



Private Peaceful

CHARLIE and Tommo are soldiers. Charlie has been given a Court-Martial for disobeying orders to leave his wounded brother, Tommo. Here, he is awaiting execution when Tommo arrives to see him in his cell for the last time.

CHARLIE: I hoped you'd come, Tommo, I didn't think they'd let you. I want no tears, Tommo. This is going to be difficult enough without tears. Understand? You'll tell Mother, and Molly how it really was, won't you? It's all I care about now. I don't want them thinking I was a coward. I don't want that. I want them to know the truth.

I tried my very best. They had their one witness, Sergeant Hanley, and he was all they needed. It wasn't a trial, Tommo. They'd made up their minds I was guilty before they even sat down. I told them everything, just like it happened. I had nothing to be ashamed of, did I? So I told them, yes, I did disobey the sergeant's order, because the order was stupid, suicidal — we all knew it was — that I had to stay behind to look after you. They knew a dozen or more were wiped out in the attack, but that no one got as far as the German wire.

I asked for you, Tommo, but they wouldn't accept you as a witness, because you're my brother. I asked for Pete, but they told me he was missing. So they heard it all from Sergeant Hanley. They believed what they wanted to believe... just tell them the truth, Charlie, and you'll be all right. That's what I thought ... How wrong could I be? The whole Court Martial took less than an hour. That's all they gave me. One hour for a man's life. It'll be over very quick. You still have my watch. Keep it ticking for me, and when the time comes, give it to Little Tommo, so he'll have something from me. I'd like that. You'll make him a good father — like Father was to us.

(CHARLIE starts to sing, softly, 'Oranges and Lemons')

I'll be singing in the morning. It won't be God Save the ruddy King or All Things bleeding Bright and Beautiful. It'll be Oranges and Lemons, for Big Joe — for all of us.

*By Michael Morpurgo
Adapted by Simon Reade*