

FACTORY GIRLS

by

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B.F.A, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 2007

A Thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in the Department of English

Memorial University of Newfoundland

St. John's

August 2019

Abstract

In 1916, a representative from the Imperial Munitions Board announced to a gathering of women at Massey Hall in downtown Toronto that women were to be recruited to munitions factories. The intention from the Board and from the Canadian government was to dilute the masculine labour force with unskilled female labourers in order to allow the largest possible number of able-bodied men to enlist for deployment overseas. Hundreds of women from a wide array of backgrounds answered the call, efficiently and effectively building weapons, aircraft and ships for the war effort. *Factory Girls* explores the lives and motives of ten such women who take up employment in a fictional factory in Toronto. Members of the leisure class join working girls as they navigate a newfound sense of freedom and agency against a background of increasingly violent nationalism, imperialism and xenophobia. As the pressures of war build and what is normal becomes increasingly strange, aspects of absurdity pop up in both the lives of these women and in the telling of their stories. *Factory Girls* explores the question of what it means to make a bomb in the context of these women's diverse economic, social and ideological backgrounds.

Acknowledgements

This work would not exist in its current form without the tremendous actors who donated their time and skill in workshop readings of earlier drafts: Kathryn Burke, Renee Hackett, Claire Hewlett, Elizabeth Hicks, Willow Kean, Allison Kelly, Jill Kennedy, Alexis Koetting, Marie Jones, Erin Mackey, Jamie Pitt, Melissa Ralph, Claire Rouleau, Kyla Smith, Sara Tilley, Bernardine Stapleton, and Monica Walsh.

Thanks are also due to Dr. Oleksiy Babych for translations, to Dr. Robert Chafe and Dr. Jamie Skidmore for dramaturgical as well as supervisory support, and to Dr. Jennifer Lokash and Dr. Robert Ormsby for pushing to provide this project with the resources and environment that it needed to thrive.

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The Girls

NADIYA ANDRUSHEVYCH (Ukrainian, 55)

Also MAJOR-GENERAL, DAVIS, COOK, REPORTER, knitter

JANE BAKER (from “the country,” 16)

Also WAITER, REPORTER, ROY MCCAULY/AVELING/TAYLOR/STEVENS,
SOLDIER, MANAGER, knitter

ABIGAIL GARNER (leisure class, 20)

Also WOMAN 1, PTE GOWAN, JUDGE, REPORTER, knitter

BEULAH JOHNSTON (middle class, 50)

Also WOMAN 2, POLICE INSPECTOR DICKMAN, TANK, STENOGRAPHER,
POLICE, PATIENT 1, knitter

ANN JONES (an ex-cook, 25)

Also DRUMMER, PATIENT 2, REPORTER, knitter

MARY MACKENZIE (working class, 43)

Also SOLDIER, CIVILIAN MAN

BEATRICE MALONEY (Mary’s neighbour, 71)

Also AUNT JOAN, SOLDIER, REPORTER

ELLEN MALONEY (Beatrice’s daughter, 42)

Also SOLDIER, CECIL STOVELL/O’TOOLE/LUKE MACKENZIE/AVERY

LAURA MCALISTER (co-founder of Women’s Home Guard, 34)

Also WELL-DRESSED LADY, MAYOR CHURCH, WILLIAM KENNEDY/CARTER/
PATTERSON, SOLDIER, REPORTER, MAJOR RODGERS

EDIE ST-CROIX (out on her own, 19)

Also REPORTER, SOLDIER, knitter

A Note on the Set

Very little about this play is realistic – even the realistic bits. Productions will require an upper level, but it needn't be fixed or look real. Table and benches, as well as factory machines, should be easy to roll on or off.

A Note on Casting

Historically speaking, every woman employed at a World War I munitions factory in Toronto would have been of British and European descent. This is because of policies explicitly excluding women of colour from taking on these opportunities. I would like to discourage the producers and directors of this piece from continuing the cycle of racial exclusion by casting a “historically accurate” cast of white women. This piece will be best served by the strongest possible ensemble, which will be achieved by actively seeking out as diverse a cast as possible. In addition to a diversity of racial, religious and cultural backgrounds, I hope that casting will consider a broad spectrum of abilities and genders. The xenophobia to which this script bears witness has its foundation in the roots of Canadian history, and we must work toward a future where notes such as these need never be written.

A Note on Music

As with casting, there is no need to maintain historical integrity when choosing pieces for the company to sing. Ideally, early songs will be era-appropriate and the music will become recognizably more and more anachronistically modern, so that the song sung in the final scene will be something produced very recently.

A Note on Sources

While *Factory Girls* is not an account of any true story, historic events were found primarily in Ian Hugh Maclean Miller's *Our Glory and Our Grief*, which summarizes a large number of

parades and gatherings, fundraising movements, and political campaigns that took place in Toronto during World War I, as well as the impact on Toronto's population of many of the major features of the war itself. Miller refers briefly to women employed in munitions work. Kori Street's doctoral dissertation, *Bankers and Bomb Makers*, dedicates half of its wordcount to the recruitment, employment and social impact of the women employed in building ships, aircraft and weaponry from 1916 to 1918. While there is much scholarly material available on the subject of women working in munitions during the Second World War, and those employed in both Great Britain and the United States during the First World War, these two documents were the only scholarly work to offer me insight into the working life of the real women who were building bombs in Toronto during World War I.

The Victory Bonds chorus in Act 2, Scene 3 is drawn from a collection of posters and newspaper advertisements which appeared during the period. The shovels that appear in Act 2, Scene 6 are E. MacAdam's patented "combination shovels." Featuring a short handle and a blade with a hole in the middle, their intended use was a light-weight multi-purpose tool that could dig trenches and shield soldiers' faces from enemy fire. They were notoriously useless, as bullets could penetrate the blade and the hole made shovelling wet mud impossible.

Footnotes are used in this script to allow citations from historic documents and, on two occasions, note a line borrowed from another dramatic text as a form of allusion to that text's style and content. Twice the footnotes refer to iconic images, which are also intended as allusions.

Ukrainian translations were generously provided by Dr. Oleksiy Babych, visiting professor at Memorial University of Newfoundland's Department of Modern Languages, Literatures and Cultures.

Prologue

When the lights rise, we find 10 women on stage, each in her own world, except for BEATRICE and ELLEN, who are washing dishes together.

ANN is peeling potatoes.

LAURA is writing on a typewriter.

NADIYA is sewing.

EDIE is getting dressed.

JANE is checking eggs for fetal chicks.

BEULAH is making a bed.

ABIGAIL is having a cup of tea.

MARY is reading a letter.

We hear only the clink of dishes and the tap of a typewriter for a moment. Then, MARY starts to hum “Keep the Home Fires Burning”. Soon the other women join her in humming, one by one, so that the song builds and builds until they are singing on voice. As the music rises, they clear away their personal spaces, so that the stage is busy with activity, rolling beds and tables away until the stage is clear. Each woman gathers a knitting bag and starts to march in the beat of the song. LAURA becomes the WELL-DRESSED LADY and takes her place, above.

The women settle into an audience for the WELL-DRESSED LADY, pulling out their knitting and starting to knit in time. As the song is about to reach its climax:

WELL-DRESSED LADY: What is it to make a bomb?

The song abruptly halts.

Act One

Scene one: Massey Hall, 12 June 1916

The WELL-DRESSED LADY (LAURA) continues to speak, but becomes barely audible as our focus shifts to the audience, particularly BEATRICE, ELLEN and MARY. Occasionally, knitters shush the 3 ladies.

BEATRICE: Whad she say?

ELLEN: Bombs, mom.

BEATRICE: They want us to make bombs now?

MARY: That's what she said.

ELLEN: She must be jokin.

BEATRICE: Sign me up.

ELLEN: Mom?

BEATRICE: I'm serious. It'll get me out of the house.

ELLEN: Who'll take care of Dad?

BEATRICE: Who cares?

ELLEN: Suspect he will. Suspect we will, once he's messed up the house.

BEATRICE: Oh calm down. Look at your old mother. She's not worried.

ELLEN: What if he gets into trouble?

BEATRICE: Then it'll serve him right, and you know it. Stop your fussing.

MARY: She's right, El. You're out now. Out of the house. Breaking free. Cutting loose. A wild excursion so the fancy ladies can tell us what we have to do for the war effort.

BEATRICE: Bombs!

ELLEN: On top of the sewing.

MARY: And the knitting.

ELLEN: And the gardening.

MARY: And sending away our husbands and sons.

BEATRICE: Bombs!

KNITTERS: Shh!

Beat.

BEATRICE (*a bit quieter*): Bombs. Imagine.

MARY: They'll be giving us the vote next.

BEATRICE: That'll be the day. More likely to send us to the front.

MARY: How's your scarf, El?

ELLEN: It's a mess, thanks. How's yours.

MARY: Oh a couple of bumps and lumps aren't going to matter to the soldier who gets it. So long as it keeps his nose warm, eh.

ELLEN: It might if he avoids poking his nose through all the big holes.

KNITTERS: Shh.

Beat.

BEATRICE: This is going to be the best scarf I ever knit. I'm going to give it to the man whose job I take at the bomb factory. Keep him warm at the front.

ELLEN: What about your sewing?

BEATRICE: I'll do that evenings.

ELLEN: And the garden?

BEATRICE: You can take that over.

ELLEN: What if I want to work at the bomb factory too, eh?

BEATRICE: Then we'll manage. If we can both get good jobs we can buy some of our vegetables, even.

MARY: Good crowd.

BEATRICE: Packed. Never seen so many women in one place.

ELLEN: There must be women here from all over Toronto.

BEATRICE: They put out a call. It was in the papers.

ELLEN: Called up to take over building bombs.

BEATRICE: Those bombs could feed us.

KNITTERS: Shh!

Beat.

MARY: Oh we've moved on from bombs.

ELLEN: Oh it's only National Registration talk again.

MARY: It's coming, whether we want it or not. At least if they know Luke is still in school they can stop knocking on my door every day of the week to recruit him.

ELLEN: They're voting on the resolution. Put up your hand, Mom.

The WELL-DRESSED LADY pauses to count. All three – and the other knitters – pause their knitting to raise their hands and be counted.

MARY: No trouble to tell that it passed.

ELLEN: Keep your hand up. They're counting.

MARY: Yes, everything's very official in this meeting.

After a few moments the WELL-DRESSED LADY starts up again and the women return to knitting.

MARY: Good. I'm sure Prime Minister Borden will be delighted to know how the women of Toronto feel.

BEATRICE: Work! Factory work. A chance to get out of the house.

ELLEN: Make a real difference. More than a bad scarf. Get some say over my own life, maybe.

BEATRICE: I want to build the one that blows up the Kaiser.

MARY: You're serious.

BEATRICE: As the heart attack the Kaiser'll have when he sees it coming.

The two younger women stare at BEATRICE.

ELLEN: Knit your scarf mom.

BEATRICE: I'll knit a bomb right here. Just you watch.

Scene two: job interview

Throughout this scene, a table with a load of blue coveralls is rolled around the stage. A bowler hat is worn by whoever is pushing the table, a role which switches from actor to actor as text makes them available. Every member of the cast should at some point be pushing the table. All interview lines are directed at the "interviewer" at the table. The company makes room for the table even as they speak. Those who have completed their interview will take a set of coveralls and pull it on. Anyone not either pushing the table, dressing or speaking can bring on several factory machines.

MARY: Mary MacKenzie, sir. Age forty-three.

ELLEN: Ellen Maloney, sir. Forty-two.

BEATRICE: Beatrice Maloney, sir. Older than the hills.

MARY: Yes sir, my husband Joe is overseas, and my oldest son –

ELLEN: No, sir, I'm not married.

MARY: What's that, sir?

BEATRICE: All right, then, since you got no sense of humour. I'm seventy-one.

MARY: Yes, sir, Joseph MacKenzie.

ELLEN: I've been taking care of my father, sir. And my brothers.

MARY: Yes sir, we are Mary and Joseph.

ELLEN: My brothers are grown men now, sir. And Dad'll just have to make do.

BEATRICE: Yes sir, I have five children, all grown. Grandkids too.

MARY: No sir, our sons are Mark and Luke.

BEATRICE: We're a short breed, us Maloneys, you see sir. My sons, I have four. Well they're all too short for service.

MARY: Yes, sir, I do get it. You're very funny, sir.

LAURA: Laura McAlister, sir, age thirty-four.

BEATRICE: Not a shirker among us, sir.

BEULAH: Beulah Johnston, sir, age fifty.

LAURA: Yes, sir, those McAlisters.

BEULAH: Yes sir, the Justice's wife. And I have a letter from my nephew, sir, Lord Henderson.

He recommends me to you.

LAURA: Yes, sir, I'm keen to do my bit.

BEULAH: At present I volunteer with the Women's Patriotic League, the YWCA, the Anglican Church Women's Association –

JANE: Jane Baker, sir, I'm sixteen.

BEULAH: I go where I'm needed. And I hear you need factory workers, sir.

EDIE: Edie St-Croix, sir, nineteen.

JANE: No sir, I heard you were hiring young women for the factory.

BEULAH: Why, no, I have no management experience.

ANN: Ann Jones, sir, twenty-five.

EDIE: I been pretty much on my own since I was a kid.

ANN: No sir, I have no factory experience, as you might imagine.

EDIE: Oh, odd jobs. This and that.

JANE: Yes sir, they're offering work back home but the farm girls are making barely anything.

EDIE: Whatever I needed to do to get by.

ANN: Yes, sir, since I was 12, in service.

JANE: I understand you offer a higher wage, sir.

ANN: I'm very good at following instructions, sir.

EDIE: Yes sir, I'd be happy in any position you can offer.

JANE: Well my family could really use a few extra dollars a week.

NADIYA: Nadiya Andrushevych, sir. I am fifty-five.

JANE: No, sir, I'm staying with my aunt. I'm not alone, sir.

NADIYA: No sir, I am Russian.

ANN: I learned the cook's Sunday Turkey Pie, sir, and now when I make it Mrs. Garner can't even tell.

NADIYA: My son, my husband, and I, we move to Canada when my son is small.

ABIGAIL: Abigail Garner, ma'am. A pleasure to make your acquaintance.

NADIYA: My son enlists, sir. Right away. He was in the first deployment.

ABIGAIL: My mother suggested that volunteering with the YWCA would be good for my character.

NADIYA: Yes sir, he is a good boy. He writes his mother.

ABIGAIL: She is anxious for me to develop, she called it, a sense of social responsibility.

NADIYA: My husband died. Long ago. I work so I can eat.

ABIGAIL: I suppose I could make sandwiches.

NADIYA: Mostly I sew, sir. I have good hands.

BEULAH: Why yes, sir, if you're certain, I'd be happy to run a team. Thank you.

BEULAH takes on the bowler hat and the table. She pushes it toward the exit.

ABIGAIL: Lovely. I'll be there on Monday.

LAURA: Thank you sir. I look forward to it.

JANE: Oh great, thank you!

ANN: Thank you!

ELLEN: Thank you!

ALL: Thank you very much!

BEULAH sends the table offstage with the bowler. NADIYA and ABIGAIL are holding their coveralls, the others are wearing theirs. As the scene ends they find themselves in their positions at the machines.

The factory whistle blows.

Scene three: the factory

MARY, BEATRICE, ELLEN, LAURA, ANN, EDIE & JANE are working at machines. EDIE has managed a flash of colour in her coveralls. BEULAH walks up and down the rows, supervising.

BEULAH: What is it to make a bomb? It is an exact science. The precise execution of a hundred small tasks. These machines exist to help you produce identical parts, and they are your most reliable colleagues. Each piece must be the standard. Bombs are not snowflakes. They are not individual. They are not personalized. They are all exactly the same. This is as it must be. An abnormal bomb is useless at best, catastrophic at worst. Do you understand me, girls?

ALL: Yes, ma'am.

BEULAH: Precision. Neatness. Each worker to her task. The sum of your efforts could be the shell that ends this war. Let's not let down our boys – they are counting on you!

EDIE: They're counting on this little tin stopper getting a slit cut through it. Neatly! And! Precisely!

JANE giggles.

BEULAH: Miss St-Croix. Do you find this war amusing?

EDIE: No ma'am.

BEULAH: Good. Very nice, Maloney.

BEATRICE: Thank you ma'am.

BEULAH: My apologies, but I did mean the younger Maloney.

ELLEN: Me? Thank you, ma'am.

BEULAH moves on.

MARY: Bravo, El.

ELLEN shrugs.

ELLEN: I think they gave me the easiest job in the factory. How're you doing, Mom?

BEATRICE: Easier on the back than the gardening, easier on the eyes than the sewing, pays better than both of em put together. I'm dandy.

BEULAH: Tidy yourself up, Miss St-Croix. This is a factory, not a dance club.

EDIE: Yes ma'am.

She tucks her colourful end in and shoots another look at JANE, who stifles a laugh.

BEULAH: Miss Baker! I trust you are settling in well in your new surroundings.

JANE: Yes ma'am.

MARY: We're all in new surroundings.

BEULAH: Miss Baker is from the country. Isn't that right, Miss Baker?

JANE: Yes ma'am. Near Barrie, ma'am.

BEULAH: And do you find yourself homesick, Miss Baker?

JANE: No ma'am. Well, sometimes, ma'am. I've never been this far from my mum before. But it's a great adventure.

BEULAH: War is no adventure, Miss Baker.

JANE: Yes ma'am. Sorry ma'am.

MARY: That's not what my eldest says. He's writing home twice a week with updates on when they'll be sent to the front. He's keener on war than he ever was on school. I just wish he wasn't so far from home

LAURA: We are all far from home.

ELLEN: I live just down the street.

LAURA: What I mean is that we are outside of our usual roles. Far from the comforts of home.

Metaphorically speaking.

MARY: On an adventure.

LAURA: If you insist.

BEULAH: How are you finding your accommodations, Miss Baker.

JANE: Oh, fine, ma'am, I'm staying with my aunt.

BEULAH: Good to hear. Will this evening be convenient for your home visit?

JANE: My what?

BEULAH: Your home visit, Miss Baker. In addition to supervising your performance at this factory, I have been charged with your moral well-being. Country girls get lost in the city, Miss Baker. It is my duty to ensure that you do not. Get lost.

JANE: I see.

BEULAH: I trust the address you provided to the company upon your employment is accurate.

JANE: Yes ma'am.

BEULAH: Very good. I will come by to visit you there this evening.

JANE: Yes ma'am.

BEULAH walks away to supervise the others.

MARY: Don't worry about her, Jane.

EDIE: Jesus, I hope she doesn't want to visit all of us.

MARY: She just wants to see you're not living in a brothel. "Your moral well-being." Like we're in school again.

JANE: When I was in school nobody wanted to see where I sleep.

EDIE: Me neither.

ELLEN: If she comes to ours I hope we get more'n a day's notice.

BEATRICE: Oh don't fuss.

EDIE: I can come over tonight if you want, Jane.

JANE: Oh, it's OK, we'll manage. How're your stoppers?

EDIE: Oh slit down the middle, each one. With neatness and precision. You want to see?

MARY: Careful, one step and our Matron'll come back to check on you.

JANE: I'll take your word for it.

MARY: You know, as the stamper of those stoppers, I consider each one of them my children, and I mourn their slitting.

EDIE: Oh don't worry, mama hen, they're only going on to fulfill their destinies as part of a shell. They'll make you proud by blowing up all the nice German boys.

This joke fails to land and the ladies work in silence for a moment. NADIYA enters, mopping.

JANE: Oh hello.

NADIYA: Good morning. I will stay out of your way.

JANE: No need.

EDIE: You're not bothering us. Mop away.

NADIYA: Thank you.

MARY: Careful around here. The sawdust is made of metal.

NADIYA: Дякую. (Translation: Thank you.) I will pay attention.

JANE: Я трохи говорю українською. (Translation: I know some Ukrainian.)

Everyone stops and stares at Jane.

JANE: She just... she thanked her. In Ukrainian. (to NADIYA) You're Ukrainian. Right?

NADIYA: No.

LAURA: I'm sure they haven't hired an enemy alien in a munitions factory, Miss Baker.

BEULAH: Indeed not.

JANE: Oh. I thought for sure.

NADIYA: I am Russian.

JANE: Oh.

NADIYA: My son. He enlists. Right away. When war is first declared.

JANE: Oh.

NADIYA: We are Russian.

EDIE: The friendly aliens.

LAURA: And how does the farm girl know an enemy language?

JANE: I... it wasn't... our neighbours at home. They speak Ukrainian.

ANN: Your neighbours are enemy aliens?

JANE: They're farmers. I grew up with them.

EDIE: Jane, you probably shouldn't –

JANE: They were just farmers until two years ago.

ANN: Two years ago when they became spies for the enemy.

JANE: They didn't! They're the same people who lived there my whole life and –

BEULAH: Back to work, ladies.

LAURA: You'd think they'd have put some system in place. To filter out enemy sympathizers.

JANE: I'm not!

BEULAH: You'd have thought so. I look forward to seeing where you live, Miss Baker. I trust your aunt is an upstanding subject of the King.

JANE: Yes ma'am.

BEULAH: Back to work please ladies!

Scene four: the canteen

A factory whistle blows and NADIYA pushes the table on stage, along with a bench for either side. ABIGAIL serves the women from a cart.

BEULAH: All right girls, this is your canteen, courtesy of the Young Women's Christian Association. The volunteers here will make sure you eat a sturdy meal.

ABIGAIL: Step forward, ladies, today we have beef stew with dumplings.

The women line up for their meals. ANN hangs back.

MARY: Get up there, El, I've been listening to your stomach growl for the last hour.

ELLEN: It really works up an appetite.

EDIE: Ann? Aren't you hungry?

ANN: Starving.

EDIE: Well, there's food.

ANN: That's Abby Garner. I used to work in her house. Until last week, I worked in her house.

EDIE: All the more reason to enjoy this meal. Step up. Head up.

ANN receives her plate.

ANN: Thank you, Miss Garner.

ABIGAIL: Ann! What are you doing here?

ANN: I work here.

ABIGAIL: Since when?

ANN: Since this morning.

ABIGAIL: You left us?

ANN: I did.

ABIGAIL: What for?

ANN: Someone gave me a choice, for once, so I took it. I chose... making choices.

ABIGAIL: Oh.

ANN: Better pay. A day off once a week. A little room of my own.

ABIGAIL: I see.

ANN: And only I have the key. So nobody else can barge in on me.

ABIGAIL: Well, if you'd only asked I'm sure mother would have –

ANN: Thank you for the stew.

The women sit and each take a spoonful of stew. It is bad. Really bad. Most manage to swallow it.

BEATRICE: Left out the salt.

BEULAH: It's her first day in the kitchen.

ANN: I think it's the first time she's ever *seen* a kitchen.

ELLEN: Maybe they're conserving salt now. For the war effort.

EDIE: At least there's meat in it.

BEULAH: Eat up, girls, you'll need your strength.

MARY: Yes, another six hours of making stoppers.

ELLEN: And packing powder.

EDIE: Direct all the protein to your right arm. Do it with your mind.

LAURA joins them at the table.

LAURA: Ladies, I have a proposition for you all. A pal and I are starting up something called the Women's Home Guard. The idea is, we learn how to fight. March in formation. Carry and fire weapons. So if something happens, here at home, we can handle it ourselves.

ANN: Like the police?

LAURA: More like the army. But all ladies. So the troops stationed here can go on to Europe.

EDIE: Sounds like fun.

LAURA: It is of course, extremely trying work. Drills. Precision.

EDIE: Neatness.

LAURA: Yes, that too, I suppose. We're making a women's army. Free up a few more men. If you're game, you can sign up with me.

MARY: What do you think, Ellen?

ELLEN: Don't think I'd be much good at shooting.

JANE: I'm in.

LAURA: Trainings are Tuesday and Thursday evenings and Saturday afternoons.

JANE: Oh.

EDIE: That's a lot.

LAURA: Once you're signed up we just need a small registration fee, to help us cover the cost of our training sessions.

EDIE: Ah. And what else?

LAURA: Well, of course there is a uniform, which you must wear to each training.

BEATRICE: I'm sure you're all a sight, dressed up and playing soldier.

LAURA: The uniforms are quite smart, if I may say so. And affordable, I think you'll find. You should be able to pay for it entirely out of your wages here, after only a week.

ELLEN: A week's wages for the clothes?

LAURA: A small price to pay to serve the Dominion, I think.

BEATRICE: Have you tried to buy bread recently, Miss McAlister?

MARY: Or coal?

LAURA: They feed you here.

ELLEN: One meal a day.

ANN: If you call this food.

MARY: I've got kids, Miss McAlister.

BEULAH: I'll join.

ABIGAIL: I'm already signed up.

LAURA: Well thank you. I do hope the rest of you will reconsider.

NADIYA comes in and approaches ABIGAIL.

ABIGAIL: Sorry, the stew's reserved for factory girls.

NADIYA: This is a factory. I am a girl.

ABIGAIL: The workers here.

NADIYA: I work here.

JANE: I'll have another bowl, please. It's delicious.

ABIGAIL fills her bowl a second time.

JANE: Сідай їсти. (Translation: Come eat.)

ABIGAIL: What's that?

JANE: Nothing.

JANE & NADIYA sit at the table. ABIGAIL takes her cart off. JANE hands over her bowl to

NADIYA. LAURA gets up as NADIYA sits.

LAURA: I'm going to get some air before the whistle goes again.

Several women get up, leaving a halo of empty chairs around JANE & NADIYA.

NADIYA: Thank you.

JANE: You have to eat.

NADIYA tucks in. She's the only one who gives no outward sign of disliking the food.

JANE: For a Russian, your Ukrainian is pretty good.

A beat.

NADIYA: My son. He enlist. In order to take him. He say he is Russian.

JANE: But you *are* Ukrainian.

NADIYA: Hard for aliens to find work. Without being enemies, also. I am alone. Since my son is away.

JANE: Right. So you're Russian.

NADIYA: Thank you. For the stew.

Scene five: 1 July 1916, Toronto & France

A marching drumbeat is heard offstage. The DRUMMER (played by ANN) enters. Her drumsticks are knitting needles. She is accompanied by the other ladies who left the table. JANE, NADIYA, and anyone else still sitting pushes the table off, and return here and there, to be swept up by BEULAH who, with ABIGAIL in tow, arranges the women into ranks.

BEULAH: All right, girls, the Dominion Day Parade! This year they're allowing a Women's Parade, and we're going to give them a show. Show them what women can give for the Empire. All right? So, mothers and wives of serving men to the front. Then, munitionettes. Looking tidy, please girls. Rank and file. Thank you. And sing! Let's get our lads across the pond some fresh new reinforcements! Nice and bright, girls, please! And give a smile – make em desperate to enlist!

The coverall-wearing ladies make two rows of four, led by BEULAH. They march all around the theatre, singing "Rule Britannia". When they arrive back at the stage, they march directly upstage. The sound of bombs in the distance. They about-face and are now soldiers on the front lines at the Somme. The song ends but the drum continues.

MAJOR-GENERAL (NADIYA): All right, men, now is our moment. We haven't been up to our ears in mud for nothing, you understand me? On my command, you go over the top. You storm their lines. There's a line of barbed wire on their side of no man's land – by now our side will have chopped it to bits. Cleared the way. Take their trenches. We do take prisoners, understand? Just because there's a war on doesn't mean we can't be civilized. Show General Haig what the Canadian boys are made of! Ready MacKenzie? On my command. GO!

The company divides: half, led by BEULAH, are the munitionettes on parade, and the other half are Canadian soldiers who push violently through the line, encouraged by a shouting MAJOR-GENERAL. A deafening volley of machine gun fire and the soldiers fall. One, centre stage, dies face down, but the others are wounded – slowly and painfully they drag themselves and their comrades off the stage. Sound effects of machine guns and bombs continue. The munitionettes step over and around their bodies, singing brightly, with large smiles.

BEULAH: That's right, girls! Left – right – left – right – show em your teeth!

Scene six: the home visit

JANE enters into her kitchen & discovers the body still on the ground (played by BEATRICE).

JANE: Aunt Joan. Didn't even make it to the stairs. Aunt Joan! Come on, up you get. That's right.

She helps the body, now her AUNT, to her feet. AUNT makes a moaning sound.

JANE: How long have you been drinking today, hm? Since last night? Upsy-daisy. Let's get you to bed.

AUNT: No, no bed.

JANE: Come on, I need you in bed. Take a nap. My boss is coming to visit.

AUNT: Boss-lady.

JANE: Yes, the boss-lady. Mrs. Johnston. She's coming to make sure I'm living somewhere sensible.

AUNT: Sheeeeeessss sees the housssse...

JANE: That's right, she's coming to see the house. So I need you to go to your room, all right, Aunty, and put yourself to bed. And then if I have to show Mrs. Johnston your room I want you to be asleep, all right? Just pretend to be asleep.

AUNT: Sssssssleeeeeeep

JANE: Yes, good. Go to sleep.

JANE has half-carried her AUNT upstairs and put her in bed, above. There is a knock.

JANE: That's right. In bed. Now, Aunty, it's Very Important that you stay right here in bed and pretend to sleep.

AUNT: Play sleeeeeeep.

JANE: Yes. Play at sleeping. Good. I'll be up later with a glass of water for you.

Another, less patient knock.

JANE: Yes, I'm coming! Stay right here.

AUNT: Stay here.

JANE: Pretend to sleep. Coming!

She rushes downstairs and exits briefly, then returns with BEULAH.

BEULAH: I trust this time is quite convenient.

JANE: Oh yes, perfectly convenient. The only thing is, my aunt, she's ill today. I've just put her to bed.

BEULAH: Indeed. The poor thing. She's lucky to have you on hand.

JANE: Yes. That was part of the idea. I mean. Me coming in, working at the factory, taking care of my aunt while I'm here. She's a lot older than my mother, right? Oldest of nine. And she never married or had kids, so we all try to pitch in on taking care of her and the house.

BEULAH: Is it a family home?

JANE: Yes, ma'am, my mother grew up here.

BEULAH: Your mother is from the Danforth?

JANE: Yes ma'am.

BEULAH: And she must have married a farmer.

JANE: Yes ma'am. But she still talks about Toronto like it's home.

BEULAH: And how are you finding our fair city?

AUNT has gotten up out of bed and now stubs her toe on the bedframe.

AUNT: Shit!

Both women downstairs hear this.

JANE: I knew it would be busy, but there's a lot more people here than I was expecting.

BEULAH: Is your aunt generally well?

JANE: No, I'm afraid not. She has ... um... delusions. Hallucinations. They're worse at this time of day, in the evenings. Sometimes she says... terrible things, ma'am.

BEULAH: I hope that's not too much of a strain on you.

JANE: Oh, no, ma'am, I'm used to it.

BEULAH: That's good. Our elders deserve our care.

AUNT stumbles again and this time falls to the ground with a crash.

BEULAH: Oh my.

JANE: Will you excuse me, please, Mrs. Johnston. I'll just go check on her.

BEULAH: Yes, I think you'd better.

JANE goes up, lets herself into the room, and picks up her AUNT while BEULAH lingers downstairs. In this time BEULAH will inspect every item of furniture for cleanliness and sturdiness, she will take careful note of any mess or untidiness left by the AUNT's drinking, and will look outside. There is a boozy smell in the house that BEULAH recognizes.

JANE (*in a whisper*): What do you think you're doing? Get up, come on.

AUNT: I wanna go walkiesss!

JANE: Later. Right now, you're pretending to sleep. Remember?

AUNT: The sun is out.

JANE: Get into bed. I'll close the curtain.

AUNT: No! no, leave it.

JANE: Fine. Do you want a cup of tea?

AUNT: Sleeping aunties don't drink tea.

She winks, an enormous, conspiratorial wink.

JANE: Excellent point. They also don't go for a stroll around their bedroom.

AUNT: Leave the curtain.

JANE: Stay in bed.

AUNT: I want to see the sun.

JANE: All right. Next time I come up here you'd better be sleeping.

AUNT: I just want to see the sun. Sometimes.

JANE returns to her guest.

BEULAH: All is well, I trust?

JANE: Yes, thank you. She fell out of bed. She really is not very well, I'm afraid.

AUNT JOAN starts to sing a drunken song about the sun, quietly at first, but in a crescendo so that by the time BEULAH leaves she is at full voice. Both JANE and BEULAH speak over her.

BEULAH: I have some doubts about your aunt's ability to supervise your moral welfare, given her... illness. But the house will do.

JANE: Thank you, ma'am. She normally –

BEULAH: You do not partake, yourself, I assume.

JANE: No ma'am. Never.

BEULAH: Very well. Does she see a doctor?

JANE: Yes ma'am! When we can afford one.

BEULAH: I recommend you start a garden, Miss Baker. I see there was one there, but it's gone to seed. No doubt your aunt has let it go only recently.

JANE: Yes, ma'am.

BEULAH: There is little that is better for the constitution than gardening, you know, Miss Baker. And for the Empire. Growing one's own foodstuffs. The more we grow at home, the more is available to go overseas.

JANE: Yes, ma'am.

BEULAH: And the fresh air would do your aunt some good. With a little encouragement, she may find a healthy occupation in growing carrots, don't you think?

JANE: Yes, ma'am.

BEULAH: Very good, Miss Baker. I'll see if the YWCA can't provide you with some seeds.

JANE: Thank you. Mrs. Johnston. Does that mean –

BEULAH: I must tell you, Miss Baker, that this living situation is far from ideal. However, as you are clearly caring for your relation, I hesitate to remove you from this house. I would like to return in a few weeks. Perhaps your aunt will be feeling better by then.

JANE: Yes, ma'am. Thank you, ma'am.

BEULAH: Have a good evening, Miss Baker.

JANE: And you, Mrs. Johnston.

BEULAH exits. The AUNT's song ends in a rousing final line.

Scene seven: the Women's Home Guard

LAURA, ABIGAIL and BEULAH march on the spot in formation. Other women march behind them. The DRUMMER (ANN), plays her snare.

LAURA: Very good, ladies. Now, present arms.

The women in front drop to one knee and aim rifles. Women behind wield their knitting needles as bayonets.

LAURA: Ready. Aim. Fire!

The rifles go off. The women start knitting, frantically.

LAURA: Second positions!

The front row stands and steps backward, the knitters take one knee. Still knitting away.

LAURA: Present arms! Fire!

The back row fires a second volley. The kneeling women knit as fast as they can.

LAURA: At ease!

The knitters relax their kneel and sit on the ground, but continue knitting.

LAURA: Now, ladies, are we ready to have Lieutenant-Colonel Galloway take over these drills?

Some general nodding & positivity.

LAURA: Well I say we are NOT! I will be embarrassed to show this scattered formation to the Lieutenant-Colonel. I will be ASHAMED. Attention!

All hands scramble into position, rifles & needles at the ready.

LAURA: Now, women of Toronto. Brave volunteers. What do we want?

ALL: To free up men for war!

LAURA: And?

ALL: To defend the home front!

LAURA: And?

ALL: To... to...

They do not know.

LAURA: Private Garner! What do we want?

ABIGAIL: The vote, Corporal McAlister!

LAURA: That's right, Garner.

BEULAH: Hang on, you never said anything about the vote.

LAURA: If we can work for wages. If we can build weapons, for heaven's sake. If we can march as a unit, and present arms. If we can do every single thing a man can do. If we can do it as well, or better. If we can show them that women are a vital, powerful reserve army in our society. If we can do all this –

ABIGAIL: and grow our own potatoes –

BEULAH: and keep a tidy home –

ABIGAIL: and send our brothers overseas –

BEULAH: and keep the family finances afloat –

ABIGAIL: despite the price of coal –

BEULAH: and bread –

ABIGAIL: and volunteer to make hot meals –

BEULAH: and serve dinners for the war orphans –

LAURA: Yes! If we can do all those things – and we can! – then they'll have to admit we should have the vote.

ABIGAIL: That's a lot of things.

LAURA: We can do them!

ABIGAIL: Including firing rifles.

BEULAH: And knitting socks.

LAURA: Yes, yes, we can manage. Because we are women! As good as men, or better!

ALL: Yeah!

LAURA: Better than the immigrant men who can vote at present!

ALL: Yeah!

LAURA: Better than the unwashed masses who have no education to speak of!

ALL: Yeah!

LAURA: Better than the thieves and liars and the heathens who can't even pick up a newspaper.

ALL: Yeah!

LAURA: Don't we deserve the vote more than any of them?

ALL: Yes we do!

LAURA: I can't hear you, ladies!

ALL: YES WE DO!

LAURA: That's right! Let's try it again. Present arms!

The rifle-holding ladies drop to one knee and raise their weapons, as before. LAURA wields a knitting needle as a commander's sabre.

LAURA: Fire!

The rifles go off. Lights out.

Scene eight: Edie's vocation

When the lights come back up, we find EDIE and DAVIS (played by NADIYA) up against a wall.

DAVIS' trousers are around his ankles; his bare lower half thrusts three or four times into EDIE and the wall. He lets out a groan.

DAVIS: Oh my god, Edie.

EDIE: Come on. You can do it.

DAVIS: Oh my god. Oh my god. Oh –

EDIE: You've got it. There you go.

DAVIS: I love you, you know.

EDIE: Shut up with that.

DAVIS: I do.

EDIE: Well, that's your prerogative, I guess.

DAVIS pulls up his pants and suspenders.

DAVIS: Say you love me back.

EDIE: Sure, if you want me to.

DAVIS: I do.

EDIE: Fine, I love you right back. We'll see you tomorrow?

DAVIS: I know where to find you.

EDIE: You do. Hey Davis –

DAVIS is about to go.

EDIE: Your payment's due.

He pulls some money out of his pocket.

DAVIS: You shouldn't have to charge, you know. I could marry you.

EDIE: But the problem with that is that then I'd have to be married.

DAVIS: See you tomorrow, Edie.

He goes out. EDIE tucks his money into her pocket. JANE appears.

JANE: I thought that was you.

EDIE: Jesus. Hi Jane.

Beat.

JANE: Who was that?

EDIE: Just a friend.

JANE: He loves you.

EDIE: Men say things. In the moment. Jane. It doesn't mean anything, all right?

JANE: Men.

EDIE: Patrons.

JANE: Oh.

EDIE: It's not a bad job, you know.

JANE: But you have a new job now.

EDIE: You can have more than one job, Jane.

JANE: But it pays good. Why would you have to... um...

EDIE: I'm gonna tell you something, OK. Because I like you. But it's a secret, OK?

JANE: OK.

EDIE: It's not about needing to. I like my job. And I've been seeing that one a long time. There's a few men like that, long-term fellas. And they're being good to me, working around my schedule at the factory.

JANE: Oh.

EDIE: So. Moonlighting.

JANE: Right.

EDIE unbundles her coveralls.

EDIE: He wants to get married, that one. Wants to save me from "the life." Thinks he's a hero. C'mere.

She uses JANE for support while she pulls the coveralls on. Meanwhile:

JANE: You ever think about it?

EDIE: Listen. What does this job mean to you? At the factory.

JANE: I didn't want to spend my whole life milking cows and shoveling their poop. The factory's a way out of there. Freedom, I guess.

EDIE: Well for me it's security, right? A chance to live out in the open, above board for once. Make a friend or two. But it won't last forever, and when it ends I'm still gonna have to eat.

JANE: You'll find work!

EDIE: I *have* work. Work I like. Work I'm good at. Work I can manage myself. Turn down or pick up. I'm in charge. D'you get it?

JANE: I think so.

EDIE: But I do have to keep it quiet, right? If I want to keep being a factory girl. Mrs. Johnston can't find out. Will you keep it quiet with me, Jane?

JANE: All right.

EDIE: Thank you.

Beat.

JANE: What'd you do if you ever wanted to stop?

EDIE: Why would I want to stop?

JANE: Suppose you met a man you did want to marry.

EDIE takes JANE'S face and gently kisses her on the mouth. JANE blushes.

EDIE: I don't think I'm the marrying type, Jane.

JANE: Oh. Oh. I think I might not be, either.

The factory whistle blows.

Scene nine: the factory

MARY: I just don't see the appeal.

ELLEN: We can see what the boys are up against, I guess.

MARY: Watching men – our men – being shot at. Dying. Some kind of entertainment.

ANN: I went.

ELLEN: And?

ANN: I liked it. The theatre was packed.

ELLEN: Did you recognize any of them?

ANN: No, I couldn't see anyone I knew. But you could see their faces, though. My brothers weren't in it, but I would have recognized them if they were.

MARY: Were you hoping they were there?

ANN: It's been a long time since I've seen them.

MARY: Me too. Two years since I saw my husband. And my son.

ELLEN: All the more reason to go with me, Mary. Maybe they'll be in it.

MARY: I know what they're up against, you know. I get letters. Mark thinks it's all great, what fun he's having, but he hasn't seen action yet. So he won't be in the film, will he, Ellen.

ELLEN: I guess not.

MARY: And Joe – Joe's letters are mostly about mud. Sometimes they're smeared in it, like he's tired of describing it and wanted me to see it for himself. By the time they get to me they're all dusty and you can barely read them.

ANN: There was lots of mud in the film. That's true. And just day-to-day stuff. Men drinking tea, you know.

BEULAH: Girls, I hope you can work while you chatter?

ANN: Yes ma'am.

MARY: Working while chattering is a special skill of mine. Look at these stoppers. They're perfect, wouldn't you say?

BEULAH: Mm.

BEULAH moves on.

ANN: And they show them opening up the packages from home, and they're so happy to get our scarves and socks.

ELLEN: Are they all really well-made, then, the knit goods?

ANN: Tell you the truth, one of them was pretty lumpy from what I could see. But this soldier, he just wrapped it around his neck with a big grin on his face.

MARY: Told you, El. They're happy for anything.

ELLEN: Well if nobody I know is in the movie, at least I'll be able to pick out my knitting.

BEATRICE: They're saying they've opened up two more cinemas to fit in everyone who wants to see. Seems like quite a thing to miss out on.

ELLEN: What if I see Joe in the movie, eh Mary? What if I come back and tell you I saw his lovely face and you missed it.

MARY: That's a chance I'm willing to take.

ELLEN: You don't want to see him?

MARY: I don't want to hope to see him and be disappointed.

ANN: It is a bit of a let down. Not to see my brothers.

MARY: Right. So, this is one phenomenon I'm willing to let pass.

ELLEN: Well, Mom and I are going right after work. If you change your mind.

MARY: I think I'll stay a bit later. I figure if they'll let me, I might as well press out a few more stoppers, make a few more pennies.

EDIE: I heard about a girl in a factory like this, couldn't get hired on full-time, she was working piecemeal. Like, paid for each shell she – stencilled – or whatever. Turns out, in the end, she worked so fast that she was making twice what the fellas get over in skilled labour. TWICE!

JANE: Imagine the skilled labourers weren't too happy about that.

EDIE: Probably not, which makes it even better. We can beat them at their own game if we go hard enough at it.

JANE: You going to stay late, too, then, Edie?

EDIE: No, I figure I'll go down to the Adelaide, see what all the fuss is about with the film. Might be a few fellas down there too.

BEULAH: I would advise you to keep your wits about you when it comes to men, Miss St-Croix.

EDIE: Oh yes, I always do, Mrs. Johnston. No need to worry about me.

LAURA: I saw it on the first day. Quite the crowd.

MARY: You got men in the war, McAlister?

LAURA: A cousin. He's a Second Lieutenant.

EDIE: Course he is.

LAURA: I beg your pardon.

EDIE: Of course he's an officer. Can't imagine a McAlister boy needs to spend too much time in drills before he gets his promotion.

LAURA: His father was a Captain. It stands to reason. He's built for leadership.

EDIE: Yes, built for it. Sturdier than other men.

LAURA: Just what exactly are you implying?

EDIE: That not everyone has to work for what they get, that's all.

LAURA: I'm here, aren't I? Working, same as you.

EDIE: Do you have to be though? A McAlister?

LAURA: Names aren't everything.

EDIE: No, you're right there. Money helps too.

BEULAH: That's quite enough of that, Miss St-Croix. I'll allow you girls to yammer on as long as the work is getting done. But you'll keep your conversation civil, please. Miss McAlister is doing her bit, same as you.

EDIE: Doing her bit, that's right.

LAURA: That's right.

EDIE: Don't even need the cheque at the end of the week. Just doing it for the good of the Empire.

BEULAH: Enough! Silent work, please, ladies.

An awkward absence of speech follows, bolstering the sound of the factory machines – crunching, hydraulic sounds. NADIYA enters with a broom and sweeps up around the ladies.

ANN: The funny thing is, the teapot the fellas were drinking out of. It looked for all the world like one of these cylinders. They're making tea in exploded shells. Isn't that something?

BEATRICE: Must give off a terrible aftertaste.

The whistle blows.

Scene ten: the Maloney house.

BEATRICE has her sewing spread out on the table. Her husband FRED (BEULAH) is sleeping at the same table, and BEATRICE must work around him as she cuts and pins.

Enter ELLEN.

BEATRICE: You're late.

ELLEN: Sorry.

BEATRICE: Out all hours. Worrying your old mother.

ELLEN: I'm sorry Mom.

BEATRICE: Your father wants his dinner.

A snore from FRED.

ELLEN: He doesn't look hungry.

BEATRICE: He is, he just doesn't know it. Where've you been?

ELLEN: I stopped by Mary's.

BEATRICE: D'you cook her supper now too?

ELLEN: She's lonely with Joe gone. Needs a friend to talk to.

BEATRICE: Any word from him?

ELLEN: She got a letter today.

BEATRICE: So he's all right, then. *She gestures to the kitchen.* There's a duck there. The neighbour boy shot it over in the park today.

ELLEN: Can he... is that legal?

BEATRICE: God knows. I paid him half, I need some money from you to make up the rest. You get your pay?

ELLEN: Yeah.

BEATRICE: Give it here.

ELLEN hands over an envelope. BEATRICE pours the contents out onto the table. She counts as she speaks.

BEATRICE: There's still a few potatoes there to go with it. The poor bugger needs plucking, though, so you can start on that first...

She trails off and starts her count again.

ELLEN: What's the matter?

BEATRICE: Nothing, must've counted wrong. Get to it. The last thing I need is to choke to death on a feather from a city park duck.

She frowns and starts the count again.

ELLEN: What?

BEATRICE: How many shells you pack in a day?

ELLEN: Why?

BEATRICE: There's twice as much money here as there was in my envelope.

ELLEN: Must be a mistake.

BEATRICE: How many shells, Ellen?

ELLEN: Eighty or ninety I guess?

BEATRICE: A day?

ELLEN: Sure.

A pause as BEATRICE finishes counting.

BEATRICE: No mistake, then.

Beat.

ELLEN: Twice as much?

BEATRICE: Just about.

Beat.

ELLEN: I'll go pay for the duck.

BEATRICE: I'll do it. You sit.

ELLEN: What about the plucking?

BEATRICE: Don't bother with that. Good rest for my eyes. Have a seat.

ELLEN: I'm not tired.

BEATRICE: Course you are.

ELLEN: Mom, it's really –

BEATRICE: Don't leave.

Beat. ELLEN is stunned.

ELLEN: What?

BEATRICE: We need you here.

ELLEN: I hadn't –

BEATRICE: Who'll check up on your father?

ELLEN: I'm not going –

BEATRICE: Or help me with the garden?

ELLEN: It's all ri –

BEATRICE: I'd never get all the sewing done.

ELLEN: Really –

BEATRICE: I can only afford half a duck as it is!

ELLEN: Mom! I'm not leaving. I never said I was leaving.

BEATRICE: With this kind of money you could get a nice room to yourself. A *nice* room.

ELLEN: I have a room.

BEATRICE: You could get away from me and your father. Take your life by the horns.

ELLEN: Where would I go?

BEATRICE: You could though.

ELLEN: Stop it, Mom. I'm going to pay the boy. You start plucking. Deal?

BEATRICE: You're coming back.

ELLEN: Relax. I've never been adventurous.

BEATRICE: None of you were.

ELLEN: I'll be back.

BEATRICE: All right.

ELLEN takes some money from the table and moves toward the entrance. Something stops her and she turns back.

ELLEN: They must've expected me to work slower, right? When they set the rate for each shell.

BEATRICE: Yeah.

ELLEN: So. I'm fast at it, then.

BEATRICE: Yeah.

ELLEN: Faster... better. Better than expected.

BEATRICE: By quite a lot, looks like.

Beat.

ELLEN: I'm good at this.

BEATRICE: I think you are.

The two women smile broadly at each other. ELLEN exits.

Scene eleven: canteen

ABIGAIL: Roast with potatoes today, ladies!

BEATRICE: Excellent. I'd rather eat my boots.

ELLEN: Don't be ungrateful, Mum. Real meat.

BEATRICE: That remains to be seen.

MARY: I haven't had meat in the house in weeks.

BEATRICE: Haven't you got a teenaged boy at home?

MARY: I do and he eats everything. I should bring some of this stuff home to him.

BEATRICE: Have a taste before you start stuffing your pockets.

ANN: Thanks, Miss Garner.

ABIGAIL: My brother misses you.

ANN: I doubt that.

ABIGAIL: He was talking about you this morning.

ANN: He knows I work here?

ABIGAIL: I told him. He just mopes around the house since you left. I think you broke his heart.

ANN: He never wanted anything to do with my heart.

ABIGAIL: I don't know how you could do that to a man. Let him touch you like that.

ANN: Let him!

ABIGAIL: And then just leave without so much as a goodbye.

EDIE: We're hungry back here, Garner.

ANN: You can tell your brother I hope I never see him again.

She goes to sit.

JANE: I'll have a double portion, please.

ABIGAIL: You miss breakfast?

JANE: No. Still growing, I guess.

ABIGAIL: Don't think I don't know what you're up to.

JANE: I'm just hungry, today, all right?

EDIE: Come on, Abs, she asked for double. Where's your Christian charity.

ABIGAIL gives JANE two plates.

JANE: Thank you.

ABIGAIL: Abigail.

EDIE: Thank you, Lady Abigail.

ABIGAIL: Just Abigail will do.

JANE: Thanks, Just Abigail.

The girls sit down together. NADIYA enters and beelines for JANE and EDIE.

JANE: Here you go.

NADIYA: Thank you.

ANN: This isn't as bad as usual.

BEATRICE: You must be hungry.

ANN: Lately I've been choosing between coal and food. Was December always this cold?

JANE: My Dad says we're in for it this year. A really cold one.

MARY: So of course there's a coal shortage. Luke's ready to burn the furniture.

BEATRICE: No sense heating the house when you're here all day.

MARY: What about your husband, do you let him freeze?

ELLEN: Dad's got other ways of keeping warm.

MARY: He's still at it, then.

BEATRICE: I don't expect he'll be giving it up. My disapproval has no effect.

ELLEN: I think actually he drinks more because of your disapproval.

BEATRICE: Prohibition can't come soon enough, if you ask me.

EDIE: You're fooling yourself if you think that'll stop him.

BEATRICE: Stay out of this, urchin.

EDIE: I'm just saying, there's other ways to get the things you need than buying them in a store.

JANE: Edie, leave them alone.

EDIE: You want a person to stop drinking, you got to watch them all the time. Turn your back once and they'll find a drink. Prohibition or not, won't make any difference.

JANE: Edie.

EDIE: You know it's true, Jane. And so does Mrs. Maloney, even if she won't admit it.

BEATRICE: Mind your business, young Edith.

MARY: Did you hear the Germans have proposed a truce?

ANN: The King should turn them down flat.

MARY: What for? Isn't peace the goal? Isn't that what my husband and son are fighting for?

ANN: The goal is victory. Can't let the Germans get away with it.

BEATRICE: What they did in Belgium.

ELLEN: Sinking boats full of innocents.

MARY: I don't think they meant to do that.

BEATRICE: Tell that to the women and children who drowned. Tell that to the boys who died in France.

Beat. There is chewing.

JANE: The trick to this roast, I think, is to mash up your potatoes with a bit of butter and spread them on top. Sticks less in your throat that way.

EDIE: Lubricates the meat. Like a beef roast oil.

JANE: Keep your throat from making creaking noises.

EDIE: Important. Regular maintenance.

BEULAH: Are you enjoying your free meal, Miss St-Croix? Generously provided to you by the Young Women's Christian Association.

EDIE: You get what you pay for.

BEULAH: Impertinence, Miss St-Croix.

EDIE: Sorry ma'am.

EDIE and JANE share a look and maybe a giggle.

BEULAH: Indeed. Mind the company you keep, Miss Baker. Remember I've been entrusted with your moral welfare.

JANE: I'll be careful, Mrs. Johnston.

Beat as BEULAH passes away from the young women.

NADIYA: Your trick with the potatoes. Is working.

NADIYA, JANE and EDIE giggle.

EDIE: So far as I'm concerned, the longer the war goes on, the longer we can keep these jobs.

JANE: At least you have a back up career.

EDIE: A vocation, Janey. You're right, I won't starve.

NADIYA: The war ends. They send home my boy. I go back to sewing, happy.

JANE: Do you hear from him often?

NADIYA: No. Every few weeks, two or three letters come all together. Like they clear out a clog in the pipe.

JANE: He's in France?

NADIYA: Yes. His letters are empty. He writes, but the words are blank. Food. Weather.

Nothing about how he is feeling. Nothing real.

JANE: He probably doesn't want to worry you.

NADIYA: He is writing in English. So his commanders can read the letters. He does not know, in English, how to write feelings.

MARY: I'm not interested in seeing the Germans punished.

BEATRICE: Hush, now, that kind of talk.

MARY: It's the truth.

BEATRICE: That kind of talk will get you in trouble. Just you watch.

MARY: I just want my boys home. Safe.

NADIYA: Me, too.

A pause. Everyone stares at NADIYA.

Scene twelve: Cherry Street Station, 20 August 1914

A collective memory. MARY and NADIYA are playing themselves. The rest of the ensemble are the band, the train, the crowd. We never see the men that MARY and NADIYA are seeing off. It's raining.

A military band is playing. The DRUMMER with the knitting needles keeps a steady, marching beat throughout the scene. Everyone but MARY and NADIYA are knitting; the two each have a knitted item in hand.

WOMAN 1 (ABIGAIL): Don't they look dashing, all done up in uniform?

WOMAN 2 (BEULAH): Never seen anything like it! There's rows of em.

WOMAN 1: And look how well they march. The Germans won't know what him em.

MARY: Joe! Joe! Let me through, please.

WOMAN 2: Careful! You think you're the only one with a man on that train?

MARY: Excuse me. Joe! Wait!

NADIYA: Міша! (Translation: Michael!)

MARY: You left your good hat.

A small crowd starts to sing.

NADIYA: Не забувай писати матері. (Translation: Don't forget to write your mother.)

MARY: That one doesn't cover your ears. Come on, you can't fight the Hun with frostbitten ears.

NADIYA: Ти все, що в мене є. (Translation: You're all I have.)

MARY: It's not always going to be hot. You'll thank me in a couple of months.

NADIYA: Повертайся до мене. (Translation: Come back to me.)

MARY: Well, what if it isn't over by Christmas.

Under the hymn, the ensemble inserts the train sounds – a slow chugging at first that picks up speed. The drummer leads this gain in tempo, and the hymn speeds up along with the drum and the train, building to a frantic cacophony.

NADIYA: Твої шкарпетки! (Translation: Your socks!)

MARY: And you'll watch out for Mark.

NADIYA: Бери, вони кращі ніж ті тоненькі, що тобі дали. (Translation: Take them, they're better than the thin ones they gave you.)

MARY: All right. Write me. Every day.

NADIYA: Бувай, синку. (Pronounced: Do pobachennya, miy syn. Translation: Goodbye, my son.)

MARY: Goodbye, my love.

The train and music speed away and the crowd on the platform engulfs and jostles both MARY and NADIYA, arms waving frantically.

The song ends and the train sounds cut out. The crowd stops waving.

There are just ten women, clustered together on a train platform now.

Silence.

The rain fades in.

MARY puts on the hat that JOE did not take. She exits. The rest of the crowd continues to watch the now-empty train tracks.

Scene thirteen: Canadian National Exhibition, 31 December 1916

The rain continues. The stage should be very bright for this scene – festively so. The DRUMMER counts in a resounding song. The singing continues as the women take off and shake out their wet wraps and coats. Two servicemen (NADIYA and ABIGAIL) take the coats and exit.

ANN: *(still drumming)* It's a vision!

BEULAH: They really have pulled out all the stops, haven't they?

JANE: I think the front steps were marble.

EDIE: Granite, probably.

JANE: Still. Very grand.

ANN: All these lights! And they're not skimping on the coal tonight.

LAURA: We've earned a bit of warmth, haven't we?

BEULAH: You have, and more. Come on girls, form up. Forward march.

The group, accompanied by the drummer and humming along to the song, march to their table.

ANN: It was so nice of the Munitions Board to give us this dinner.

JANE: I thought we were lucky enough just to have a job.

LAURA: A way to do our bit. How kind of them to celebrate us.

JANE: Look, look – here comes the food!

ANN plays a drumroll. The servicemen present a giant platter, upon which a munitions shell is presented surrounded by root vegetables.

ANN: Oh, it's gorgeous! Is that all for us?

The servicemen land the platter in the centre of the table. One of them takes the drum from ANN.

BEULAH stands to "carve" the shell. She slices off the nose and gunpowder spills out.

ELLEN: I haven't had a meal like this in years.

BEATRICE: You haven't had a meal like this in your life.

BEULAH: Hand down your plates, girls.

She goes about spooning gunpowder onto each plate. The mood is jovial as plates are passed along.

MARY: It looks wonderful.

JANE: Oh, it smells incredible.

LAURA: And how was everyone's Christmas?

ELLEN: Busy at our place.

MARY: Luke and I went over for dinner.

BEATRICE: Yes, that Luke is such a funny young man.

EDIE: I dropped by Jane's.

JANE: Yes, my aunt was happy to have visitors for Christmas. She gets lonely.

ANN: I went home to see my parents. It's been ages. So quiet there, without my brothers to rile everyone up.

BEULAH: How about you, Miss McAlister.

LAURA: Oh, I spent the day with the Women's Patriotic League, serving meals to the beneficiaries. There are so many women and children, you know, who have so little while their husbands and fathers are away. And they are so cheerful in spite of it all.

BEULAH: Is that everyone? Very good, girls, raise your glasses. A Merry Christmas, and a happy 1917 to each of you.

They toast, then dig in.

ANN: Mmmmm. Delicious.

JANE: Isn't it? Perfectly tender.

BEATRICE: Better'n the pot roast at the factory, I'll say that for it.

EDIE: I must admit, I was hoping for wine.

BEULAH: I, for one, do not mourn the absence of alcohol at this event. We can be quite festive enough without losing control of our faculties, don't you think?

LAURA: Yes indeed.

BEATRICE: Alcohol never did anyone any good if you ask me.

EDIE: A drink every now and then. It has its appeal. On special occasions.

JANE: Oof, have you tried this sauce? It's perfect.

ELLEN: Something to write home about, eh, Jane.

JANE: Don't think I won't. They'll be so jealous.

ANN: It takes a long time making a sauce like this. This isn't just gravy.

MARY: And to make it for so many of us. There must be a thousand people here.

BEULAH: A thousand women, yes. The Munitionettes. Serving the Empire with our skill and time as well as our thrift and good humour.

LAURA stands and tings her glass with a knife. Everyone looks up at her.

LAURA: Ladies. God Save the King!

ALL: God Save the King!

They stand to toast.

The whistle blows. The women rotate around the table as a unit and sit again in new seats, this time with ABIGAIL at the head of the table.

Scene fourteen: canteen

The shell on the platter, with gunpowder spilling out from its nose, remains on the table as the workers pass their plates up to be served.

ABIGAIL: A special treat, ladies, it's Shepherd's Pie today!

BEATRICE: Why is it grey?

ELLEN: Hush mother.

JANE: Two servings, please.

ABIGAIL: You're not serious.

JANE: I am.

EDIE: Remember your Christian charity, Abigail.

ABIGAIL: Here it is. We haven't had meat at our house in a week, but here are two servings of mince for you and your Bolshevik janitor.

JANE: She isn't –

EDIE: Jane, come on.

They sit down together.

MARY: Thanks.

ABIGAIL: You're welcome.

JANE and EDIE squish together to make room for NADIYA, who sits with them.

NADIYA: Thank you.

JANE: You're welcome.

EDIE: So the Bolsheviks won. Do you ever hear from home? Is your family safe?

NADIYA: I do not have any family in Russia.

JANE: Of course.

NADIYA (*with a glance around*): Anymore.

EDIE: Well that's a relief then.

NADIYA: Yes. A relief. Only my son is left.

LAURA: It seems a shame, doesn't it? To have a foreigner working here when there are Canadian women who would love to have that job?

JANE: The Russians are allies.

ANN: Not anymore. They're out, or do you not read the papers?

LAURA: By rights, your pal should go and we should get in an American to do the cleaning.

EDIE: Last week you were cursing the Americans.

BEULAH: Last week, the Americans weren't in the war.

LAURA: I'll write a letter, I think. Ask the managers to reconsider who belongs in this factory.

JANE: Nadiya's not the one who took Russia out of the war, is she?

ANN: I never trusted her to begin with. Russians are cold and hard to read. Treacherous.

LAURA: Regicidal.

EDIE: Maybe the Russians were onto something, taking down a Tsar who was so out of touch with the people.

JANE: Edie!

EDIE: I think they might be onto something.

BEULAH: Mind your mouth, Miss St-Croix. This is dangerously close to treason.

EDIE: All I'm saying is the Russians were dying of starvation, /never mind the war –

BEULAH: /Do you like this job, Miss St-Croix?

Beat.

EDIE: It's better than anything else going.

BEULAH: Then you will keep your treacherous, socialist ideas to yourself. In this factory we acknowledge the King of England, and we work in his service. Is that clear?

MARY, ELLEN, BEATRICE, LAURA, and ANN mumble a "yes ma'am."

BEULAH: Miss St-Croix?

EDIE: Yes, ma'am.

BEULAH: Good. Finish your lunches, girls, word from above is there's a new order come in.

Long hours this week.

There is a long pause while the ladies eat. Everyone but JANE and EDIE stare at NADIYA.

ANN loads up a bit of shepherd's pie onto her fork and volleys it at NADIYA. She hits her.

JANE: Hey!

EDIE: Shut up, Jane.

ANN reloads her fork. LAURA does the same. ANN lets fly, then LAURA, calmly, separately, with no joy or giggling. NADIYA sits very still.

JANE: Nadiya –

NADIYA gets up and leaves the stage.

BEULAH: Now, girls, you mustn't be wasteful. You know the boys overseas would love to have a bit of warm mashed potato tonight.

Scene fifteen: Child's Restaurant, 12 April 1917.

A WAITER (JANE) starts clearing plates from the table. The snare drum is heard approaching.

A crowd of returned soldiers (the full company) barges in; they are not marching, this is a crowd on the verge of riot. It should be clear from the actors' physicality that the soldiers have been injured in action. One, PRIVATE GOWAN (ABIGAIL), has a streak of blood on his face and is plainly drunk.

SOLDIER 1 (MARY): Bring us your Austrian!

WAITER: I'm sorry?

SOLDIER 2 (ELLEN): You've got an Enemy Alien working here, and we want him.

SOLDIER 1: Yesterday evening, he struck Private Gowan.

SOLDIER 2: A veteran of the field!

SOLDIER 1: A hero!

SOLDIER 2: He didn't sacrifice his health and livelihood to be insulted by an Austrian!

SOLDIER 1: An Austrian who has a job at your establishment!

SOLDIER 2: While we get nothing when we get home!

PRIVATE GOWAN: He gave me this! (*referring to the blood on his face*)

WAITER: With respect, Private, you threw the first punch. I saw it.

SOLDIER 1: That's his right!

SOLDIER 2: As a veteran!

SOLDIER 1: As a soldier!

SOLDIER 2: To tackle the enemy!

SOLDIER 1: An enemy on home soil!

SOLDIER 2: Give us the enemy!

CROWD: Give him to us! Give us the Austrian! Give us the alien! (*etc ad lib – do not shy away from slurs but there should be no profanity*)

WAITER: He isn't working today. He's not here.

SOLDIER 1: You're hiding him!

SOLDIER 2: Where's your loyalty to the King?

SOLDIER 1: Why didn't YOU serve, eh?

SOLDIER 2: Too much of a coward?

WAITER: I tried but I couldn't –

SOLDIER 1: A shirker?

WAITER: They said my vision –

SOLDIER 2: A traitor?

WAITER: I don't see well enough to –

SOLDIER 1: Let's see what you can see.

The crowd surrounds the WAITER and gets threateningly closer. In the coming lines the SOLDIERS refer to each others' injuries:

SOLDIER 2: Do you see this arm?

SOLDIER 1: Do you see this leg?

SOLDIER 2: This chest?

SOLDIER 1: This ear?

SOLDIER 2: This eye?

SOLDIER 1: This hand?

SOLDIER 2: This nose?

SOLDIER 1: These lungs?

SOLDIER 2: These minds?

SOLDIER 1: Do you see blood when you close your broken eyes?

SOLDIER 2: We see blood.

SOLDIER 1: And body parts.

SOLDIER 2: Blown up.

SOLDIER 1: Craters in the mud.

SOLDIER 2: Craters in our comrades.

SOLDIER 1: We'll show you.

SOLDIER 2: We'll show you.

SOLDIER 1: We'll show you what we see.

PRIVATE GOWAN throws a wild, unfocused punch. The WAITER dodges and a brawl ensues.

When the WAITER is knocked down the CROWD turns its attention to the objects on stage:

chairs, benches, plates – everything but the table and the shell on the platter, which remains

untouched as if sacred. The snare, which has been beating steadily throughout the scene, builds

in tempo and intensity. The percussive sounds of the smashing of furniture and crockery join the

snare to build a syncopated, almost-jazzy rhythm.

The WAITER crawls under the table and emerges on the upstage side of it with a large Union

Jack. He stands on the table, straddling the shell.

WAITER: Stop! STOP!

He waves the flag.

WAITER: We are subjects of the King here! We are Canadians!

Out of the fray, SOLDIERS 1 & 2 produce a civilian who is wrapped – cocooned – in knitting.

The needles hang off of him visibly.

SOLDIER 1: We found him!

SOLDIER 2: The Austrian!

PRIVATE GOWAN: That'ss nah him.

WAITER: That's our cook – he's Swiss.

SOLDIER 1: He's coming to the police station with us.

SOLDIER 2: They'll know how to deal wit the Austrian!

PRIVATE GOWAN: That'ss nah the Ausstriann.

COOK (NADIYA): I'm not Austrian.

SOLDIER 1: Come on lads!

The crowd march their prisoner all around the theatre. Occasionally they break off the rabble to question audience members: “Where are you from?” “Why aren’t you in khaki?” “Too yellow to fight the Huns?” etc. Under no circumstances should they listen to any answers the audience gives them. This rampage continues to the end of the scene. Performers should not be concerned about upstaging the remaining scripted scene – the more obnoxious they are, the better.

Meanwhile, on stage, the WAITER continues to wave the flag. A REPORTER (EDIE) and POLICE INSPECTOR DICKMAN (BEULAH) enter separately, engaging with the wreckage. Maybe the REPORTER grabs a piece of broken plate to scribble notes on. Maybe DICKMAN has to step over a broken piece of furniture.

REPORTER: Inspector! Police Inspector! Inspector Dickman! Will you comment on the today’s events?

DICKMAN: There was no profane language, no damage was done to property, and no necessity for the police to take action against any civilian. I did not intend to precipitate a riot by giving a wrong order.¹

REPORTER: Mayor Church!

One of the rioting SOLDIERS assumes the role of MAYOR CHURCH (LAURA) and approaches the stage. DICKMAN finds something to sit on and sets himself up at the table, loading up a broken plate with the shell’s innards.

¹ This is a direct quote accredited to Police Inspector Dickman, from the Metropolitan Toronto Police Museum and Discovery Centre, as cited in *Our Glory and Our Grief* p. 166. Mayor Church’s comments that follow are drawn from the same source and are the real words cited, with cuts for brevity only.

CHURCH: Cannot something be done to require restaurants to file returns showing the number of alien enemies in their employ? A restaurant is no place to employ Austrians and Germans; their very presence tends to a breach of the peace.

As MAYOR CHURCH arrives on stage he finds another seat and sets himself up across from DICKMAN. The two competitively eat the gunpowder, eating with their hands, talking with their mouths full, interrupting each other. The REPORTER runs to take notes from whoever is speaking, making a wide, frantic circle around the table. The WAITER continues to wave the flag immediately overhead. The snare continues as the rabble progresses through the house.

DICKMAN: Introduce a motion at Council –

CHURCH: All natives of alien enemy countries now domiciled in Canada –

DICKMAN: who are known –

CHURCH: or who may in future be found guilty –

DICKMAN: of using seditious language –

CHURCH: or of sympathy with the German cause –

DICKMAN: be at the close of the war –

The SOLDIERS and their prisoner the COOK arrive back on stage.

CHURCH & DICKMAN: deported.²

SOLDIERS: Deported!

REPORTER (*taking notes*): Deported.

The SOLDIERS lift the COOK onto the table. Suddenly, all noise stops. The WAITER holds the now-stationary flag so that it hangs behind DICKMAN, who briefly becomes BEULAH.

² “All natives... deported” is an exact quote from *Our Glory and Our Grief* (166), which cites *Minutes of the Proceedings of the Council of the Corporation of the City of Toronto for the Year 1917*, 30 Apr 1917 (Toronto: Industrial and Technical Press, 1918), Toronto City Hall Archives, pp. 96-97.

BEULAH: Nadiya Andrushevych.

NADIYA: Yes ma'am?

BEULAH: You're fired.

A victorious roar from the crowd of soldiers. The WAITER waves the flag again, eyes high. The drum picks up, a brisk rhythm, building momentum. CHURCH and DICKMAN reach hungrily for the cook and the crowd rushes the table. The COOK lets out a wail.

Blackout and silence. End of Act One.

Act Two

Scene one: Massey Hall, 3 August 1917

The Hall is full of knitters. MARY, BEATRICE & ELLEN in a row, also knitting. We can hear the muffled speech of the WELL-DRESSED LADY throughout. Occasionally, knitters shush the 3 ladies.

BEATRICE: Whad she say?

ELLEN: The draft, Mom.

BEATRICE: I don't know what the hold up is with that. Only makes sense, really.

MARY: It's coming, whether we want it or not. Doesn't matter what we say here today, in my opinion.

BEATRICE: I guess if the gents in Ottawa need a bunch of ladies to tell them what's good for them.

MARY: I suppose if there are exemptions. For boys like my Luke. Man of the house now, until his dad and brother get home, you know. I need someone to stay with me.

ELLEN: They're voting on the resolution, put up your hand Mom.

The WELL-DRESSED LADY pauses to count hands. BEATRICE and ELLEN – and the other knitters – pause their knitting to raise their hands and be counted. MARY focuses hard on her knitting for a moment.

BEATRICE: No trouble to tell that it passed.

ELLEN: Keep your hand up. They're counting. *(She looks over to MARY and finds her hand not up.)* Mary!

MARY: Yes yes, sorry. *(She raises her hand.)* Everything's very official in this meeting.

After a few moments the WELL-DRESSED LADY starts up again and the women return to knitting.

MARY: Good. I'm sure the Prime Minister will be delighted to know how the women of Ontario feel about Conscription.

ELLEN: You never know. We might get the vote next thing.

BEATRICE: Ha! That'll be the day.

KNITTERS: Shh!

MARY: Why not? We're already making their bombs.

ELLEN: And in return they pay us enough to eat.

MARY: Almost enough. If you haven't got a growing son in your house.

BEATRICE: If you ask me, an election is just a waste of everyone's time. Draft the lazy bums and send them over, why don't they?

ELLEN: Seems like trouble they can't even agree on *that*.

KNITTERS: Shh.

Beat.

MARY: Good crowd.

BEATRICE: Packed. Never seen so many women in one place.

MARY: There must be women here from all over the province.

BEATRICE: They put out a call. It was in the papers.

MARY: Every woman who has a relative at the front, or who works for the Red Cross, or a Patriotic Society, or who does war work... so basically every woman in Ontario.

BEATRICE: Well in that case they fell a bit short, didn't they?

KNITTERS: Shh!

Beat.

BEATRICE: I'll tell you one thing, if they *do* give me the vote it won't be going to that Laurier fella. Little French traitor.

MARY: He's only saying he'd let us vote on the draft. Like we just did.

BEATRICE: Exactly, we just did it. Can't they count up all the people who send in resolutions? That must be more than half the country.

ELLEN: Maybe not in Quebec.

BEATRICE: Don't even talk about Quebec. Weasels and frogs. Won't even send their men over to defend their motherland.

ELLEN: That's right, King and Country and all that.

MARY: The English King and Country, that means.

BEATRICE: Canada's part of England, whether the French like it or not. And our boys are fighting for France's freedom right now. In France.

ELLEN: Yeah. Doesn't seem fair.

MARY: There's lots about war that isn't fair, I'm noticing. Like being expected to use graham flour instead of wheat. Or oats, like horses.

BEATRICE: Graham cakes aren't so bad. Just no good in bread.

MARY: I don't know why they go on and on about it. We were already growing our own veggies, weren't we? It's not like there's money to burn.

BEATRICE: I'd burn it if it'd heat my house.

KNITTERS: Shh.

Beat.

MARY: How's your scarf coming El?

ELLEN: I don't think I've gotten any better at this.

MARY: Well, it doesn't matter, does it, if you're the best powder-packer in the factory.

ELLEN: I'll say that to myself every time I drop a stitch. By the time the scarf's done I'll have built myself up so much you won't be able to tell me anything at work.

MARY: I heard you're doing better than a few of the men now. For money.

ELLEN: They keep on paying me by the shell. I'd take a full-time salary if they offered.

BEATRICE: Hush about that.

MARY: You should be proud of it, El. You're good, and you're fast, and if they want to pay you extra you should let em.

KNITTERS: Shh.

Beat.

BEATRICE: I only wish my worthless husband liked work as much as you do.

MARY: At least he's home with you. And you have your sons.

BEATRICE: To my shame. I wish the lot of them could have gone, but you know how those recruiters are. Too old, too short, bad eyesight, bad breath.

MARY: They're dropping restrictions left and right, I hear. Sounds like they'll take anyone who can stand up straight these days.

ELLEN: The boys should go get themselves examined again. Maybe they could go after all.

BEATRICE: Wouldn't that be lovely.

MARY: Yeah. Lovely.

KNITTERS: Shh!

Beat. The WELL-DRESSED LADY carries on.

ELLEN: The men at work are always staring at me now.

BEATRICE: They must know, then.

MARY: They can't hurt you with their eyes, El.

BEATRICE: Let em stare, I say.

MARY: Maybe they like you. There's nothing like a competent woman to make a man weak in the knees.

BEATRICE: Yes, that's true. Your father always loved that in me. My advice, Ellen: keep your competence to yourself. Your father and I won't be around forever, and when we go, you'll manage, won't you. Now that you've found something to be good at.

ELLEN: One thing.

MARY: Pick up your chin, El. You start thinking like you can do things, you might find you really can.

The factory whistle blows.

Scene two: factory

DAVIS (NADIYA), patrols the rows of women working. He touches them casually at any opportunity.

DAVIS: You know what I hear?

ELLEN: What's that, Mister Davis.

DAVIS: I heard you're making mint.

ELLEN: Don't know where you heard that.

DAVIS: Rumours go around and around this place, you know Maloney. For example, I heard this one, about you, visiting the manager after hours.

BEATRICE: Well that's a load of /horsesh –

MARY: /What are you saying, Mr. Davis?

DAVIS: I'm not saying anything. Just checking on the work.

MARY: We have a Matron for that, Mr. Davis.

DAVIS: Checking on the Matron's work, then.

BEULAH: And how do my girls measure up, Mr. Davis?

DAVIS takes his time checking over the women's shoulders etc. He picks up a metal stopper that MARY has made.

DAVIS: Oh, good enough. The machine is doing most of the work on this, isn't it. Don't need to be too clever to run these machines. A monkey could do it.

BEULAH: I'm glad you agree that the girls are doing an excellent job.

DAVIS approaches EDIE.

DAVIS: This one in particular. She's got this slot-making all sorted out. I dare say her slot is the best slot going. All told.

HE touches EDIE.

EDIE: Mr. Davis. If you don't mind. I am working.

BEULAH: I'll thank you not to distract my girls, Mr. Davis.

DAVIS: They're very distracting, your girls. Good thing you're all down here. Tucked out of sight.

BEULAH: I agree. That is a very good thing. Are you quite satisfied, sir?

DAVIS: It'll do. I'll be back tomorrow to check again.

DAVIS exits.

BEULAH: What was that about, St-Croix?

EDIE: How should I know?

MARY: Can he do that?

BEULAH: It is outside the scope of his work, if that's what you mean.

JANE: Can you stop him?

BEULAH: I'll have a word with the foreman. But you know as well as I, girls, that the union men get what they want around here. Back to work, please.

She crosses away.

JANE: You ok?

EDIE: Sure. Nothing I can't handle.

MARY: You all right, El?

ELLEN: I'll manage.

BEATRICE: She's tough, aren't ya Ellen.

ANN: He's disgusting.

JANE: Doesn't sound like he wants to marry you anymore.

EDIE: I told you, I choose whether I see a man again. He's out. Might be the bee in his bonnet.

JANE: Bug up his butt.

EDIE: Bat in his attic.

JANE: Bear at his picnic.

They giggle.

MARY: Looks like we got our wish, eh. With the vote. I saw it in the paper this morning.

BEATRICE: You did. Not us.

ELLEN: Not until we got a man at the front.

MARY: Well I've got two men out there. You think they'll give me two ballots?

BEATRICE: Ask em. You can put one in for me.

MARY: Let's go down together on the day, Ann.

ANN: Yeah all right. I'd be a bit intimidated by myself.

MARY: Sure, we'll make it a party. Anyone else?

EDIE: I'll go.

MARY: You got a man in the war?

EDIE: My dad, yeah.

MARY: I never knew.

JANE: Me neither.

EDIE: Well now you know. How about you, Jane?

JANE: My family are farmers, they couldn't spare anyone. Gotta grow the food to feed the soldiers, right?

ANN: What'll it be like, I wonder.

MARY: Full of men looking at us like we don't belong, no doubt.

EDIE: Well if we're not used to that by now I don't know if there's hope for any of us.

A general laugh.

EDIE: How about you, Laura? Your officer-cousin get you the vote?

LAURA: I'm not sure. I'll have to look into it.

EDIE: That'd be a no, then.

JANE: Edie, your dad is serving?

EDIE: Let's talk about this later, eh.

MARY: There was an ad in the paper for men to go work on the farms for harvest, I saw. Was thinking of sending my youngest out to lend a hand. You know anything about that, Jane?

JANE: Um, yeah, Dad says it's been a good season and you know how short food is –

General agreement from the women.

JANE: ...so they want to get everything in before the frost. It's a lot of work in a short time, and half the men who'd be doing it are overseas, so they need hands. Dad's extra mad I'm here and not there helping out. I can barely send him home any money to make up for it.

MARY: And it pays a bit too, right? Seems like we got more money than ever before but still getting poorer and poorer.

LAURA: Yes, it's called inflation, /you see –

MARY: /Luke is out of school now and he's big and strong but, well, he's...

BEATRICE: Dumb as a post?

MARY: No. He's just...

BEATRICE: The dullest nail in the box?

MARY: He follows instructions great. He just doesn't talk well. No good with people.

JANE: Ok?

MARY: And we could use an extra bit of money and I'd say your Dad could use a hand.

JANE: Um, yeah. I'll ask him.

ELLEN: Thought you said you needed to keep him home.

MARY: Maybe I just need him to not be shot by Germans.

BEATRICE: Not very patriotic of you.

MARY: You get a man in the war, Beatrice Maloney. You get someone you love over there and then you can talk to me about patriotism. Make your bomb.

BEATRICE: I've knit ninety pairs of socks –

MARY: Do you have nightmares about those socks you made being blown up?

BEATRICE: No, I –

MARY: Crying out into the dark for help?

ELLEN: Mary –

MARY is worked up now.

MARY: Bleeding to death in a hole –

BEATRICE: I didn't say –

BEULAH: MacKenzie!

ELLEN: Leave it, Mom. Mary. You get news?

MARY: No. Not yet. But I have a bad feeling. Can't shake it.

ELLEN: You probably just need a good sleep.

MARY: I need my boys home, El.

A beat.

BEATRICE: Make your bomb, Mary.

Scene three: downtown, late November 1917.

A crowd has gathered to watch the Victory Loans parade. LAURA and ABIGAIL are among them, holding a small cushion each. There is also a CIVILIAN MAN in the crowd (played by MARY).

ABIGAIL: Mother says they got a tank. Can you imagine? A tank on Yonge Street?

LAURA: Extraordinary.

ABIGAIL: I've never seen a tank before.

LAURA: I've never seen one move. How exciting.

REPORTERS flood the stage. They take notes frantically as they speak: on the crowd, the audience, the weather, etc.

REPORTER 1 (EDIE): Help finish the job:/ buy Victory Bonds!

REPORTER 2 (JANE): /Pave the way to Victory:// buy Victory Bonds!

REPORTER 1: //Stick it Canada! ///Buy more Victory Bonds!

REPORTER 2: ///They serve France; how can you serve/ Canada? Buy Victory Bonds!

REPORTER 1: /Help Finish the Job: //Buy Victory Bonds!

REPORTER 2: //To maintain the prosperity of Canada:/// Buy Victory Bonds!

REPORTER 1: ///If you can't enlist – invest! ///Buy Victory Bonds!

REPORTER 2: ///Back him up! Buy Victory Bonds!

REPORTERS repeat a chorus of “Buy Victory Bonds” continuously. At first they are doing so in their own time. Then, we hear the DRUMMER approaching. Gradually, the REPORTERS’ chorus falls into time with the drum.

Meanwhile, LAURA produces a seam ripper and opens up her cushion.

ABIGAIL (*over the REPORTERS’ chorus*): May I borrow that?

LAURA: Certainly.

ABIGAIL likewise opens her cushion.

As the DRUMMER approaches, the REPORTERS start to march in place. When they are all marching, they push into the crowd, still taking notes, still repeating their chorus. The rest of the crowd begins to chant, and to march in place along with them.

The DRUMMER enters at last and parades through the audience, followed by the TANK. This is the actor playing BEULAH, dressed as Britannia, whose iconic costume & helmet extends into a large frame with clear tank-like elements, including machine guns.

As the DRUMMER and TANK arrive on stage and march off, the company bursts into song; it is the chorus of “Rule Britannia” but the words are:

ALL (*singing boisterously*): Buy, Victory, Bonds Buy Victory Bonds. Buy Vic-to-ree-ee-ee-ee Bonds, Buy Vict'ry Bonds!

While the parade passes in front of the crowd, LAURA and ABIGAIL stuff feathers from their cushions into the CIVILIAN's costume – breast pocket, neck, wherever there is an opening. As the parade exits:

CIVILIAN: Hey! What...?

The crowd jumps away from him, leaving him in the centre of a circle.

REPORTER 1: A man in civilian clothing was marked –

REPORTER 2: as a coward –

REPORTER 1: a lily-livered –

REPORTER 2: weakling –

REPORTER 1: by two brave women –

REPORTER 2: wielding as their weapons –

REPORTER 1: only a spoiled cushion –

REPORTER 2: and a handful of chicken feathers.

CIVILIAN: Hang on, I –

The crowd begins to converge on him. He tries to rid himself of the feathers.

REPORTER 1: His shame –

REPORTER 2: was on display –

REPORTER 1: and one could not blame –

REPORTER 2: any man who had returned from Europe –

REPORTER 1: or any woman who loved a serving soldier –

REPORTER 2: for harbouring an uncharitable –

REPORTER 1: angry –

REPORTER 2: violent sentiment toward him.

The CIVILIAN is still trying to get free of the feathers.

CIVILIAN: Wait just a moment, I –

REPORTERS & CROWD: Victory, victory, victory, victory (etc)

As the crowd is about to reach him, he ducks down and crawls out of the crowd, then gets up and exits at a run. The crowd chase him off. The feathers remain on stage.

Scene four: home visit

JANE's home, as before. JANE and EDIE are in bed, above. NADIYA, below, vacuums up the feathers. When the vacuum is shut off:

EDIE: When is Matron Beulah coming?

JANE: Mm. Any minute.

EDIE: Get out of bed.

JANE: I seem to be stuck here.

EDIE: Come on, get up. She could send you home.

JANE: Just one more minute.

EDIE gets out of bed and starts to dress.

EDIE: You are not being sent away to the country because some old woman with a stick up her butt finds you in a state of dishabille. Get dressed.

JANE does.

JANE: Nadiya?

NADIYA: Yes?

JANE: Will you keep an eye out for Mrs. Johnston? I just need a moment.

NADIYA: I will watch.

She exits.

JANE: Now, you need to make yourself scarce.

EDIE: Tired of me already? Ho hum.

JANE: Stop it.

JANE flicks an article of clothing at EDIE, who puts it on.

EDIE: And to think, not two minutes ago you were begging for me to stay exactly where I was.

JANE: You love it when I beg.

EDIE: I do. I do.

They kiss.

EDIE: What are you going to tell her about your Aunt?

JANE: What's to tell? Aunt Joan is exactly the same as before.

EDIE: And how is that?

JANE: Very ill. Bedridden. Delusional, you know.

EDIE: And not at all missing.

JANE: I looked for her, didn't I?

EDIE: You didn't go to the police.

JANE: Since when do you recommend going to the police?

EDIE: They could keep an eye out for her. Let you know if they find her.

JANE: She's never not made it home. She knows where she lives. She's lived here her whole life.

EDIE: So?

JANE: So if she were coming home, she'd be home, wouldn't she.

EDIE: Have you told your mother? That her sister's been missing for days?

JANE: No.

EDIE: You have to tell her, Jane. And you should report her missing.

JANE: She's fine.

EDIE: What if she isn't? What if she's hurt?

JANE: You're one to lecture me on morals.

EDIE: Meaning what, exactly?

NADIYA (*re-entering*): Miss Baker, she is coming!

JANE: Nothing. Come on.

The two young women come downstairs.

EDIE: Why does she call you Miss?

JANE: I am one, aren't I? Thank you Nadiya. Now, I need you to do something, this is very important. Go up to the bedroom and get in the bed. Turn your back to the door and do not move until after Mrs. Johnston has left.

NADIYA: The bed... your bed.

JANE: My aunt's bed, yes.

NADIYA: You were just in?

JANE: That's right. Hurry hurry.

NADIYA gives EDIE a look, then goes upstairs. During the coming lines she strips the bed down to the mattress, handling the sheets as though they are infested, and bundles them on the floor. She flips both pillows over, then flips the quilt. Only then does she get into bed and follow JANE's instructions.

EDIE: You'd make a good McAlister, talking to her like that.

JANE: She has a place to sleep, doesn't she? Nobody will hire her, not even to do their sewing, except me.

EDIE: You haven't *hired* her. You're not *paying* her. And she's cleaning up after you, doing your cooking –

JANE: She's grateful.

EDIE: Right now she's saving you from a trip back to the country. *You* should be grateful.

JANE: I'm not taking any more lecturing from you.

EDIE: Because I'm so corrupt, is that it? I thought you understood.

JANE: I understand you get paid to have sex with men.

EDIE: We both take money for making bombs. You know what bombs do, right Jane?

JANE: They kill Germans! The enemy.

EDIE: They're people, Jane.

JANE: It's not the same as –

A knock at the door.

EDIE: I'm gonna go.

JANE: You should go.

EDIE: You should tell the police about your aunt.

JANE: Shut up.

She exits and returns with BEULAH.

BEULAH: Oh, hello Miss St-Croix.

EDIE: Hello Mrs. Johnston.

JANE: Miss St-Croix was just leaving.

EDIE: That's... Yes, I'm going. Good evening, Mrs. Johnston.

BEULAH: Good evening.

EDIE exits.

BEULAH: Your home looks good, Miss Baker.

JANE: Thank you.

BEULAH: Tidier than last time I was here.

JANE: Yes. Things are... more settled now.

BEULAH: Indeed. How is your aunt?

JANE: Much the same, I'm afraid.

BEULAH: Is she home at the moment?

JANE: She is. In bed.

BEULAH: Miss Baker, normally I would not impose upon a woman in ill health, but I must ask to speak with her.

JANE: Uh. Well, now is –

BEULAH: It has been far too long that you have been in my charge without my having met her. It is my responsibility to make sure that you are well taken care of.

JANE: She takes good care of me.

BEULAH: I suspect you take much more care of her, Miss Baker. And that is proper, given the... situation. But she must be able to attend to your moral needs, in the absence of your mother.

JANE: She does! She –

BEULAH: So I am afraid I must wake her and say a few words to her. The bedroom is upstairs, as I recall?

JANE: Oh, yes –

BEULAH leads JANE up to the bedroom, above. She goes in and stands over the bed. NADIYA's back is to her.

BEULAH: Miss – er?

JANE: Um. Andrews.

BEULAH: Miss Andrews, my name is Beulah Johnston, and I have the pleasure of supervising your niece at the factory.

Beat.

BEULAH: I apologize for interrupting your rest, Miss Andrews, but I would very much appreciate the opportunity to speak with you.

Beat.

BEULAH: Miss Andrews? I'm afraid you'll have to say a few words to me before I'll be able to go in good conscience.

Beat.

NADIYA: Nice. To. Meet. You.

BEULAH: The pleasure is mine. Are you able to sit up, Miss Andrews? Or to roll over?

NADIYA: I. Am. Afraid. Not.

JANE: She has sores! Um, bedsores, Mrs. Johnston, from her long illness. That is the only position that doesn't cause her pain.

BEULAH: I see. Well, I shall go around to visit on the other side of the bed, shall I?

BEULAH goes around the bed. JANE rushes around to put herself between the two women.

JANE: Oh dear, auntie, you've kicked off all your bedsheets! Are you warm? Mrs. Johnston, she must have a fever, best not to get too close.

BEULAH: Miss Baker, is this –

JANE: Oh yes, she has one of those faces, doesn't she? You'd swear you'd seen her before, in the street or somewhere.

BEULAH: Uncanny. Well, I do hope you feel better soon. Miss Andrews.

BEULAH steps out and heads downstairs.

JANE: You took off the sheets?

NADIYA: I will not share sheets with a whore.

A beat: JANE is stunned. She goes downstairs.

BEULAH: Miss Baker.

JANE: Yes ma'am.

A pause as the elder woman considers the younger.

BEULAH: Did you plant carrots?

JANE: I did, ma'am.

BEULAH: And how are they?

JANE: Thriving. You can see them from here actually. *(She points out into the garden.)* See the row of greens?

A beat as they look.

BEULAH: You are a very independent young woman, Miss Baker.

JANE: Thank you, ma'am.

BEULAH: I will come by again in a few days, and I hope to meet with your aunt then.

JANE: Of course.

BEULAH: Your aunt. You understand. Miss Baker?

JANE: Yes ma'am. Thank you.

BEULAH: Good evening.

She goes. NADIYA has come downstairs and is making a beeline for the exit.

JANE: Where are you going?

NADIYA: To wash.

JANE: You've got a lot of gall. Edie was just sticking up for you, and that's what you think of her?

NADIYA: To share your bed with someone like that. What makes you different than her men?

JANE: She loves me.

NADIYA: Фіґня. (Translation: Bullshit.) You are both the same. You do not deserve to be protected. To be lied for. Господи прости. (Translation: God forgive me.)

Beat.

NADIYA: I go and wash.

JANE: Fine. But then you can get out.

NADIYA: Так. (Translation: Yes.)

She goes. JANE stands alone.

JANE: Так.

Scene five: draft exemptions tribunal

A JUDGE (ABIGAIL) presides from above. Next to him, a STENOGRAPHER (BEULAH) sits at a station, equipped with a typewriter, a ream of paper, and a shingle with the stenographer's

mark.³ She records the full scene, regularly resetting the carriage to its left-justification. As she finishes her pages – and in between each applicant – she discards the paper and it falls to the stage below. ROY MCCAULEY⁴ (JANE) stands in the centre of that stage. Several REPORTERS watch from the sidelines, taking notes. MARY is with them, knitting.

JUDGE: Mr. McCauley, you have come before us today because you have applied for exemption from the draft. What reason do you present that a man in such exemplary health might shy away from his responsibility to his King and Empire and his comrades at the front?

ROY: Ground for exemption number six, your honour. Hardship owing to exceptional domestic position.

JUDGE: Very well. Please describe your exceptional domestic hardship.

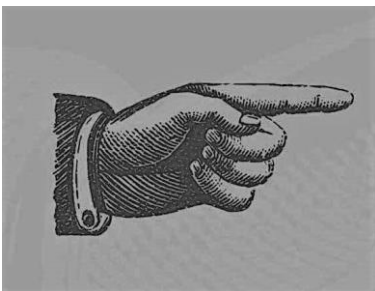
ROY: Your honour, my brother has been wounded at the front. He has returned home now but is unable to work, leaving me to support both him and my mother.

JUDGE: What would become of your mother if you were to go out on the street and be killed by a motor car?

ROY: She would become destitute, your honour –

JUDGE: Your brother is not dead.

ROY: If I may describe his injuries, your honour –



3

⁴ The cases of Roy McCauley through Thomas Aveling are true tribunal cases, collected and recounted in *Our Glory and Our Grief* pp. 340-42. The Judge's lines "What would become of your mother... Military Cross" are cited in that text from "Tribunals Are Tightening Up on Exemptions," *News*, 10 November 1917, p. 1.

JUDGE: And instead of being killed you might come back with the Military Cross. Wouldn't that be nice?

ROY: But if I *am* killed –

JUDGE: You are drafted. Next!

ROY exits and another draftee, WILLIAM KENNEDY (LAURA), is brought forth. The stenographer drops her first sheet of paper and reloads her typewriter.

JUDGE: And you, Mr. Kennedy, what is your excuse?

WILLIAM: Number three, your honour, continuing education.

JUDGE: Tell me.

WILLIAM: I have one year left in medical school, your honour, and once I complete my degree I would be able to serve as an army doctor –

JUDGE: You can serve as an infantryman now, and your country needs you. Drafted.

WILLIAM exits and is replaced by CECIL STOVELL (ELLEN). A sheet of paper falls from the STENOGRAPHER.

JUDGE: Mr. Stovell, your claim?

CECIL: Number eight, religious grounds.

JUDGE: No. Drafted.

CECIL exits and his paper falls from above. As the scene continues, the same actors can appear over and over as the draftees.

JUDGE: Mr. Aveling?

AVELING (JANE): Five, business obligations.

JUDGE: Drafted. Mr. O'Toole?

O'TOOLE (ELLEN): Number –

JUDGE: Drafted. Mr. Carter. Drafted. Mr. Taylor, drafted. Mr. MacKenzie, drafted.

MARY: No! Luke!

Beat. Everyone looks at MARY, who wails.

JUDGE: Officers, remove this woman.

Two REPORTERS (EDIE & ANN) escort a weeping MARY out, as the circle of draftees continues to turn:

JUDGE: Mr. Patterson, drafted. Mr. Stevens, drafted. Mr. Avery, drafted. Drafted. Drafted!

DRAFTED!

The JUDGE bangs his gavel madly as the STENOGRAPHER drops pages.

The factory whistle blows.

Scene six: factory

BEULAH oversees ELLEN, BEATRICE, LAURA and JANE. A beat as they work. MARY, EDIE and ANN enter in a hurry.

ANN: Sorry we're late, Mrs. Johnston.

MARY: Big crowd at the polling station.

EDIE: What a rush! The look on the registrar's face when we strolled up, I'll never forget it.

BEULAH: Far be it from me to keep you from the ballot. I only wish I could have joined you.

ANN: Don't you have people at the front, Mrs. Johnston?

BEULAH: My husband is a recruiter, so he stays here.

ANN: Oh, what a shame.

BEULAH: Quite. Come on now, girls, you have some catching up to do.

The three take up their positions. They perform the same tasks as always, but now MARY's machine produces ballots and EDIE's stamps them with a big red X. ANN's machine produces small paper Union Jacks. The paper piles up around each of the three women.

ELLEN: Who'd you vote for, Mary?

EDIE: You don't ask that kind of question, Ellen. It's frowned upon in polite society.

JANE: Since when are you in polite society?

MARY: Society be damned. Borden said the boys who work on the farms won't get drafted.

That's my Luke as long as he's over with your folks, Jane.

JANE: Oh yeah, they like him. He's strong, Dad says.

MARY: Good. So yes, Borden got my vote.

EDIE (*in a whisper*): Got a surprise for you.

JANE: Have you.

EDIE: I asked around. Found someone you've been looking for.

JANE: Who?

EDIE: Joan. (*Beat.*) Your aunt. You know, owns the house you live in.

JANE: Oh. Oh good.

EDIE: Yeah. Thought you'd like to know. She got picked up by the dogcatchers and dropped off to the Hospital for the Insane.

JANE: All right.

EDIE: So you should go claim her.

JANE: Stay out of it.

EDIE: You know she'll get coherent again once she dries out, right? And she'll come home and wonder why her charming niece didn't seem worried she was missing.

JANE: Would you stop?

EDIE: You can't just run from things, Jane.

BEULAH: A little work to accompany your gabbing, please Miss St-Croix.

EDIE stamps a ballot.

EDIE: Stop running away.

A pause, full of the women's factory work. JANE does not make eye contact with EDIE.

ELLEN: Terrible stuff in Halifax, isn't it?

MARY: I haven't read the paper today.

JANE: Something like two thousand dead.

LAURA: A little girl from here named Elizabeth.

BEATRICE: You're all going to spoil my day.

ELLEN: Not as spoiled as Elizabeth's parents' day.

BEULAH: Your mother is right, Miss Maloney. No sense dwelling on it. There's a war on. Miss Baker. I thought this evening might be a good opportunity for me to come visit you at home. Is your aunt recovered?

JANE: I –

BEULAH: Very good then, it's settled. I'll be by just after dinnertime.

She goes off.

JANE: Jesus.

EDIE: I'm not pretending to be her. You know where she is now.

JANE: Stay out of it.

DAVIS enters, all hands.

DAVIS: How are you girls doing today?

BEULAH: I will venture to say that all my girls are doing very well. What can we do for you, Mr. Davis?

DAVIS: Just came down to take a look. How's it packing, Ellen?

ELLEN: Fine.

DAVIS: Show us all up, you are.

EDIE: You should be taking notes.

DAVIS: And how are you, Edie?

EDIE: Fabulous. Spectacular day. Voted. Exercised my democratic *right*.

DAVIS: Did you. Shouldn't be surprised, a girl like you going where you don't belong.

EDIE: There's really only one dark spot on the glorious, glowing beacon of this day. Can you guess what it is?

DAVIS: Don't care.

EDIE: Come on, I'll give you a hint. It's got two legs, two arms, about a million hands, and the worst breath this side of the Atlantic.

DAVIS breathes on her and moves on to JANE.

DAVIS: And how's our farm girl? Still got the manners your mother taught you.

DAVIS touches her. JANE pulls away but says nothing.

EDIE: Don't you touch her.

BEULAH: Mr. Davis, I'll thank you to keep your hands off my girls.

DAVIS: Oh, jealous are you, Matron? Your old husband not paying you enough attention?

He moves over to her and reaches for her bum. BEULAH moves away.

BEULAH: I am warning you, Davis. Do not touch me.

DAVIS: Or what? You think the managers will take your side over mine? I'm a union man, or haven't you forgotten?

He goes to grab her. BEULAH punches him in the face.

Silence.

DAVIS: Oh... you'll regret that.

He attacks her. She defends herself handily. It cannot be said that BEULAH "fights like a girl."

The women cheer her on, with wordless cheering as well as a few "Give him one for me"s and "Go for his junk"s and "watch out!"s etc. Finally, DAVIS is beaten and backs away.

DAVIS: You'll regret this. You'll regret it!

He goes off. The women surround BEULAH.

LAURA: Are you all right?

EDIE: That was the best thing I've ever seen.

ANN: Beulah Johnston. Where did you learn to fight like that?

BEULAH: McAlister here trained me up, didn't you Laura?

LAURA: Regimented marching is what you learned from me.

JANE: I'd bet on you in any pub brawl.

BEULAH: Maybe it was having brothers.

ELLEN: I don't think so.

BEULAH: Could've been marriage with a drunk.

There is an uncomfortable beat. ELLEN and BEATRICE look to each other.

BEATRICE: He shouldn't be smacking you, drink or /no drink.

ELLEN: /Mom, stop.

JANE: Thank you, Mrs. Johnston.

BEULAH: One should never let a fellow like Davis anywhere near a girl who doesn't know how to defend herself.

Beat.

BEULAH: Now, girls, I trust you can finish your shift without me?

LAURA: Where are you going?

EDIE: You're not hurt, are you?

BEULAH: No, St-Croix, I'd say I'm in better shape than Davis there. But once he tells management, well, that's the end of this job for me. And if I'm being honest, being fired would spoil my day. So I'm quitting. Tell the foreman when he comes down, won't you?

A pause. BEULAH exits. We hear her shoes on the floor for a moment after she is gone from view. The women gradually go back to their machines and take up their work again.

The women work without speaking for a moment. Gradually, they emulate the movements of their machines. They take on the machines' noises. ABIGAIL arrives with her meal cart full of shovels, and the drum, and delivers shovels with holes in them. As each woman receives a shovel, she becomes a soldier and starts to dig. Finally she delivers the drum to ANN.

Scene seven: the front/factory

Several SOLDIERS are digging a new trench – they dig through the paper on stage. One, SOLDIER 2 (MARY), produces a coffeepot made of an unexploded bomb shell. The DRUMMER (ANN) drums a working beat. The STENOGRAPHER takes her position above, and records the conversation. When she finishes her pages, she puts them through an electric shredder, which drops slivers of paper to the stage below.

These soldiers are, simultaneously, the Factory Girls, shoveling the paper on stage as snow.

ABIGAIL and DAVIS (alternately the officers of the battalion) observe from above. DAVIS grows increasingly handsy with ABIGAIL, who does not resist.

As this scene progresses, the shoveling falls into the drummer's rhythm. The diggers mark the end of each line with a stomp, a dig, or a tap from the handle end of the shovel. SOLDIER 2 slams the shell/thermos on the ground. The result should be a chorus of percussion, syncopated and dissonant.

SOLDIER 1 (LAURA): Hey you, German soldiers! Be careful! Don't shoot this way; there's somebody here!⁵

SOLDIER 2 (MARY): Coffee, MacKenzie?

SOLDIER 3 (ELLEN): Pour me some. Damn these shovels!

SOLDIER 2: Pour this in. Fuel your engine.

He brings SOLDIER 3 some coffee.

SOLDIER 3: Keep my pilot light burning, anyway.

SOLDIER 5 (BEATRICE): My joints are stiff.

SOLDIER 3: Need a bit of oil.

SOLDIER 1: All this mud is gumming up my cogs.

SOLDIER 6 (JANE): It's so wet. We're shoveling water.

SOLDIER 5: Shoveling water with a sieve.

They laugh.

SOLDIER 2: Coffee?

SOLDIER 5: Tank's full. Come help.

⁵ This line is from Alfred Jarry's *Ubu Roi*, Act 4 Scene 4, translated by Beverly Keith & G Legman (I have replaced Jarry's "Russian" with "German").

SOLDIER 2: All right.

He puts down the coffee, picks up a shovel and becomes ELLEN.

ELLEN: I've never seen snow like this.

BEATRICE: Me neither, and I've been around longer than I care to say.

JANE: There's so much of it. Where do you put it all?

MARY: Hard not to just heap it in the neighbour's yard.

ELLEN: What's that expression? Good fences make good neighbours?

MARY: I'm not saying I *would*. Just that it's awful tempting.

They shovel.

SOLDIER 6: Seems to me we're going backwards.

SOLDIER 4 (EDIE): Seems to me we're not as far forward.

SOLDIER 1: Seems to me we're behind our former selves.

SOLDIER 3: Must've been pushed back.

SOLDIER 2: Gone in reverse.

LAURA: I can't believe she has us out here shoveling.

EDIE: That's "unskilled labour" for you.

JANE: Yep, all the unskilled labourers, shoveling.

EDIE: I'd like to see what those men are doing that any of us couldn't do better.

SOLDIER 5: How many'd we lose today, you reckon?

SOLDIER 3: Couldn't say.

SOLDIER 4: They haven't said, either.

SOLDIER 2: No, they never say.

SOLDIER 6: They write it down.

SOLDIER 1: So they can read it at home.

EDIE: I'd like to see what those men up in skilled labour can do better than us.

ELLEN: Or faster.

MARY: Still getting guff for bringing home the bacon, El?

ELLEN: Not as bad recently. Maybe they got used to it.

LAURA: The new normal, women outperforming men.

EDIE: Today the vote, tomorrow the world.

BEATRICE: Tomorrow the vote for the rest of us. (*As SOLDIER 5:*) My upper half is wearing out.

SOLDIER 2: My screws are all stripped.

SOLDIER 6: My bolts are bugged.

SOLDIER 4: My nuts are froze.

They laugh.

SOLDIER 3: We're all froze, eh?

SOLDIER 1: Full of cold coffee.

SOLDIER 4: At least it's not lead.

SOLDIER 3: I crawled ten yards in two hours.

SOLDIER 1: You're full of gunk.

SOLDIER 3: Not shot, though.

SOLDIER 5: You made it back.

SOLDIER 4: To dig with a sieve.

DAVIS: They should hurry up.

ABIGAIL: Come on, girls, we haven't got all day!

SOLDIER 3: I hope they send us home.

SOLDIER 1: They won't.

SOLDIER 2: They need us.

SOLDIER 4: All of us.

SOLDIER 5: All of us with a working engine.

SOLDIER 6: All of us with all our parts.

DRUMMER: All of us who don't get shot.

The drum and all shovels suddenly bang as one note. SOLDIER 5 drops. All the diggers, now the women, drop their shovels and go to help her up. ANN puts down the drum.

ELLEN: Mom, you OK?

BEATRICE: I'll live.

ABIGAIL: All right, Maloney?

BEATRICE: Just slippery down here.

EDIE: Unbelievable how fast they replaced Johnston, isn't it?

ANN: I just can't believe it's Garner. What qualifies her, exactly?

EDIE: She doesn't need qualifications, Ann.

LAURA: She's a good girl. Smart.

ANN: Ha!

EDIE: Rich.

DAVIS: Tick tock tick tock.

ABIGAIL: All right, that's enough, come in! Hop to!

The women go into the factory. One collects the shovels and clears them. They head to their factory positions. Meanwhile, ABIGAIL and DAVIS begin a sort of tango – he takes a strong lead and she follows.

ABIGAIL: What is it to make a bomb? It's a responsibility. To the country, the empire. To the men at the front. Without us, without these bombs, they fail. We all have responsibilities, girls. Our boys follow orders from their generals, and so must we.

DAVIS leads her in a turn.

ELLEN: At least it's warm in here.

MARY: I think warmth is relative.

EDIE: It *is* colder in here than it used to be.

ELLEN: Still. You could wash dishes in here and the water wouldn't freeze. That's an improvement over our place.

JANE: Heatless Mondays... what an idea.

LAURA: We have to conserve coal.

ANN: Yes, so the factories can run.

JANE: I can't get warm even when I light the stove afterwards. By the time Sunday night rolls around I'm only starting to feel my fingers again.

ANN: Saves a bit of money, though, on top of the general good.

JANE: I guess.

EDIE: I know something you could do to keep warm.

JANE: Shut up.

DAVIS: Awful lot of talk down there.

EDIE: I'm just saying.

ABIGAIL: Enough gossip now, girls.

There is a pause while they all work.

ANN: Did you see the list of shirkers in the paper?

MARY: They're already doing that?

EDIE: They're offering a reward for turning them in, you know.

MARY: Good thing Luke is out of the way.

ANN: You got a shirker in your family?

MARY: I do not. Luke's on a farm. Farm workers are exempt.

ANN: They should send everyone they can. Our boys need reinforcements.

DAVIS leads ABIGAIL in a twirl out. When she arrives:

ABIGAIL: Ann, there's an officer to see you.

She twirls back. The tango continues.

ANN: An officer? What officer?

ABIGAIL does not answer.

LAURA: Better go see.

ANN exits.

JANE: That's bad news, right?

EDIE: What else could it be?

LAURA: Let's not jump to conclusions.

DAVIS: Back to work.

ABIGAIL: Back to work, please.

ANN re-enters, carrying a piece of paper. She carefully folds and tucks away the letter, then returns to her station and continues to work with progressively more speed and force.

LAURA: What did he want?

ANN does not answer.

EDIE: Is it bad news?

JANE: Do you need to go home?

ANN does not answer.

ELLEN: We can cover for you.

BEATRICE: Garner will understand.

JANE: Will she?

EDIE: We'll explain it to her.

ABIGAIL speaks while dancing.

ABIGAIL: Girls, the foreman informs me that we're moving into night shifts, beginning tomorrow.

LAURA: Nights? Really?

BEATRICE: Tomorrow? That's awfully short notice.

ELLEN: Who's going to watch my dad?

ABIGAIL: *(repeating both the dance and the words)* The foreman informs me that we're moving into night shifts, beginning tomorrow.

JANE: Is that safe?

EDIE: I'll watch out for you.

MARY: We'll have to stick together on our way in.

ABIGAIL: The foreman informs /me that we're moving into night shifts, beginning tomorrow.

LAURA: /Ann?//

BEATRICE: //Was it one of your brothers?///

ELLEN: ///Can we see the letter?

ABIGAIL: The foreman /informs me that we're moving into night shifts, beginning tomorrow.

BEATRICE: /Leave her be, El.//

MARY: //Come on, Ann, we'll take you home.///

ELLEN: ///To your family.

BEATRICE: You should see your mother.

MARY: You can't stay here, Ann.

EDIE: Of course she can. If she wants.

ABIGAIL: *(as a skipping record)* Beginning tomorrow. Beginning tomorrow. Beginning tomorrow *(etc)*

ANN continues to work. The women watch her. Above, ABIGAIL is dipped before a final flourish of the tango. When ABIGAIL goes down, ANN collapses. ELLEN catches her. She, MARY, BEATRICE and LAURA help her off stage.

Scene eight: outside the factory

The STENOGRAPHER pulls a sheet out of her typewriter and reads back the letter. As she reads:

JANE and EDIE come out from the factory together. A group of MEN, including DAVIS, watch from across the stage. EDIE hands JANE a note, catching JANE's hand affectionately. JANE reads it and is delighted by it. EDIE has caught sight of the men. She links arms with JANE and they pass by the MEN, who leer and whistle at them.

On their way off, the girls cross paths with ELLEN, alone. The MEN block her way. Others join them until ELLEN is surrounded. They take her coveralls from her and pass them around in an increasingly angry game of monkey-in-the-middle. Finally they catch and rape her.

STENOGRAPHER: To Colonel Ernest J. Chambers, Chief Censor's Office, Ottawa.

Dear Sir:

We are beginning to use female labour in Munitions Factories on night shifts as part of our programme regarding the dilution of labour. It is conceivable, but not probable, that some of these women or girls might be either actually, or in imagination, interfered with on the streets while going to, or coming from the place of employment. Having regard to the National cause, I submit that Press comments upon such an incident, should it occur, would be most unfortunate.

I lay the situation before you with confidence that you will do what is in the best interests, having regard to all the circumstances.

Faithfully yours, Mark H. Irish, Director, Department of Labour.⁶

The factory whistle blows. The MEN, having finished, back off from ELLEN. The STENOGRAPHER shreds the letter. As the paper shreds the MEN become our women: ANN, LAURA, ABIGAIL, JANE, EDIE, BEATRICE and NADIYA. EDIE picks up the coveralls and return them to ELLEN, who clutches them.

The whistle blows again. Everyone but ELLEN exits, leaving her on the ground, alone for a moment.

MARY enters as if for work.

Beat.

⁶ This letter is cited directly, with some cuts, from a letter on Imperial Munitions Board letterhead dated October 27th 1916.

MARY: Ellen?

She goes to her.

Scene nine: Cherry Street Station

Several REPORTERS (everyone but ELLEN, MARY and the DRUMMER) pointedly ignore ELLEN, who must, through the beginning of this scene, get up with MARY's help, and painfully exit. They may even step over her or get in her way. MARY's focus is split: between her friend in need and her returning husband.

REPORTER 1 (EDIE): Extra! Extra!

MARY: Let us through, please.

REPORTER 1: Married men in the First Contingent granted furlough!

MARY: Joe?

REPORTER 2 (JANE): Extra! Men come home from the front for the first time in almost four years!

MARY: Joe's coming home?

REPORTER 3 (BEATRICE): Extra! Furloughed men expected March 19th!

REPORTER 1: March 20th!

REPORTER 2: March 21st!

MARY: Excuse us. Ellen, come on.

REPORTER 4 (ABIGAIL): Extra! Crowd gathers to witness the returning heroes!

REPORTER 5 (LAURA): Eighty men coming home for a month!

REPORTER 6 (NADIYA): Eighty out of thousands!

MARY: Let us through!

REPORTER 3: The lucky men who have been honoured to serve –

REPORTERS: since the beginning!

MARY and ELLEN reach the edge of the crowd.

REPORTER 2: Here they come.

MARY's attention is diverted and ELLEN leaves the stage alone.

REPORTER 3: Crowd anticipates seeing soldiers returning without crutches!

REPORTER 1: Not a missing limb anywhere!

MARY: Let me through!

REPORTER 3: Here comes the train!

The DRUMMER approaches – she is the train. REPORTERS 5 & 6 attempt a lively song, but the others physically get into their space and speak over them until they have to stop. The drumming continues.

REPORTER 1: Old Originals' train stops one track over from departing conscripted men!

REPORTER 2: What a moment!

REPORTER 4: Originals shout encouragement to the drafted soldiers!

REPORTER 1: Their comrades in arms!

REPORTER 2: Drafted men depart for front!

REPORTER 3: Originals turn to waiting families!

MARY: Joe!

She waves.

REPORTER 4: Men await orders from commanders!

REPORTER 6: DISMISSED!

The REPORTERS cheer.

MARY: Joe!

REPORTERS push ahead of MARY.

REPORTER 1: Bad news from Front!

REPORTER 6: Germany launches worst offensive so far!

REPORTER 5: English forces take casualties!

REPORTER 4: Reinforcements desperately needed to hold line!

REPORTER 3: All leaves cancelled!

REPORTER 2: Originals to return to France immediately for deployment!

MARY: Wait –

REPORTER 1: Tearful crowd sees off furloughed men!

REPORTER 6: Originals answer King's call to service!

MARY: Joe!

The DRUMMER marches back out from whence she came. The REPORTERS burst into song.

MARY pushes through the crowd and chases the DRUMMER, calling after her husband.

The DRUMMER stops drumming and turns around to face MARY. Suddenly the song stops and the REPORTERS vanish. The DRUMMER backs MARY back onto the stage. She punctuates every line with a rap of the drum.

DRUMMER: Mrs. MacKenzie? (*rap*)

MARY: Yes?

DRUMMER: Mrs. Mary MacKenzie? (*rap*)

MARY: Yes?

DRUMMER: Mrs. Mary Margaret MacKenzie? (*rap*)

MARY: Yes?

DRUMMER: Our records show that you have two sons and one husband who are Class One men eligible for service. (*rap*)

MARY: My husband just –

DRUMMER: Our records show that both your husband and your oldest son are in active service in Europe. (*rap*)

MARY: Yes, and –

DRUMMER: This visit concerns your youngest son, Mr. Luke MacKenzie. Do you deny that you have a son of this name? (*rap*)

MARY: No! But –

DRUMMER: Mr. Luke MacKenzie has not reported for duty. (*rap*)

MARY: Well no, he –

DRUMMER: This puts him in violation of the Military Service Act. (*rap*)

MARY: No, you see it doesn't because –

DRUMMER: If Mr. Luke MacKenzie surrenders himself immediately, he may be shown mercy by the courts. (*rap*)

MARY: He's a farmer! Borden said –

DRUMMER: The exemption for farmers has been repealed. (*rap*)

Beat.

MARY: What?

DRUMMER: The exemption for farmers has been repealed. (*rap*)

MARY: But the Prime Minister promised –

DRUMMER: The exemption for farmers has been repealed. (*rap*) /If Mr. Luke MacKenzie surrenders himself immediately, he may be shown mercy by the courts. (*rap*)

MARY: /He promised that farmers wouldn't need to serve. He's only a little boy. He's my little boy and I just want him safe. What if something happens to him, what if something happens to all of them and they leave me alone. What then?

Beat.

DRUMMER: This has been your official notice.

The DRUMMER hands MARY a letter, then drums a march and marches herself off.

Scene ten: 2 August 1918, Yonge Street

The DRUMMER marches on again, still drumming, now accompanied by a mob. Some are returned soldiers, others are civilians. One carries a large Union Jack.

SOLDIER 1 (MARY): This is it, boys. Get em!

The mob storms the stage, destroying everything (they can at this point overturn the factory machines). Sounds of broken glass, cracking wood, etc. The MANAGER (JANE) runs out from within. He wears a sign: "White City Café."

MANAGER: Stop! What are you doing?

SOLDIER 2 (ELLEN): Aliens! Living in our country!

SOLDIER 3 (ABIGAIL): Making money off this war!

SOLDIER 1: Making money off our backs!

SOLDIER 2: We want revenge.

SOLDIER 3: Justice for our fallen.

MANAGER: Get out or I'll call the police!

SOLDIER 1: Bring him here.

Two mobbers pick him up and carry him to the Union Jack.

SOLDIER 2: Salute the flag.

MANAGER: I salute it. (*He does.*)

SOLDIER 3: Say “God Save the King.”

MANAGER: God save the King.

The mob roars, victorious. The flag-carrier leads the mob through the audience, the DRUMMER bringing up the rear. The MANAGER picks a few things up, puts them back into place.

SOLDIER 2: Where to next?

SOLDIER 1: The Marathon Lunch!

SOLDIER 2: We’ll flatten it!

SOLDIER 1 (*shouting*): We’ll flatten it!

The mob cheers. On stage, a POLICE OFFICER (BEULAH) enters, handing the MANAGER a new sign: “Marathon Lunch.”

MANAGER: Help me!

POLICE: I don’t want to start a riot.

MANAGER: It’s already a riot!

POLICE: They’re heroes, you know.

MANAGER: Look at my restaurant!

POLICE: Heroes. Fine young men, really.

The mob returns to the stage. The POLICE OFFICER watches from the sidelines.

SOLDIER 1: Get em!

Destruction ensues, accompanied by sound effects.

MANAGER (*wearing his new sign*): Stop!

SOLDIER 2: Revenge!

SOLDIER 3: Justice!

SOLDIER 1: Bring him here.

Two mobbers pick him up and carry him to the Union Jack.

SOLDIER 2: Salute.

MANAGER (*saluting*): God save the King.

SOLDIER 1: Come on!

Again the mob travels through the audience.

SOLDIER 1: Another restaurant.

SOLDIER 2: We'll flatten it!

MOB (*shouting*): We'll flatten it!

The MANAGER puts on a new sign: "Star Lunch."

MANAGER: Help!

POLICE: We'll close the next place in advance. That'll stop em.

He sticks a large CLOSED DUE TO RIOT sticker across the MANAGER'S sign.

POLICE: Fine young men.

The mob returns to the stage. The POLICE OFFICER stands in front of the MANAGER. The mob knocks him down easily and proceeds past.

SOLDIER 1: Get em!

Destruction as before.

MANAGER: Stop!

SOLDIER 2: Aliens!

SOLDIER 3: Revenge!

Two mobbers pick up the MANAGER and carry him to the Union Jack.

MANAGER (*saluting*): God save the King.

POLICE: (*getting up*) Heroes.

MAJOR RODGERS (LAURA) *enters, above.*

RODGERS: Attention!

The mob falls suddenly silent and still

RODGERS: Gentlemen, restrain yourselves!

One of the mobbers throws a rock at him. The sound of broken glass rings out. At the same time, a great deal of shredded paper falls from above.

The mob roars and storms the stage, calling "Justice!" and "Revenge!" ad lib. They pick up the MANAGER and carry him off.

Scene eleven: factory

ABIGAIL, *wearing a gauze mask over her nose and mouth, supervises LAURA, BEATRICE, MARY, ELLEN, EDIE and JANE. She hands out masks to them.*

ABIGAIL: All right girls, we're short staffed today. Has anyone seen Jones?

BEATRICE: Who's that?

EDIE: Ann.

JANE: Her mother's got the flu, Miss Garner. Nobody else to take care of her.

ABIGAIL: Very well. Masks on, girls, and make sure to disinfect before you go touching your machines.

She tours the facility with a spray bottle, spritzing everything. The workers take their positions.

Where machines are overturned, they position themselves so that they have the usual spatial

relationship to their machine (this will sometimes mean that they are lying on the floor). They work the machines as usual, taking no notice of their brokenness.

BEATRICE: I don't know how we've stayed clear of it, ourselves. El and I are the only ones who haven't caught it. Must be some protective chemicals in the explosives.

MARY: Your dad has it now, too?

ELLEN does not respond.

BEATRICE: Yes and isn't he the biggest baby of them all. My sons could be burning up, warm enough to heat the house, blind with headache, and still they'd crawl on hands and knees to help their mother with the garden. But my husband. One inkling of a fever and he's in bed, calling out to me to bring him soup. Demanding old fool.

MARY: Who's taking care of him?

BEATRICE: Oh, he'll be fine. He can get himself water. And what's better is, he can't get himself to the pub. It's been closed all week.

MARY: Beatrice Maloney, always finding that silver lining.

BEATRICE: I'll wallpaper my house with em.

ELLEN is beating the powder into a shell with a huge mallet. MARY turns to her.

MARY: And you're feeling OK?

ELLEN shrugs.

LAURA: I got the training, you know. How to care for the victims. It's not hard. Everyone should do it. I'm volunteering at the old hotel between shifts.

JANE: They wouldn't let me in to see Joan when I went. Said visiting the hospital is too dangerous. So, fine, I won't visit.

EDIE: Hey. You tried.

PATIENT 1 (BEULAH) enters, coughing, and throws herself at ABIGAIL.

ABIGAIL: All right now, what do we have here. Fever? Yes. Come lie down.

She guides PATIENT 1 to an empty spot on the floor and has her lie down.

ABIGAIL: There you are. There. Towel, please.

LAURA pulls a bowl with a towel in it out of her machine and hands it to ABIGAIL, who applies the wet towel to PATIENT 1's forehead. LAURA immediately goes back to work.

ABIGAIL: How long have you been sick? One day? Two?

PATIENT 1 nods with a groan and cuddles up with a shell.

ABIGAIL: Two. That's good, you know. It means this is the worst of it. Try and rest.

NADIYA enters, supporting PATIENT 2.

NADIYA: Help us, please.

ABIGAIL: You.

NADIYA: The hospital. They turn us away.

JANE: Nadiya?

JANE delivers two cups of water, made of shell noses, from her station.

NADIYA: She is sick. Please.

ABIGAIL: Lie her down here.

NADIYA: Thank you.

ABIGAIL: Yes, that's right, you can just have a rest, that's the only thing for it.

PATIENT 2 (ANN): My bones hurt.

ELLEN: My bones hurt too.

ABIGAIL: You're not sick too, Maloney?

ELLEN is silent. ABIGAIL goes to feel her forehead.

ABIGAIL: No fever –

BEATRICE collapses.

ELLEN: Mom!

MARY and ABIGAIL both rush to her. ABIGAIL touches her skin and pulls back as if burnt.

ABIGAIL: She's like an oven!

MARY: How long has she been like this?

ELLEN: She was fine –

ABIGAIL: Mrs. Maloney. Mrs. Maloney?

MARY: Beatrice!

ABIGAIL: I can't... she's so hot. I can't find her pulse.

MARY: Fuck. Beatrice?

There is commotion. The patients groan and wail. LAURA, EDIE and JANE gather around BEATRICE. ELLEN is glued to the spot.

Suddenly, silence. BEATRICE's caretakers take the position of pall-bearers. They are one person short.

MARY: Ellen?

ELLEN is frozen. A long pause. MARY approaches NADIYA.

MARY: Will you...?

NADIYA nods. She takes ELLEN's position.

JANE: Дякую. (Translation: Thank you.)

Together the six women lift BEATRICE onto their shoulders and solemnly carry her to the exit.

Scene thirteen: 11 November 1918

The factory whistle blows – a long, loud blast. Bells ring. Sirens sound. The company cheers.

BEATRICE becomes JANE'S AUNT. She sits up the shoulders of the two centre pall-bearers,

MARY and NADIYA. PATIENT 1 and PATIENT 2 leap to their feet and hoist up machinery and

dance it offstage. Others – the four now free of carrying BEATRICE – pick up other bits of

machinery. They clang them together, making as much noise as they can.

AUNT: War is over! Ding dong! Ding dong!

JANE: Come down from there, Aunty!

AUNT: The sun is out! You come up here!

ABIGAIL: Girls, your King and Empire thank you for your service. Your employment at this factory is ended, effective immediately.

The company bursts into song. The stage is alive with celebration and movement, as the company splinters into small groups. MARY and NADIYA put down the AUNT and say a jubilant prayer:

MARY: Oh thank God. Thank you Jesus, they're coming home.

NADIYA: Дякую. Дякую! (Translation: Thank you. Thank you!)

The AUNT climbs to the second level and enjoys a drink. ABIGAIL and LAURA repeat their

Women's Home Guard drills, celebrating their silliness. BEULAH and ANN return to the stage

and swing each other around in a wild dance. JANE and EDIE climb up to the second level.

EDIE kisses JANE as in Alfred Eisenstaedt.⁷

During the celebrations, ELLEN fetches what had been Laura's bucket, and starts to glue bits of paper to the stage wherever they have landed. She mutters to herself as she works.

An enormous knitted Union Jack drops from the ceiling, blocking all but ELLEN from view. The noise abruptly stops. ELLEN, still gluing paper to the stage, is finally heard.

ELLEN: ...did you see in the papers? The dove's tail feather. And the raven's, too. And Noah's clothes unravel in a yarn that's told over and over in different voices. Each hour a feather falls – every two hours someone writes a poem – which someone cuts up with scissors.⁸ It's only because the street is flooded with mustard that you can see the bubbles of the man's eyes. Their painted faces. Could be anybody. Making bombs to explode our own lives. Aspire to greatness, which is danger. It's letters to the papers, letters in the papers, letters that make names, names that make lists, lists that make people gone. They stay away. Or stay quiet. Stay hidden in the dirt, trenches dug for safety. The wheel spins out and nothing can stop it. Competent to stop. Competence is nothing, and now nothing to do at all. Put down your hammer, Ellen, put it down now. Put it down now. Put it down. Now.



7

⁸ This line is from Tristan Tzara's *The Gas Heart*, translated by Eric v. d. Luft, p 49.

Unseen, the DRUMMER starts a slow marching rhythm. ELLEN glues to the beat, still mumbling.

ELLEN: Put it down. Put it down. Put it down...

Lights. End of play.

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