



### ONWARD CRINGING SOLDIERS

Sending a Major to go to war while the rest of the army plays games, is just as silly as expecting the minister to wage war with all the spiritual gifts while the rest of the Christian soldiers play at church. To mix metaphors I quote Ephesians 4:16 “The whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament grows and builds itself up in love, as each does its work”.

This is a good sketch to involve as many volunteers as is feasible. As they are chosen from the audience, they are given a weapon, an excuse written on a piece of paper and folded, and are assigned, two or more to a captain, who tells them to copy what he does. Any chaos ensuing will enhance rather than detract from the message of the sketch.

Tomato puree or ketchup makes good stage ‘blood’.

Cast: Major – Captains Jenkins, Hobbs, Smithers. Six or nine ‘Volunteers’ from the audience.

Enter Major, followed by cast, marching. Each carries a weapon of some kind. Each has been given a slip of paper with an excuse written on it. These are to be read out when indicated.

**Major** Halt! Attention! Stand at – ease! Right men, you’re probably wondering what this exercise is all about!

**Cast** Yessir!

**Major** It is this ... You have been chosen to take part in Operation Great Commission (murmurs of surprise and anticipation). We have landed on this island, as far as I can tell, without being seen. I am informed by intelligence that the enemy is just over the hill, and our instruction is this – Win back this island for the King! (Exclamations of bravado and patriotism). You have been given your weapons, all different, all effective. This then is the plan. Captain Jenkins?

**Jenkins** Yessir!

**Major** Take 'A' Company and circle beyond that belt of trees, pitch camp due west. Got that?

**Jenkins** Yessir!

**Major** 'B' company, under Captain Hobbs?

**Hobbs** Yessir!

**Major** Along the beach, due east, scale that cliff, and pitch camp among the rocks. At first light, 'A' and 'B' Companies form a pincer movement around the enemy, and take them by surprise. They can't escape north, there's nowhere to go, and any that escape south will find a reception committee – 'C' Company! Smithers?

**Smithers** Yessah!

**Major** You remain here with 'C' Company and don't let the enemy escape!

**Smithers** Yessah! Aah, No Sah!

**Major** A personal message from the King (reads telegram). "Keep your weapons sharp, take the shield of Faith, fight the good fight, and take no prisoners! Companies! Attention! Pre-sent arms! (The companies present their arms to the Major, point him in the general direction of the enemy, and wave him goodbye, with messages of encouragement. They sit. Exit Major, disconsolate).

**Jenkins** Right, lads, let's have a game of cards! (They deal, and then argue which game to play).

**Hobbs** I'm fed up with cards, I want to play Trivial Pursuits!

**All** No! No!

**Smithers** Oh no, chaps! Do let's play Charades! (They argue amongst themselves, drawing the volunteers into the argument. The Major comes back, dishevelled and bloodied. Jenkins catches sight of him).

**Jenkins** Oh! Well done Sir!

**Smithers** Jolly good show!

**Hobbs** Don't give up now, Sir, you're doing ever so well! (They clean his wounds, and send him back again with more words of encouragement).

**Jenkins** He's doing it all wrong, you know. He should send for the Hurricanes and bomb the lot! Isn't that right?

**Hobbs** No! Torpedoes from HMS Impulsive! Flame –throwers! Torch the whole island.

**Smithers** Oh I say! That's a bit thick! Couldn't one just ask the blighters to surrender? (Major comes back again even more battle scarred).

**Major** (wearily) Look, men, I can't do it alone, and you must help me. With your help, we can win back the island from the enemy, and then we all share in the victory! Jenkins! Hobbs! Smithers! Have the men stand to attention.

**J, H, S** Atten – tion! (They shuffle reluctantly to attention).

**Major** I'm going to ask each one of you why you won't help me and your excuses had better be good (company by company, one by one, they read out their excuses. 'I'm too busy. It's not my gift. I've got evening classes. I've never done it before. I'm scared. It's not my scene. I don't know how to do it. I've got family commitments. My friends will laugh at me' etc). As he hears each one, he becomes more and more saddened and incredulous. He slowly picks up the remaining weapons and heads off to the fight again. They watch him go).

**Smithers** I say, Hobbs, do put on the kettle on, there's a good chap! Tally Ho for the mess, what? (Exeunt, cheering)