

# **THE CHRISTMAS TRUCE**

## **A DRAMATIZATION OF THE CHRISTMAS MIRACLE OF 1914**

A One-Act Play

by

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(This play may be produced without a performance royalty when  
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# **The Christmas Truce**

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## Characters

British Army Private, early 20's

British Army Captain, late 30's

British Soldiers (6)

German Soldiers (7)

## Time

Christmas Eve, 1914

## Place

British and German trenches in France, World War I

## Set/Costumes/Props

Bare stage except for standing dead tree with several branches at center stage. In the British trench (below stage right stairs) are rifles, canteens, wrapped Christmas presents with bows, a worn sign with “Merry Christmas” painted on it, and a Bible. In the German trench (below stage left stairs) are rifles, canteens, small Christmas trees with stands, and candles, greens garland for tree, and worn sign with “You no fight, we no fight” painted on it, paint, and brush. Binoculars for Private. Memo on piece of paper and revolver for Captain. Private, Captain, and British Soldiers wear British army uniforms (World War I), worn long coats, hats/helmets, gloves, and boots. German Soldiers wear German army uniforms (World War I), worn long coats, hat/helmets, gloves, and boots. Sandbags around the trenches.

THE CHRISTMAS TRUCE:  
A DRAMATIZATION OF THE CHRISTMAS  
MIRACLE OF  
1914

*{As the lights come up, Private is lying on the stage right stairs looking at stage—no one's land—with binoculars. Another British Soldier with rifle is lying facing stage on stairs stage right of Private. The other British Soldiers are sitting at ease below the stage right stairs in the stage right trench. Rifles are standing up against the stage. Canteens, wrapped Christmas gifts, and a Bible on the ground in the trench. There is a sign with “Merry Christmas” painted on it on the stage above the stage right trench {stage left of stairs}. Two German Soldiers with rifles are lying facing stage on the stage left stairs. The other German Soldiers are sitting at ease below the stage left stairs in the stage left trench {stage right of stairs}. Rifles are standing against the stage. Canteens, small Christmas trees with stands, candles, and sign with “You no fight, we no fight” {along with paint and brush} are on the ground}*

*{spot #1 on British Soldiers}*

*{spot #2 on German Soldiers}*

*{SFX of artillery shelling—loud}*

*{At sound of artillery shelling, other British Soldiers protect heads with hands, and then grab rifles. One British Soldier lies along the other soldier and Private on the stairs. The other British Soldiers lean against the edge of the stage and look cautiously onto stage. At the sound of the artillery shelling, other German Soldiers grab rifles. These soldiers lean against the edge of the stage and look cautiously onto stage}*

*{SFX of machine gun burst then rifle shots}*

*{All soldiers remain alert and attentive during machine gun bursts}*

*and rifle shots}*

*{SFX of machine gun burst and then rifle shots with 2 second interval between burst and shots. Then machine gun burst and rifle shot with 5 second interval between machine gun burst and rifle shot. Then rifle shot 5 seconds later}*

*{Stage lights slowly down to dim}*

*{The two British Soldiers on the stairs cross to trench and rest rifles against stage and sit at ease. The other British Soldiers rest rifles against stage and sit in trench at ease. The other German Soldiers cross to trench, rest rifles against stage, and sit in trench at ease, Private remains on stage right stairs looking through binoculars onto stage. Captain enters from stage right aisle and hurriedly crosses to stage right trench. As he approaches stage right trench, he crouches down not to get hit by any rifle fire. When he reaches Private, he lies on stage left side of him looking onto stage}*

**Captain:** Anything, Private?

*{Private looks at Captain}*

**Private:** Nothing, sir.

*{Private resumes looking through binoculars}*

**Captain:** No machine gun bursts. No rifle fire. No artillery...*{looking up and backing away in fear}* or planes. *{harshly}* The bloody Krauts...They're up to something. *{looking around}* Eerie. Real eerie. When'd it stop?

*{Private looks at Captain}*

**Private:** Sunset.

**Captain:** How...?

**Private:** Everyone stopped shooting. Not at once. Gradual. One area of the trenches then another. Our side then theirs. Slowly...then still. All quiet...since then.

**Captain:** *{shaking head}* I've seen nothing like this in my career, even since I was transferred to the front.

**Private:** How long, Captain? Since you've arrived in France.

*{Private resumes looking through binoculars}*

**Captain:** Since September. When the rains came, and came and came... 'Til tonight. *{holding sides}* It's finally turned cold and the ground's froze. Now you can walk in the trenches without sinking into mud. And the snow starting this afternoon...covering everything. *{looking and pointing to stage}* Makes no man's land... *{slowly}* *{amazed}* beautiful.

**Private:** Should, sir.

**Captain:** Why, soldier?

*{Private looks at Captain}*

**Private:** It's Christmas Eve.

*{Captain turns around facing the audience}*

**Captain:** Almost forgot out here...*{hand up}* with the dead, the dying, and...*{tapping chest}* the rest of us, the 'bout to die.

*{Captain turns back looking at the stage}*

**Captain** *{cont'd}*: *{pointing ahead}* Any sharpshooters on the line?

*{Private resumes looking through binoculars}*

**Private:** Not a one.

**Captain:** *{with a sigh}* Couldn't miss 'em. The Boche monsters are only a hundred yards away along this sector. *{spits in derision}* Swine!

*{Captain turns toward audience and takes folded piece of paper from inside coat/shirt}*

**Captain** *{cont'd}*: *{holding paper up}* A communique from the British High Command.

*{Private looks at Captain}*

**Private:** Christmas greetings?

*{Captain smirks and opens piece of paper}*

**Captain:** *{reading}* “To all units: The enemy may be contemplating an attack during Christmas. Special vigilance will be maintained during this period.” *{waving paper}* *{with derision}* What else would you expect from their kind?

**Private:** *{genuinely}* Christmas changes everything...everyone, if you let it.

**Captain:** *{pointing with paper to stage}* Not them...*{strongly}* Never. I lost one of my sergeants...my best sergeant this morning. Got caught on a roll of barbed wire on patrol, 'bout dawn. Every time he tried to pull away, he got more tangled. The Jerries spotted him and started firing. We couldn't get to him. He screamed, *{with animation}* *{with arms up as surrender}* “Don't shoot! Don't shoot.” *{hands down}* *{with bitterness}* How'd they know what he was saying? They speak German. *{with animation}* “I want to see my wife. I want to see my kids... one more time.” *{shakes head}* But they peppered him with...*{Captain is tearful and shakes head}*. *{sadly}* He was still tugging on the barbed wire when he took his last breath. He was like... family to me. We served together on a number of campaigns, over...five years. *{with great emotion}* Barbarians! *{with bitterness}* All the stuff they write 'bout the Germans in the papers's true. *{waving off}* There's no hope for them. *{tapping Private's arm with piece of paper}* *{resolutely}* They gotta be destroyed, 'cause they want to destroy us!

*{Captain folds piece of paper and puts it inside coat. Captain motions to Private to carry on. Private resumes looking through binoculars. German Soldiers start singing "Silent Night" in German}*

**German Soldiers:** *{singing}*  
*{traditional melody}*  
"Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht,  
Alles schläft; einsam wacht..."

*{As German Soldiers begin singing, Private becomes more attentive and looks around through binoculars. Captain turns around and looks at stage}*

**Captain:** What's happening, Private?

**German Soldiers:** *{singing}*  
"Nur das traute hochheilige Paar..."

**Private:** They're singing...in their trench. The enemy.

**Captain:** *{with an edge}* I know they're... *{looking around in a panic}* Are they preparing to attack?

**German Soldiers:** *{singing}*  
"Holder Knabe im lockigen Haar..."

**Private:** It's a Christmas carol, sir.

**Captain:** *{with edge}* I know it's...

**German Soldiers:** *{singing}*  
"Schlaf in himmlischer Ruh!..."

**Private:** *{looking around stage}* "Silent Night"...

**Captain:** *{with an edge}* In German.

**German Soldiers:** *{singing}*

“Schlaf in himmlischer Ruh!”

*{“Silent Night” ends. Captain turns around. Private looks at Captain}*

**Captain:** *{nodding}* Be on guard. They're...

*{German Soldiers put Christmas trees on top of stage left stairs. Private notices the movement and looks anxiously through binoculars}*

**Private:** *{anxiously}* *{pointing towards trees}* Captain...

*{Captain turns around and looks at stage, trying to see in dim light}*

**Captain:** What? *{looking around stage}* Mortars? Gas canisters?

*{Private hands binoculars to Captain}*

**Private:** Christmas trees.

*{Captain looks through binoculars and shakes head. Captain puts down binoculars and turns around}*

**Captain:** *{confused}* What should we do?

*{Private points to sign}*

**Private:** *{to British Soldiers}* *{with eagerness}* Turn it around. The sign.

**Captain:** What are you...?

*{British Soldiers turn “Merry Christmas” sign at edge of stage to face stage. Private starts singing “The First Noel”}*

**Private:** *{singing}*  
*{traditional melody}*

“The first Noel, the angel did say,

Was to certain poor shepherds...”

*{German Soldiers see sign and point to it for other soldiers to look}*

**Private:** *{cont'd} {singing}*

“In fields as they lay...”

*{German Soldiers gather around to “paint” sign to say*

*“You no fight, we no fight”}*

**Captain:** *{holding up hands toward Private}* Stop! Stop this instant!

*{Private encourages British Soldiers to sing}*

**Private and British Soldiers:** *{singing}*

“In fields where they lay keeping their sheep,

On a cold winter's night that was so deep.”

**Captain:** I'm giving you a direct order!

*{Captain pulls revolver out of coat and brandishes it}*

**Captain** *{cont'd}*: You could be shot...!

*{Private puts hand gently on Captain's arm. Captain thinks about what he has said and lowers revolver to side}*

**Private and British Soldiers:** *{singing}*

“Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel, Born is the King of Israel.”

*{Captain is touched as he listens to singing. As “The First Noel” ends, German Soldiers clap. German Soldiers hold up sign “You no fight, we no fight” to stage for British to see. Private points to sign and encourages Captain to look. Then German Soldiers put sign down sign on stage}*

**Captain:** *{indignantly}* Outrageous! This is war. *{confused}* *{quieter}* This is war.

*{Leaving their rifles, German Soldiers enter stage via stage left stairs, pick up Christmas trees, and light candles. They cross to center stage. Private notices German Soldiers and points toward them}*

*{spot #2 follow German Soldiers to center stage}*

**Private:** Captain, They're bringing us...*{amazing}* bringing us Christmas presents!

**Captain:** *{hands out in front}* It's a trick. They're dirty Huns. They can't be...

*{German Soldiers start singing "O Come, O Come, All Ye Faithful" in Latin}*

**German Soldiers:** *{singing}*  
*{traditional melody}*

“Adeste Fideles, Laeti triumphantes.  
Venite, venite in Bethlehem...”

**Private:** *{waving to British Soldiers}* Let's go. *{waving}* C'mon.

**German Soldiers:** *{singing}*

“Natum videte Regem angelorum.”

*{Private listens intently to singing, then puts hand to ear to show British Soldiers they should listen}*

**Private:** It's in Latin. We can all sing it.

*{Private and British Soldiers stand and start to enter stage via stage right stairs. British leave their rifles}*

*{spot #2 widens to cover British Soldiers as they enter stage and cross to center stage}*

*{spot #1 remains on Captain}*

*{Captain stands up with revolver at side}*

**Captain:** *{agitated}* It's a trap. It must be. *{pleadingly}* Don't do it.

**Private:** It's Christmas, Captain.

*{Private and British Soldiers cross to German Soldiers at center stage, and shake hands. British Soldiers join German Soldiers in singing}*

**German Soldiers and British Soldiers:** *{singing} {with joyful enthusiasm}*  
“Venite adoremus, Venite adoremus,  
Venite adoremus, Dominum.”

**Private:** *{to all}* The Prince of Peace has brought His peace to this valley of death.

*{British Soldiers and German Soldiers exchange greetings.  
German Soldiers give Christmas trees and candles to British Soldiers}*

**Private:** *{to British Soldiers} {pointing to area below stage right stairs}* Get those gifts we got from home. *{waving}* All of 'em.

*{British Soldier {solo} sings “O Holy Night”}*

**British Soldier:** *{singing}*  
*{traditional melody}*

“O holy night! The stars are brightly shining;  
It is the night of the dear Savior's birth.  
Long lay the world in sin and error pining,  
Till He appeared and the soul felt its worth.

A Thrill of hope—the weary world rejoices,  
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn!  
Fall on your knees! O hear the angel voices!  
O night divine, O night when Christ was born!  
O night, O holy night, O night divine.”

*{Two British Soldiers cross to stage right stairs, exit off stairs, and pick up presents. They enter stage via stage right stairs and cross to British Soldiers and German Soldiers at center stage. British Soldiers give presents to German Soldiers. German Soldiers open presents and thank British Soldiers. Captain watches the action while shaking head —almost trance-like}*

**Private:** *{to Captain}* *{pointing to Bible}* Captain, the Bible. We'll have our Christmas Eve service out here with...

*{Captain comes out of trance-like staring, looks around, and picks up Bible}*

**Private** *{cont'd}*: Bring it, sir...

*{Private puts arm around a German Soldier}*

**Private** *{cont'd}*: With...

*{Private looks at German Soldiers and at other soldiers}*

**Private** *{cont'd}*: *{genuinely}* Our brothers.

*{Private and German Soldier smile at each other and Private takes his arm away. Captain is perplexed about what has happened. One German Soldier exits into stage left trench and returns with green garland. Private, British Soldiers, and German Soldiers decorate tree with garland and candles as singing resumes. Captain looks at revolver and then up at Private as singing continues}*

**British Soldier:** *{singing}*

“Truly He taught us to love one another;

His law is love and His gospel is peace.  
Chains shall He break, for the slave is our brother,  
And in His name all oppression shall cease...”

**Captain:** *{calling out to Private}*Private!

**Private:** Yes, Captain.

**Captain:** Will it last? Can it last?

*{Private looks around at British Soldiers and German Soldiers decorating tree together}*

**Private:** If we listen, sir.

**British Soldier:** *{singing}*

“Sweet hymns of joy in grateful chorus raise we;  
Let all within us praise His holy name.  
Christ is the Lord! O praise His name forever!  
His pow'r and glory ever-more proclaim!  
His pow'r and glory ever-more proclaim!”

*{spot #1 follows Captain onto stage and to center stage as singing starts}*

*{Captain looks at revolver and thinks about it He looks at British Soldiers and German Soldiers decorating tree together. Captain puts revolver into coat. Captain slowly enters stage via stage right stairs, and crosses to center stage. Private, British Soldiers, and German Soldiers greet him}*

**British Soldier:** *{singing}*

“Christ is the Lord! O praise His name forever!  
His pow'r and glory ever-more proclaim!  
His pow'r and glory ever-more proclaim!”

*{Private takes Bible and shows it to German Soldiers as singing resumes. They take Bible and open it. Private encourages Captain}*

*to talk with German Soldiers and show them the Bible. Captain acts more friendly to German Soldiers and shows them pages of Bible as "O Holy Night" ends}*

*{spot #1 and spot #2 slowly to black}*

*{black out}*

**END OF PLAY**