - by making peace the only way the Germans understand.

YORK

Christ said if a man smite you on one cheek, you turn the other.

MAJOR

Christ also said: He that hath no sword, let him sell his cloak and buy one.

YORK

Thou shall not kill.

MAJOR

You just read Revelations Private. Or Ezekiel: If the watchman not blows his trumpet, his blood I require at the watchman's hand.

YORK

Yes I knows.

MAJOR

Uncle Sam wants you to be the watchman for our nation Private York. Think on that.

EXT. - WAR ZONE, GALLIPOLI - DAWN

A misty silent dawn. Signaller Tom Skeyhill is on top of a hill, semaphore-signaling by moving flags held in out-stretched arms.

His young face is etched in fear. The zing of a bullet. He flinches, then shuts his eyes. His lips quiver. He takes a deep breath and continues with his message.

EXT. - ROAD TO PALL MALL, TENNESSEE - DAY

York in his army uniform walks along a road with a suitcase on his shoulder.

York approaches Pall Mall. York's dogs come bounding up, yapping with delight as they jump up on him. Gracie runs to him and they embrace. She is followed by York's mother.

MOTHER

What's you doin' here?

GRACIE

You don't have to go to war?

YORK

I's been given ten days leave.

MOTHER

(angry, disapproval)

So you going to fight? You told 'em you'd kill your fellow man?

YORK

No I haven't mother. They tole me to come home and sort myself out.

INT. - PALL MALL'S CHURCH OF CHRIST IN CHRISTIAN UNION - DAY

York enters an empty church save for Pastor Pile.

Pile

I heard you was back, but you haven't been to near me these past days.

YORK

I had to work it out for myself Pastor. What this army major told me - about the Bible.

York and Pastor Pile sit in a pew, facing each other.

YORK (CONT'D)

Its an awful thing when your country gets mixed up with God. I done nothing but worry of late.

PILE

The Bible.

YORK

I read the Bible over and over,  
 Pastor. I read that Bible so much  
 my eyes hurt. I'm a-telling you  
 there was a war going on right  
 inside me. So I whistled up the  
 hound-dogs and went hunting in the  
 hills. But I never fired a shot I  
 was so troubled. Prayed all that  
 afternoon, plumb thru the night,  
 and into the next day.

FLASHBACK:

EXT. - NIGHT ON A MOUNTAIN - DUSK

York is kneeling on the mountainside with his dog.

YORK (V.O.)

I still couldn't work it out so I  
 decided to ask Him. Sorter straight  
 out from the shoulder. God, He  
 hears me and comes to the mountain.

BACK AT THE CHURCH - CONT'D.

PILE

God! God came!

YORK

He look right inside of me and He  
 knowed I had been troubled because  
 I only wanted to do what would  
 please Him.

PILE

God? You sure God came?

YORK

I didn't see him, but he was there.  
 He reckoned he could let me go to  
 war and even kill and because I put  
 him first He wouldn't hold it  
 against me.

Pile motions for the two men to kneel in the isle of the church.

YORK (CONT'D)

Then when I walks home I felt  
 refreshed like bathing in the  
 waters of a mountain lake.

EXT. - ROAD AWAY FROM PALL MALL, TENNESSEE - DAY

York in his army uniform walks along the road with a suitcase on his shoulder.

Gracie comes running behind him. He hears her. He turns and drops his case. She runs into his arms. He lifts her in a huge hug.

YORK  
 (whispering in her ear)  
 I'll be back with nary a scratch  
 Gracie. Just you wait and see. God  
 done tole me.

EXT. - RIDGE LEADING TO VILLAGE OF KRITHIA, GALLIPOLI - DAY

Tom and Bobby are amongst soldiers sheltering behind a cliff protected by low prickly bushes. Tom has a pencil and notebook in his hand.

They hear the whistle of a bomb. They duck and the bomb explodes behind them.

Tom, shaking badly, continues to write. A soldier next to him, BULLMORE, leans over to peer at the notebook.

BULLMORE  
 What's that kid?

TOM  
 Nothing.

Bullmore snatches the notebook.

BULLMORE  
 Hey listen to this. The kid is a  
 poofter poet.

Bullmore recites in a female voice:

BULLMORE (CONT'D)  
*Now when I said to Mother,  
 I've volunteered to fight,  
 She said may God bless you sonny,  
 and bring you back all right.*

Enraged, Tom charges at Bullmore who smacks the youngster in the face. Blood flows from his nose.

Bobby appears.

BOBBY  
 (in hissing anger)  
 Give it back to him.

Bobby has a stout stick held high.

Bullmore considers his options. He sees Bobby's fury and shrugs.

BULLMORE  
 Gees it was only a bit of fun. Let  
 him write his stupid poems if it  
 stops him shitting his pants every  
 time a bomb flies over.

He throws the notebook to Tom.

ANOTHER SOLDIER  
 Look wary. Brass.

Australian Colonel McCay leads a dozen troops crawling to join them.

MCCAY  
 You've got 24 hours in reserve.

Tom and the others crawl past the relieving troops.

ONE OF THE SOLDIERS  
 Anything happening?

BOBBY  
 Not if you don't stick your head  
 up.

EXT. - ANZAC BEACH - DAY

Tom, Bobby and others run thru mountains of equipment scattered across a beach throwing their clothes off as they go.

Naked, they plunge into the sea.

LATER

The soldiers frolic in the sea.

The boom of an explosive waterspout. Soldiers are thrown in the air.

With his heart racing Tom, amongst others, swims ashore.

Tom sits frozen on the beach. The sound of bullets.

Bobby drags him up and pulls him in a stumbled run to safety behind the twisted wreck of a landing craft. Tom is shaking. Bobby holds the boy in a hug.

LATER

An angelic-looking Tom, now dressed in army fatigues, is asleep on the sand. Bobby look fondly at the youth. He sighs.

EXT. - VALLEY IN THE GALLIPOLI PENINSULAR - DAY

From a position of safety Tom's platoon overlooks a wide valley.

**TITLE: VALLEY LEADING TO KRITHIA, GALLIPOLI**

They watch as a company of black Senegalese Infantrymen, in traditional uniforms of blue and red caps, march up the valley with bayonets fixed.

TOM

What's up?

BOBBY

French colonials. Senegalese Infantry.

The Australians watch in horror as the Senegalese troops begin to run up the valley. They are mown down by withering fire.

Some of the Senegalese break ranks and are shot in the back.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Oh you poor, poor French golliwogs.

EXT. - VALLEY LEADING TO KRITHIA, GALLIPOLI - NEXT DAY - DAY

The valley is a silent expanse of dead Senegalese Infantry.

From their position of safety Tom's platoon watches New Zealand troops charge up the valley with fixed bayonets, jumping over Senegalese bodies. Machine guns cut them down.

TOM

Oh you poor, poor Kiwis.

EXT. - TOM'S PLATOON OVERLOOKING THE VALLEY TO KRITHIA - DAY  
 A toffee-nosed English Major General HUNTER-WESTERN walks by.

HUNTER-WESTERN  
 Your chance soon lads. Counting on  
 you Australians.

EXT.- TRENCH WARFARE IN FRANCE - DAY

**TITLE: TRENCH WARFARE, FRANCE**

York and a company of US soldiers in a trench. Private Conomus is next to York.

York levels his rifle at the German's lines some 120 yards away.

Conomus waves for some soldiers further down the trench to be quiet.

The German heads bob up and down over the top of their trench.

CUT TO FLASH  
 BACK

EXT. - FOREST IN THE TENNESSEE MOUNTAINS

As in opening scene heads of turkeys bob up and down above a log.

BACK TO

EXT.- TRENCH WARFARE IN FRANCE - DAY

York fires. There is the distant gasp of death.

CONOMUS  
 (jubilant)  
 You got him!

York's face is etched with distress as Conomus jumps with delight.

YORK  
 Heads a lot bigger than any turkey  
 I knows.

EXT. - TRENCH WARFARE GALLIPOLI - LATE AFTERNOON

McCay crawls along the trench to Tom's platoon.

MCCAY

Pass it along. We attack in the morning.

BOBBY

(grumbling under his breath)

Why should we do better than the others?

MCCAY

(in anger)

What did you say private?

BOBBY

Nothing Sir.

MCCAY

It will be different this time.

The men look doubtfully at McCay.

MCCAY (CONT'D)

The French are in support.

As McCay crawls away ...

BULLMORE

Can you believe it? Bloody French.

LATER

Tom and Bobby are sitting in the bottom of a trench, eating army issue mush.

TOM

I am 19 and I'm going to die tomorrow.

BOBBY

I'm 29 and I'm not too happy about it either.

TOM

What work did you do back home, Bobby?



BOBBY

A school teacher. Well an unemployed teacher really. I got into a spot of bother.

Tom glances at him.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

A bit close to one of the boys.

TOM

Oh.

BOBBY

So they said. What about you?

TOM

Post office. I stole some money... so they said.

BOBBY

Oh.

TOM

Just took holiday pay owing when I ran away. The only time my father noticed me. Oh the family shame! Roundabout way to get into the army.

BOBBY

The Army is so understanding. More forgiving than any Catholic priest.

McCay comes along the trench. He points to Tom.

MCCAY

Signaller Skeyhill. You're wanted at Command Headquarters. New posting for a few days.

McCay departs.

Tom enthusiastically packs up his gear.

TOM

(to Bobby)

Can you believe it! What bleeding luck. Look after yourself Bobby.

They shake hands. Bobby pulls Tom into an embrace.

BOBBY

Take care kid.

TOM

You been a great mate Bobby. Till  
the next time then.

As Tom departs:

BULLMORE

Lucky bastard.

EXT. - TENT OF COMMAND HEADQUARTERS - LATE AFTERNOON

McCay escorts Tom to Command Headquarters where Staff Officers fuss around Major General Hunter-Western. He looks up as Tom arrives.

HUNTER-WESTERN

Damn phone line has gone dead.  
Phones need wires don't they  
Signaller?

TOM

Yes Sir.

Hunter-Western nods to an officer who hands a reel of insulated wire to Tom.

HUNTER-WESTERN

There's a good lad. Run it across  
to the French.

Hunter-Western points across open ground pocked marked with the craters of enemy bombs. Tom looks in horror. Hunter-Western walks off. Tom turns to McCay.

TOM

I'll never make it.

MCCAY

Of course you will. Just duck and  
weave.

Hunter-Western turns back.

HUNTER-WESTERN

You had better get going Signaller.  
I have to get those Froggies in  
place before dark.

EXT. - DEEP, WIDE GULLY - LATE AFTERNOON - CONT'D

Tom walks to the edge of the gully, whispering to himself:

TOM  
 God protect me. Please God protect  
 me.

Tom runs, jumping over rocks, bomb craters and bodies,  
 trailing the wire behind him. It is eerily silent.

EXT. - TENT OF COMMAND HEADQUARTERS - CONT'D

The officers watch Tom.

HUNTER-WESTERN  
 (to McCay)  
 Bloody good lad you have there.

EXT. - DEEP, WIDE GULLY - CONT'D

Bullets ping into rocks near Tom. He collapses in frozen  
 fear.

More sounds of shots. Silence. Then he rises and races on,  
 unwinding the wire as he goes.

A thunderous explosion envelopes Tom in smoke and dust.

LATER

A muffled ringing in Tom's head. He lies unconscious at the  
 bottom of a bomb crater.

LATER

All is quiet. Tom is covered in dust. He does not move.

LATER - DUSK

Stretcher-bearers race Tom thru the gathering gloom.

EXT. - CASUALTY CLEARING STATION - CONT'D

The stretcher-bearers cart Tom into a large tent crowded with  
 twitching, moaning, bloodied soldiers.

It is so packed that the stretcher-bearers have difficulty  
 finding a place to put Tom down. Eventually they squeeze his  
 stretcher in.

McCay arrives with a detachment of privates. Confronted by  
 such carnage, the men await orders.

MCCAY

Move them out of here. All of them.

Two soldiers, each at the end of a stretcher, pick up the wounded, including Tom.

EXT. - BEACH - DUSK - CONT.

Stretchers are hurried across the beach towards barges. In the distance is a Hospital Ship with a Red Cross painted on its side.

EXT. - AT SEA - DUSK - LATER

Tom, seemingly unconscious, is at the bottom of a barge, laden with injured soldiers heading towards the Hospital Ship.

A soldier, with the side of his face shot off, asks:

SOLDIER

Where are we?

No response from Tom.

Without opening his eyes Tom reaches out to stroke the soldier's face. Tom's fingers become covered with blood.

Tom smears blood around his own eyes.

EXT.- TRENCH IN FRANCE - NIGHT

There is a subdued mood in the trench. York is writing in a small diary. Conomus walks up.

CONOMUS

I'll never sleep.

YORK

Sure will you.

CONOMUS

Been training for this day ever since we left home and now day comes and I've got the flunks.

YORK

We all have.

CONOMUS

What you writing?

YORK  
I keeps a diary. About the day's  
bin gone. Prayers I make up.

Several soldiers look towards York.

ANOTHER SOLDIER  
Can you read us one of your prayer?

YORK  
Ain't much.

CONOMUS  
Go on. We need it for tomorrow.

The men gather around.

YORK  
*O God, in hope that sends the  
shining ray,  
Far down the future's broadening  
way;  
In peace that only Thou can give;  
With Thee, O Master, let me live.*

The men look in awe.

EXT.- TRENCH WAR IN FRANCE - DAWN

An officer stands and with a rebel yell clambers out of the trench. He is followed by hundreds of soldiers with fixed bayonets. Despite the rapid fire of German guns and many wounded the Americans make steady progress. York and Conomus are amongst those charging forward.

Carnage, but the Americans advance.

INT. - HOSPITAL DAY ROOM - DAY

**TITLE: MILITARY HOSPITAL, EGYPT**

A uniformed nurse is singing as she plays a piano. Her audience are soldiers, some in wheelchairs, some lack legs, others have stumps of arms.

The nurse sings the 'Taximeter Car' by Harry Heath.

NURSE  
*Just now the taximeter car in  
London's all the go.*  
(MORE)

NURSE (CONT'D)

*They're flying all around the town  
and making quite a show.  
The driver with his uniform a big  
sensation's made.  
The poor old cabby and bus are  
fairly in the shade.*

A march of the cripples, aided by walking sticks, crutches and wheelchairs, circle the piano.

For guidance Tom (wearing goggles) holds the waist of the soldier ahead. The march stops and Tom sings:

TOM

*Oh, the car, the taximeter car,  
It's better than taking a trip to  
Spain,  
Or having your honeymoon over  
again.*

Huge cheers.

Colonel McCay, on crutches, and his batman are watching.

BATMAN

(shouting)  
Attention - all who can.

MCCAY

No, no. At ease. Carry on men.

Nurse resumes on the piano and Tom sings:

TOM

*If you're out with your sweetheart,  
Your mater or your pa,  
Do it in style,  
At eight pence a mile.  
In a taximeter car.*

INT. - HOSPITAL LATRINES - LATER - DAY

Although without doors the cubicles are separated by dividing walls. Tom is sitting on a toilet with his trousers around his legs.

Bobby hobbles into the latrines area, enters a cubicle, and takes down his trousers.

Suddenly he stumbles up to stand before Tom.

BOBBY

Is that you Tom?

TOM  
Bobby?

BOBBY  
You're wearing goggles?

TOM  
I am blind.

BOBBY  
Really? Shit.

TOM  
What about you?

BOBBY  
I copped bullets in the groin.

TOM  
Really.

BOBBY  
They can't get them out. Still  
there.

By this time Bobby is standing before Tom. Tom stands, and both men, with trousers around their legs, embrace.

TOM  
Christ it's so good to see you  
Bobby. I thought you were a goner.

There are tears in both men's eyes.

BOBBY  
You're safe. We're both safe.

INT. - HOSPITAL DAY ROOM - NEXT DAY

Bobby hobbles forward on crutches.

BOBBY  
The next item is a song recently  
written by our resident poet,  
Signaller Skeyhill.

Tom stands.

TOM  
It is called the 'Red Cross Nurse'  
and dedicated to you know who.

Bobby points to the nurse at the piano. Applause.

Tom sings to the tune of 'The Drover's Dream.'

TOM (CONT'D)

*When you're lying in bed with a  
buzzing in your head,  
And a pain across your head that's  
far from nice,  
She just moves about the place,  
with a sweet angelic grace,  
That makes you think the dingy ward  
is paradise.*

SOLDIER IN AUDIENCE

Throw back your head Tom! Look  
blind.

TOM

*Though she hasn't got a gun and she  
hasn't killed a Hun,  
Still she fights as hard as  
veterans at the front.  
When the allies start to drive and  
wounded boys arrive,  
It's always she who has to bear the  
battle's brunt.*

Bobby joins Tom in a duo.

BOBBY & TOM

*Then with fingers true and light,  
she will bind your wounds up tight,*

CUT TO

INT. - HOSPITAL WARD - NIGHT

A cavernous hospital ward, crammed with iron beds. A nurse,  
with a lamp held high, moves between the patients.

BOBBY & TOM (V.O.)

*And when she leaves you're sleeping  
fast and breathing low.*

Quietness in the ward.

INT. - HOSPITAL WARD - MORNING

Dawn's sun angles in the window. Tom is asleep.

A commanding voice sounds:



SOLDIER (O.S.)  
 Signaller Skeyhill. The Doc wants  
 to see you.

A soldier shakes Tom awake.

INT. - MEDICAL EXAMINATION ROOM, EGYPT - MORNING

Tom holds his goggles in one hand as he stands before a  
 doctor in a white coat.

The doctor reads from a report, while using the file to cover  
 his mouth.

DOCTOR  
 No shrapnel wounds. No bullet  
 holes.

Tom gives a mumbled reply.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)  
 Answer me Signaller.

TOM  
 No cuts Sir. No bullet holes.

The Doctor, as he writes on the report, says:

DOCTOR  
 Hearing's OK then.

The Doctor points to a paragraph in the report.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)  
 (in surprise)  
 Hell. According to this you were  
 only in the battle zone for ten  
 days - a mere ten days, yet you  
 report in blind!

The doctor picks up a torch and shines it into Tom's face.  
 Tom does not flinch.

TOM  
 There is someone else in the room.

A man in a white coat is behind Tom, holding a cardboard box.

DOCTOR  
 My assistant.

The assistant silently places the box on the floor in front  
 of the door.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)  
 Look this way. Nothing for you to  
 see.

The doctor puts down his torch and stares into Tom's eyes.  
 Tom doesn't flinch.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)  
 Nothing wrong that I can see.

No response from Tom.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)  
 They say that the eyes are windows  
 to the soul.

The doctor continues to stare into Tom's eyes. Tom does not  
 flinch.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)  
 But there is no soul to be found in  
 there is there Signaller?

Tom does not flinch.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)  
 Not one that I can see.

Tom does not flinch.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)  
 Oh get out of here Skeyhill. I'm in  
 no mood for cowards. I've real  
 injuries to attend to.

The doctor watches Tom put on his goggles, pick up his  
 walking stick and tap his way towards the door.

Tom stops before the box, thinks, then kicks it away.

TOM  
 (calling over his  
 shoulder)  
 I heard him.

INT. - OFFICERS' MESS, EGYPT - DAY

An Egyptian waiter in a sparkling white uniform, topped by a  
 red fez, carries a whiskey on a silver tray to the Doctor.

McCay hobbles in on crutches. And sits clumsily next to the  
 doctor.

MCCAY  
My knee is still giving me hell.

DOCTOR  
Whiskey?

The doctor waves a finger at the waiter.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)  
That bloody signaller you sent me  
is a fraud.

MCCAY  
Then why didn't he shoot himself in  
the foot like the others.

DOCTOR  
If not, he's a damn good actor.

MCCAY  
He's a poet too.

DOCTOR  
Oh McCay, his poems are doggerel,  
fit only for country bumpkins.

MCCAY  
That's why I want him. Just fill in  
the paperwork. If he's a shyster,  
he will be easier to control.

The doctor is displeased.

MCCAY (CONT'D)  
And increase my dose of morphine.

DOCTOR  
No.

MCCAY  
No!

DOCTOR  
No.

INT. - MCCAY'S OFFICE - DAY

Tom is standing at attention before McCay, seated at his desk. McCay looks up.

MCCAY  
Take off those silly goggles.

Tom takes off his goggles.

MCCAY (CONT'D)

I can keep you here until you make a mistake. Then I'll take pleasure in having you shot.

TOM

Yes Sir.

MCCAY

Your poems. I saw several in 'The Egyptian Mail.'

TOM

Been published in British papers as well.

MCCAY

Although the fight is over for me, I've been given a far more important job. Back home.

TOM

Yes Sir.

MCCAY

I have to recruit 50,000 volunteers in the next nine months.

TOM

Yes Sir.

MCCAY

I'm assembling a team of soldier-entertainers to go around the country drumming up men.

TOM

Better you fill your team with men who know what war is about.

MCCAY

You catch on quickly don't you Skeyhill?

TOM

Yes Sir.

EXT.- DECK OF AN OCEAN LINER - MORNING

McCay is taking his morning exercise on the deck.

He sees Tom making slow progress on his walking stick. McCay watches carefully.

LATER

McCay and Tom walk together on the deck, both on walking sticks.

MCCAY

You'll be on the southern circuit.  
Country towns. Church halls. That  
sort of things. Don't worry, the  
standard is not up to much.

TOM

Thank you sir, I'm grateful ... To  
do my bit.

MCCAY

I've also arranged for your poems  
to be published in book form. Give  
you a bit of credence as the Blind  
Poet of Gallipoli.

McCay passes thru a gate with the sign: OFFICERS ONLY. Tom attempts to follow only to be stopped by a guard.

McCay turns:

MCCAY (CONT'D)

Don't think you can step out of  
line when you get home Skeyhill.  
I'll be watching you. Any comment  
against the war effort and I'll  
have you locked up so fast your  
head will spin.

TOM

Yes Sir. Of course.

INT. - US SLEEPING QUARTERS IN FRANCE - DAY

York is writing in his diary.

YORK (V.O.)

A war brings out the worst in men.  
It turns us into mad, fighting  
animals but it also brings out  
something else, something I just  
don't know how to describe - a sort  
of tenderness and love for the  
fellows fighting with you.

York looks across at a drunken group of his comrades playing cards.

YORK

A heap of them can't hardly talk English. But they's ready to die for the old US of A. All they want to do is go over the top yelling at them Germans to fight it out.

INT. - STAGE OF RURAL HALL, AUSTRALIA - EVENING

Tom stands next to a stage graveyard marked by simple crosses. Bobby and two other soldiers attempt to take a short cut across the graveyard.

Tom holds out his hand to stop them as he recites one of his poems.

TOM

*Halt! Thy tread is on heroes'  
graves;  
Australian lads lie sleeping below;  
Just wooden crosses at their heads;  
To let their comrades know.*

Dorrie enters, wearing an apron and playing the role of a grieving mother.

DORRIE

*There's many a loving mother,  
Home in Australia dear;  
Who is thinking, broken-hearted  
Of her loved son's distance bier.  
They know not where's he lying,  
Or how their loved one fell.*

TOM

*While coming from the trenches,  
And glancing over there,  
I've often seen a khaki form,  
Kneeling in silent prayer.*

Bobby and the two soldiers kneel.

Emotional silence from the audience. Then tremendous applause.

McCay, who is in the audience, joins in the applause.

FOYER OF THE HALL - LATER

Bobby is standing, holding up a book. Next to him is a sign:  
'SOLDIER-SONGS FROM ANZAC BY TOM SKEYHILL.'

BOBBY  
(calling)  
Poetry from the trenches. Composed  
amidst bombs and bullets.

Tom is signing copies of the book.

An elderly couple approach Tom.

ELDERLY WOMAN  
My son lies somewhere in those  
rugged hills.

The woman begins to cry.

ELDERLY WOMAN (CONT'D)  
Sorry, sorry.

Her husband puts an arm around her shoulders.

ELDERLY WOMAN (CONT'D)  
Thank you so much Mister Skeyhill.  
You have given me such comfort,  
knowing how much his fellow  
soldiers care.

TOM  
Oh they do. They do.

EXT. - ROTUNDA OF TOWN'S BOTANICAL GARDENS - DAY

A huge crowd sit on the grass. Tom, standing in the rotunda,  
is next to the MAYOR important in his robes.

The Town Band behind Tom plays a patriotic tune.

LATER

TOM  
Have you noticed a Recruitment Desk  
over there? Stand up Major.

The major and several soldiers at a desk under a tree stand  
and wave to Tom.

TOM (CONT'D)  
Now I am told there are plenty of  
young men hereabouts who have not  
joined up.  
(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)

Probably shuffling and looking awkward right now. You know them. I want everyone to keep an eye on them at the end of the concert. Sadly I can't see them. But you can! Is it too much that they walk over to that desk and pledge their service?

Clapping from the audience.

EXT. - STREET - NIGHT

A large poster is being put up by a man slapping glue on a wall with a mop dipped from a nearby pot.

The poster, with an illustration of Tom in goggles reads:  
'The *SINGING SOLDIER*, Tom Skeyhill tells of the fight for Gallipoli. Palace Theatre 8 p.m., Friday & Saturday. *SELLING FAST.*'

INT.- THEATRE STAGE - NIGHT

On a screen a lantern slide shows soldiers in a trench.

Tom sings to the tune 'Alice Blue Gown':

TOM

*I've a little wet home in the  
trench,  
Which the rain-storms continually  
drench;  
Mud and clay for a bed,  
And a stone we use for a bed.*

The screen now shows the words of Tom's song. Dorrie, in a male army uniform and a fake mustache, uses a pointer to pick out the words, as Tom and Bobby act out the lyrics. Audience sings along.

DORRIE

*Bully beef and hard biscuits we  
chew;  
It seems years since we tasted a  
stew;  
Shells crackle and scare,  
But no place can compare  
With my little wet home in the  
trench.*

Thunderous applause.



INT. - FLASH HOTEL - NIGHT

A crowded party is in full swing. Tom is surrounded by several pretty woman. He is drunk. Bobby and Dorrie watch him with concern.

TOM  
 (to a waiter)  
 Get some more champagne. Buckets of it.

Tom pulls wads of notes from his jacket and gives them to the waiter.

Tom kisses a pretty girl. She is receptive until Dorrie pulls her away.

Tom, being blind, doesn't know what happened to her. His hands flounder in vacant air. Dorrie pulls him away.

INT.- TRAIN - DAY

Tom, Dorrie and Bobby board a train and settle into the first class lounge, where a man is playing a small piano.

BOBBY  
 Dorrie be a dear will you and check the luggage has landed in our cabin?

Dorrie departs.

TOM  
 What's gives?

Bobby waits until Dorrie has gone and pulls a letter from his jacket.

BOBBY  
 You have been invited to America. By something called the Committee of Public Information. Patriots, who have heard of you. They want you to be part of a recruitment and Liberty Bond Campaign.

Tom takes the letter. He appears to look at it. He fondles the raised letterhead, then hands it back.

BOBBY (CONT'D)  
 There's nothing about Dorrie.

TOM  
You? I need your eyes.

BOBBY  
Yes, they'll pay for a manager.

TOM  
So no Dorrie.

Tom ponders.

TOM (CONT'D)  
She can't hear us?

BOBBY  
No, she's gone.

TOM  
I want the truth from you Bobby.  
What does she look like? She's not  
young, is she?

BOBBY  
Hard to say. Wears a lot of makeup.

TOM  
I can feel wrinkles on her bum. I'm  
22 and I don't have wrinkles on my  
bum.

BOBBY  
Well have you asked her?

TOM  
What?

BOBBY  
Her age.

TOM  
Bobby, you know nothing about  
women.

BOBBY  
Suppose not.

TOM  
Told me once she's about the same  
age as me.

BOBBY  
Well could be.

INT. - HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Dorrie throws a vase at Tom. It misses and shatters against the wall.

TOM

I'm not saying you can't come. ...  
Later. After we've settled.

DORRIE

You were a fucking babbling amateur  
until I showed you how.

TOM

This is my chance to be something  
better.

DORRIE

Could be my chance too.

He shakes his head.

The truth sinks in and Dorrie begins to cry.

TOM

I'll be back. I promise. My little  
Dorrie.

He attempts to cuddle her. She pushes him aside.

DORRIE

We were a great team. You, Bobby  
and me.

TOM

I must do this. You understand?

She nods. And when he cuddles her, she drops her head on his shoulder.

DORRIE

I knew it wouldn't last. Never does  
with a half decent man. I thought  
with a blind man...

She is embarrassed at her words, so she adds.

DORRIE (CONT'D)

I thought we might settle down Tom -  
together. When we got old we could  
buy a small shop or something. A  
grocery. I'd look after you. I  
would. I really would.

TOM  
We still might.

She smiles but doesn't believe him.

DORRIE  
It was just a dream I had. Life  
with you in a small town.

TOM  
Oh Dorrie.

DORRIE  
Don't give me your sympathy, Tom.  
I'll fuckin' survive. I always do.

She walks to a bar. Her hands shake as she pours a stiff  
scotch.

TOM  
Dorrie I want to be someone. I was  
a nothing selling stamps in a post  
office. All of a sudden I can be a  
star in the United States.

CUT TO:

EXT. - STAGE OVERLOOKING THE SAN FRANCISCO PLAZA - DAY

Tom is on a stage peering from behind a curtain to a large,  
crowded plaza with people waving flags and patriotic posters.  
A band is beating out Sousa's 'Stars and Stripes Forever.'

**TITLE: SAN FRANCISCO NOVEMBER 1917**

BACKSTAGE - DAY

Tom is dressed in his soldiers uniform and dark goggles. To  
one side President Wilson is surrounded by his advisers, The  
M. C., holding a clipboard, walks over to Tom.

MASTER OF CEREMONIES  
(reading from clipboard)  
You fought at Gal-lee-poly.  
Blinded? Right. Australian?

TOM  
Gallipoli. Yes.

MASTER OF CEREMONIES  
You speak good English.

TOM

Yes.

MASTER OF CEREMONIES

You have three minutes. Just before President Wilson. You go a second over time and I'll yank you.

LATER

MASTER OF CEREMONIES

We are standing shoulder to shoulder with our British brothers against the German onslaught. So it is a special welcome to a poet who was blinded at the Battle of Gal-lee-poly. Let's give Private Tom Skeyhill, a great American cheer.

Bobby walks Tom forward, tapping with his walking stick. The crowd slips into a respectful silence.

TOM

True, I am from the British Empire.  
True I was blinded in the war.  
Sentenced to a life of darkness.

After a dramatic pause, Tom roars:

TOM (CONT'D)

And I want my revenge.

A clamor of approval.

TOM (CONT'D)

I want my revenge against Kaiser Bill. An egotistical monster with a hair-trigger temper. Rattling his saber and snorting fire and brimstone as he plunges the world into bloody chaos. He is a danger to Britain and its colonies. He is a danger to the United States and its possessions. There will be no peace until he is crushed. Absolutely crushed. Crushed.

Tom raises his hand in acknowledgement of the roaring cheers.

Tom leaves the stage to be replaced by President Wilson.

Solomon GOLDING approaches Tom.

GOLDING

That was a fine address Mister  
Skeyhill. You sure have the gift of  
the gab.

Golding hands a business card to Tom.

GOLDING (CONT'D)

Ring me. We must get you to New  
York. Top billings. Decent hotels.

TOM

Speak to my manager.

He points to Bobby.

EXT. - NEW YORK - DAY

Two innocents (Tom and Bobby) rubber neck it past the  
Flatiron Building. They are astonished at its height.

EXT. - MILLIONAIRE'S CLUB NEW YORK - DAY

Golding escorts Tom and Bobby past a brass plate reading  
"Millionaires Club". They enter.

LATER

Tom is on a podium.

TOM

The explosion which took my sight  
also blasted the left side of my  
face. Crushing injuries. Such was  
the price of sacrifice. A blindness  
a thousand times worse than the  
darkness of the darkest night. ...

The audience is enthralled.

WIPE TO

INT. - STAGE OF THEATER - NIGHT

Tom is surrounded by patriotic posters and other posters  
selling Liberty Bonds. He is just finishing up.

TOM

We must prevail. We shall prevail.

Tom raised his hands in the air to great applause.

WIPE TO

EXT. - CARNEGIE HALL - NIGHT

Tom and Bobby step out of a limousine and walk up stairs thru crowds.

LATER

Tom is centre stage.

TOM

I know of the deadly whisper of artillery. I know the spitting yellow of a flamethrower. I know the chatter of machine guns firing six hundred shots a minute in a steady stream. And I have seen whole platoons go down like ripe corn before the reaper's blade. Such is the ferocity of the enemy. And why we need your money to match them piece for piece. Bullet for bullet. Forget not our boys in uniform.

LATER

As Tom leaves the stage a man grabs his arm.

MAN

Colonel Roosevelt would like to speak to you.

Forgetting that Tom is blind, he indicates Theodore Roosevelt standing close by. Tom appears not to know who Roosevelt is.

TOM

Who?

MAN

Teddy Roosevelt. The former President.

TOM

Of course. Yes.

Tom is escorted to Roosevelt.

ROOSEVELT

That was a fine speech. An  
inspiration to all those who seek  
to end the horrors of war.

Roosevelt grasps Tom's hand. The two men shake.

ROOSEVELT (CONT'D)

Come and visit. I'd like to chat.

Roosevelt's minder gives Tom a card.

INT. - A PARK AVENUE APARTMENT, NYC - EVENING

A posh party.

Suave as any dandy, Tom is dressed in an elegant three-piece  
suit. He is talking to MARIE Adels, a young actress.

He hands her one of his pamphlets. She examines it as he  
says:

TOM

Come and hear me explain why the  
war will soon end. The tide has  
turned for us. I'm sure of it.

MARIE

Not everyday I speak to someone who  
has studied the classics at Oxford.

TOM

Didn't complete. Had to give up the  
Ivory Towers to fight the Hun.

MARIE

And did Teddy Roosevelt really say  
that about you.

TOM

Sure did.

Marie hands the pamphlet back.

MARIE

I don't have to hand out pamphlets  
to get an audience.

TOM

Is that so?

MARIE

You can come and see me.



She is embarrassed by her choice of words.

MARIE (CONT'D)  
 Sorry. How awful of me. Come and  
 hear me anyway.

They both laugh at her faux pas.

INT.- STAGE OF THEATER - NIGHT

Marie is playing Roxane in Cyrano de Bergerac.

MARIE  
 His letter ...and you read it so.

CYRANO  
 Farewell, my dear. My dearest.

MARIE  
 In a voice.

CYRANO  
 My heart's own. My own treasure.

MARIE  
 In such a voice.

CYRANO  
 My love.

Tom sits in the audience. He is captivated by her.

EXT. - CENTRAL PARK N.Y.C. - DAY

Tom and Marie link arms as they play the courting game.

MARIE  
 I used to dress up and perform for  
 my dogs.

TOM  
 I bet you got a lot of tail wags.

MARIE  
 More if I threw them a bone.

TOM  
 My audience were sheep. Got four  
 baas once.

Marie laughs. They walk on.

TOM (CONT'D)  
 Bet you didn't know I write plays.  
 'Moon Madness.' About to open in  
 Detroit.

MARIE  
 (impressed)  
 No!

TOM  
 Might be an opportunity for you.

MARIE  
 A girl in every part?

TOM  
 Oh no. I'm a serial virgin.

Marie laughs.

MARIE  
 Well you are more interesting than  
 the men in tights I usually meet.

EXT.- TRACK TO GRACIE WILLIAM'S HOUSE, PALL MALL - DAY

Pastor Pile rides a horse at speed to Gracie William's house.  
 He leaps off his horse and hurries inside.

PILE  
 (shouting)  
 Gracie, Gracie look what Alvin's  
 done.

Pile has a magazine in his hand. On the front page is a photo  
 of York in his army uniform.

Pile shows Gracie the magazine. She doesn't know what to make  
 it.

PILE (CONT'D)  
 I'll read it?

Gracie nods and they both sit down as Pile reads:

PILE (CONT'D)

In one of the bravest acts of the war a simple soldier from the bootblacks of Tennessee faced the might of the German army and showed that a rifle and a pistol could overcome the power of the machine gun. In fact the power of over thirty machine guns.

By this time Gracie's father, Asbury Williams stands behind them. He looks intently at the photograph of York.

WILLIAMS

Could you kindly read that from the beginning Pastor.

PILE

(reading)

In one of the bravest acts of the war a simple soldier from the bootblacks of Tennessee...

EXT. - OUTSIDE A NEW YORK HOTEL - MORNING

As Tom and Bobby walk towards Broadway they are buffeted by a noisy crowd running down the street. They look around in confusion.

WOMAN

It's over. At last.

MAN

It is official. Just this morning.

EXT. - BROADWAY - DAY - CONT'D

Bobby and Tom join huge crowds in Broadway. Bands play, people dance, wave flags, hug each other.

A woman hugs Tom.

WOMAN

I prayed for my brother every day.  
Now he's safe.

She cries into Tom's chest. He tenderly pats her back.

Bobby hugs a young man. When they break their look suggest sexual possibilities.

EXT. - NEW YORK CANYONS - DAY

An open car moves through New York canyons in a ticker tape blizzard. York is in the back seat with two dignitaries.

DIGNITARY

(shouting above the roar)  
Be the biggest parade in New York  
for years.

YORK

Me?

DIGNITARY

Of course! Everyone wants to see  
you - the soldier who killed 25 of  
the enemy and captured 132.

OTHER DIGNITARY

Followed by a dinner tonight at the  
Waldorf Astoria in your honor.

YORK

Does I has to say something?

OTHER DIGNITARY

Only a few words. I can write it  
for you. You can read?

YORK

Yes.

York sighs.

DIGNITARY

Not much more.

YORK

I just wants to go home. All me  
mates have been let home except me.

INT. DINING ROOM, WALDORF ASTORIA - NIGHT

York, strangulated in his uniform is a picture of boredom as a stuffed shirt holding a glass of wine makes a speech praising York (who does not listen.)

YORK (V.O.)

I gets tired inside my head and all  
I could hear was my dogs of mine  
baying for me to come back home.

EXT. - TOWN OF PALL MALL, TENNESSEE - DAY

Six cars pull up. They are packed with dignitaries and York. A band plays as York emerges to the cheers of the crowd.

YORK (V.O.)  
The first thing I did was go  
hunting for Gracie.

EXT.- TRACK TO GRACIE WILLIAM'S HOUSE - DAY

York rides a horse at speed to Gracie's house followed by excited dogs. He leaps off his horse and rushes inside.

Gracie runs to him, then pauses.

GRACIE  
I heard you was getting back, but I  
didn't know if you'd come for me.  
You being so famous.

YORK  
Oh Gracie.

They look awkwardly at each other, then plunge into each other arms.

Williams appears. York looks anxiously towards him. Williams smiles and says:

WILLIAMS  
Welcome home Alvin. Proud of what  
you did.

INT. - NEW YORK BAR - DAY

A drunk Tom is nursing a beer at the bar. Bobby is on a wall phone a short distance away.

Bobby angrily shoves the phone back on its cradle. He joins Tom.

BOBBY  
Another bloody cancellation.

TOM  
Don't worry about it.

BOBBY  
All they want is crooners and  
magicians.

Tom shrugs his shoulders.

TOM  
Audiences don't want to be reminded  
of war injuries now its over.  
Besides I am sick of being a blind  
poet.

BOBBY  
Back to Australia then?

TOM  
No way. Don't know about you but  
I'm going to Washington for a  
couple of weeks.

Bobby looks at him.

TOM (CONT'D)  
To that osteopath Teddy Roosevelt  
recommended to me.

BOBBY  
I never know what to believe.

Tom smiles cheekily.

EXT. - FRONT STEPS OF BOBBY AND TOM'S APARTMENT NYC - DAY

The evergreen Tom, looking like a kid on his first day of  
school, stands on the front steps, holding a case.

BOBBY  
This is madness.

TOM  
Life is madness Bobby.

Tom taps his way to the corner.

TOM (CONT'D)  
(he turns and calls)  
One more toss of the dice Bobby.

INT. - INSIDE OF BOBBY AND TOM'S APARTMENT - DAYS LATER

Bobby is on the phone.

BOBBY  
Hell I've been worried sick all  
week about you. Are you cured?

TOM  
 (over phone)  
 Not sure. Another week before the  
 bandages come off. Maybe more.

BOBBY  
 You are such a crazy bastard Tom.  
 But I love you like a brother.

EXT. - BOBBY AND TOM'S APARTMENT, NYC - DAY - A WEEK LATER

Watching from the front window, Bobby sees Tom walking along  
 the street wearing goggles and carrying his bag.

BOBBY  
 (shouting from the window)  
 You're back.  
 (turning to call behind  
 him)  
 Tom's here.

Marie's face appears at another window.

MARIE  
 Tom, Tom!

Tom drops his bags and pulls off his goggles.

TOM  
 Won't need these any more.

Tom walks to a garbage can and in a dramatic gesture hurls  
 the goggle inside.

He bows and commences a song and dance up and down the  
 stairs.

TOM (CONT'D)  
*I'm a happy sort of man you see,  
 No matter where I go,  
 Happy to see,  
 My friends must see,  
 When I am about you see.*

Marie runs down the stairs. She and Tom dance up and down the  
 stairs while Tom sings:

TOM (CONT'D)  
*I'm a happy sort of man you see,  
 No matter where I go,  
 Happy to see,  
 My friends must see,  
 When I am about you see.*

INT. - BOBBY AND TOM'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Tom, Bobby and Marie are seated at a table surrounded by wine bottles and the scraps of a meal.

TOM

Doctors said a cure was possible but the big danger was that my spine could be cracked further. And I'd end up a cripple - a blind cripple. Imagine the horror of that!

INT.- CHURCH - NIGHT

Tom is seated in a gloomy church.

TOM (V.O. CONT'D)

I spent many, many hours in a house of God seeking guidance and came to a prayerful understanding....

CUT TO:

INT. - HOSPITAL THEATER - DAY

Men and women in white coats hold up an x-ray of Tom's spine.

TOM (V.O. CONT'D.)

that it would be ignoble of me to turn away from the possibility of living life to its full potential.

Tom clad only in his underpants is on an operating table surrounded by six men and women dressed in medical garb.

WIPE

A woman seated on Tom's back violently cracks his neck one way and the other. (This scene could be played as burlesque.)

TOM (V.O.)

For 18 hours a team of doctors and physios manipulated my spine.

WIPE

A man holds Tom in a wrestle of legs and arms.

WIPE

A woman walks on Tom's spine.



TOM (V.O.)  
 Never, ever have I experienced such  
 pain. Then a miracle. At the 18th  
 hour I felt a click. Then a series  
 of clicks.

CUT TO:

BACK TO BOBBY AND TOM'S APARTMENT

TOM  
 A reverberation to my very soul.  
 Then a distant glimmer of light.

Awe from Bobby and Marie.

INT. - BOBBY AND TOM'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Tom, Bobby and Marie are now seated on a couch with glasses  
 of wine in hand

MARIE  
 So you can't be the Blind Poet  
 anymore?

TOM  
 I'll think of something.

BOBBY  
 You might try Chautauqua.

TOM  
 What the heck is Chautauqua?

INT. - INSIDE A MOTOR CAR - DAY

Tom is a passenger in a car being driven by Bobby. (At this  
 time Tom does not own a Lexington Tourer.)

BOBBY  
 Perhaps I can stop being the  
 crippled soldier as well.

Tom looks at him in surprise.

BOBBY (CONT'D)  
 I had a big scar from an old hernia  
 operation. I stabbed it open with a  
 knife then shot a bullet in. Only  
 one though.

TOM  
You faked it?

BOBBY  
So did you. Difference is I could have died, but there was no danger of you dying of blindness.

TOM  
I most certainly did not fake anything. I made sacrifices for my country Bobby. I spent five years in darkness. And you accuse me of treachery, you spineless poltroon. Do not equate me with you.

Tom glares at him.

TOM (CONT'D)  
What if every soldier faked it?

BOBBY  
The war would have ended sooner.

TOM  
Rubbish Bobby. The Germans would have won.

Car stops outside a building with a large CHAUTAUQUA sign.

INT. - INTERIOR OF CHAUTAUQUA BUILDING - DAY

Tom and Bobby are seated on a bench in an open office. Nearby a dozen clerks are busy at their desks. The walls are lined with posters, some on a Christian theme. Other colorful posters urge Prohibition of Alcohol.

TOM  
What are you getting me into Bobby?

BOBBY  
A moral circus. But the dollars are good.

Harry HARRISON puts his head outside his enclosed office. He motions the two inside.

INT. - HARRISON'S OFFICE IN CHAUTAUQUA BUILDING - CONT'D

Bobby and Tom sit before a desk occupied by Harry Harrison.

TOM

For years now Mister Harrison I have been going round in circles wondering why I was put on this earth. Now at last I know. The hope of the future is in the hands of young men like myself who have been thru the hell of war and are asking, nay demanding a new order.

Under the table Bobby nudges Tom's foot and motions with his hand to steady down.

TOM (CONT'D)

To listen to the thoughts of young men and women and reconcile them with Jesus. A new world is upon us, such as in Russia, now that the Czar is gone.

HARRISON

You can lecture on Russia?

TOM

I have an intimate knowledge of Russia. I've spoken to Lenin. I've spoken to Trotsky. I can report first hand.

Bobby looks at him in astonishment.

INT. - BOBBY AND TOM'S APARTMENT - DAY

Tom bursts in wearing a fur coat and an Ushanka hat. He places a stack of books on a table.

TOM

Russia!

Tom holds up 'Ten Days that Shook the World' and 'What Marx Meant.'

EXT. - TENNESSEE MOUNTAINS - DAY

Tom, shaken to the bone, drives on rough mountain roads.

EXT. - FRONT DOOR OF BUSHING HOUSE - CONT'D.

Mr. Bushing stands at the front door.

BUSHING  
No, you still can't see him.

TOM  
Why not?

BUSHING  
Trying to forget the war.

TOM  
Mister Bushing I hope you realize I  
can pay for an interview.

BUSHING  
Let me tell you Mister What-ever  
your name is, the Sarg done  
rejected \$30,000 dollars to do a  
vaudeville tour. And those what  
wanted to pay \$50,000 to make a  
movie of himself. And \$20,000 just  
for having him photographed  
shooting one of their rifles. Can  
you match that?

Tom has no reply.

BUSHING (CONT'D)  
I guess not.

Tom hesitates.

TOM  
I just want him to be better known.

Bushing sighs in exasperation and shuts the door.

EXT. - MAIN STREET OF A SMALL TOWN - DAY

A town band drums out marching music ahead of a procession of  
American Legionnaires and girl guides, followed by open cars  
occupied by Chautauqua performers, including Tom.

To the crowds lining the streets Tom throws fliers  
advertising himself.

A boy picks up a flier and hands it to his father. It shows  
Tom dressed in furs and reads: *'Hear the latest on Russia.  
Adventurer TOM SKEYHILL tells of his journey to discover the  
real Russia.'*

EXT. - A PASTURE OF FLAT LAND - DAY

A huge tent goes up, as an anvil chorus of college boys bang in huge metal pegs.

INT. - CHAUTAUQUA TENT - DAY

The Reverend LINDSEY, an old-time preacher, raises both arms and roars:

LINDSAY

Whoever degrades the sanctity of  
the home is an enemy of our nation.

Shouts of agreement, "Oh Yes", from the audience.

LINDSAY (CONT'D)

Oh Yes. The saloon owner is the  
most damnable, low-down, weasel-  
eyed, purple-faced scoundrel who  
ever wiggled out of hell and  
fastened himself on public  
morality.

More shouts of "Oh Yes".

LINDSAY (CONT'D)

Oh Yes! Praise be to God  
Prohibition will mean an end to  
saloons and the bootleggers. But  
why wait for the Government to act.  
You good people of Riverburg know  
where they are. And I ask you, nay,  
I demand to know, why the heck are  
they not run out of town already?  
And if the menfolk are too lily-  
livered to do it, it has to be the  
women.

Lindsey points to a group of women in the audience who stand, and raise a banner: LIPS THAT TOUCH LIQUOR SHALL NOT TOUCH MINE.

LINDSAY (CONT'D)

Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

Jubilant women respond "Oh Yes, Oh Yes".

INT. - CHAUTAUQUA TENT - LATER

MASTER OF CEREMONIES

Let's hear it for Tom Skeyhill. A soldier who has had more hair-breath escapes from death and undergone more thrilling adventures than the most notorious character in fiction.

To a blast of music, Tom runs from the body of the hall up stairs to the stage.

LATER

While Tom speaks the screen behind Tom shows Lenin, then flicks to Trotsky and then on to picturesque views of Russia.

TOM

They refused me entry. But was Tom Skeyhill deterred? No, never. I took a roundabout journey by sledding across the frozen Gulf of Finland, holding a forged passport and guided by a Russian monk.

Screen shot of Tom in furs and peppered by snow. Screen then shows Bobby in the garb of a Russian monk waving a gold cross.

TOM (CONT'D)

I suffered great pain in the cold, not least because of pesky bullets - war injuries - still in my groin. An end of a lifetime of pleasure for me, I'm afraid. I see a stack of college boys and girls chuckling away at that. Great to see you here. Great because you are the hope of the future. Civilization will not collapse in 20 or 30 years; it is collapsing right now! Believe me.

EXT. - OPEN FIELD NEAR PALL MALL - DAY

York is teaching about 30 children sitting in a mowed field when Pile walks up.

The two men walk a short distance away and look back at the children obediently reading their books.

YORK

I do my best Pastor Pile but we need a proper school with proper teachers.

PILE

Sure do. Need a pile of money Alvin.

YORK

(ignoring Pile's doubts)  
Reading and writing and 'rithmetic. The boys learning agriculture and useful trades. The girls spinning and home economics. Proper learning that I never got.

PILE

Never get it if you keep knocking back money.

YORK

Must be free cause them mountain families of 8 or 9 kiddies can't afford to pay. And heatin' in winter so them with no coats or shoes can come.

INT. - CHAUTAUQUA OFFICE - DAY

Tom marches into the office, followed by Bobby. In an exuberant mood, he turns to the clerks.

TOM

You must all come to the World Premiere of my play. In Detroit. I'll send you all tickets.

Tom counts the clerks.

TOM (CONT'D)

Five, six seven. And your wives. Fourteen. And some women here at their desks, so your husbands too. So 20. Write that down Bobby.

A secretary comes out from Harrison's office.

ONE OF THE CLERKS

What's it called?

WOMAN

He can see you now.

TOM  
 'The Unknown.' A drama of deception  
 and lust. It's opening in Chicago  
 and Broadway in the fall.

BOBBY  
 (whispered)  
 Oh Tom!

TOM  
 Don't worry, you are invited. Of  
 course you are Bobby. Don't mention  
 my play in there.

Tom jerks his thumb to Harrison's office.

TOM (CONT'D)  
 Wouldn't suit him. Too sexually  
 advanced.

Tom strides into Harrison's office, followed by Bobby,  
 shaking his head.

BOBBY  
 (to himself)  
 I can't stand this anymore.

INT. - HARRISON'S OFFICE

HARRISON  
 Ah Mister Skeyhill. I was just  
 going to ring you. Chautauqua's  
 reputation is based on improvement  
 and clean-living. And abstinence  
 from alcohol.

TOM  
 Why tell me?

HARRISON  
 Well I've heard.

TOM  
 You have spies?

HARRISON  
 Don't need spies Mister Skeyhill.  
 In small towns everyone is a spy.

Bobby shows Harrison a copy of Tom's new book of poetry, 'A  
 Singing Soldier.'



TOM  
Published in New York. It's a hit.

Harrison looks at the book.

HARRISON  
Poems about war? Sold many?

BOBBY  
It's too early to say. Just out.

Harrison slips it into his desk drawer.

HARRISON  
Thanks.

INT. - STAGE OF TENT - DAY

The three ORCHARD SISTERS, backed by a small orchestra, sing:

ORCHARD SISTERS  
*Three little maids from school are  
we  
Pert as a school-girl well can be  
Filled to the brim with girlish  
glee  
Three little maids from school.*

INT. - BED IN HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Tom is in bed with the three Orchard Sisters. He is wearing a fur Ushanka hat. He takes a swig from a bottle of whiskey before singing:

TOM  
*Everything is a source of fun  
Nobody's safe, for we care for none  
Life is a joke that's just begun  
Three little maids from school.*

The sisters giggle.

TOM (CONT'D)  
How in the world can I ever tell  
you apart?

EXT. - TENNESSEE MOUNTAINS - DAY

Tom, shaken to the bone, drives on rough mountain roads.

EXT. - TOWN OF PALL MALL, TENNESSEE - DAY

As Tom stops his car a farmer in overalls idly watches.

TOM  
Is Sergeant York hereabouts?

FARMER  
No, he be gone for a week.

TOM  
What about Mister Bushing?

FARMER  
Went with him. Looking for money  
for their school.

A dejected Tom turns his car and drives off.

INT. - HARRISON'S OFFICE CHAUTAUQUA - MORNING

Tom and Bobby are sitting on chairs facing Harrison at his desk.

HARRISON  
I have several letters of  
complaint. From Nashville. When you  
were there last week you praised  
Lenin.

TOM  
I bloody well did not.

HARRISON  
That Lenin possess one of the  
greatest minds on earth today. They  
copied it down. The Reverend  
Lindsey tells me that Lenin is an  
atheist.

Tom and Bobby look at Harrison in astonishment.

TOM  
Yes, I suspect he is.

HARRISON  
Now you listen to me, Lenin is not  
to be praised, in any form at  
Chautauqua. Do you understand that  
Mister Skeyhill?

BOBBY  
Yes he does.

HARRISON

(to Bobby)

I don't want to get rid of him. All about I get requests he do a return season but he gives me more grief than any other two together. Can't he speak on someone more wholesome.

BOBBY

Like who?

HARRISON

Mussolini. I saw a newsreel. He ran the communists out. Gets the trains to run on time. That is the sort of man we want. A good church-going man. Friend of the Pope.

INT. - KANSAS CITY WOMEN'S DINING CLUB - DAY

High-society women in a restaurant. A woman, next to a sign, KANSAS CITY WOMEN'S DINING CLUB holds a sheet of paper:

WOMAN

(obviously reading)

Our speaker is an accomplished student of world affairs. He has recently returned from a five month's visit to Italy, watching the rise and rise of Benito Mussolini. He has seen and heard much. May the City Women Dining Club give Mister Skeyhill a warm Kansas welcome.

Tom rises to applause. He is dressed as snappily as a stockbroker, with shoes polished to a gleam.

As Tom approaches the podium, the scene changes. He strides on stage to stirring music.

WIPE TO

INT. - STAGE OF TENT - DAY

Tom marches on stage to the 'Fascist Marching Song' by Blanc.

While the music plays he chants:

TOM

Ben-ven-uto Mussolini Aha, Aha Aha.  
Ben-ven-uto, Ben-ven-uto.

(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)

Aha, Aha, Aha. I've often marched to that stirring tune. On the Peoples' March in 1922. It was this march which freed Italy from the grip of an ineffective, ruinous government, riddled with Communists and Nationalist thugs. The eyes of the world are now focussed on il Duce, as he is known.

CUT TO:

INT. - STAGE OF TENT

Sign in the background: CHARLOTTE WELCOMES CHAUTAUQUA.

Tom stands in front of a screen showing Mussolini in his characteristic jaw-thrusting pose of il Duce.

TOM

Vigorous, handsome, dramatic. His story is like a chapter from the Arabian Nights.

The screen alters to a Fascist torchlight procession. He points to a tiny figure amongst thousands

TOM (CONT'D)

There I am. In my black shirt.

The screen alters to a movie of trains puffing thru the Italian countryside.

TOM (CONT'D)

The US can learn much from Italy?

Screen shows a movie of Italian boys and girls doing gymnastics while Tom says:

TOM (CONT'D)

And isn't it the truth that in our country, the 1920s have proved to be a cesspool of greed, gangsters and speakeasies. Our women cutting their hair short, smoking in public and talking endlessly about fashion and sex.

Cheers of support.

EXT. - CITY STREET - DAY

Tom drives up to Bobby in a 1921 Lexington Tourer (or similar). A pretty girl is in the back seat.

TOM

Hop in.

Bobby gets in the front seat. Tom drives off.

LATER

Tom driving on a scenic tour.

BOBBY

Who is she?

TOM

Don't know. She just hopped in when I stopped back there.

BOBBY

Is it her car?

TOM

No. I just bought it.

BOBBY

But you're overdrawn.

TOM

Sure am now.

INT. - BEDROOM OF YORK'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Gracie is in bed. She hears York slam the front door, then enter the bedroom. He is not in a good mood.

GRACIE

What did they say?

YORK

Sure the State and the County will put in, but it must be built where's they say.

York sits on the bed and puts his head in his hands.

YORK (CONT'D)

And that has to be the other side of Jamestown.

GRACIE  
That's terrible.

YORK  
When I already got the land here  
where it is most needed. What use  
is a school the mountain children  
can't get to?

GRACIE  
What are you going to do?

YORK  
I'm going to set up my own school  
Gracie. Where I wants, on my own  
land. You just watch.

INT. - SPEAKEASY CHARLOTTE - NIGHT

Taxi arrives outside a speakeasy. Tom gets out and speaks to  
a man who opens the peephole in a door.

After a brief conversation Tom returns to the taxi.

TOM  
It's OK.

Bobby and Marie get out.

INT. - SPEAKEASY - NIGHT

Tom, Bobby and Marie are seated at a table.

MARIE  
You looked so calm tonight. You  
don't get nervous? I know I do.

TOM  
It's not me up there.

A waiter arrives with a tray holding a tea pot, a flask of  
water, ice and several china cups.

WAITER  
Special tea. Canadian mind.

Without waiting for the others, Tom pours the tea (whiskey)  
into his cup and adds water and ice.

MARIE  
Who is it then?

Tom gulps down the whisky and pours himself another.

TOM  
A kid on a beach, pretending to be  
deaf and dumb.

The other two look at him. He pours himself another drink.

TOM (CONT'D)  
So he can escape somewhere else.

BOBBY  
And be someone else.

TOM  
Bobby thinks he has worked me out,  
but he hasn't.

BOBBY  
That's because you are never you.

Tom laughs and takes another drink.

TOM  
Why would I want to be me? When I  
can be what I want.

INT. - BACK AT HOTEL ROOM - LATER

Tom is on the phone.

TOM  
Look Mister Harrison what I  
require, before and after my talks,  
is something cultural - an  
instrumental group, something like  
Beethoven. Not bloody minstrels.

HARRISON  
(over the phone)  
Have you been drinking Mister  
Skeyhill? Do you know what time it  
is?

TOM  
No.

HARRISON  
It's one in the morning.

TOM  
Really? No one told me.

HARRISON

You listen to me Mister Skeyhill.  
Chautauqua can't afford the scandal  
of one of headline speakers being  
arrested for drunkenness.

TOM

Mister Harrison, my life is my own  
affair. You should realize I can do  
better than working for peanuts in  
your circus.

Bobby enters the room, and grabs the phone from Tom. Over the  
phone Harrison is shouting his indignation as Bobby waves to  
Tom to walk away - which he does.

EXT. - A RIVER BANK - MORNING

Bobby and Tom stroll by a river bank.

BOBBY

I've sorted things out with  
Harrison.

Tom grunts.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

You have to promise to never ring  
him at home.

Tom waves his hand in acceptance.

TOM

Where are we going tomorrow?

BOBBY

Town outside St. Louis. Train  
leaves four this afternoon.

Tom grimaces.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Do you ever worry you'll be found  
out.

TOM

Jesus Bobby, not now with my head  
thumping off its rocker.

They walk on.



TOM (CONT'D)  
People don't care if I shovel smoke  
so long as I amuse them.

INT.- GRAND CENTRAL STATION - DAY

Tom and Bobby follow a porter carrying bags thru the station  
and on to a platform.

They stop at the door of a train.

BOBBY  
Don't know for sure. Try to get  
into theater management. I've nine  
years experience in the US - trying  
my best to look after you. That's  
worth something. What about Mister  
Skeyhill?

TOM  
I might go with my play when it  
opens in London.

Bobby rolls his eyes, then laughing, says:

BOBBY  
Tom you are already in your own  
play in your own special theater.  
With you directing. And starring of  
course.

Tom chuckles.

TOM  
I'll miss you so much Bobby. No one  
can burst my balloon like you.  
Won't you stay. Please. If you want  
manage theaters, America is the  
place. How can you be a big success  
in a country of 6 million people  
living on a sheep farm?

BOBBY  
I don't want to be a big success,  
Tom. I just want to be where the  
sun shines.

Bobby extends his hand; Tom takes it.

BOBBY (CONT'D)  
Leaving is not easy for me Tom.

TOM

I know.

BOBBY

I love you Tom.

TOM

I know you do.

BOBBY

Ever since I saw that frightened kid in an oversized army uniform shivering on a Gallipoli beach.

Tom nods. Bobby wells up in emotion. They hug each other.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

(in a gasp of sobs)

But you never asked me into your bed.

TOM

Doesn't mean I don't love you Bobby.

Bobby breaks apart and steps on the train.

Tom wipes tears from his eyes.

INT. - YORK'S HOUSE- EVENING

York and Bushing are seated at the kitchen table. Gracie and several of the York children are cooking in the kitchen. A dog is on the floor next to York.

YORK

By now there should be a school standing out there. But what do I get from those damn politicians and them useless county officials. Nothing! I gets so mad. It be harder than that war but Gracie tells me I can't use my old service rifle on them.

Gracie laughs.

BUSHING

Alvin there's this slick stranger been coming around. Wants to look at your diaries. Talking big about money.

YORK  
Hurmp! Another one.

York stands. A dog follows him as he walks out.

YORK (CONT'D)  
I's going for a walk.

INT. - BACK STAGE OF CHAUTAUQUA TENT, - NIGHT

Tom is before a mirror, applying makeup.

As the Rev. Lindsey enters, Tom hides a bottle of moonshine under his desk.

LINDSAY  
Still here. Thought they'd got rid  
of you.

Tom scowls at him.

After Lindsay departs Tom retrieves the bottle and takes a swig.

INT. - STAGE OF TENT - CONT'D

Tom, in a Chaplinesque entrance, staggers onto the stage. He stumbles over a lectern. He starts to topple over, then recovers.

The audience roar their delight.

TOM  
(to audience)  
And how are we today?

Lindsey strides on the stage and tries to escort Tom off stage. They chase each other around the lectern. Lindsey trips over the leg of the lectern and falls to the ground.

TOM (CONT'D)  
Oh Reverend, you shouldn't drink  
so.

Tom runs off the stage. Audience in hoots of laughter. The MC rushes onto the stage and in a frantic motion urges the next act on. It is a Blackface Minstrels group carrying banjos, fiddles, tambourines and bones, and singing *Campdown Races*.

But Tom has not finished. He appears amongst the audience, waves to them, runs up stairs to the stage, and with arms raised, charges thru the minstrels.

A minstrel hits him on the head with a banjo. Tom gets a minstrel in a headlock and they fall to the ground.

Uproar from the audience.

INT. - HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Tom is at a table writing a letter.

TOM (V.O.)

I am a tired of being accused of breaking every command in the book. It was just a bit of an act-up. To show how the evils of drink affect all classes, even a Reverend.

Tom considers, then adds:

TOM (V.O.)

It is a matter of record that I am the most heavily booked speaker on your list. If I resign you have only yourself to blame.

WIPE TO

INT. - HARRISON'S OFFICE - CONT'D. - DAY

Harrison is reading Tom's letter.

TOM (V.O.)

Mister Harrison, the simple truth is I have lost faith in you. I have carried four bullets in my groin since the war. Twice I was in such pain that I had to have morphine injections before I could limp on stage.

HARRISON

Jesus give me strength.

He scrunches Tom's letter and throws it across the room towards a wastepaper basket. He misses.

INT. - EXPENSIVE N.Y. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

A waiter weaves through tables of well-dressed diners to serve Tom and Marie.

TOM

Harrison pleaded with me to stay,  
but I said not for all the tea in  
China. Oh it is such a relief,  
Marie. It was a dog's life. Town  
after town. Crummy hotels. Bed-bug  
beds.

He strokes her hand.

TOM (CONT'D)

So now I can concentrate on my  
writing.

He smiles and makes a tentative proposal:

TOM (CONT'D)

Perhaps we could get married?

MARIE

(laughing)

Tom if I felt the urge to marry a  
hopeful playwright I could have  
years ago. ... What are you going  
to write about?

TOM

I've got tons of ideas. A real  
intellectual contribution, not the  
rubbish my life has been about so  
far. And I haven't given up on  
Sergeant York.

EXT. - FRONT DOOR OF BUSHING HOUSE - LATER

Tom knocks on the front door. Bushing appears.

TOM

I wrote you.

BUSHING

That you did.

TOM

Didn't get a reply.

BUSHING

Expect not.

The two men stare at each other.

TOM

Can you show me around town?

Bushing thinks.

BUSHING  
Suppose I can. Won't take long.

EXT. - MAIN STREET OF PALL MALL - DAY

Distant shot of two men walking. Indistinct conversation from Tom.

They walk into the mountains and sit watching a beautiful view.

BUSHING  
The Sarg is not like any other man you is likely to meet. He reads the Bible and puzzles over things all the time. Won't decide until he's sure it's right.

Tom thinks about this.

EXT. - OPEN FIELD NEAR PALL MALL - DAY - LATER

Tom and Bushing walk across an open paddock. They stop next to a stack of sawn timber and bricks overgrown with grass.

BUSHING  
So he's a-dedicating himself to this school of his. Right here.

TOM  
Don't look like much is happening.

BUSHING  
Money's a bit short since Tennessee went bust... Since you here, you might want to put in. I've got a receipt book in my pocket.

Bushing waves a receipt book at Tom who pulls out his wallet but does not open it.

TOM  
Where are the Sergeant's diaries?

He waves his wallet under Bushing's nose.

BUSHING  
He keeps 'em in a bank vault over in Jamestown.

Tom hands over several notes. Bushing pockets the money.

Again Tom waves his wallet at Bushing.

BUSHING (CONT'D)

Bank opposite the park. Can't miss it.

Tom hands over more money.

BUSHING (CONT'D)

He won't show them to you but. He don't like talking about all the killing he done. Says it would be taking the thirty pieces of silver to betray his uniform.

LATER

Tom, walking with Bushing towards his car, has another thought:

TOM

What if I write to the Sergeant and ask for a meeting? Would you give my letter to him?

BUSHING

Sure. Mind you write to me. I's his private secretary. No bothering the Sarg.

INT. - BACKSTAGE OF THEATER - DAY

Tom and Marie stand backstage watching several actors in rehearsal.

The flustered DIRECTOR is detained by Tom shoving a sheaf of papers at his chest.

DIRECTOR

What's this?

TOM

A play I wrote.

The Director looks disdainfully at it.

TOM (CONT'D)

Not a play really, more a sketch of a play. Not much to read.

DIRECTOR

Send it to my agent, like everyone else.

He hands it to Marie and walks off.

TOM

(to Marie)

I deserve better than this. I've got a play about to run in Detroit. Another in London. No wonder he's directing in this two-bit flea house.

MARIE

The one I act in.

TOM

I didn't meant that.

MARIE

Tom, I like you for who your are, not what you pretend to be.

She pushes his script into his chest and storms off.

EXT. - TOWN OF PALL MALL, TENNESSEE - DAY

Tom halts his car outside Mr. Bushing's house.

EXT. - FRONT DOOR OF BUSHING HOUSE - CONT'D

Mr. Bushing and Tom in conversation.

EXT - ROAD ALONG A VALLEY - AFTERNOON

Tom is in a buggy driven by Bushing. It is snowing. They halt outside the Church of Christ in Christian Union. The two men get out and walk along a path to the church.

INT. - RURAL CHURCH - AFTERNOON

While Bushing sits on the porch Tom enters.

The church is crowded with children sitting on hard benches around a potbelly heater. Standing next to a rostrum is Sergeant YORK, an overweight, red-haired giant.



YORK  
Children, let us greet Mister  
Skeyhill.

CHILDREN  
(in sing-song)  
Good afternoon Mister Skeyhill.

YORK  
You sit down Mister Skeyhill.  
Joseph was doing Isaiah.

Tom sits uncomfortably in a child's seat while JOSEPH,  
standing at the rostrum, reads ponderously from a very large  
bible.

JOSEPH  
Behold, God is my salvation; I will  
trust, and will not be afraid.

York nods in approval.

YORK  
Mister Skeyhill might recall what  
comes next.

Tom shrugs in failure. York nods to Joseph.

JOSEPH  
For the Lord God is my strength and  
my song.

YORK  
My song! Let's do as Isaiah  
suggests and sing for Mister  
Skeyhill.

York nods to violin and piano players in the corner of the  
church.

Children, York and Tom sing 'Give Me that Old Time Religion'.  
(This is a nod to the 1941 movie 'Sergeant York' starring  
Gary Cooper.)

INT. - YORK'S HOME - AFTERNOON

Tom and York are at the kitchen table. York's pregnant wife,  
Gracie, is serving tea and pumpkin scones. Four infant  
children hang around, hoping for leftovers.

YORK

I like to be civil to strangers but every few weeks, I been getting someone pestering me to do this or that. If I hadn't been a doughboy killing all those Germans they never would come near. You follow?

TOM

Sure do. I never was a big war hero like you, but when people asked what it was like, I never said.

York nods.

TOM (CONT'D)

Wouldn't say. Just wanted to forget.

EXT. - TRACK THRU THE MOUNTAINS - DAY

York and Tom walk along a track.

YORK

Thousands of our boys killed. Millions of dollars poured out just like water. War is a awful, awful thing Mister Skeyhill.

TOM

Ain't it so. I was blinded for five years.

YORK

Just terrible for you Mister Skeyhill. I feels for them injured veterans I sees in Jamestown. Lacking arms and legs. I stays worried about making money from all that. God wouldn't want me to.

TOM

Even for your school.

YORK

Hit's a-coming.

TOM

I can help.

INT. - GREASY DINER, PALL MALL - DAY

**Note:** Over time, as Tom pursues York, he adopts the mode of speech of the mountain people. However in his dress he remains an eastener.

The cook in a dirty apron brings out beef and cornbread piled high on a tin plate.

YORK

Mister Suva, this is Mister Skeyhill. Hails from way overseas. Here for a couple of days. Said I would show him the best food in Tennessee.

Tom rises to shake Suva's hand.

TOM

Howdy from Australia.

Suva hasn't a clue about Australia. He smiles and walks back to the kitchen.

YORK

I figured you was English.

TOM

No Australian.

York thinks for a moment.

YORK

Wasn't we fighting them?

TOM

No that's Austria. Australia's an island. In the Pacific.

York nods thoughtfully.

GREASY DINER, IN PALL MALL - LATER

Tom and York are seated around a pot belly heater with several old timers playing a fiddle and flute. Tom and York tap their feet along with the mountain music.

When there is a break in the music:

TOM

I wrote a song about getting wet in them trenches. You-uns wanna to hear it?

YORK

Sure do.

To the tune of 'My Little Grey Home in the West':

TOM

(sings and the musicians  
pick up the tune)  
*I've a little wet home in the  
trench,  
Which the rain-storms continually  
drench;  
Mud and clay for a bed,  
And a stone we use for a bed.  
Bully beef and hard biscuits we  
chew;  
It seems years since we tasted a  
stew;  
Shells crackle and scare,  
But no place can compare  
With my little wet home in the  
trench.*

York, and the diners clap.

YORK

That's a mighty fine song you've  
got there Mister Skeyhill.

EXT. - FRONT VERANDAH OF YORK'S HOUSE - SUNSET

Tom and York sit on rocking chairs watching the sunset.

YORK

They wanted me to do vaudeville.  
Can you imagine that.

TOM

You on stage singing and dancing.  
No!

YORK

They also wanted me to do a  
speaking tour.

TOM

I did that once. An awful life.

YORK

Never had any need for fame.

York looks shrewdly at Tom.

TOM

Well I ...

York smiles and pats him on the leg.

YORK

All I wanted was to live on a little farm in the Valley of the Three Forks, Tennessee.

TOM

It sure is beautiful around here.

YORK

Where I grew up.

TOM

A man could be real content hereabouts.

INT. - APARTMENT NEW YORK - NIGHT

Tom is sitting on a chaise lounge with Marie resting her head on his lap. Tom is drinking Tennessee moonshine.

TOM

He might be a national legend but he's not much of a farmer. Locals tell me he's losing money.

MARIE

You haven't asked him for his diaries yet?

TOM

Best take it slowly. Like seduction. When a woman's ready.

Tom strokes Marie's face. He leans down and kisses her on the forehead. She smiles.

MARIE

Well you've got me ready.

Marie pulls Tom on top of her. Passionate kiss.

EXT. - TENNESSEE MOUNTAINS - DAY

Tom, York and four lively dogs walk thru woods. Both men carry muzzle-loaded rifles.

YORK

Most time I only has schooling  
three weeks a year. Some of my  
brothers never went at all.

TOM

Same in my town out in the desert.  
We always went kangaroo shooting  
instead.

YORK

That'd be some fearsome critter  
Mister Skeyhill. Wouldn't want to  
meet one of them.

York motions for Tom to be silent. He points out a turkey in  
the undergrowth. He indicates that it's Tom's shot.

Tom fires and thrown by the recoil of his rifle, falls  
backwards, toppling York and landing on top of him. York  
wrestles Tom off, only to collapse again in a peal of joyful  
belly laughs.

YORK (CONT'D)

Mister Skeyhill, that be the worst  
shot I every saw. You sure missed  
the turkey. Don't think you hit the  
mountain behind. Doubt you landed  
anywhere in Tennessee at all. Ho,  
ho, ho.

York stands and wipes tears of merriment from his eyes.

INT. YORK'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Mrs. York places a large plate of baked turkey and potatoes  
before York, his children and Tom. They are seated at the  
kitchen table.

York says grace.

YORK

By his hand we all are fed;  
Give us, Lord, our daily bread.  
O Lord, we thanks you for the gifts  
of your bounty which we enjoy at  
this table.

LATER AT THE DINING TABLE

York is in a jolly mood.

YORK

Then he fires clear into the sky,  
and gets such a fright he falls  
over and lands me to the ground.

Tom smiles in acceptance of being the butt of the joke.

York wipes his chin on his sleeve and gives a huge burp.

EXT. - TENNESSEE MOUNTAINS - DAY

Tom, York and dogs walk thru mountains. Both men carry rifles.

York motions for Tom to be silent. He looks overhead at a line of ducks in flight. York raises his rifle killing the one in the rear. He motions to Tom.

YORK

(whispering to Tom)  
You git that next from the back.

LATER

They walk home, each carrying a duck.

YORK

When you sees a line of 'em you  
pick 'em off from the last.

TOM

And work forward.

YORK

That's right. So the front ones  
don't scamper.

TOM

Same how you got those Germans.

York grunts.

INT. - GREASY DINER, PALL MALL - DAY

Tom is finishing a meal when York walks in.

YORK

Just takin' a stroll to church if  
you wants to come.

EXT.- PATH TO RURAL CHURCH - DAY

YORK

I'd look at them Germans lying on the ground and I'd see they were just kids. Younger than me. Blood everywhere.

TOM

Maybe something good can still come out of it.

York looks at him then opens the gate to the church.

YORK

I was just going to pray for a bit.

Tom nods and they enter the church. They both kneel and shut their eyes in silent contemplation.

After a while Tom opens his eyes and looks at York.

Suddenly Tom begins crying. He stands in embarrassment.

York stands beside him. They walk out of the church.

On the way home:

TOM

Thinking of the things I've done.

York nods but remains silent.

TOM (CONT'D)

Wish I had your faith.

INT. - BEDROOM OF HOTEL, JAMESTOWN - EVENING

Tom is on the phone in his room.

TOM

(over phone)

I've got to spend a few more days here while he goes up in the mountains and asks God what to do.

CUT TO:

INT. - MARIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Marie is lying on her bed.



MARIE

Hell!

TOM

(over phone)

Yes, I know. I keep stressing that I'm not like the others. Me writing his life story isn't asking him to make a fool of himself.

EXT. - FRONT VERANDAH OF YORK'S HOUSE - SUNSET

Tom and York sit on rocking chairs watching the sunset.

YORK

I never done hated them, Mister Skeyhill.

TOM

Same with me. Them Turks were just defending their homeland. I'd have done the same.

YORK

Never rightly understood why we was fighting them anyways. We's both forced to do dreadful things by our government. Can't be right.

Long silence.

York stands and walks inside.

Tom half-rises to peer through the window to see York go to the kitchen dresser and pick up a black satchel.

York returns with the satchel, sits and passes it to Tom.

Tom looks inside and sees two, small, cloth-covered diaries, one black and one red.

Tom reverently picks one up.

YORK (CONT'D)

I's embarrassed to show 'em to you, you being an educated man.

TOM

No, no. Never went to college. Like you straight into the army.

YORK

They won't do you no good. Just a few scribbles before I gets to sleep. Hardly anything there.

Tom ignores him. He is greedily flicking thru a diary.

York sighs as he watches the sunset over mountains.

YORK (CONT'D)

I just love this place.

Tom pays York no attention.

INT. - BEDROOM OF HOTEL, JAMESTOWN - EVENING

Tom is on the phone in his room.

TOM

He wrote them for years. I've got his whole life!

MARIE

(over phone)

Well done Tom.

TOM

Day by day. A bit cryptic so I'll have to get him to pan them out. Look I'm sorry but I'll be here for weeks. I'll have to miss your opening night.

MARIE

(chilly)

I'll survive.

TOM

I can't help it Marie.

MARIE

Sure.

INT. - KITCHEN OF YORK'S TABLE - DAY

Tom and York are at the table. Tom is writing notes.

YORK

I was hog-wild when I was young. Drinking, fighting, guzzling moonshine.

(MORE)

YORK (CONT'D)

It's my mother waiting up at night,  
sobbing away till I comes home.  
That's what got me. So I promised  
her, I'd seek the way of the Lord.  
No more drinking, fighting or using  
cuss words.

Tom busily writes this down.

WIPE

AT THE KITCHEN TABLE - LATER

YORK

When the war comes I goes straight  
to the Bible where it says Thou  
Shall Not Kill. Even a child can  
understand that.

Tom watches him.

YORK (CONT'D)

So I writes to the U.S. Government  
saying I want to be a conscientious  
objector. Three times I writ. But  
ole Uncle Sam writs back three  
times how I have to go to war  
anyhow. Even wrote to the  
President.

York laughs in embarrassment.

YORK (CONT'D)

When I became someone I was taken  
to meet President Wilson in France.  
But I was too shy to ask him why he  
don't answer my letter.

York laughs.

EXT. - OUTSIDE YORK'S HOUSE - MORNING

Tom arrives in his car with a young, pretty female in a tight  
business suit.

From the front door, York looks suspiciously at her.

TOM

Miss McKiddie may I introduce you  
to Mister York. I'm sure you've  
heard of him.

McKiddie takes York's hand and bows.

TOM (CONT'D)  
 She's a stenographer. From  
 Jamestown.

York is confused.

TOM (CONT'D)  
 She takes down what you say. As you  
 speak. So it's your words. Not  
 mine. I wants this book to be  
 yours.

AT THE KITCHEN TABLE - LATER

York, Tom and McKiddie are seated. McKiddie is writing in her notebook.

York is fascinated by the shorthand squiggles McKiddie makes.

YORK  
 (to McKiddie)  
 Is that me down there?

MCKIDDIE  
 Yes, what you said.  
 (reading from her  
 notebook)  
 "Its an awful thing when your  
 country gets mixed up with God and  
 they goes against each other."

YORK  
 Goodness.

TOM  
 But you went to war?

York reflects for a moment.

YORK  
 God, He hears my prayers and comes  
 to the mountain.

McKiddie is fascinated. Opened mouth she stops transcribing.

Tom motions for her to continue.

YORK (CONT'D)

God sees right inside me. And he says so long as I believed in Him He ain't going to allow a hair of my head to be harmed. He tole me that.

TOM

So God was guiding you when you shot up all those Germans?

YORK

No! Not guiding me. I just knew I would not be harmed because He told me. The bushes were shot up all around me but I never got a scratch. A lot in my platoon got killed that day.

TOM

Why you?

YORK

I never know. He could see I believed. Maybe no one other ask.

Both Tom and McKiddie write rapidly.

FRONT OF YORK'S HOUSE - LATER

York and Tom watch McKiddie walk to the car. York frowns.

YORK

You married Mister Skeyhill?

TOM

No. I've got a serious girl friend though.

YORK

Marriage was the best thing Gracie and I ever did.

Tom nods.

INT. - KITCHEN OF YORK'S HOME - MORNING

York, Tom and McKiddie are seated.

TOM  
We have been talking for weeks, and  
the only thing left is what  
happened in the Argonne Forest.

YORK  
Hmm.

TOM  
8th October 1918?

York is distressed. He shakes his head.

TOM (CONT'D)  
Not much in your diary about it.

YORK  
No, I hardly writ.

TOM  
People say you killed 25.

No response.

TOM (CONT'D)  
By yourself?

No response.

TOM (CONT'D)  
Mister Bushing's never heard you  
talk about it neither?

YORK  
God said he would protect me. Never  
said I could boast about it.

TOM  
I can't write the book, unless you  
tell me what happened.

YORK  
I ain't never Mister Skeyhill. I'm  
sorry. You should have asked afore  
time. I's not even told Gracie.

TOM  
But Sergeant...

York stands and walks to a rack of guns.

YORK  
 (emotional)  
 I still see all those boys Mister  
 Skeyhill. Six of our own killed. I  
 pray for them. All those Germans. I  
 done pray for them too Mister  
 Skeyhill. They was all my brothers.

York picks out a rifle. Tom looks nervously at him.

YORK (CONT'D)  
 Tell Gracie I've gone a-hunting.

He walks out. Several dogs follow.

INT. - INTERIOR OF CAR - LATER

An anguished Tom is driving McKiddie back to the hotel.

TOM  
 He'll talk endless about his  
 childhood, and his years of booze  
 and his trying to avoid the draft,  
 and his God, and telling me to get  
 married but the thing that matters  
 most he's a bloody clam.

Tom bangs at the dashboard of the car.

TOM (CONT'D)  
 Its's the only thing he's famous  
 for. And he won't talk about it.  
 Hell!

AT RURAL HOTEL - LATER - DAY

As Tom marches in, he yells to the Desk Clerk.

TOM  
 A bottle of your worst bootleg - to  
 my room.

INT. - BEDROOM OF HOTEL, JAMESTOWN - EVENING

Tom is drunk on the hotel bed. He is on the phone to Marie.

TOM  
 I'm driving back tomorrow. I'm done  
 for. It's all over.

MARIE

He might change his mind.

TOM

You don't know the man. He's the most pig-honest, stubborn man on God's earth.

There is a knock on the door. Tom ignores it. The knock is repeated.

TOM (CONT'D)

Go away.

The door opens. It is York. He looks sadly at the bottle of booze next to Tom's bed.

YORK

I'm sorry. I guess I caused that.

Tom shrugs.

TOM

I pushed you too hard.

YORK

I come to say there's a way.

TOM

You will talk about it?

A maid brings a coffee pot and cups on a tray.

YORK

No. But I remembered something. You can read it for yourself.

TOM

How?

YORK

The Army Brass ain't never able to work out how I killed so many and captured 132, so they walks me thru it. They got me to write an Official Report too. I had to if the army asked.

Excitedly Tom sits up.

YORK (CONT'D)

Still be in the War Department I expect.



York picks up the bottle of bootleg.

YORK (CONT'D)  
Oh Mister Skeyhill, not apple  
brandy! Can I?

Tom nods.

YORK (CONT'D)  
They done ask my platoon buddies  
all about it as well. They writ it  
down and signs it's the truth.

York walks to a sink and empties the bootleg.

As it glugs away he turns and says:

YORK (CONT'D)  
You never seen how much those  
Yankees in New York drink. I was  
give a special dinner at the  
Waldorf Astoria. All the time  
booze, booze, booze. Our top law  
makers, generals. Judges too. Boy  
was I glad to get out of there!

LATER

York and Tom sit next to each other on the hotel veranda  
drinking coffee.

YORK  
Funny thing is that the war ended a  
month after I killed them. Perhaps  
it didn't need to happen. A lot of  
them Germans just surrender cause  
they wanted to live.

TOM  
I wanted to live too, so I ran  
away. Never told anyone that.

York looks at him.

TOM (CONT'D)  
Never was blind. Didn't want to  
die. I was only nineteen.

Tom suddenly breaks down in tears. York looks uncomfortable,  
then gives Tom a tentative hug as Tom sobs.

INT. ARCHIVES OF WAR DEPARTMENT - DAY

A silent room of long oak tables.

Tom is at a desk when an archivist places a sizeable file before him. He opens it.

Tom picks up a document and reads aloud:

TOM  
Our investigation revealed that  
Sergeant York fired 28 bullets of  
which 25 hit human targets

Tom picks up another document.

FLASHBACK

INT. - US COMMAND HEAD QUARTERS - DAY

York is seated at an desk while an officer, also seated, writes down his words. Several officers watch proceedings.

YORK  
The undergrowth was so thick we  
could see only a few yards ahead.

FLASHBACK

EXT.- ARGONNE FOREST - DAY

York is part of squad of 17 Americans creeping through the undergrowth.

YORK (V.O.)  
We bust through the bushes and was  
upon the Germans before we know.  
They was eating breakfast.

The Germans and the Americans are startled to come across each other. The heavily armed Americans surround the Germans who do not have their arms at the ready.

The Americans line the Germans up as prisoners of war.

Suddenly hell breaks loose. Several German machine guns 40 to 50 yards away fire at the Americans. As both the German prisoners and the Americans nose-dive to the ground, six Americans are killed, as are many German prisoners.

Conomus is amongst those killed.

York, although unharmed, is caught out in the open. He runs/crawls closer to the German machine gunners until they are about 25 yards away.

Lying in a prone position he raises his rifle towards the German gunners and places spittle on the front sight.

CUT TO FLASHBACK

EXT. - FOREST IN THE TENNESSEE MOUNTAINS

As in opening scene of this script turkey heads bob up and down above a log.

BACK TO:

EXT.- ARGONNE FOREST - DAY

York carefully picks off German heads bobbing above the hillside gun emplacements.

York inserts more bullets and continues to take down the heads.

LATER:

Five Germans with fixed bayonets charge at York from a distance of 25 yards.

York stands holding his Colt .45 pistol in a fixed, steady hand.

York picks off the last bayonet-carrying soldiers first. Then he shoot the next from the rear. The front-most soldier is only feet away when York shoots him in the stomach.

Some Germans put up their hands. York motions them forward.

To his amazement they keep on coming. One hundred and thirty two of them.

He motions for them to drop their weapons. Most do, but one German raises his pistol. York shoots him.

Seven US soldiers arrive and guard the prisoners.

York walks sadly amongst the American and Germans dead. Amongst them is Conomus.

York turns away.

EXT. - ROAD THRU THE ARGONNE FOREST - LATER

York, aided by seven other US soldiers, shepherds 132 prisoners down a road.

US MAJOR in jaw-dropping astonishment:

MAJOR

Good Lord, have you captured the whole German army?

YORK

No, just a tolerable few.

MONTAGE

EXT. - WINDOW OF BOOKSHOP WINDOW - NIGHT

Pedestrians pause to look at the display of Tom's book in the window. The display includes a large poster of the cover: 'Sergeant York: His own Life Story and War Diary edited by Tom Skeyhill.'

MONTAGE

INT. - BOOKSHOP - DAY

Stacks of the book in the aisles of a bookshops. Customers tussle for copies.

MONTAGE

INT. - BOOKSHOP - DAY

Tom is seated at a desk in a bookshop. Customers holding copies of his book queue for Tom to sign it.

INT. - EXPENSIVE RESTAURANT - DAY

Tom and Marie are eating at a flash restaurant. Tom is signing one of his books for a man standing next to the table. As the man departs Marie says:

MARIE

Liberty Magazine is going to serialize it next month.

The man nods. Marie turns to Tom.

MARIE (CONT'D)

I'm so proud of you Tom. You deserve all the attention you're getting.

TOM

Then why do I feel so flat? He once said to me that we was both forced to do dreadful things by our government. Never true for me. I ran away.

Marie looks at Tom.

TOM (CONT'D)

Been running ever since. It's really Sergeant York's story. It's his book. But he never asked for a contract... So I didn't give him one.

MARIE

Oh Tom.

TOM

Yes. I must fix that.

EXT. - OPEN FIELD NEAR PALL MALL - DAY

Tom, Bushing, dignitaries and lots of children, stand in a field. Everyone is dressed in their Sunday best.

Tom holds up a copy of his book.

TOM

To be placed in the school library which is going to be built just about there.

He walks a few paces to where York and his wife stands.

TOM (CONT'D)

And with this check the last amount needed for its construction will be done.

Tom hands the check to York amidst much applause.

LATER

York, Tom and a few dignitaries hold cups of coffee.

YORK

It's very generous amount Mister Skeyhill. I hope you held back some dollars for yourself.

TOM

I always wanted to own an airplane.

York nods his head in approval.

YORK

An aero-plane! Fancy that. You married that girl of yours yet?

TOM

Yes. We've got a daughter.

Tom pulls a photograph of a baby out of his jacket.

York nods wisely and passes the photo to his wife.

TOM (CONT'D)

They are in New York.

Gracie hands the photo back to Tom.

GRACIE

She's beautiful.

TOM

(to York)

I hoping you will agree to letting me make a movie of your life.

YORK

No, no. Can't imagine that.

TOM

Thinking of getting Gary Cooper to be you.

YORK

You know Gary Cooper?

TOM

Not yet.

EXT. - SKY, CLOUDS, TENNESSEE MOUNTAINS - DAY

Tom is flying crazy stunts in an airplane. He hollers in delight.

**TITLE: TENNESSEE - 1929**

The plane flies low over an impressive building bearing the sign 'YORK AGRICULTURAL INSTITUTE.'

Children pour out of the school, followed by York.

YORK  
It's Mister Skeyhill.

York and the children wave.

Tom buzzes low and waves back. Then the plane flies over the mountains.

EXT. - SMALL AIRPORT - DAY

Tom, a pilot and another walk to Tom's smart-looking plane. Tom is in an ebullient mood. He takes a swig from a bottle of booze.

**TITLE: MASSACHUSETTS - 1932**

As they climb aboard, the pilot holds out his hand.

PILOT  
I'd better have the keys.

Tom hesitates, then hands the keys to the pilot.

EXT. - SKY, CLOUDS - DAY

Tom's plane is a silhouette against a blue sky.

Abruptly the engine stops. Eerie silence.

The plane glides silently into telegraph wires.

The plane hangs precariously, until the wires snap and the plane crashes to the ground.

People rush to the crumpled plane.

TOM (V.O.)  
(singing softly and slow)  
*I've a little wet home in the  
trench,  
Which the rain-storms continually  
drench;*  
(MORE)

TOM (V.O.) (CONT'D)

*Blue Sky overhead,  
Mud and clay for a bed,  
And a stone we use for a bench,  
With my little wet home in the  
trench.*

EXT. - GRAVESIDE IN A CEMETARY - DAY

Twenty or so stand around an open grave plus a priest and a uniformed detachment from the Cape Cod Legion.

TOM (V.O.)

*Blue Sky overhead,  
Mud and clay for a bed,  
And a stone we use for a bench,  
With my little wet home in the  
trench.*

FADE TO BLACK.

**TOM SKEYHILL DIED IN AN AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT IN MAY 1932.**

**THE FILM, 'SERGEANT YORK', BASED ON SKEYHILL'S BOOK AND DIRECTED BY HOWARD HAWKS, WAS RELEASED IN 1941. IT WAS THE HIGHEST GROSSING MOVIE OF THAT YEAR AND WON GARY COOPER THE ACADEMY AWARD FOR BEST ACTOR.**

**SERGEANT YORK DIED IN TENNESSEE IN 1964.**