

Resistance have threatened my life if I don't help with some new hare-brained scheme.

Edith: And have you taken lunch up to my mother?

René: I did not realise it was on my "to do" list. I had no idea she ate. I assumed she just lived out of spite. **(To audience.)** Edith's mother is bed-bound in the attic room. We are not the best of friends. Frankly, I have a better relationship with the Gestapo.

Edith: You lazy, feckless fool! My mother cries out for sustenance and you cannot even fetch her the simplest of meals. Come upstairs with me. Even now we are due to receive a message from British Intelligence so we can check on mamma at the same time.

René: **(To audience.)** For reasons best known to themselves, the Resistance have built a wireless set into my mother-in-law's bed. Ah well, let us go and see how many other ways I can lay down my life in the name of France.

(Edith and René exit up the stairs. Blackout.)

ACT ONE SCENE TWO THE COLONEL'S HQ

(That same day. The Colonel's office. There is a desk with chair, and two further chairs in front. There is a single door / entrance. There is a military style map on one wall. The Colonel appears to be hard at work reading a report in a manila folder with mounting interest, and then drops the folder to reveal he is reading a copy of a risqué magazine; "Reichstag and Reichhens". There is a knock at the door and the Colonel hurriedly hides the magazine under his papers on his desk.)

Colonel: Enter!

(Captain Geering and Lieutenant Grüber enter.)

Colonel: Ah, Captain Geering, Lieutenant Grüber, come in.

Geering: You sent for us Herr Colonel?

Colonel: General Von Klinkerhoffen has returned to Nouvien and I understand he is not in a good mood.

Grüber: Why is that Herr Colonel?

Colonel: Because Grüber, he has no doubt heard all about the loss of the painting of "the Fallen Madonna with the big Boobies"...

Geering: Yes, he wanted to get his hands on those boobies.

- Grüber:** I never saw the appeal myself!
- Colonel:** It is a great shame that the painting has disappeared.
- Geering:** It was our retirement fund.
- Colonel:** *Our* retirement fund Geering? I found it!
- Geering:** Yes. But *we* know about it.
- Colonel:** I suggest we just say nothing and try and keep a low profile until he has forgotten about it all.
- (Helga enters.)**
- Colonel:** What is it Helga?
- Helga:** **(Shouting.)** General Von Klinkerhoffen!
- (General Von Klinkerhoffen enters. The other officers jump to attention.)**
- General:** Heil Hitler!
- Colonel:** Heil Hitler!
- Helga:** Heil Hitler!
- Grüber:** Heil Hitler!
- Geering:** **(Late.)** 'Tler!
- Colonel:** Ah, General, to what do we owe this pleasure?
- General:** I understand that we have lost the priceless painting of "the Fallen Madonna of the Big Boobies" and it is all your fault!
- Geering:** It's all our fault?
- General:** Ah, so you admit it. I had planned to sell it to fund a life of luxury after the war.
- Colonel:** I'm sorry to hear that General, but it was nothing to do with us.
- General:** Nonsense. You will pay for your incompetence. To make it up, you must pay me 50,000 francs by the end of the week, or you will all be sent to the Eastern Front.
- Colonel:** Where are we going to find 50,000 francs?

- General:** That is not my problem... it is *your* problem. If you cannot pay then you must find someone else who can.
- Geering:** In Nouvien?
- General:** You have been too soft with these peasants. This is an occupation not a holiday. I have received word from Berlin that the Fuhrer plans to reinforce this district in case of invasion. **(He indicates with a wooden pointer on the map on the wall.)** In this area we are deploying a regiment of artillery. In one month there will be over 2,000 men camping here.
- Colonel:** **(To Grüber.)** Make a note of that, Grüber...
- Grüber:** I already have.
- General:** Now get me that money. You have until Saturday night. Heil Hitler!
- All:** Heil Hitler!
- Geering:** **(Late again.)** 'Tler!
- (The General exits.)**
- Colonel:** What are we going to do? You heard the General. I don't want to end up on the Eastern Front.
- Geering:** I have heard that the weather is terrible. The troops are forced to huddle together at night to keep warm.
- Grüber:** That doesn't sound *too* terrible.
- Helga:** I have a suggestion, Herr Colonel. We could insist that René in the Café finds the money for us, after all, we know he has connections with the resistance.
- Geering:** Good idea.
- Grüber:** But what if René refuses to help?
- Colonel:** Simple. We say that we will tell the General that René is hiding the British airmen. And Helga, not a word of this to Herr Flick of the Gestapo.
- Helga:** Of course not, Herr Colonel, although if he chooses to interrogate me, I may be forced to reveal it. He can be very persuasive.
- Colonel:** You will just have to resist him. Geering, Grüber and I will visit René in his cafe...
- Grüber:** I'm not too sure about this Colonel and I am very busy today...

Colonel: ...Where we shall probe him. Yes, we shall pump him dry...

Grüber: ...Although there's nothing that can't wait...

Colonel: ...Of any money that he may have.

Grüber: **(Slightly disappointed.)** Yes... yes... of course.

(Blackout.)

ACT ONE SCENE THREE FANNY'S BEDROOM

(Later the same day. Lights up in Fanny's Bedroom. There is a large bed with an iron bedframe, a bedside table, a window and a single door / entrance. Fanny is in the bed with her ear trumpet. Unseen by the audience, the British airmen are hidden under / behind the bed.)

Fanny: Edith! Edith! Oooh, I am so ill!

(Fanny realises no-one is listening and leans over and picks up her knitting from the side table. She starts knitting furiously, muttering. René and Edith enter. Edith carries a bowl of soup.)

Fanny: Edith, Edith, I am so ill and old...

René: Shut up and knit you old bat.

Edith: Do not call my Mamma an old bat!

René: She *is* an old bat.

Edith: That is not the point.

Fanny: What are you saying? I cannot hear.

René: Be quiet will you, we are awaiting an urgent message from London.

(The bed nobs light up. Sound FX: Buzzing in time with the flashing!)

Fanny: Oh the knobs! The flashing knobs!

(This frightens Fanny who screams and jumps at the noise and her knitting is thrown to the floor.)

Fanny: Oh my knitting, my stitching!