

Over the Line

Playscripts

The following playscripts are based on the book **Over the Line** by Tom Palmer. Please refer to the 'About the Playscripts' document for information about using these playscripts in the classroom.

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Playscript 1

Protestors disrupt a game at Huddersfield Town.

SCENE: Huddersfield Town FC Stadium

The Huddersfield Town and Grimsby players are on the pitch. Play has stopped in the second half of their match because protestors have spilled onto the pitch. The protestors are angry that footballers are still playing when the country is at war. The players are not sure whether play will resume.

PROTESTORS: [sing] Onward Christian soldiers, marching as to war ...

WHEELHOUSE: It's not going to go away.
Those protestors aren't going anywhere. Neither is the war.

JACK: [to himself] No. My dream's only just come true and now it's crumbling.

WHEELHOUSE: Is that Larett Roebuck's widow over there?

JACK: It is.

WHEELHOUSE: I heard he was ex-army. They called him up on the day they declared war.

JACK: That's what I heard too.

PROTESTORS: [sing] Onward Christian soldiers, marching as to war ...
[singing fades]

WHEELHOUSE: Did you hear that MP going on about the Footballers' Battalion at half time?

SUMMERS: What battalion?

WHEELHOUSE: The Footballers' Battalion. It was set up last month. There's an artists' battalion. A musicians' battalion. And now there's one for us.

SUMMERS: [panicky] Do you think you'll do it, Jack?

JACK: What? Sign up?

SUMMERS: Yes.

JACK: No. Not me.

WHEELHOUSE: So, you don't care about the things people are saying about footballers, then?

JACK: What are they saying?

WHEELHOUSE: They say we're not fit to fight. They say we're just interested in making money from football. Rugby players are fighting. Cricketers are fighting. But not footballers. They say we're too scared of being shot at and bombed.

JACK: [annoyed] Lots of footballers have gone to fight. Roebuck went.

WHEELHOUSE: He did. But he was called up. I'm talking about volunteers. People will keep saying those things until footballers start to volunteer.

JACK: I hate it when people say bad things about football. What about you, Wheelhouse? What are you going to do?

WHEELHOUSE: I'm going to volunteer.

JACK: I can imagine you on the battlefield.

SUMMERS: You can't volunteer, Sid. You've got kids, a wife. What if ...

WHEELHOUSE: What if I end up dead like Larrett Roebuck? [laughs, bitter]

What if my wife ends up like
that poor cow over there?

PAUSE

WHEELHOUSE: I know a bloke whose
wife and kids were killed
in Scarborough. In the
bombardment last December.
The Germans are attacking us
here, lads. Next time it could
be my wife and my children.
Unless we stop them.

JACK: I read about that in the
newspaper. The bombardment.

FX: Referee's whistle

WHEELHOUSE: Come on then, lads, we're
starting again. Jump to it!

Playscript 2

Henry Norris tries to intimidate the Huddersfield players.

SCENE: Dressing room, Highbury Football Stadium

The Huddersfield Town players are in the dressing room, ready for their game against Arsenal. The Gaffer is about to give them his pre-match talk when the door bursts open and Henry Norris, the owner of Arsenal, bursts in.

NORRIS: Good afternoon, gentlemen.

PLAYER 1 & PLAYER 2: [mutters] Hello.

PLAYER 3: [mutters] Good afternoon.

BULLOCK: [mutters] Hello.

PAUSE

NORRIS: At ease, gentlemen. I came to wish you luck. This is a big stage for a small-town team. But we're happy to welcome you here.

GAFFER: [cross sigh]

NORRIS: Most of my lads have already signed the form. Off to fight the Germans. And I'm proud of them. They're patriots. [PAUSE] I know this is a big day for you, with a game against the Arsenal, but I still want you to think about enlisting. You're footballers – fit, strong men! You should be going out to fight.

BULLOCK: [whispers] Don't listen to him. He's trying to put us off our game. Distract us so we don't play well.

NORRIS: Well, then. Come and see me when you're ready to sign up. To be heroes. And good luck today. [laughs]. Goodbye, gentlemen.

PLAYER 1 & PLAYER 2: [mutters] Goodbye.

PLAYER 3: [mutters] Good riddance.

FX: Footsteps. Door slams

PAUSE

GAFFER: Who are we, Jack?

JACK: No.

JACK: What?

GAFFER: [yells] That's right! Because when we are on the pitch, we're eleven men who can beat any team. Isn't that right, Jack?

GAFFER: Who are we? What team?

JACK: Town. Huddersfield Town.

JACK: [shouts] Yes, boss!

GAFFER: Will you remember that? Remember you're Huddersfield Town FC?

GAFFER: I think Mr Norris has done my team talk for me. Is that right?

JACK: Yes, boss.

JACK: [yells] Yes!

GAFFER: Do you think a fancy London team with a smart new stadium and rich men in its corridors deserve to beat us, Jack?

BULLOCK: [yells] Yes, sir!

PLAYER 1, PLAYER 2, PLAYER 3: [roar] YES!

JACK: We're going to hammer them.
We're going to hammer
Arsenal!

[All cheer]

Playscript 3

Jack and Percy Summers enlist.

SCENE: Army Office, London

Jack has come to London to enlist in the army. He is glad to have reached a decision at last. Outside the office, he meets Percy Summers and Sid Wheelhouse.

SUMMERS: Jack?

JACK: Hello, lads! I see you're well settled in the battalion already, Wheelhouse. The uniform suits you.

WHEELHOUSE: Bullock said you'd be down this week, Jack. Good to see you.

JACK: And you, Sid. But what's this, Percy? Are you joining up today too?

PERCY: [small voice] I am, Jack.

WHEELHOUSE: Right. I need to get over to the barracks at White City. You two can sort each other out now.

FX: Wheelhouse's footsteps.

WHEELHOUSE: [shouting from a short way off] Make sure you join the Footballers' Battalion and not any other. We need men like

you to prove that footballers can fight. Yes?

JACK: [shouts] Of course, Sid. [Normal voice] Have you seen the way the newspaper men are still writing that footballers are cowards, Percy?

SUMMERS: Come on. Let's go and sign this piece of paper.

FX: Footsteps.

OFFICER: Next! Name?

JACK: Jack Cock.

OFFICER: Address?

JACK: Number 81 An –

OFFICER: Just a moment. Are you a footballer?

JACK: Yes. I mean – yes, sir.

OFFICER: I saw you at Arsenal. That late goal you scored.

JACK: Are you an Arsenal fan, sir?

OFFICER: I am. You finished our chances of promotion that day. Maybe we'll sign you after the war?

JACK: Maybe.

OFFICER: Oh, well. Address?

JACK: 81 Ansell Street, Fulham.

OFFICER: Are you a British subject?

JACK: Yes.

OFFICER: Born in England?

JACK: Yes.

OFFICER: You could be playing for England if it wasn't for this war. For some reason I thought you were a Scot, playing so far up north.

JACK: No, sir. I'm English.

PAUSE [while Jack signs.]

OFFICER: Trade or calling?

FX: Pen scribbling.

JACK: Professional footballer.

OFFICER: Best of luck to you then.

OFFICER: That you are.

JACK: Thank you. I mean – thank you, Sir.

JACK: I won't be after I sign this paper, will I? I'll be a soldier then.

OFFICER: You will. Are you willing to serve upon the conditions provided by His Majesty?

JACK: Yes.

Playscript 4

A bomb in Jack's trench.

SCENE: Jack's trench, night

Jack is trying to sleep when he hears a wet thud and realises that a bomb has fallen into the trench.

FX: Raindrops.

FX: Thud.

JACK: Bomb! It's a bomb! Out of the way!

SUMMERS: Move! Get away from it!

Wheelhouse. Standing there staring at the thing!

PAUSE

SUMMERS: What do we do now?

JACK: Shouldn't it have exploded by now?

JACK: We need to get the bomb clearance lads over to sort it out. Go and get them, Mawson.

WHEELHOUSE: It should have.

MAWSON: Right you are, Sir!

MAWSON: [shouting into the trench]
What's happening, lads?

PAUSE

WHEELHOUSE: You were out of these quick enough, Mawson! You too, Evans.

FX: Footsteps.

EVANS: You're right we were! Don't know what kept you – if you could have seen yourself,

WOODWARD: What have we here, men?

JACK: A bomb, Sir. It came over but it hasn't exploded.

WOODWARD: Very good, Corporal. Leave it to me. Stand clear, men.

PAUSE

FX: Explosion.

JACK: Sir? Sir? Are you all right, Sir? I can't see you, Sir!

BULLOCK: [shouts] He's here, Corporal. He's wounded bad in the leg.

JACK: Hold him still, Bullock. I need to tie a strap round his leg to

stop the blood. There – that's it done.

SUMMERS: [shouts] Get a stretcher-bearer over here, quick! We need a stretcher-bearer!

MAWSON: [shouts] Stretcher-bearer!

EVANS: [shouts] Stretcher-bearer!

JACK: Talk to me, Sir. It's important you stay awake. The bearers will be here soon. It's a quiet night. You'll be fine.

WOODWARD: Look at my leg, Corporal.

JACK: Sir?

WOODWARD: Look. At. My. Leg. What are my injuries, Corporal?

here. Let them through – clear the way!

JACK: [pause] You've two injures, sir. Both above the knee. The bleeding has slowed now.

STRETCHER-BEARER: Right you are, now, Sir. We'll get you out of here in no time.

WOODWARD: And how bad are the injuries, Corporal?

FX: The stretcher bearers leave.

PAUSE

SUMMERS: His legs are ruined, aren't they, Jack?

JACK: The injuries are deep, sir. Not life-threatening. But your legs are badly damaged.

JACK: They are, Percy. [PAUSE] But do you know this? He's in terrible pain. I've just told him his career is over. And do you know what he said to me? He said 'thank you'. Jack Woodward is a brave and honourable man.

WOODWARD: Thank you, Corporal.

SUMMERS: The stretcher-bearers are