

Journey's End

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*You could have heard a pin drop in
the quiet; yet you knew thousands
of guns were hidden there, all ready
cleaned and oiled — millions of
bullets lying in pouches —
thousands of Germans, waiting and
thinking.*

Synopsis

An officers' underground dugout, Spring, 1918. The First World War is in its closing months. Captain Stanhope, who has been greatly changed by the fighting over the last 4 years, is shaken by the sudden arrival of his childhood friend, Raleigh, who has looked up to and idolised him for years. Stanhope had planned to marry Raleigh's older sister after the war, and fears that Raleigh will write back home, describing the short-tempered alcoholic that his former hero has now become. In the meantime, the great German offensive is expected within days, dwarfing all the men's personal concerns with the imminent threat of destruction.

Journey's End first captured the public imagination almost a hundred years ago, as an early embodiment of the gritty conditions and extreme psychological pressure that has come to be associated with the first world war ever since.

The writing is a thorough exploration of such themes as mental health and masculinity long before these modern terms had emerged, and when dialogue surrounding these topics was largely tabooed.

I'm Davey, a 3rd year history student at Trinity Hall. This is my first time directing, and I'm incredibly excited to be doing so with Journey's End. The script is infused throughout with the grit and gloom of the First World War, and fully exploits this setting to draw out truly hard-hitting emotional relationships.

Without further ado, then, please pick an extract to take to the audition, and a role to go for:

- Stanhope: The captain of the unit, who has been in the war from the start, and has turned to alcoholism to counteract the strain on his nerves
- Raleigh: A young new recruit, who has just arrived in the trenches and is eager for combat alongside his childhood mentor, Stanhope.
- Osborne: Known to the men as 'uncle' Osborne makes for an experienced and easily trusted presence in the dugout.
- Trotter: Another older member of the company, whose simple approach to life in the trenches often offers his comrades comic relief.
- Hibbert: A young officer whose nerves have already been driven near breaking point by the start of the play.
- Hardy: The captain of the previous company, who appears only in the first scene
- Mason: The much-maligned company cook.
- The Colonel: Makes only occasional appearances in the frontline to dispense orders to the men.

Note that the show is in week 5, meaning that we're working with a pretty tight turnaround - i.e. all of these roles will require high commitment and availability for these five weeks.

If you have any more questions email me at gdcc2@cam.ac.uk

Good luck, and dont forget to pick a slot on strawpoll:

<https://strawpoll.com/B2ZB97ze7gJ>

EXTRACT 1: RALEIGH

Raleigh is a young, officer, who immediately enlisted after leaving school, and has just arrived in the trench. He knew Stanhope as a boy, but is unaware of the heavy toll that the war has taken on his nerves.

Raleigh : Oh, yes. Of course, I wasn't in the same class as Dennis --- I say, I suppose I ought to call him Captain Stanhope ?

Osborne : Just Stanhope.

Raleigh : I see. Thanks.

Osborne : Did you get your colours ?

Raleigh : I did for Rugger. Not cricket.

Osborne : Rugger and cricket seem a long way from here.

Raleigh (laughing) : They do, rather.

Osborne : We play a bit of soccer when we're out of the line.

Raleigh : Good !

Osborne (thoughtfully) : So you were at school with Stanhope. (Pause.) I wonder if he'll remember you ? I expect you've grown in the last three years.

Raleigh : Oh, I think he'll remember me. {He stops , and goes on rather awkwardly} You see, it wasn't only that we were just at school together - our fathers were friends, and Dennis used to come and stay with us in the holidays. Of course, at school I didn't see much of him, but in the holidays we were terrific pals.

Osborne : He's a fine company commander.

Raleigh : I bet he is. Last time he was on leave he came down to the school ; he'd just got his M.G. and been made a captain. He looked splendid ! It --- sort of--- made me feel...

Osborne : --- keen ?

Raleigh : Yes. Keen to get out here. I was frightfully keen to get into Dennis's regiment. I thought, perhaps, with a bit of luck I might get to the same battalion.

Osborne : It's a big fluke to have got to the same company.

Raleigh : I know. It's an amazing bit of luck. When I was at the base I did an awful thing. You see, my uncle's at the base --- he has to detail officers to regiments

Osborne : General Raleigh ?

Raleigh : Yes. I went to see him on the quiet and asked him if he could get me into this battalion. He bit my head off, and said I'd got to be treated like everybody else

Osborne : Yes ?

Raleigh : and next day I was told I was coming to this battalion. Funny, wasn't it ?

Osborne : Extraordinary coincidence !

Raleigh : And when I got to Battalion Head- quarters, and the colonel told me to report to " G " Company, I could have cheered. I expect Dennis'll be frightfully surprised to see me. I've got a message for him.

Osborne : From the colonel ?

Raleigh : No. From my sister.

Osborne : Your sister ?

Raleigh : Yes. You see, Dennis used to stay with us, and naturally my sister {he hesitates } ---well --- perhaps I ought not

Osborne : That's all right. I didn't actually know that Stanhope

Raleigh : They're not --- er --- officially engaged

Osborne : No ?

Raleigh : She'll be awfully glad I'm with him here ; I can write and tell her all about him. He doesn't say much in his letters ; can we write often ?

Osborne : Oh, yes. Letters are collected every day.

[There is a pause]

Raleigh : You don't think Dennis'll mind my --- sort of --- forcing myself into his company? I never thought of that ; I was so keen.

Osborne : No, of course he won't. {Pause.} You say it's --- it's a good time since you last saw him ?

Raleigh : Let's see. It was in the summer last year --- nearly a year ago.

Osborne : You know, Raleigh, you mustn't expect to find him --- quite the same.

Raleigh : Oh ?

Osborne : You see, he's been out here a long time. It --- it tells on a man --- rather badly

Raleigh : Yes, of course, I suppose it does.

EXTRACT 2: STANHOPE:

After several days on the front lines, the tension between Stanhope and Raleigh draws to breaking point. The hierarchy of command, as well as their personal history, causes the tempers of both men to clash here.

Stanhope: I thought I told you to come down to dinner at eight o'clock?

Raleigh : Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't think you --- er

Stanhope : Well ? You didn't think I --- er --- what ?

Raleigh : I didn't think you'd --- you'd mind --- if I didn't.

Stanhope : I see. And why do you think I asked you --- if I didn't mind ?

Raleigh : I'm sorry.

Stanhope : Well, we've kept your dinner. It's ready for you here.

Raleigh : Oh, it's awfully good of you to have kept it for me, but --- I --- I had something to eat up there.

Stanhope : You --- had something to eat up there ? What do you mean, exactly ?

Raleigh : They brought the tea round while I was on duty. I had a cup, and some bread and cheese.

Stanhope : Are you telling me --- you've been feeding with the men ?

Raleigh : Well, Sergeant Baker suggested

Stanhope : So you take your orders from Sergeant Baker, do you ?

Raleigh : No, but

Stanhope : You eat the men's rations when there's barely enough for each man ?

Raleigh : They asked me to share.

Stanhope : Now, look here. I know you're new to this, but I thought you'd have the common sense to leave the men alone to their meals. Do you think they want an officer prowling round eating their rations, and sucking up to them like that ? My officers are here to be respected --- not laughed at.

Raleigh : Why did they ask me --- if they didn't mean it ?

Stanhope : Don't you realise they were making a fool of you ?

Raleigh : Why should they ?

Stanhope : So you know more about my men than I do ?

[There is silence.]

Raleigh : I'm sorry then --- if I was wrong.

Stanhope : Sit down.

Raleigh : It's all right, thanks.

Stanhope {suddenly shouting} : Sit down ! [quietly] I understand you prefer being up there with the men than down here with us ?

Raleigh : I don't see what you mean.

Stanhope : What did you tell Hibbert?

Raleigh : Hibbert ? I --- I didn't say

Stanhope : Don't lie.

Raleigh (rising) : I'm not lying ! Why should I ---lie ?

Stanhope : Then why didn't you come down to supper when I told you to?

Raleigh : I --- I wasn't hungry. I had rather a headache. It's cooler up there.

Stanhope : You insulted Trotter and Hibbert by not coming. You realise that, I suppose ?

Raleigh : I didn't mean to do anything like that.

Stanhope : Well, you did. You know now --- don't you ? [loudly] I say --- you know now, don't you ?

Raleigh : Yes, I'm sorry.

Stanhope : My officers work together . I'll have no damn prigs.

Raleigh : I'll speak to Trotter and Hibbert. I didn't realise-

Stanhope : What are you looking at ?

Raleigh {lowering his head) : Nothing.

Stanhope : Anything - *funny* - about me ?

Raleigh : No. I'm awfully sorry, Dennis, if--- if I annoyed you by coming to your company.

Stanhope : What on earth are you talking about ? What do you mean ?

Raleigh : You resent my being here.

Stanhope : Resent you being here ?

Raleigh : Ever since I came.

Stanhope : I don't know what you mean. I resent you being a damn fool, that's all. (There is a pause.) Better eat your dinner before it's cold.

EXTRACT 3: HIBBERT

Hibbert is one of the company's younger officers, who has been among the most heavily psychologically affected by the war. Here, he is attempting to get leave from the front as a result.

[Hibbert comes quietly into the dug-out from the tunnel leading from his sleeping quarters]

Stanhope : Hullo ! I thought you were asleep

Hibbert : I just wanted a word with you, Stanhope.

Stanhope : Fire away.

Hibbert : This neuralgia of mine. I'm awfully sorry. I'm afraid I can't stick it any longer

Stanhope : I know. It's rotten, isn't it ? I've got it like hell

Hibbert : You have ?

Stanhope : Had it for weeks.

Hibbert : Well, I'm sorry, Stanhope. It's no good. I've tried damned hard ; but I must go down

Stanhope : Go down --- where ?

Hibbert : Why, go sick --- go down the line. I must go into hospital and have some kind of treatment. I'll go right along now, I think.

Stanhope (quietly) : You're going to stay here.

Hibbert : I'm going down to see the doctor. He'll send me to hospital when he understands ---

Stanhope : I've seen the doctor. I saw him this morning. He won't send you to hospital, Hibbert ; he'll send you back here. He promised me he would. (There is silence.) So you can save yourself a walk.

Hibbert (fiercely) : What the hell !

Stanhope : Stop that !

Hibbert : I've a perfect right to go sick if I want to. The men can --- why can't an officer ?

Stanhope : No man's sent down unless he's very ill. There's nothing wrong with you, Hibbert. The German attack's on Thursday ; almost for certain. You're going to stay here and see it through with the rest of us.

Hibbert (hysterically) : I tell you, I can't --- the pain's nearly sending me mad. I'm going ! I've got all my stuff packed. I'm going now--- -you can't stop me

[He goes excitedly into the dug-out . Stanhope walks slowly towards the steps , turns , and undoes the flap of his revolver holster . He takes out his revolver , and stands casually examining it.

Hibbert : Let's get by, Stanhope.

Stanhope : You're going to stay here and do your job.

Hibbert : Haven't I told you ? I can't ! Don't you understand ? Let --- let me get by.

Stanhope : Now look here, Hibbert. I've got a lot of work to do and no time to waste. Once and for all, you're going to stay here and see it through with the rest of us.

Hibbert : I shall die of this pain if I don't go !

Stanhope : Better die of the pain than be shot for deserting.

Hibbert (in a low voice) : What do you mean ?

Stanhope : You know what I mean

Hibbert : I've a right to see the doctor ! Stanhope --- if you only knew how awful I feel Please do let me go by!

EXTRACT 4: OSBORNE:

Osborne and Raleigh have been chosen to go over the top in a trench raid - it is unlikely that both will return. In the few minutes before going over, Osborne tries to alleviate the young man's nerves with small-talk. In the previous lines, he has been telling Raleigh about a hobby of his.

Osborne : I did go exploring once --- digging up Roman remains.

Raleigh : Where was that ?

Osborne : Near my home in Sussex there's a Roman road called Stane Street ; it runs as straight as a line from the coast to London.

Raleigh : I know it.

Osborne : Near where I live the road runs over Bignor Hill, but in recent times a new road's been cut round the foot of the hill, meeting the old road again farther on. The old road over the hill hasn't been used for years and years --- and it's all grown over with grass, and bushes and trees grow in the middle of it.

Raleigh : Can you still see where it runs ?

Osborne : Quite easily, in places.

Raleigh : Did you dig a bit of it up, then ?

Osborne : Yes. We got permission to dig out a section. It was in wonderful condition.

Raleigh : Did you find anything ?

Osborne : We found a horseshoe --- and a Roman penny.

Raleigh (laughing) : Splendid !

Osborne : It's awfully fascinating, digging like that.

Raleigh : It must be.

[Osborne glances at his watch]

Is it time yet ?

Osborne : Two minutes. Then we must go up. I wish we had a good hot bath waiting for us when we get back.

Raleigh : So do I. (Pause.) We're having something special for dinner, aren't we ?

Osborne : How did you know ? It's supposed to be a secret.

Raleigh : Mason dropped a hint.

Osborne : Well, we've had a fresh chicken sent up from Noyelle Farm.

Raleigh : I say !

Osborne : And a most awful luxury --- two bottles of champagne and half a dozen cigars ! One each, and one spare one in case one explodes.

Raleigh : I've never smoked a cigar.

Osborne : It's bound to make you sick.

[Raleigh notices Osborne's ring on the table ; he picks it up]

Raleigh : I say, here's your ring.

Osborne : Yes. I'm --- I'm leaving it here. I don't want the risk of losing it.

Raleigh : Oh ! (There is silence. He puts the ring slowly down.)

Osborne (rising) : Well, I think perhaps we ought to get ready.

Raleigh : Yes. Righto. (He also rises.)

Osborne : I'm not going to wear a belt --- -just my revolver, with the lanyard round my neck.

Raleigh : I see. (He puts his lanyard round his neck and grips his revolver.) I feel better with this in my hand, don't you ?

Osborne : Yes. Something to hold. Loaded all right ?

Raleigh : Yes.

Osborne : I do hate leaving a pipe when it's got a nice glow on the top like that.

Raleigh (with a short laugh) : What a pity !

Osborne : Three minutes to. I think we'd better go.

Raleigh : Righto.

Osborne : I'm glad it's you and I --- together* Raleigh.

Raleigh : Are you --- really ?

Osborne : Yes.

Raleigh : So am I --- awfully.

Osborne : We must put up a good show.

Raleigh : Yes. Rather !

[There is a short pause]

Osborne : Let's go along, shall we ?

EXTRACT 5: TROTTER

Trotter, one of the older members of the company, finds solace from the fighting in food, and simple conversation. Here, he is about to go out on a regular morning patrol.

Trotter : Cut us a chunk of bread, Uncle.

Osborne : How are things going up there ?

Trotter : I don't like the look of things a bit.

Osborne : You mean --- the quiet ?

Trotter : Yes. Standing up there in the dark last night there didn't seem a thing in the world alive --- except the rats squeaking and my stomach grumbling about that cutlet.

Osborne : It's quiet even now.

Trotter : Too damn quiet. You can bet your boots the Boche is up to something. The big attack soon, I reckon. I don't like it, Uncle. Pass the jam.

Osborne : It's strawberry.

Trotter : Is it ? I'm glad we've got rid o' that raspberry jam. Can't stand raspberry jam. Pips get be'ind your plate.

Osborne : Did Stanhope tell you he wants two wiring parties out to-night?

Trotter : Yes. He's fixing it up now. (He pauses) My goodness, Uncle, doesn't he look ill !

Osborne : I'm afraid he's not well.

Trotter : Nobody'd be well who went on like he does. (There is another pause.) You know when you came up to relieve me last night ?

Osborne : Yes ?

Trotter : Well, Raleigh and me came back here, and there was Stanhope sitting on that bed drinking a whiskey. He looked as white as a sheet.

God, he looked awful ; he'd drunk the bottle since dinner. I said, " 'Ullo ! " and he didn't seem to know who I was. Uncanny, wasn't it, Raleigh ?

Raleigh (with lowered head) : Yes.

Trotter : He just said, " Better go to bed, Raleigh " --- -just as if Raleigh'd been a school kid.

Osborne : Did he ? (There is a pause.) Look at the sun. It'll be quite warm soon.

Trotter : It's warm now. You can feel it on your face outside if you stand in it. First time this year. 'Ope we 'ave an 'ot summer.

Osborne : So do I.

Trotter : Funny about that bird. Made me feel quite braced up. Sort of made me think about my garden of an evening --- walking round in me slippers after supper, smoking me pipe.

Osborne : You keen on gardening ?

Trotter : Oh, I used to do a bit of an evening. I 'ad a decent little grass plot in front, with flower-borders --- geraniums, lobelia, and calsu- laria --- you know, red, white, and blue. Looked rather nice in the summer.

Osborne : Yes.

Trotter : 'Ad some fine 'olly'ocks out the back. One year I 'ad one eight feet 'igh. Took a photer of it. Like to look at it ?

Osborne : I would. By Jove, it's a beauty.

Trotter : You see that, just there ?

Osborne : Yes ?

Trotter : That's the roof of the summer- 'ouse.

Osborne : Is it really !

Trotter : Just shows the 'ite of the 'olly'ock.

Osborne : It does. (He shows the photo to Raleigh.) A beauty, isn't it ?

Raleigh : Rather !

Trotter : It never wanted no stick to keep it straight, neether. {There is a pause.} You keen on gardening ?

Osborne : Yes. A bit. I made a rockery when I was home on leave. I used to cycle out to the woods and get primroses and things like that, and try and get 'em to grow in my garden.

Trotter : I don't suppose they would !

Osborne : They would if you pressed a bit of moss round them

Trotter : --- to make 'em feel at 'ome, eh ? {He laughs .}

Osborne : They'll be coming out again soon if they've got this sun at home.

Trotter : I reckon they will. I remember one morning last spring --- we was coming out of the salient. Just when it was getting light in the morning --- it was at the time when the Boche was sending over a lot of that gas that smells like pear-drops, you know ?

Osborne : I know. Phosgene.

Trotter : That's it. We were scared to hell of it. All of a sudden we smelt that funny sweet smell, and a fellow shouted " Gas ! and we put on our masks ; and then I spotted what it was.

Osborne : What was it ?

Trotter : Why, a blinkin' may- tree ! All out in bloom, growing beside the path ! We did feel a lot of silly poops --- putting on gas masks because of a damn may-tree ! (He stretches him- self and tries to button his tunic.) Lord ! I must get my fat down.(He gets up.) Well, I better go and relieve Stanhope. He'll curse like hell if I don't. I bet he's got a red-hot liver this morning.

Osborne : I relieve you at eleven.

Trotter : That's right. I don't like this time of day in the line. The old Boche 'as just 'ad 'is breakfast, and sends over a few whizz-bangs and rifle grenades to show 'e ain't forgotten us. Still, I'd rather 'ave a bang or two than this damn quiet. Cheero.