

Character List

Miss Taylor: A school teacher

Frank: A thirteen year old school boy who enlists underage in the Army

Molly: A thirteen year old school girl, who becomes a nurse

Jim: A school friend of Frank

Gwen: A friend of Molly who is also a nurse

Lights up to reveal an old fashioned, 1940s looking classroom. There are wooden desks facing the audience and a chalkboard. Students are entering from stage right, wearing 1940s uniforms. Boys are throwing bits of paper at each other and hitting each other with their satchels. When the boys have sat down, girls begin entering from stage left. They are chatting and giggling and take their seats. Just then, a boy who is running late, runs from stage right into centre stage and drops his satchel. A girl gets up from her desk and helps him pick the contents of it off the floor.

MISS TAYLOR enters

MISS TAYLOR: (*looking with exasperation*) Thank you Frank, thank you Molly – that’s quite enough. Take a seat.... now.

Frank and Molly hurry back to their tables. They sit down but continue to steal glances at each other.

MISS TAYLOR: (*picking up a piece of chalk and writing across the board*) Today we are continuing our study of Julius Caesar, open your readers to page 15. (*She writes on the board ‘Si vis pacem, para bellum’*) Frank, what does this quote mean?

Frank stares at the board, squinting his eyes. Other students shoot their hands up. After a few moments, MISS TAYLOR sighs and calls on JIM to answer the question.

JIM: If you want peace, prepare for war! (*He jumps up and begins using his pencil as a sword and the rest of the class begin to laugh*).

MISS TAYLOR: Yes, thank you Jim, sit down for goodness sake. Hitler won’t be walking through the door anytime soon, and even if he did, I doubt a pencil would do the job.

JIM sits back down. MOLLY is staring over at FRANK and is interrupted by MISS TAYLOR.

MISS TAYLOR: And Molly, who said this?

MOLLY: (*scanning her reader quickly, and locating the answer*) Umm...Flavius Renatus!

MISS TAYLOR: Very good.

A siren begins to wail. The students react promptly, they pack their readers in their bags. MISS TAYLOR begins shouting over the siren.

MISS TAYLOR: Ok everyone, gas masks out, follow me calmly and quickly please. No pushing and shoving! Make a line by the door.

Students begin to make a line, MOLLY endeavours to get things in her bag, FRANK helps her and the two join the line at the back. MISS TAYLOR and all the students exit stage right.

Lights down.

Lights up in a cellar. MISS TAYLOR is sitting with a group of other teachers. There are a few wooden tables and plenty of benches. There is dust falling every so often from the ceiling and the noise of bombs falling outside. FRANK and MOLLY are sat next to each other centre stage.

MOLLY: I hate when the siren goes off at school.
FRANK: Me too, but we're perfectly safe here Mol'.
MOLLY: I know we are, but I always wonder about Mum and Dad when I'm not with them. I suppose that doesn't scare you – if you're still planning on... you know.
FRANK: Signing up? Oh yeah. I'm fourteen tomorrow Mol', the same age Robbie was...
MOLLY: (*getting annoyed*) When he lied, yeah.
FRANK: (*hushing MOLLY*) Keep it down Mol'! Everyone does it. They need us Molly – on the front. I have to do my duty, keep the Nazi's out! Robbie's fine you know – better than fine, he's a hero. He writes every month.

Molly doesn't look convinced

MOLLY: Come on! The war wont last much longer Mol'. (*He nudges her*) I'll write to you.
MOLLY: (*Looking pleased, but nudging him back*) You won't.
FRANK: (*adamantly*) I will!

They fall into a silence that lasts a few moments before MOLLY spontaneously throws her arms around FRANK'S shoulders. FRANK is taken aback.

FRANK: Mol'!
MOLLY: (*dropping the hug and looking uncomfortable*) Sorry.

FRANK looks embarrassed, he then appears to feel bad and puts his arm around MOLLY'S shoulder. MOLLY looks at him.

FRANK: I'll be back before you finish Julius Caesar – you'll see.

The bombing outside continues. Lights down.

Lights up on the same classroom as before. The wall displays are the same and the board is still there, however, where there were desks there are now beds. There is a nurse in a red cross uniform mopping the floor. MOLLY enters stage left dressed in the same uniform. Three years have passed.

MOLLY: Sorry I'm late Gwen, bus didn't turn up. Had to ride my bike.
GWEN: Don't worry Molly, quiet day really. A lorry load arrived from the port. (*She gestures to a few beds*) him, him and him made it. (*She walks up to Molly and whispers*) they're in a bad way though Mol'. Burnt from the waist up. Unrecognisable faces.

MOLLY has begun flipping through paperwork at the end of the beds, on the second one she freezes. GWEN doesn't notice.

Anyway, I'm off. Jack's home on leave and I made a chocolate cake, well as much of a chocolate cake as I could make – no idea what it will taste like... (*she stares at Molly*) Molly, are you alright love?

MOLLY: (*suddenly remembering where she is she puts paperwork back at the end of the bed*) Fine. (*She rubs her dress down, and wrings her hands*). Fine. You head off, I'll um... I'll see you in the morning.

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The School Room – 6 – Text

GWEN: *(picks up her coat and puts it on)* Alright, night Mol'.

MOLLY: *(still staring at the bed)* Night Gwen.

MOLLY begins to cry. Then she wipes her eyes angrily, neatens up her hair and straightens her apron. She goes to a jug of water and pours herself a glass, she drinks it, then pours another one and carries it to the bed. She stays stood up and looks down. She begins to talk to the sleeping patient.

MOLLY: Frank. Frank. Come on Frank. *(She bends down)* Have some water. I should tip it all over you - you said you would write. Frank, come on Frank. Do you remember the last time we were in this classroom Frank, what were we doing? Julius Caesar I think. War is great – all that nonsense. Frank, do you remember? Frank for goodness sake I told you not to go.

FRANK begins to stir.

Frank. It's me, Molly. Do you remember Frank? I don't think you can see because of the bandages, but Frank, it's me. You'll be okay Frank, I'm going to get the doctor.

FRANK: *(taking her hand)* Don't go Mol', it's nice to hear your voice. Did you finish Julius Caesar yet? Am I late?

MOLLY: *(crying and laughing)* Yes Frank, very late.

FRANK: I couldn't stand Caesar Mol'.

MOLLY: Me neither Frank. We did Erasmus after you left. I liked his Latin much better. Especially now.

FRANK: Never heard of him Mol'. Your Latin was always better than mine. Did you hear about Robbie? And Jim?

MOLLY: Yes Frank. I did. I was with your mum when they told her. Does she know you're here? It doesn't matter, try and sleep. I'm going to fetch the doctor. You're going to be okay Frank.

MOLLY stands up and goes to leave the room. She looks over at the board and gets an idea. She goes over to what was MISS TAYLOR'S desk, and has become a nurses station. She ransacks the drawer and pulls out a stick of chalk. She goes over to the board and writes furiously, 'War is delightful to those who have had no experience of it', Erasmus. She looks at the men in the room, straightens her dress once more and leaves, calling for the doctor.

Lights down.