



BLOOD AND IRON

Written by
Alex D. Reid

based on true events



Fray Bentos, designation F41, a typical 'male' Mark IV British tank

OVER BLACK;

Torrential rain assaults steel.

A muffled explosion.

Men shouting to each other.

TITLES:

August 22nd, 1917

The Battle of Passchandaele

INT. FRAY BENTOS - DAY

The *cramped* interior of a Mark IV tank.

A large exposed engine nestled in the middle, taking up the majority of what little space there is.

At both sides, a POUNDER (cannon) and LEWIS MACHINE GUN jut out from the main chassis.

A small steel exit latch beside each.

Two sets of complex levers linked to the engine labeled **GEARS**.

At the front, another set of levers by the driver's seat.

A seat beside it hosting another Lewis machine gun pointing forwards.

From outside, a muffled, austere voice.

COMMANDER (O.S.)

The finest piece of engineering
Britain has to offer chaps.

Through a dirty front-facing VIEWFINDER, we can see outside.

POV: A British base, drenched in rain.

The sky has barely started to lighten.

Stark bare trees scattered across the horizon.

Shouts and screams ahead.

Miles in the distance, smoke, fog and fire.

Through small slits on both sides of the tank between the cannons and machine guns, seven more tanks are lined up beside this one.

Soldiers dash about the base, trying to escape the rain.

Men circle the steel behemoths.

Including this one.

The latch on the right side creaks open.

The DRIVER squeezes in.

Thirtyish, turbaned with well-kept facial hair, his uniform hanging off him, weeks old dirt clinging to his shirt. Sharp eyes, relentlessly stoic.

Examining the central engine, he climbs up to the front compartment, into the driver's seat.

He gently moves the levers, hearing the machinery rumble beneath him.

Through the open latch the COMMANDER, late 20s, white, looks in on him. Trying too hard to refute an upbringing of proper manners, he watches the driver with a studied casualness.

COMMANDER (CONT'D)

All in working order?

Driver reaches up and pushes out the exit hatch above him.

It takes a good deal of effort, the hinges groaning.

High above, fighter planes screech by, slicing the dark clouds with their wings.

He pulls it closed before speaking in a thick Scottish accent.

DRIVER

It'll do.

Commander nods.

COMMANDER

You ready to become a hero?

DRIVER

(non-committal)

Sure.

Commander turns away and takes a small silver LOCKET out of his pocket.

Inside, a sepia photo of a young WOMAN with brown hair.

He glances at it quickly, a ghost of smile, before snapping it shut and putting it back in his pocket. Driver watches it all.

DRIVER (CONT'D)
She'll wait for you.

Commander nods.

COMMANDER
(re-assuring himself)
I know.

He leans his body outside.

COMMANDER (CONT'D)
Alright gentlemen, it's time to
give those krauts a good what for.

Commander steps back, allowing two soldiers to cautiously press in.

The GEAR OPERATOR, barely 18, black, hardly fills out his uniform. He looks around the spider web of machinery with affecting fear, before taking his place by one of the gear panels.

The MECHANIC, white, by far the oldest of the crew, into his late 30s. A gruff Northern Irish accent and a stern paternal demeanor make for an unspoken seniority among them.

He lurches to the engine and stares into the host of pipes, valves and pistons.

MECHANIC
(to Gear Operator)
Ever been in a Mark IV lad?

Gear Operator shakes his head.

Mechanic looks up at him with a strange unhinged grin.

MECHANIC (CONT'D)
Neither have I.

GEAR OPERATOR
Really?

MECHANIC
You best believe it.

The Driver shakes his head.

DRIVER
(to Gear Operator)
He's messin' with ya son. That
bastard's tamed steel beasts best
left to the imagination.

HUSH climbs through the latch. 20s, black, dirty hair, brown
teeth, worn. He barely looks at the other men, taking his
position at the RIGHT MACHINE GUN.

Gear Operator watches him before turning back to Driver.

GEAR OPERATOR
Have you fought any Germans?

DRIVER
Aye. A few.

GEAR OPERATOR
And?

DRIVER
And what?

GEAR OPERATOR
Are they barbarians?

Beat.

DRIVER
They're just good men. Just like
us.

WEBLEY ambles in. Early 20s, white, tall, lanky, he checks
his revolver before looking up at anyone else.

He has to hunch very low to make his way to the RIGHT
POUNDER.

He motions behind him towards the Commander.

WEBLEY
Where in God's name did they scrape
up that chap?

Driver shrugs.

Hush doesn't acknowledge them.

Instead, he looks out of his viewing slot.

Outside, kneeling in the mud, CRAVEN appeals to the PRIEST, white, both in their late teens, both looking scared shitless.

CRAVEN
The thing's a bloody deathtrap.

Priest puts a comforting hand on his shoulder.

PRIEST
God's watching.

Craven rises, moving towards the entry hatch, glancing towards No Man's Land up ahead.

CRAVEN
No he isn't.

He climbs into the tank, barely looking at the others as he moves to the LEFT MACHINE GUN.

Gear Operator watches him carefully.

His hands are shaking, freezing and clenched, his skin white.

Priest squeezes in soon after.

He takes a measured look over everyone in the tank, quietly coming to terms with what's on the horizon.

He takes off a crucifix looped around his neck and hangs it on a small HOOK over the latch.

He quietly mutters a prayer to himself as he presses to the LEFT POUNDER.

The Commander hops into the tank and closes it behind him.

It CREAKS shut.

For the foreseeable future, these men are stuck inside the cramped tank.

He makes his way to the front of the tank, beside Driver, and gently caresses the steel.

COMMANDER
(to Driver)
Beautiful isn't it?

Driver looks at him incredulously.

DRIVER

Sure.

Commander sits beside him, facing inwards towards his men.

All eight of them in position.

It's very cramped.

They can almost hear each other's hearts beat.

The Commander props himself up on the side of the steel.

COMMANDER

Gentlemen, it's my pleasure to welcome you aboard the Fray Bentos Mark IV landship designation F41. Room is tight in here, and once the engine is started, we won't be able to hear each other, so please listen and watch for my orders.

The Driver peers through the small front viewfinder.

POV: A view of the gray horizon.

About a half mile away, a long, thin, decrepit trench. Beyond it, No Man's Land, a wasteland of mud, steel, blood, mounds of dirt dissected by splintered wood

The helmets of soldiers bobbing up and down between the dirt.

COMMANDER (CONT'D)

The weather is positively grim. As such, the tracks will have some trouble gathering traction in the mud. It will be an exercise in persistence, so please securely hold onto whatever you can.

The Gear Operator clutches a lever fearfully.

COMMANDER (CONT'D)

The trenches at Passchendaele have not moved in months. Command hopes that with these new Mark IV's, we'll be able to break the German lines.

(beat)

Which means we will be driving face first into the enemy itself.

Mechanic moves over to a long steel starting handle with thin handles in the middle.

He delicately lays his hands on it.

COMMANDER (CONT'D)

Remember, you are far safer in this tank than you would be as infantry. You must be steadfast. We are representing the technological frontier of what the British Empire has to offer, we must not disappoint.

(beat)

There's no way I'd rather die than with seven other patriots.

The men look to each other anxiously.

COMMANDER (CONT'D)

For King and Country.

The crew don't give him the rousing applause he was expecting.

COMMANDER (CONT'D)

While we wait for the signal from our brothers, I'd ask you all to put on your masks that have been supplied to you.

The Commander stands and looks through the exit hatch above Driver.

The men reach around to their pockets taking out their masks.

They're strange. Like the top half of a leather gas mask, but the mouth is covered by a layer of chain mail. A small string is used to tie it around their heads.

As they put them on, the men quietly chat.

MECHANIC

(to Priest)

You a priest son?

He shakes his head.

PRIEST

Not yet. I was in training.

Webley laughs.

WEBLEY

Almost managed to dodge the draft you crafty bastard.

PRIEST

I had no such intentions.

The Gear Operator looks to Priest.

GEAR OPERATOR

Priests aren't conscripted?

He nods his head.

PRIEST

And ministers. Men of God don't
make efficient soldiers.

Still looking out his peep-hole, Hush speaks up for the first time, quiet, but forceful.

HUSH

I beg to differ.

They look over to him.

Beat.

GEAR OPERATOR

(to Priest)

Can you say a prayer for us?

Priest looks to him, then meets the eyes of the Driver and the Mechanic.

PRIEST

Of course.

(beat)

Lord, in these dark hours, protect
us from those who would do us harm.
Shield these men from the dangers
they face, and let them have the
courage to do what is necessary in
these times of strife.

(beat)

Amen.

He looks up.

Only a few of the men watch him.

The rest look away.

Gear Operator jostles opposite the Mechanic.

He grabs the lever with clammy hands.

MECHANIC
You alright son?

Gear Operator nods.

The Mechanic tilts his head, before pointing to a small corner near the back of the tank.

MECHANIC (CONT'D)
If you need to vomit, do it back there.

Gear Operator looks at him, wondering if he's serious.

But before he gets his answer--

COMMANDER
Gentlemen! Let's get moving!

Commander lowers himself back into the tank.

He SLAMS the hatch closed, then gingerly attaches his own mask.

COMMANDER (CONT'D)
Weapons ready?

Each man checks their Revolver is securely holstered in their overalls.

COMMANDER (CONT'D)
On your mark.

Mechanic and Gear Operator crank the starting handle round and round...

A third time...

A fourth time...

Gear Operator watches the engine anxiously.

Maybe even with a spark of hope.

Maybe it won't start.

A fifth time...

Ker-CLUNK--

The engine sputters to life.

Gear Operator's face drops.

The engine sputters, crescendoing until deafening.

Driver turns to the Commander and points ahead.

Commander grabs a wrench and BANGS it against the steel.

Gear Operator and Mechanic notice.

Commander holds up one finger, then pushes downwards.

Nodding, Gear Operator and Mechanic each pull a lever marked **LOW** and pull another--

Ker-CLUNK--

The whole tank juts forward, knocking the men off balance--

Driver slowly pushes a lever forward--

Outside, the sound of the tracks turn.

The whole chassis VIBRATES.

Slowly but surely, the tank sputters forward.

They're so close that the slightest bump causes them to crash into each other.

Through his narrow peep-hole, Craven watches the other tanks move forward too.

They all bear Union Jacks.

Mechanic tends to the engine as they trundle forward at top speed. 4 miles per hour.

The tank has no suspension. Every bump in the road is felt. One divet in the muddy ground sends Webley off balance towards the engine--

Mechanic GRABS him by the scruff of the neck, stopping him before his arm touches one of the pipes.

Mechanic motions down to them. Even from here, the pipes are noticeably scalding.

Driver taps the Commander on the side, pointing upwards with his finger..

Commander hits the sides of the wall again with the wrench but Gear Operator is too busy coughing on the mounting fumes spouting from the chugging engine.

Commander SLAMS the walls harder. It's barely audible over the roar of the engine.

Mechanic notices.

He climbs over to Gear Operator, slaps him over the head, then motions to Commander. Overwhelmed, Gear Operator looks up. Commander motions upwards, then puts two fingers up.

Gear Operator and Mechanic both pull a lever marked **HIGH** and push several more levers.

Ker-CLUNK--

The treads seem to find new power.

Craven looks green in the face from the bumping motion. Priest puts a comforting hand on his shoulder.

Craven shouts something. Priest can't hear. He gives up trying to communicate, placing both hands on his gun.

Mechanic climbs up onto the engine, careful not to touch it, gently guiding his hand between two RED HOT pipes...

The whole tank LURCHES forward--

Mechanic BURNS his hand, the skin already white--

With a grimace, he quickly spins a lever between the pipes.

The engine ROARS louder as petrol feeds into the main engine. He shuts the valve off once more and keeps a careful eye on the machinery.

A look at his hand. Already scarred.

Webley watches the countryside dip away, quickly becoming gray.

Hush takes a few calming breaths. He's rolled his overall sleeves up. His arms, covered in scars and cuts.

The Commander peers back into the narrow viewfinder.

POV: On the horizon, the battlefield draws closer.

Until--

A deafening HIGH-PITCHED WHISTLE--

Before an EXPLOSION hits--

Barely ten meters from the tank--

The men duck down but the tank trundles onwards--

The friendlies in the trenches ahead scatter as the tanks lumber closer.

A horse without a rider gallops through the mud.

Craven sweats profusely. Rain drips off the end of his gun.

As they reach the trench, Driver presses down on his brake pedal. Commander bellows something that goes unheard.

Driver grips tightly onto his set of levers.

As he drives the tank straight into the trench--

The whole tank tips forwards--

The men are knocked off balance--

The front treads SLAM into the front of the trench--

The recoil sends Gear Operator off his feet--

CRACKING his head on a pipe.

The treads start to climb up.

The men in the trench watch the tank with terrified reverence.

The Mechanic reaches forward for Gear Operator and examines the back of his head. It's bleeding, but it's not deep.

He gets his attention, then with his hand demonstrates putting pressure on the wound.

Gear Operator understands just as--

The back treads FALL into the trench.

All the men tip backwards, but this time they're ready--

They hold on for grim death as they are bounced around the cold steel.

The engine SCREAMS as it hauls the 30 tonne machine up and over the trench...

And into NO MAN'S LAND.

Outside, a high pitched whistle--

The men in the trench ROAR as they charge into No Man's Land with the tanks, bayonets thrust forward.

Commander looks forward again.

Up ahead, about 150 meters away, a series of fortified farmhouses, surrounded by German trenches--

A line of machine guns OPEN FIRE--

Commander and Driver duck down as bullets PEPPER the outer chassis, a rapid-fire ear-splitting drum kit of gunpowder and steel.

The four gunmen point their weapons in the direction of the trenches.

And OPEN FIRE--

Except for Craven, who can't seem to pull the trigger.

Outside, the wholesale slaughter of hundreds of men--

Torn down by a blizzard of bullets--

More mortar blasts, each coming closer to the tank--

Men who have fallen over get tangled in stray barbed wire.

Steel ripping flesh.

One mortar scores a DIRECT HIT on a Mark IV next to Fray Bentos, exploding it in an instant--

Some men outside take cover behind the roving tanks--

Hush grits his teeth as he aims at specific targets with surgical precision--

Both Pounders send off their payloads, before rapidly reloading each time--

Molten metal flicks off the edge of the chassis where German fire hits it, splashing onto the men--

One lands on Priest's exposed neck--

He screams as he hastily tries to scrape it off--

It leaves a fleshy burn on his neck.

Luckily, the masks of the other men shield their faces from similar fates.

An exhaust from the engine starts to glow red hot.

Gas HISSES into the cabin from the engine.

Mechanic fiddles with small knobs, trying to alleviate it--

More bumps in the mud knock the men off balance--

Gear Operator backs into the corner, shaking--

Artillery strikes mutilate the muddy hell--

More direct hits on friendly tanks--

Priest's eyes widen as he sees the other tanks EXPLODE, the flames reflecting in the black of his eyes--

Soldiers crawl to whatever cover there is, leaving a long trail of blood and sinew behind them--

Commander turns his attention to the front and takes up position on the front Lewis, firing at will--

Webley glances to the ground outside. Soldiers are BANGING on their steel beast, pleading to be let in.

It shakes him--

A barrage of bullets mow them down in an instant.

Bloody mist hangs in the air--

Driver looks through the viewfinder--

POV: Only 40 meters from the enemy trench.

Up high, Fighters and Bombers SCREECH through the clouds.

Engines SCREAMING at each other--

A total CACOPHANY of MADNESS--

More mortar fire--

It misses their last tank ally, but they become jammed in the mud, their treads unable to gain traction.

Fray Bentos is the last tank moving.

Mechanic storms over to Gear Operator and wrenches him to his feet, practically throwing him back towards the engine.

Despite it all, Craven still can't fire his weapon--

Commander notices--

Rising--

Driver spots something in the German trench--

A GLINT of a scope--

A bullet RIPS through Driver's shoulder--

It LAUNCHES him into the levers--

The bullet finds purchase in Commander's leg--

Driver falls onto the acceleration lever--

He tries to get up, but not before the entire tank tips forward like a sinking ship--

And falls into a large muddy crater.

Driver lurches to his feet, through gritted teeth trying to readjust the levers--

But the tank can't find traction whatsoever--

Mechanic rushes over to Commander who's sprawled out on the floor.

He examines the wound.

The bullet's deep, but nothing major has been hit.

Driver hurses the engine.

In a MIGHTY CRESCENDO--

It chokes--

And dies.

Explosions, bullet fire and screams from the war zone still ring out loud. But the tank crew are deathly quiet.

Gear Operator sinks back down into a corner, cradling himself.

Hush looks down his barrel. It's caked in wet mud, and more is slipping onto the tank.

HUSH
(to Craven)
Take your gun off the mount!

They both withdraw their guns before they're buried in mud.

Driver takes off his mask and looks to Mechanic with grim urgency.

D R I V E R

Get her started.

Mechanic nods, grabs Gear Operator by the scruff of his neck and moves to the starting handle.

M E C H A N I C

Ready?

Gear Operator nods.

M E C H A N I C (C O N T ' D)

Go!

They both turn it.

Once.

Twice.

Three times.

Mechanic grits his teeth.

M E C H A N I C (C O N T ' D)

Come on...

Four.

Five.

Six...

Gear Operator looks at it with unabashed desperation. For the love of God, **start**.

No change. The Mechanic holds the handle steady.

D R I V E R

Again!

They spin it more.

Seven--

Eight--

Nine--

Ten times--

Nothing.

MECHANIC

Fuck!
(long beat)
She's dead.

Commander hoists himself up against a wall.

Driver falls limp.

CRAVEN

What do you mean, dead?

Webley exhales and looks at the engine.

WEBLEY

Mean's we're stranded.
(to Mechanic)
Doesn't it?

Mechanic doesn't reply.

Hush moves quickly to the back of the tank, searches in a storage compartment for a first aid kit and brings it over to Commander and Driver.

As he works on applying basic first aid, Gear Operator takes his mask off and looks to them all.

GEAR OPERATOR

So... what do we do?

His question goes unanswered.

Craven sits on the floor. Priest tends to the Commander while Hush helps Driver.

COMMANDER

Bastards got me in the bloody leg.

Priest looks down at it.

Hush has washed away the blood.

He tosses Priest a roll of bandages.

PRIEST

Can't take it out now. It'll get infected.

Commander grimaces.

COMMANDER

Get it over with.

Comparatively, Driver looks far worse. His shoulder is spurting dark blood and his color is fading.

Hush rips open his shirt, examining the wound.

HUSH

Clean entry and exit. You'll be alright. I'm going to clean, then bandage, alright?

Driver nods.

Hush grabs a small flask out of the kit. He unscrews the lid and holds it aloft over the wound.

HUSH (CONT'D)

Ready?

Another nod.

Hush tips into the wound--

Driver growls in pain as the blood is washed away.

Hush swiftly bandages it.

Meanwhile, Mechanic and the other men talk urgently.

MECHANIC

I can probably repair it. But it'll take time, and there's no guarantee it'll work.

CRAVEN

What if you can't repair it?

Webley shrugs.

WEBLEY

We'll have to run.

GEAR OPERATOR

Across No Man's Land?

He looks to them all with potent fear.

GEAR OPERATOR (CONT'D)

Oh god...

MECHANIC

That's the worst case scenario.

Commander makes his way over to the group, limping unsteadily with his arm around Priest.

The injury makes navigating the cramped tank a difficult task.

COMMANDER
(half-joking)
Better not be making any bloody decisions without me.

MECHANIC
Wasn't planning on it sir.

Commander manages to roughly sit on the side of the now cooled off engine.

COMMANDER
We're not bloody running. I think I've got a better idea.

He addresses Gear Operator.

COMMANDER (CONT'D)
Private, you installed the cross-beam, correct?

GEAR OPERATOR
Yes sir.

COMMANDER
Would you be able to disengage it, and use it as a track for the tank to make its way out of this pit?

All eyes turn to Gear Operator.

GEAR OPERATOR
I...
(beat, nervous)
I suppose I could, yes.

Craven slowly gets to his feet, then makes his way to the closest exit hatch.

He pushes on it, but can't open it.

CRAVEN
The latches are jammed. Mud must be forcing them closed.

COMMANDER
(to Webley)
Check yours.

He does, pushing it with a shove, no give. He looks back without a word.

Commander looks slowly around to Gear Operator.

COMMANDER (CONT'D)

Means the top hatch is the only way out.

GEAR OPERATOR

But they'll be able to get me. I'll-- they could see me through their scopes.

Driver sits in the corner, controlling his breathing.

DRIVER

Then I'd advise you to keep your bloody head down son.

Mechanic places a hand on Gear Operator's shoulders.

MECHANIC

You installed it. You know how to disengage it fastest.

He motions to the rest of the crew.

MECHANIC (CONT'D)

Tomorrow when we're appreciating the breath in our lungs, we'll have you to thank.

Gear Operator nods his head, amping himself up.

GEAR OPERATOR

Alright.

COMMANDER

Good show.

They make way for Gear Operator as he clambers up beside Driver in the front seat.

Driver reaches up and slowly pushes the top exit latch back.

Outside, the battle continues viciously. The terrible symphony bleeds into the tank, the wave of sound washing over them all.

Gear Operator takes a few deep breaths.

DRIVER

Stay low, move fast. They'll be too busy with the rest of the assault.

Careful, Gear Operator pokes his head out, taking cover behind the latch.

Driver watches him carefully.

Gear Operator looks back down to him.

GEAR OPERATOR

We're properly wedged.

DRIVER

And the crossbeam?

GEAR OPERATOR

In-tact.

The Commander hobbles up beside Driver.

COMMANDER

Can you get us out of here?

Gear Operator's hands shake viciously.

GEAR OPERATOR

I think so.

He looks around to the rest of the crew, who give him a solemn nod. After a few shaky breaths, he clambers on to the top of the tank.

We stay with Driver looking up through the hatch.

Gear Operator stays motionless, almost on his belly.

In a break of the machine gun fire, he starts to wriggle forward.

A long beat.

Something near the front of the tank jiggles.

Driver turns his head and peers into the viewfinder.

POV: A long, thick piece of wood is chained over the front tracks. A sweaty, pale, Gear Operator clambers over the top of it.

He fiddles with the chains.

A grimace.

It's not working--

An explosion nearby showers the tank and Gear Operator with dirt and debris.

Gear Operator covers his face as he's showered with the mud.

Beat.

He looks up again then continues working on the chain.

Eventually, the chain falls to the ground with a loud clatter.

Determination winning over fear, Gear Operator grabs one end of the wood, and starts to pull it back towards the top of the tank.

Excruciating and slow, he hauls it into position.

Further and further back, onto the top of the tank roof.

Driver looks through the hatch.

Above him, Gear Operator drags the heavy crossbeam.

Standing.

He makes eye contact with Driver--

Before he's **TORN TO PIECES** by a volley of machine gun fire--

In the split-second Driver sees him, his flesh has been completely cleaved apart--

Commander SLAMS the exit latch shut--

THUMP THUMP. The sound of Gear Operator's body and the crossbeam hitting the top of the tank.

Driver closes his eyes, head back, breathing fast.

Commander stares at the latch.

Silence.

He takes a few calming breaths, then turns to his crew.

They look at him, dumbfounded.

Mechanic holds his head in his hands, and storms to the back of the tank.

MECHANIC
(fearsome)
FUCK!

One by one, the men sit on the steel.

Commander slumps into the chair beside Driver. Wordless.

The only crew member who seems relatively unaffected is Hush.

He takes a few breaths, thinking hard.

HUSH
What are our options?

Silence.

HUSH (CONT'D)
Anyone?

The Mechanic reels around on him.

MECHANIC
For God's sakes the boy just died!
Have some bloody decency.

Beat as Mechanic turns away.

Hush takes a few moments before continuing.

HUSH
Alright.
(beat)
As I see it, we have two. We try to
make a run for it back to the
trench.

COMMANDER
We'll be blown to pieces.

HUSH
Quite possibly.
(beat)
Alternatively, we wait in here and
hope to God we can take the enemy
trench before...

Beat.

CRAVEN
Before what?

Hush looks to Commander.

He sighs, carefully articulating his response.

COMMANDER

The Krauts haven't developed technology like this landship yet. So instead of developing it, they're more likely to...

(beat)

Repurpose one of ours.

(beat)

Command would rather our landship be completely destroyed than have it fall into German hands.

CRAVEN

With us in it?

The Commander nods.

HUSH

We're more likely to be mortared by the British than the Germans.

WEBLEY

Christ. Then we've gotta run.

Driver shakes his head.

COMMANDER

Not quite. We've got a few hours before they presume we're dead. We've got to make sure they know we're alive first. That'll put the bombardment off for a time.

Webley draws his revolver and makes towards the hatch above Driver.

WEBLEY

Then I'll just fire this into the air--

The Driver grabs him roughly by the hand.

DRIVER

And waste the ammunition?

A long moment of tension...

Webley relents, returning to where he was.

PRIEST

We'll need the ammunition?

Mechanic watches, somewhat delirious.

MECHANIC

Oh we will alright. Germans won't mortar us, but by God they'll want this tank. They're gonna take it from us.

He chuckles.

MECHANIC (CONT'D)

This isn't a temporary setback.

(beat)

This is a bloody siege.

INT. FRAY BENTOS - DAY - LATER

The sound of war has quietened outside.

Only a stray shot every so often.

The men in the tank are sweating.

Masks are off, overalls stripped.

Hush lays out the small amount of rations.

He looks at them, blank.

There's barely enough for one, nevermind seven.

Mechanic slumps by the engine, watching Commander.

Commander in turn seems to have spaced out sitting at the front of the tank.

The symphony of warfare fading out replaced by...

Birds?

He looks around. All he can hear, the cheerful tweeting of birds...

Then--

A delirious, sweet *laugh* of a woman.

He recognizes it--

Driver accidentally trips on Commander's foot, knocking him out of his daydream. Driver's crouching and squeezing by the other men, feeling his arm and doing impatient laps.

Shaking himself back to reality, Commander grabs Driver's attention.

COMMANDER
How's the arm?

Driver shrugs.

DRIVER
Nothing that can't be fixed.

Priest peers out of one of the slots, looking out at the crater. The tank's not in that deep.

He can just about see into No Man's Land.

But with torrential rain and terrible heat, the tracks are engulfed in the mud.

Craven sits on the ground, quivering. Closing his eyes, taking deep breaths.

Webley rummages through a nook in the back of the tank.

He's throwing out empty boxes...

Until it's empty.

His look turns sour.

WEBLEY
Where's the fucking flare gun?

COMMANDER
It isn't in the back?

Webley gives him a dirty look.

COMMANDER (CONT'D)
One of the supply boys must have forgotten.

Mechanic storms towards Commander and sticks a finger right into Commander's chest.

MECHANIC
It's your responsibility y'hear me?
Anyone who dies, it's your
responsibility.

COMMANDER
I hardly think that's fair--

Hush interrupts them.

HUSH

Wouldn't matter anyways. We fire a flare and we're advertising ourselves to the enemy.

(beat)

If we're lucky, they might not even know we're here.

Craven is sweating profusely, eyes swiveling.

WEBLEY

How're supplies?

Hush shakes his head.

HUSH

Not good. Not enough. We can live without food. Water's a problem.

Priest glances out the window at the torrential rain, painfully aware of the irony.

WEBLEY

We can't just sit here and wait to die.

COMMANDER

I suppose you'd have us run?

WEBLEY

What other choice do we have?

Craven stumbles to his feet, and clambers towards the front.

CRAVEN

I've gotta get outta here--

Before anyone can react, he tries to open the top hatch--

But it doesn't budge.

The men who were moving to restrain him stop for a moment.

His face falling, Craven tries the hatch again.

It refuses to open.

Commander pushes him away and tries opening it for himself.

It's jammed shut.

CRAVEN (CONT'D)

Oh my God...

Priest hastily moves to him, trying to calm him down.

Craven barges past him to the latch by their guns.

Still blocked shut.

Shaking his head, he clammers over to the other latch on the other side.

Which is jammed shut.

No exit.

The tank's closing in on Craven--

No space--

Can't breathe--

No air--

He starts to hyperventilate--

Priest quickly lowers him to the ground.

PRIEST

It's alright, calm down.

But he won't, his breathing quickening.

WEBLEY

Keep him quiet.

Priest gives him a look that could kill.

He leans up against one of the cramped walls, and rests Craven's head on his lap.

He wipes away stray hairs over his sweaty forehead.

PRIEST

It's alright, just relax.

Priest mutters a quiet prayer to himself.

Commander continues to try the latch over and over again.

Even he's shaken. But Mechanic seems to understand.

MECHANIC

It's the boy. His body or the crossbeam are jamming it. Maybe both.

Craven starts to calm down.

Priest gently, paternally, combs his hair back.

Driver squeezes past and mounts the driver's seat.

Commander looks to him with desperation.

COMMANDER

What do we do?

Driver thinks for a long moment.

DRIVER

(to Mechanic)

Is the engine dead?

MECHANIC

Functionally.

DRIVER

Meaning?

MECHANIC

Meaning we'd need to force a start if we want to move again. It's dangerous, could permanently break her.

DRIVER

But it's possible.

The Mechanic shakes his head.

MECHANIC

It shouldn't be.

Driver turns back to Commander.

DRIVER

Got a better idea?

Commander looks through his viewfinder again.

The front tracks are being engulfed by the mud.

Then to his men, all in a sorry state.

COMMANDER

Even if we get this thing moving and we get out of the crater, we'll be the only target in No Man's Land. We'll be bloody eviscerated.

Priest gets Craven to his feet and leads him to his position.

DRIVER
How would you rather die?

A long thoughtful moment.

A grimace.

COMMANDER
Christ.
(to Hush)
How many days of rations have we
got.

HUSH
One, maximum.

Beat.

Commander wraps his hands around the front facing Lewis gun.

A long beat...

COMMANDER
Let's go.
(to Crew)
Positions everyone.

Those who aren't in position make their way to their place, squeezing past each other, flesh to steel.

Apart from the Mechanic.

MECHANIC
(to Commander)
The boy was the only other soldier
who knew how to work the gears.

Commander processes the info, then looks to Driver.

COMMANDER
Can we still move?

DRIVER
Only one track, for now, but it'll
be rough once we get out of the
crater.

COMMANDER
(to Mechanic)
We'll work out it out as we go.

With barely a nod, Mechanic moves to the starting handle.

Craven still quivers.

CRAVEN
(to Priest)
Tell me it'll be alright.

Beat.

Before he gets a chance to respond--

Commander gives a nod to Mechanic.

Mechanic starts to spin the starting handle.

Three times, no action.

Not surprised, mid-rotation, he knocks off a few valves on the engine.

Pressure hisses out from the engine.

He rotates it a fourth time.

A grumble from the engine.

A fifth time.

A crescendo.

A sixth time.

The engine ROARS to life, far louder than before--

The men CHEER--

Driver accelerates--

The tank JUTS forward a few meters, throwing the men off balance--

The tracks JAM--

The naval pounder cannons swing on their axis from the momentum--

Webley manages to dodge out-of-the-way in time--

But Priest is hit by the gargantuan gun as it RAMS into him--

It takes him off his feet, and SLAMS him against the wall--

We can't hear the crack, but his torso crumples as the gun smashes his ribs against the steel--

The engine ROARS--

The Driver accelerates more--

They start to make headway--

Priest SCREAMS as the gun pins him to the wall--

Craven tries to pry it off him--

The engine SCREAMS--

The front of the tank is peppered with MACHINE GUN FIRE as it peaks over the crater--

Commander and Driver duck down--

As the engine dies.

The tank lurches backwards, sending the men flying--

Hush's head catches on a HOOK--

Half his scalp TEARS off as he's catapulted to the back of the tank--

Mechanic feverishly cranks the starting handle--

The engine WHINES--

MECHANIC
C'MON YOU FUCKER!

But no matter what he does, it just whines louder--

A pipe EXPLODES from the pressure, sending steel fragments flying into the cabin--

Mechanic, being the closest to the blast, takes the brunt of the damage--

He falls to the ground, cradling his torso which has been shredded by hot steel.

As the tank falls back into the center of the crater.

The engine HISSES, spouting steam and petrol--

Webley, the quickest to react, rips off a piece of his clothing and ties it around the exposed pipe, stemming the flow of petrol.

The cannon is still pinning Priest to the wall--

His screams piercing, blood-curdling, primordial.

Driver and Commander go as quickly as they can to help Craven pull the gun off Priest.

Mechanic grimaces through his own pain and makes towards Hush.

His scalp is bleeding badly.

Hush instinctively reaches up to it. Mechanic bats the hand away.

MECHANIC (CONT'D)

Don't.

All the equipment was thrown to the back of the tank, including the first aid kit.

MECHANIC (CONT'D)

Stay still.

Mechanic quickly moves to the back, grabs the first aid kit, and brings it back up.

Commander, Driver and Craven all pull at the gun--

Barely any progress--

Mechanic bandages up Hush's head shoddily.

He examines his own torso.

Around fifteen individual pieces of metal have embedded themselves into his stomach.

He grabs a set of tweezers from the first aid kit before looking over to Priest.

Webley moves to help the men pull the gun off Priest.

Eventually they manage to relieve the pressure--

Priest immediately falls to the ground with a yelp--

Ragged, torn breaths.

Craven kneels beside his friend and lifts his shirt.

His torso has crumpled. His lungs, stomach and ribs all collapsed inwards, bone piercing flesh, collapsed organs compressed, the skin black.

Priest coughs up blood.

The Commander limps away.

The reality of the situation is finally setting in.

Mechanic spots him.

MECHANIC (CONT'D)

No, you don't have that bloody
right.

He holds out his hand, motioning for him to take the
tweezers.

MECHANIC (CONT'D)

I need your help, now.

He props himself up against the wall of the tank, removes his
shirt and ties it around his mouth like a gag.

The Commander slowly makes his way around to him.

MECHANIC (CONT'D)

Every decision you make will have
consequences.

Mechanic hands him the tweezers, then motions to cleaning
alcohol and the bandages.

COMMANDER

I don't--

MECHANIC

Do it!

With a trembling hand, Commander holds the tweezers and aims
towards the piece of metal most protruding.

He applies pressure.

COMMANDER

Bite down.

He does.

Commander takes a few breaths, then slowly starts to pull out
the piece of metal--

Flesh clinging to it--

Tendons ripping--

Mechanic WAILS with pain--

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. FRAY BENTOS - NIGHT

The men keep to themselves.

They're all profusely sweating.

A small dim lantern lights the interior.

Driver peers out the front slit.

POV: Total darkness.

Stray gunshots embody the pulse of the battlefield.

Every so often, a mortar goes off somewhere in No Man's Land.

He prods his shoulder and winces.

Hush leans on the wall.

The dressing on his scalp barely covers the fleshy mess.

Webley holds his revolver, inspecting it closely.

Mechanic sits near Driver, wincing with every movement, more than fifteen individual blood stains seeping through his shirt.

Craven and Commander tend to Priest, whose skin has gone ashen pale.

He can barely keep his eyes open.

Commander stays a little further away, uncomfortable.

Craven cradles his friend's head.

They're deathly silent.

PRIEST

(weak)

Water...

Craven looks up to Commander.

CRAVEN

He wants water.

Commander nods without replying or moving.

CRAVEN (CONT'D)

Hey! You hear me? He needs water!

Commander doesn't raise his head.

CRAVEN (CONT'D)
Hey!

DRIVER
Shh.

Craven quietens down as Driver points towards the Germans.

CRAVEN
For God's sakes he just wants
water--

WEBLEY
We all need water.

He doesn't look up from his revolver.

WEBLEY (CONT'D)
We only have enough to get us
through 'till tomorrow morning.

CRAVEN
So? Give him his share!

Nobody makes eye contact with Craven.

Mechanic exhales almost silently.

After a long beat.

WEBLEY
Why waste it on a dead man?

Beat.

Craven's lost for words.

CRAVEN
Wha-- I--
(to Commander, protesting)
Commander...

Commander still doesn't look him in the eye.

HUSH
The French use a process called
triage. The allocation of medical
resources, especially when scant,
based upon the likelihood of
improval.
(beat)
Your friend will not make it
regardless of what care we give
him.

(MORE)

HUSH (CONT'D)

(beat)

Palliative care has no place here.

Beat.

Driver turns his head back out to the battlefield.

And listens.

The mortars have stopped.

CRAVEN

Bastards! The lot of you!

(to Hush)

And you! I bet you enjoy this! How
come you know so much?

Driver listens closely.

Not even any gunfire.

Hush stays calm.

HUSH

On the contrary, if I knew that
giving him water would save him
then I think we'd all happily give
him some. As it stands, that's not
possible.

Mechanic unsteadily gets to his feet.

Craven curls up, instinctively protecting Priest.

Mechanic shoves past Commander before kneeling down beside
Craven.

Silent tears start to run down Craven's face.

A long beat as Mechanic looks up and down Priest's wounds.

He picks up some discarded overalls and balls them up before
putting them under Priest's head.

MECHANIC

Keep him comfortable.

As Mechanic leaves, Commander looks up.

But not at Mechanic.

He hobbles over to a slit and looks out.

Pure darkness.

He looks urgently over to Driver.

Who returns the look, both with grim looks on their faces.

COMMANDER

How long?

DRIVER

About a minute, maybe more.

Priest lets out a dreadful moan as his core convulses.

But everyone save Craven is watching Commander and Driver.

COMMANDER

More?

DRIVER

Maybe. I just noticed it.

More moaning.

WEBLEY

What's that mean?

Commander listens closely.

COMMANDER

Before they go over the top, the mortaring stops.

MECHANIC

Meaning?

DRIVER

Meaning someone's about to launch an attack.

WEBLEY

The British?

Another look between Commander and Driver.

DRIVER

Or the Germans.

A ripple of fear pulses through the men.

Priest's moaning grows louder--

PRIEST

God make it stop, please make it stop, please God...

Craven does his best to comfort him.

Webley's hand starts to shake as he leans on the wall.

COMMANDER
Pistols ready men.

They scramble for their pistols.

Hush quickly makes towards the back of tank where he pulls out a long scoped rifle.

He brings it over to his station, leaning it against the chassis.

Priest's moaning becomes desperate.

PRIEST
Oh God please I just want to die I
just want to--

WEBLEY
(snapping)
Shut him up!

Craven tries to shush him, but his pleas go unheard.

The men stay low.

And wait.

Listening.

COMMANDER
(to Webley)
Put that lantern out. If it's the
Germans, they better think we're
dead or we may as well be.

Priest's anguish turns to painful screams.

Driver snaps his head around, pure intensity.

DRIVER
Gag him.

CRAVEN
What?!

COMMANDER
Do it!

Hush hastily moves over to help him--

Webley sits and listens as closely as he can as he extinguishes the lantern.

Deathly silence...

A whistle--

Followed by thousands of ROARS...

From the **GERMAN SIDE**.

The men's faces fall into total fear.

COMMANDER (CONT'D)
(urgent)
Not. A. Word.

They all hunker down.

As the screams grow louder.

Closer.

Fire from the British side opens up--

Total chaos outside--

Screams--

Massacre--

But the men inside the tank stay completely silent.

Hush silently ties the gag around Priest's mouth.

He draws his own pistol--

Gets to the ground--

And points it at the latch above Driver.

Soon the footsteps are right on top of them.

Literally.

Light beams into the tank, Commander looks out a slit.

Outside, a horse ON FIRE gallops across the battlefield.

Commander can't quite believe what he's seeing--

BANG--

A heavy footstep on the tank readjusts his attention.

The horse is gone as soon as he looks back.
Screams and desperation from the German forces.
Some of them take cover in the crater.
Driver spots one through the viewfinder.
He slides downwards slowly, staying out of sight.
More footsteps atop of the tank--
On the treads--
A shout--
As a soldier peers in through one of the holes--
It's pitch black in the tank--
Maybe he won't see anyone--
Priest MOANS--
Hush instantly covers his mouth--
The soldier looks around for the noise--
But must decide against it--
He stands back up...
The men keep their revolvers ready.
As a few footsteps leave--
A great SCREECHING from the hatch above Driver.
They're dragging away the crossbeam.
And Gear Operator's body.
Someone tugs at the hatch--
Driver holds it shut...
Beat.
More pulling on the hatch--
Driver does his damndest to stop them...
A shout--

As an overwhelming force PRIES IT OPEN--

Light POURS IN--

Revealing DRIVER--

The Germans SHOUT--

Driver FIRES FOUR SHOTS--

Webley dashes to his feet and shuts the front latch--

WEBLEY

Fuck!

COMMANDER

Watch the slits!

Urgent shouts from outside--

Germans on both sides try to pull open the side latches.

Another looks in through Hush's peep-hole--

Hush instantly FIRES--

Total CHAOS--

The top latch is almost wrenched off its hinges--

Mechanic quickly grabs a broken pipe and jams it in the latch--

It holds, for now--

A German rifle peeks through a slot--

And FIRES--

It's deafening, the bullet RICOCHETS inside the chassis--

The men's ears RING--

But it doesn't strike anyone--

Webley shoots back--

But he misses the slot--

His own bullet ricochets back--

And barely avoids injuring anybody.

COMMANDER (CONT'D)
BE CAREFUL!

More SHOUTING from outside--

Gradually the feet retreat from the viewing slots--

But they're still on top of the tank.

Craven hyperventilates.

Close to twenty voices on top of the tank.

One rises above the rest.

Then silence.

Feet shuffle.

Driver's eyes follows the footsteps across the roof.

Until they stop directly overhead.

Another shout--

BANG--

The entire top latch almost caves in as the pipe keeping it
locked CRACKS--

BANG--

Even more so--

BANG--

The pipe falls to the floor--

CLANG CLANG CLANG--

The latch FLIES open--

A German soldier stands above--

Holding a GRENADE--

Driver FIRES without aiming--

He dispatches the soldier--

But the grenade tumbles into the tank--

WEBLEY
Get it!

It rolls right into the belly of the engine--

Mechanic launches into action, quickly ripping off steel panels--

Hush grabs it--

And throws it to--

Commander, who just about catches it--

Before lobbing it outside--

Webley drags Driver away from the hatch--

A DEAFENING EXPLOSION--

Shrapnel flies into the tank--

Where Driver was sitting moments ago--

Hush grabs the rifle--

Dashes up to the latch--

And points it out--

Taking several shots before ducking back in--

Closing the latch behind him--

HUSH
(breathless)
They're keeping back--

DRIVER
2nd wave will be coming--

COMMANDER
How many?

HUSH
I--

He wipes his brow.

HUSH (CONT'D)
I don't know, too dark.

Mechanic gathers up the Lewis Machine Guns that were detached when they first were swamped.

He gives one to Webley--

He moves to Craven--
Gives him one look--
Before turning to Commander.

MECHANIC
Time to prove yourself.

Commander nods, taking it from him.

Mechanic points to two small slots on the sides and the one in front of Driver.

MECHANIC (CONT'D)
The mounts are clogged with mud,
meaning we'll need to improvise.
Wedge the barrel in the slots and
fire when you think you have a
chance. There's not much room to
aim, but we might scare them off.

Commander and Webley do as their told, wedging their guns into the slot, rotating them.

It's rough, but it'll do.

Commander glances to Hush.

COMMANDER
Can you clear the top?

He nods.

HUSH
(motioning to his revolver
and rifle)
Three shots in him, four in her.
(beat)
I got it.

Still pale from his shoulder wound, Driver starts unscrewing his driving levers, pulling them free.

He gives them a test swing.

Three levers, now separated.

Craven gives him an aghast look.

DRIVER

We're not going anywhere son. If they get in and we start firing our guns, we'll kill ourselves first. Grab one of those and swing.

Mechanic grabs one, throws one towards Craven and Webley.

Shouts from outside grow louder--

Priest's completely passed out--

Craven looks him up and down fearfully.

Commander leaves his station for a brief moment, leaning down beside him.

He gently lays Priest to the side, then pulls out Craven's revolver.

He puts it in his hands.

COMMANDER

You know how to fire it?

Craven nods.

COMMANDER (CONT'D)

Will you?

CRAVEN

I--

COMMANDER

You didn't fire your weapon on the advance. I admire your restraint old boy but no man's land isn't the place for pacifism.

Commander hoists him to his feet, struggling with his own injured leg.

COMMANDER (CONT'D)

I can't see very well, so I need you to be my eyes.

(beat)

Can you do that?

Craven nods.

COMMANDER (CONT'D)

Good.

Mechanic picks up one of the levers and lightly swings it.

Driver takes hold of the front mounted Lewis Machine Gun.

As shouts from outside grow louder.

Driver can just about spot a few enemy soldiers on the edge of the crater, looking in carefully.

COMMANDER (CONT'D)

Remember gentlemen, we have to keep ammo consumption to an absolute minimum.

(beat)

Fire only when necessary.

WEBLEY

When's that?

COMMANDER

When they're right on top of us. Do not fire a bullet until my mark. We drive them out of the crater, our men back in the trench should be able to take them out.

Beat.

COMMANDER (CONT'D)

Understood?

ALL

Understood.

COMMANDER

Keep your heads down and out of the way. The more of us they think they clipped the better.

The screams are almost right on top of them.

All the men hunker down.

MECHANIC

Let's show these bastards what we're made of.

But they don't come immediately.

They sit in absolute silence.

Craven's eyes scan outside.

Behind him, unnoticed by all, Priest's eyes go blank.

As his breathing stops.

And the gag in his mouth falls loose.

On the right side of the tank, Hush peers outside.

The next wave overwhelms the tank.

Many of the soldiers run by, ignoring them.

But a few duck into the crater for cover.

They breathe heavily.

Scared beyond belief.

Young, anywhere between 16 and 18.

Commander watches from his side too, biding his time.

The soldiers don't seem to pay the tank any mind.

Until--

A German soldier shot in the previous assault who was lying face down in the mud SCREAMS to the fresh men.

Something urgent.

The fresh soldiers glance to the Mark IV tank in fear--

Their eyes go wide--

They start to scramble away--

Commander notices--

COMMANDER

FIRE!

Commander and Webley slaughter the men outside--

The Lewis has vicious recoil--

Hush open up the latch and brings his rifle up with him.

Mechanic dashes to a viewing hole and points his pistol out.

But he stops.

For a moment the enemies outside don't look like bloodthirsty killers.

They look like scared boys.

Some look barely different from Gear Operator. Spotty, dirty, innocent faces.

Dead faces.

But the onslaught doesn't end.

WEBLEY
I need a reload!

Mechanic snaps himself out of his trance and dashes towards the back of the tank, opening a compartment.

There, two long reels of machine gun bullets.

He takes one then dashes back to Webley, feeding it into the gun.

A beat in the fire as he primes the first bullet.

Cocks it--

And starts firing once more--

Whatever soldiers that escape the crater are soon cut down by the British fire--

But those that stay in the crater adapt--

They get close to the tank, out of view of the Lewis guns.

Hush ducks back into the tank, throwing his rifle away.

HUSH
I'm out!

Engineers dash down and throw crowbars to the other soldiers.

Hideous metallic creaking--

Snapping--

COMMANDER
What are they doing?!

Mechanic sidles around and tries to get an angle on them--

Through an awkward perspective, he can see Germans peeling away at the tank's outer extremities.

Towards...

The **FUEL TANK.**

MECHANIC

They're going for the fuel tank!

Commander looks urgently to Hush.

COMMANDER

Can you get them?

HUSH

Not on my own. I only have three bullets.

Commander looks warily to Craven.

COMMANDER

Take the gun. Don't stop firing.

Commander draws his revolver and hobbles towards the top hatch.

COMMANDER (CONT'D)

(to Hush)

Three. Two. One.

(beat)

GO!

Both of them dash out--

Gunfire outside--

SCREAMS and SHOUTS--

Footsteps on top of the tank--

An EXPLOSION goes off nearby--

Craven holds the Lewis machine gun fearfully.

In front of him, three German soldiers.

They slide into the crater.

Rifles in hand.

They raise them upwards to the tank.

To where Commander and Hush presumably are.

Their fingers wrap around the triggers.

Almost convulsing, Craven wraps his finger around his trigger.

They aim--

Craven FIRES, mowing them down in a grotesque mist of blood and dirt.

He misses most of his shots, but it doesn't take long until all three are eviscerated.

Craven openly weeps through blood shot eyes as he continues to fire--

THUMP THUMP THUMP--

Towards the back of the tank large bangs against the chassis--

MECHANIC

They're peeling through the bloody shielding--

A rapid VOLLEY OF GUNFIRE--

A German shout--

As Commander slides back into the tank, breathless, dirtied and bloodied.

COMMANDER

They're fleeing, don't let up--

He dashes over to his gun and takes it from Craven.

He glances outside and sees the three soldiers he shot.

And only briefly looks at Craven's traumatized face.

He unleashes another volley of fire--

WEBLEY

They're retreating!

Sure enough, whoever's in the crater claws their way out--

MECHANIC

Where's the gunner?!

Sensing the immediate danger has passed, Commander releases his gun.

COMMANDER

I thought he was already he--

Hush collapses into the tank.

Driver closes the hatch behind him--

He's badly beaten...

And drenched in blood.

He drops a large knife to the ground, flesh still clinging to the blade.

Driver lowers him to the ground.

He's hyperventilating, eyes open wide--

Blood's seeped right through his overalls.

The bandage on his head has come off, revealing his mutilated scalp.

He's shivering.

Driver grabs his overall jacket and lays it over him.

Craven collapses to the ground too.

He holds his face in his hands, unstoppably sobbing silently.

His foot hits...

Priest.

He looks for a moment.

CRAVEN

Hey...

He crawls over and grabs Priest's face.

CRAVEN (CONT'D)

Hey, wake up!

Priest's blank eyes stare up at the roof.

CRAVEN (CONT'D)

Wake up!

Commander hobbles over to him, clocking the situation immediately, laying a hand on Craven's shoulder.

CRAVEN (CONT'D)

No, he's not...

He forces a smile, shaking Priest's head.

CRAVEN (CONT'D)

C'mon...

(sudden explosion)

WAKE UP!

He stumbles away the reality sinking in--

And SCREAMS in a primal fury.

For once, the other crew members look scared of him.

He SCREAMS as he PUNCHES the wall--

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. FRAY BENTOS - DAY

Each of the men sit separate from each other.

All their lips are dry and cracked.

Webley drinks the last of his water out of his canteen.

He listens to the pattering of the rain on the tank.

He squeezes through to the front latch beside driver.

WEBLEY

I can get more water.

Driver shrugs, deflated.

Webley climbs up beside him and slowly opens up the latch.

The rain starts to pour in.

He holds out his tongue.

After a few moments he raises his canteen up--

PING--

A bullet ricochets off the latch, almost taking Webley's hand clean off.

He darts his hand back in before closing the latch, gathering his breath.

The other men look at him for a few moments...

But none say a thing.

Commander gently caresses the locket in his pocket, not opening it. His dirty fingers smudging the silver.

Priest's body has been moved towards the back of the tank. His face covered.

Near him, a small puddle of piss and shit.

The smell's atrocious. Those near aerating slits push their noses towards the outside, preferring to smell the burning flesh outside than the stench inside.

Hush is legitimately shaken. His eyes are dulled and underactive.

Craven struggles to breathe, sitting down.

His whole body convulses forward.

He dry heaves.

He scrambles to his feet and clambers towards the back--

Where he vomits on the ground.

He stands stunned--

Before dry heaving another time--

But nothing comes up.

He dry-heaves once more before falling to his knees.

The men turn away, staying silent.

Craven wipes his mouth as he looks over to Priest.

Then around to Commander who idly fiddles with a pipe.

A look down to his own waistband.

There, the grip of his revolver.

His breathing quickening, Craven grabs it.

Stands.

Advances towards Commander.

And aims.

Driver notices almost immediately.

DRIVER
Put that down!

The men snap to attention and immediately curve away from Craven whose eyes rest squarely on Commander.

Commander stays relatively calm, breathing through his nose.

He faces Craven.

MECHANIC
Son, just calm down and put it
down, alright?

Craven's hand shakes uncontrollably, but the barrel stays pointed at Commander's forehead.

CRAVEN
It's his fault. It's all his fault.

Commander looks squarely at Craven, nowhere else.

COMMANDER
What's my fault?

Craven points to Priest's body.

CRAVEN
Him! And the other man rotting in
the mud. All because of you.

Webley slowly grabs a detached lever, watching Craven closely.

COMMANDER
I take responsibility for that.

That shakes Craven for a moment.

CRAVEN
You do?

After a long beat, Commander nods.

A realization.

COMMANDER
Yes. You are my unit. You are my
responsibility, meaning whatever
action's you take or do not take
under my command is my
responsibility.

Beat.

CRAVEN
So you admit it.

Webley slowly moves his way around, inch by inch.

COMMANDER
I do.

Craven almost laughs, completely delirious.

CRAVEN
My God. The arrogance--

He storms forward, pushing the barrel of the revolver into Commander's head--

The men all shout in protest, but he doesn't hear them.

They speak quickly, vicious, no gaps between, Commander losing his composure--

CRAVEN (CONT'D)
You should have let me run!

COMMANDER
And have you die?

CRAVEN
You don't know that!

COMMANDER
I know we've got a better chance of living in here.

CRAVEN
Until the Germans or the British mortar us, right? Maybe you're just craven!

COMMANDER
You're the one who wouldn't pull the trigger on the advance--

CRAVEN
(exploding)
YOU MADE ME KILL THOSE PEOPLE!

A long silent beat.

CRAVEN (CONT'D)
They weren't any different from me. And I gunned them down. Why? Because a stuffed shirt thirty miles behind the trench says so?

COMMANDER

That's war.

CRAVEN

(frenetic)

That's stupidity! To die for a King
who'll never know my name, to
perish for a general who sees me as
a number, to *kill* to grasp a few
yards of hell.

He pushes the revolver hard into Commander's skull.

CRAVEN (CONT'D)

Meanwhile, those who do know my
name, those who'd miss me, those
who'd mourn me will lose a son, a
brother and a friend to a war that
went unchanged by his death.

(beat)

I want to see my Mother again
Commander.

(beat)

If that's war then may this Great
one devour us entirely.

A long quiet beat.

Webley moves ever closer.

CRAVEN (CONT'D)

Will our deaths change anything? At
all? Why wait to rot while we can
still run, and maybe just live.

Beat.

COMMANDER

We are not running.

Craven's eyes flare--

Webley's still too far away--

Craven's finger pulls back the hammer--

CLICK.

But not from his gun.

Directly adjacent to Craven, Hush aims his own revolver at
his head.

HUSH

Put it down.

Craven's finger curls around the trigger.

Commander stares him dead in the eye.

Beat.

Hush rises to his feet.

Craven glances towards him...

Before dropping the gun to the floor.

Commander openly decompresses with relief.

Mechanic picks up Craven's revolver and passes it to Driver.

Craven seems to be empty. He moves to the farthest corner and crawls into a ball.

WEBLEY

Should we restrain him?

Commander shakes his head.

COMMANDER

No.

Webley's eyebrows furrow, but he obeys the order, watching Craven skeptically.

Commander looks to Hush, concerned.

Hush smirks, cynical, putting the gun in his mouth--

And pulling the trigger--

CLICK.

He retracts it, smiling wryly.

HUSH

Empty.

Driver groans as he gets himself to his feet.

He moves beside Commander and sits beside him.

They talk quietly.

DRIVER

You alright?

Commander nods.

COMMANDER

Yes.

He's very visibly not, but Driver nods anyway.

He wrings his hands, deliberating.

DRIVER

He wasn't wrong.

Commander sighs, holding his head in his hands.

COMMANDER

You too?

Driver looks around to make sure no one is listening before speaking in a hushed tone.

DRIVER

What's the plan here? Really? The only way we get out of this is if the British know we're alive, the Germans don't kill us and we manage to win this accursed battle before we run out of water.

(beat)

Which judging by current supplies, will be within the next few hours.

COMMANDER

I will not run.

DRIVER

Why?

Beat.

COMMANDER

I will not be labeled as craven so long as I live.

DRIVER

Is that what we're doing now?
That's what this is? Being brave?

COMMANDER

As much as I can be.

DRIVER

Is it worth it?

COMMANDER
Bravery is its own reward.

DRIVER
There's a fine line between bravery
and stupidity.

Commander faces him, anger flaring, but still hushed.

COMMANDER
Is that what you all think of me? A
fool? A puppet?

Beat.

DRIVER
Why does it matter?

COMMANDER
Because a commander must be
respected.

DRIVER
Respect is earned, not granted.

Commander sighs, frustrated.

COMMANDER
My father fought in the Boer War.
His father fought the Zulus. His
father fought the Perians and the
Russians.

Beat.

DRIVER
And you think they never ran?

Commander stays silent.

INT. FRAY BENTOS - DAY

They sit silent.

Not scared anymore though, they seem past that.

They're bored.

Mechanic idly tinkers with the engine.

A thought comes to him and he looks to his comrades.

MECHANIC
Who volunteered to be here?

Nobody responds.

MECHANIC (CONT'D)
I did.
(beat)
When me two boys died I told myself
that whoever kills the innocence of
a child is the greatest monster
alive.

He wipes his face, grime smearing his face, looking to the
body of the Priest.

MECHANIC (CONT'D)
No disrespect to your friend, but
any god who slaughters kids is no
god at all. I volunteered thinking
I could save a few boys out here.
Thought these tanks would protect
them, not kill more of them.

He peters out to silence.

Hush watches him close.

WEBLEY
I volunteered too.

HUSH
Why?

Beat.

All his swagger has left, his fetishization of his revolver
dissipated. He's like a scolded child.

WEBLEY
I-- I thought I'd be... I'd be good
at it.

Hush keeps a still face.

HUSH
Good at what?

Beat.

WEBLEY
Killing.

Hush's demeanor clearly shifts to that of anger, but he keeps still.

HUSH

Why?

WEBLEY

My Da always said I was good at
clay pigeon shooting.

Beat.

Hush's tension dissolves, he can't help but laugh.

Soon enough, the rest of the crew is laughing too. Even Craven cracks a smile. Webley laughs too.

DRIVER

This sure beats the Olympics.

They laugh again before descending back into silence, strangely content.

INT. FRAY BENTOS - DAY

The mortaring outside has picked up.

Rhythmic explosions, sometimes close, sometimes far away.

The mortars SCREECH as they approach ground, sometimes deafening.

It's no longer raining, the sun scorches the tank's steel.

The men are lying limp.

The very steel of the tank is scorching to touch.

Craven stays curled in the corner.

Webley pants in a corner.

He lifts a nearby canteen and tips it into his mouth.

A drop of water at most.

He throws it away in frustration.

Mechanic is tinkering in the engine.

He unscrews several panels, reaching into the belly of the beast.

His eyes light up for a moment.

MECHANIC

Someone get me a container.

Driver throws an empty canteen towards him.

Mechanic catches it, then lowers it into the engine.

He tips something.

The sound of rushing water.

The men snap alert, watching Mechanic.

But Mechanic doesn't smile just yet.

He brings up the canteen, peers in, then empties a little of the fluid onto his hand.

It's almost pitch black.

The men's faces fall.

MECHANIC (CONT'D)

Radiator fluid.

Commander hobbles around the engine to get a closer look.

COMMANDER

Is it drinkable?

Craven rises to his feet.

MECHANIC

I don't know. It'll taste terrible.
All manners of mechanical fluids in
it.

(beat)

Maybe.

Craven snatches it out of Mechanic's hand and takes a long swig.

He swallows and puts the canteen down.

His face stays still as he concentrates on keeping it down.

Before wiping his mouth and returning to his corner.

Commander watches without interjecting.

COMMANDER

How much more fluid is there?

MECHANIC

Close to another canteen's worth.
That's about it.

Commander nods.

Slowly but surely they all get to their feet, none excited at the thought of drinking the near pitch black ichor.

But one by one they all take a drink.

Some have more trouble than others.

Webley's gag reflex kicks in, spitting it out again, dry heaving.

But by the time everyone else has had a drink, his desperation brings him back to take another swig.

He closes his eyes and takes one more mouthful.

Swallows...

Grimaces...

But keeps it down.

Commander takes a long drink before sitting back down to the ground, closing his eyes.

He rolls up his trouser leg.

The wound is bandaged, but his lower leg has taken on a putrid shade of black.

He touches it, instantly recoiling in pain.

It looks as if the corruption is making its way up his leg.

He tears a small piece of fabric off his overalls and ties it tight around his knee.

Driver watches the whole procession, silent.

He checks his own shoulder wound.

Comparitively it seems better. The blood's congealed on the DIY wound dressing.

Hush's head injury is looking worse. The raw flesh has become infected, pus pushing against the surface.

Webley stares out the window at No Man's Land.

WEBLEY

Why haven't our boys mortared us yet?

Mechanic shrugs.

Mechanic screws up his eyes.

WEBLEY (CONT'D)

Maybe they know we're alive.

COMMANDER

How?

DRIVER

They could have spotted us in the fighting?

Commander shakes his head.

COMMANDER

It's impossible to know for sure.

Beat.

WEBLEY

Then why don't we let them know for sure?

CRAVEN

And let the Germans know in the process?

WEBLEY

They already know we're here. There's nothing to lose letting the entirety of the battlefield know our location now.

They know he's right.

DRIVER

We don't have a flare gun.

MECHANIC

Maybe we don't need it.

(beat)

If we can get the crossbeam vertically upwards from the tank, it'll be high enough off the ground so that we can use it as a signal.

Commander hobbles over to the left viewing slot and peers through.

Sure enough, amongst the rotting bodies and consuming mud, the crossbeam lies in the dirt.

COMMANDER

We've already had someone die for that beam.

DRIVER

(cooly)

The alternative is that we run.

Commander takes a deep breath.

COMMANDER

Alright, let's do it. Who's most able?

He looks around his crew.

Only Webley and Craven are relatively uninjured.

One look at Craven tells him all he needs to know about him volunteering.

Commander points to Webley and Mechanic.

COMMANDER (CONT'D)

Can you two do it?

Mechanic looks to Webley, who nods in return.

Mechanic grunts as he gets to his feet, rubbing the shrapnel wounds on his chest.

MECHANIC

We can do it.

HUSH

What'll we attach to the top?

Commander thinks for a moment.

COMMANDER

There should be a Union Jack clipped to the roof. That'll do.

Driver opens the exit hatch above him.

Mechanic and Webley make their way towards it.

DRIVER

Keep your heads down. If you can see either trench you're not low enough.

Both of them nod.

MECHANIC
(to Webley)
Ready?

Webley nods.

WEBLEY
Let's get it over with.

One after the other they clamber out of the tank.

Commander stays at the window, watching them.

They stay on the tank roof for a moment.

The sounds of their boots across the roof.

With a grunt they drop down into the crater making towards the crossbeam.

They're both laser focused, almost hugging the ground.

But before they get to the crossbeam, Mechanic stops.

He spots Gear Operator's body, strewn across the ground mutilated by bullet wounds, rotting, flies delighting in the roosting.

He looks to Webley.

They exchange words that we can't hear from inside the tank.

Beat.

Webley walks towards the crossbeam--

And straight past it.

COMMANDER
What's he doing?

He gets on his belly and crawls up to the edge of the crater.

He peers up for a moment.

Then slinks back down.

He says something urgently to Mechanic.

Mechanic barks back at him.

Webley appeals.

Then Mechanic follows him up the side of the crater.

COMMANDER (CONT'D)

No!

Driver makes his way beside Commander and peers through.

DRIVER

They're running.

They talk quickly--

Angrily--

Suddenly, Mechanic grabs Webley by his overalls and THROWS him down into the pit again.

Webley scrambles to his feet and attacks--

They scuffle, punches being thrown far and wide.

Webley continually tries to make his way up to the edge of the crater--

Each time, Mechanic drags him back down into the dirt--

Mechanic ROARS at him, loud enough that the crew of the tank can hear him.

MECHANIC

(furious)

He did not die for this!

Webley stays on the ground, not fighting back.

His face is slightly swollen.

Commander wipes grime off his face.

COMMANDER

Christ.

Mechanic and Webley stare at each other, furious.

Beat.

Mechanic extends a hand.

Webley takes it.

Mechanic hauls him to his feet.

Without a word they make their way to the crossbeam, taking an end each and hauling it over to the tank.

Mechanic climbs on top of the tank as Webley feeds the crossbeam up to him.

Driver clambers back over to his seat and looks through the exit hatch--

A bullet WHIZZES past Mechanic's head, missing him by a few inches--

He drops to the ground--

MECHANIC

Shit!

Beat.

WEBLEY

You good?

Mechanic gathers his breath.

MECHANIC

I'm good.

Keeping careful care to stay low, he grabs the cross beam then starts jamming it between the treads of the tank.

Webley mounts the tank as well, helping him hoist it up.

The sound of Webley's footsteps towards the side of the tank.

Beat.

Through the exit latch, we can see him returning to the crossbeam, the UNION JACK in hand.

He ties the dirty torn flag to the cross beam as Mechanic raises it above the crater.

They take a few steps back.

Their mast stands proud.

Driver looks up at it and talks in a low voice to Commander.

DRIVER

What's braver? To run when you know
you can or stay behind until you
can do the same and follow orders
of a man you disagree with?

Mechanic slides back into the exit hatch.

Commander rushes over to him--

COMMANDER
Did he try to run?

Beat.

MECHANIC
It's sorted.

Mechanic climbs back to his position without another word.

Webley moves back to the exit latch--

BANG BANG BANG--

A quick burst of machine gun fire from the German lines--

Webley ducks--

As the Union Jack is torn apart by the gunfire.

Webley slides back into the tank.

INT. FRAY BENTOS - NIGHT

Commander sits at his station examining his leg.

Everyone else has fallen asleep.

Even Craven, who dutifully stays by his friend.

Everyone's covered in dirt, blood, sweat and mechanical fluids.

The sporadic potshots from trench to trench punctuate the silence.

Commander cracks open the exit latch a few inches.

The mast still stands, but the flag has been shredded.

Behind the rolling clouds, distant explosions light them like thunder.

The rain hits Driver in the face.

He closes the latch and wipes his face.

It's not water, it's blood.

He cracks open the latch again--

From the clouds, a tempest of blood swirls around the battlefield, painting the horror crimson.

He closes the latch shut, knowing it must be in his head.

It must be.

By the engine, the men have pooled their guns together.

With a quiet grunt, Commander moves towards them.

Eight revolvers. Only three seem to have bullets left.

One rifle. One bullet in the chamber.

A few steel levers.

He starts to count a small pile of bullets--

THUMP.

It was faint, but he definitely heard something.

Stopping counting, he rises to his feet, grabbing one of the revolvers and moves to the Driver seat, shaking him awake.

Driver looks at him with a finger over his lips, motioning upwards. He stays quiet and listens.

Rain on the steel beast.

Stray bullets.

Mortars...

THUMP.

He heard it for certain this time.

Just outside the tank.

He scrambles up to his seat and peers out into the darkness.

He can't see anything.

Hush slowly wakes. The moment he notices Commander's face and the gun in his head, he becomes alert.

HUSH

What is it?

Driver shushes him.

Beat.

Driver urgently points to the weapons pile.

Hush slowly moves over and grabs the rifle.

DRIVER
(whispering)
Wake them up.

Hush nods.

One by one he wakes up the men, shushing them.

Mechanic rises and moves beside them.

MECHANIC
(whispering)
What is it?

DRIVER
Something's outside.

MECHANIC
You're sure?

Beat.

COMMANDER
We're sure.

The men stay to the ground wary, eyeing Commander skeptically.

Commander doesn't move a muscle, only his eyes scanning the darkness.

His irises grow...

THUMP--

The men all heard it--

It was at the back of the tank--

A WHISPER from outside the tank.

Craven, furthest to the back of the tank looks to where the sound came from--

And dread falls onto his face.

CRAVEN
They're going for the fuel tank.

Panic spreads through the men like wildfire--

Commander shoots a look to Driver--

COMMANDER

Go!

Driver WRENCHES open the exit latch--

Three German soldiers POINT GUNS at him--

They're taken by surprise--

He FIRES--

He catches one of them--

And pulls their rifles down into the tank--

In the scuffle, they PULL HIM OUT OF THE TANK--

COMMANDER (CONT'D)

STOP THEM!

Hush LAUNCHES into action, sprinting to the exit latch--

Climbing up...

And we do too.

EXT. FRAY BENTOS - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

We free ourselves from the claustrophobia of the tank--

Hush scrambles onto the top of the tank--

But not before a boot SMASHES him in the face--

He rolls onto the roof of the tank--

Clambers to his feet--

And clocks the situation.

At least ten GERMAN SOLDIERS clad in black have scaled the tank.

At the back of the tank, one in particular lays an **EXPLOSIVE CHARGE** on the fuel tank.

Hush goes to shout--

But is immediately CLOCKED in the face once more by an enemy.

As the rest of the crew clamber outside the tank, Hush rolls off the side--

And face first into the mud.

The soldier that attacked him moves away towards the fuel tank.

Hush scrambles for a revolver on one of the many dead bodies around the tank and screams at the top of his lungs--

HUSH
FUEL TANK!

An enemy soldier moves to the edge of the tank--

Raises his pistol towards Hush--

AIMS--

With a ROAR, Mechanic TACKLES into the soldier, hurtling him down to the mud--

Hush immediately pounces on top of him--

Aiming his revolver--

The soldier SWATS it away into the mud and sticks his thumbs in Hush's eyes, attempting to GOUGE THEM OUT.

The enemy soldier's eyes flare in fear, not rage.

Hush manages to push him off--

The enemy falls to his back--

Glances over--

To a revolver, no more than ten feet away.

Hush sees it too.

The enemy soldier rises to his feet and DASHES over--

Hush hot on his heels--

Five feet away--

Hush kneels down to a body to grab a KNIFE--

Two feet away--

The enemy reaches down to grab it--

Hush TACKLES him to the ground--

Then RIPS the enemy's calf straight open, SAWING the knife through the muscle, cleaving and mutilating tendons--

The enemy SCREAMS in pure terror and pain.

Hush drops the knife and crawls away from what he's done.

The soldier is undoubtedly crippled for life.

He doesn't get long to dwell on it--

BANG!

On top of the tank, Mechanic and Driver brawl with three other enemy soldiers--

Each time someone tries to draw their pistol, it's knocked away--

They fight dirty--

Nothing's choreographed, each punch is wild, most missing, more harmful to the attacker than the defender--

They kick, grab, spit, claw and bite--

Mechanic brings one of them to the ground, STRANGLING them--

Driver grabs a rock and SMASHES it into the soldier's head, spraying them with blood.

Once--

Twice--

Three times--

A demonic look taking over his eyes--

The soldier's face pulp--

Commander, and Craven have made a beeline for the fuel tank--

BANG!

The bullet BARELY MISSES Commander's ear--

They glance up--

More enemies are pouring into the crater--

They look for any cover, moving around the fuel tank--

Immediately piling onto the few enemy soldiers at the fuel tank--

But they're losing badly, getting beat within an inch of their life--

Webley pops his head out of the exit hatch with the rifle.

He aims at the fresh troops pouring into the crater--

And fires--

He strikes one in the leg--

But he doesn't have time to load another shot as his rifle is KICKED away by a German on top of the tank--

Who raises his crowbar to swing downwards--

Webley braces himself--

Before the German's neck EXPLODES outwards--

Showering Webley in blood--

Followed by an almighty BOOM that CRACKS across the battlefield.

Driver glances to where it came from.

The British trenches.

It's too far to tell--

But there may just be the glint of a sniper scope.

DRIVER

They're helping us!

Hush stands over the body of the man he mutilated, his pistol barrel smoking.

He stays sedentary for a moment, but upon hearing what Driver said, he runs to the fuel tank--

Where Craven and Commander are being beaten within an inch for their life while one last soldier applies the explosive.

Craven is blocking himself from the beating--

But Commander seems to be taking it, curling into a fetal position--

Taking a brief moment, Hush raises his knife--

And lunges at the soldier applying the explosives.

He BUTCHERS him like a madman, each stab seemingly amplifying the maddened look in his eye.

This is not glory.

This is utter, terrible, gruesome barbarity.

Mechanic drops down too and HURLS one of the enemy soldiers back above the crater--

Where he is TORN apart by gunfire--

Webley tosses up one of the revolvers to Driver and takes one for himself--

They unload the rest of their ammunition into the fresh troops.

They kill none, but injure them badly.

They cough up terrible amounts of blood--

One GERMAN SOLDIER WAILS in pain, more beast than man.

Webley takes a brief moment to look over the chaos.

The tank is quite literally surrounded by bodies.

He can't see Gear Operator's body anymore.

Most infested by maggots and flies.

The longer he looks the more his skin becomes more pale--

As he leans over the side of the tank and vomits into the mud.

Driver doesn't notice, making for the fuel tank.

Where the fight seems to have ended.

Among the dead bodies, Hush lies in the mud, drenched in blood.

Commander and Craven are beaten very badly, bleeding wounds over their faces.

They slowly make their way to their feet and move to Mechanic--

Who is pinning a German Soldier's neck to the ground with his boot, stomping on his windpipe.

CRAVEN

Stop.

Mechanic doesn't. He's too carried away. A terrible bloodlust in his eyes.

Craven looks to Commander and Hush, both despondent.

Then back to Mechanic.

And for once, his voice is firm and authoritative.

CRAVEN (CONT'D)

Stop it.

Mechanic takes a beat before he seems to come back to his senses.

He slowly lifts his boot.

CRAVEN (CONT'D)

Let's preserve some humanity.

HUMANITY, a young German soldier, 16, catches his breath, holding his purple neck.

He looks up to the crew of the Fray Bentos.

Beaten, bloodied, and half-way to madness.

With his regaining breath he repeats the same word over and over.

HUMANITY

Danke... Danke... Danke...

MECHANIC

He's the enemy.

CRAVEN

He's a human being.

MECHANIC

A German.

CRAVEN

A boy. Like me. Like...

Mechanic understands immediately, backing off, quiet.

Driver jumps down and looks Humanity closely in the eye.

Humanity stays stone silent.

DRIVER

What're we gonna do with him?

Webley comes from around the side.

He draws his pistol--

Then falters as he sees the looks on everyone's faces.

Then laughs.

WEBLEY

So we can validate a massacre, but
not a single killing?

His laughter turns to frustration then anger.

WEBLEY (CONT'D)

(delirious)

This doesn't make any FUCKING
SENSE!

Driver watches him carefully until he holsters his pistol.

He gives one more look to Humanity, before turning his back
on him to the rest of the crew.

Specifically to Commander and Craven who are more fleshy
wounds than untouched skin.

DRIVER

Can you walk?

Craven nods, wincing as he moves around a little.

But Driver isn't satisfied.

DRIVER (CONT'D)

(to Commander)

Commander?

Commander slowly gets to his feet.

He takes a sharp intake of breath as he straightens his body
out.

Then nods, silent.

Driver looks at him briefly with concern before turning to
Hush.

But he doesn't say a thing to him. Hush seems to have
completely withdrawn.

Driver talks to all of them, but only Craven and Mechanic seem to be listening.

DRIVER (CONT'D)

The good news is home base seems to know we're alive.

MECHANIC

The mast?

Driver shrugs.

DRIVER

Maybe. Or the gunfire from any of the skirmishes.

He gives a reluctant look to Commander.

CRAVEN

(grim realization)

That means we'll stay. We can stand our ground.

Webley listens in.

He, Mechanic, Craven and Driver all look to Commander, expecting the worst.

A long beat as Commander thinks.

He takes his revolver and opens the cylinder.

Empty.

COMMANDER

We don't have any ammunition do we?

No one speaks up.

A beat.

DRIVER

Assuming there'll be more assaults... It'll be suicide. They're all watching us over in our trench.

(beat)

If they watch us resist they'll think us heroes. It'll be suicide, but they'll think us heroes.

He's matter-of-fact and doesn't seem overjoyed at the idea.

Commander hobbles over to Humanity, watching him.

They stare at each other for a long time.

He moves over to the fuel tank.

Hush looks up at him, surprised, as if he didn't realize he had company.

Commander examines him, then to his head wound which has become infected.

Commander looks over each of his men, examining each of them carefully.

Mechanic's torn chest.

Craven's gaunt skull.

Driver's limp arm.

Webley's oncoming madness.

His own corrupted leg.

Beat.

COMMANDER

We run.

A silent beat.

EXT. NO MAN'S LAND - DAWN

Humanity stands by the explosive charge, fiddling with the wires.

The men huddle by the edge of the crater.

Waiting.

Dawn is breaking.

They shiver in the rain.

They're conserving energy, but not closing their eyes.

They might not open again if they do.

Commander watches Humanity.

Humanity whispers a quiet prayer to himself, clutching a crucifix around his neck.

After a moment, the rain begins to falter.

Then it stops.

Commander looks up at the sky.

Just beyond the horizon, the rim of the sun starts to rise.

The light hits his eyes.

For a brief moment...

Silence.

BANG!

A shot from the German trenches--

Then an all out barrage of gunfire begins from both sides.

Commander quickly kneels down and talks with Driver, Webley, Hush, Craven and Mechanic.

COMMANDER

We go one by one while they're
distracted. Keep crawling and don't
stop until you get to the trench.

(beat)

Crawl until you can't keep
crawling, then crawl some more.

They nod.

Beat.

CRAVEN

What order?

COMMANDER

Whatever you'd like.

(beat)

But I'm last.

DRIVER

Why?

COMMANDER

(resolute)

Leaders eat last.

Driver keeps eye contact with him.

In that brief moment they seem to have some sort of understanding.

CRAVEN
I'll go first.

Commander nods.

COMMANDER
God help you.

Craven takes off his pack and sidles up to the edge of the crater, getting onto his belly.

CRAVEN
He can try.

With a deep breath, he sets off, slow, keeping his nose to the mud.

Gunfire swoops over head, but nothing hits him yet.

Webley psyches himself up.

WEBLEY
See you in hell.

And just like Craven, he starts crawling away towards the British trenches.

As Commander watches him go, he notices a thick veil of fog slowly engulf the battlefield.

Craven's crawling straight for it.

COMMANDER
This is our chance chaps.

Mechanic approaches Commander.

He looks furious.

But the anger subsides.

Both men look at each other.

Hollow, broken men.

Mechanic looks away and crawls into No Man's Land with no ceremony.

The fog's closer now, the British trench out of sight.

Hush stares off towards the ominous sky.

HUSH

I've just realized. I don't know
how many men I've killed.

A long beat.

Driver and Commander stay silent.

HUSH (CONT'D)

Me and my brother used to go out in
the woods and hunt for days. Just
days with each other, the trees,
the wind, a gun and a knife. We'd
hunt, eat, rest, read, sleep and
hunt again. 'Quiet' he'd always say
as I tried to interrupt him when he
was reading. 'This line's good' he
said. He loved Shakespeare.

(mockingly)

*'Once more unto the breach, dear
friends, once more; Or close the
wall up with our English dead. In
peace there's nothing so becomes a
man as modest stillness and
humility'*

A few deep breaths and he crawls out onto the battlefield
too.

Craven and Webley have been enveloped by the fog.

Commander turns over the locket in his pocket once more.

Driver takes a long look at Commander, clocking the nervous
tick.

A long beat.

Then finally, after all this time, Driver's stoicism finally
breaks.

His face crumples as he can't help the tears falling,
breathing ragged and body shaking.

Commander embraces him and doesn't say a word.

Two men in hell.

Humanity watches with mournful eyes.

After a few moments, he recovers somewhat.

DRIVER

If I make it, I'll tell her what
you did.

Beat.

COMMANDER

Same to you.

Driver shakes his hand firmly.

No more words needed, he falls to his belly and crawls into
No Man's Land.

But as Commander watches him go, the fog has enveloped
everything apart from the crater.

Commander slumps to the ground.

He runs a hand down his face, beaten and torn.

Then he examines his leg, putrid black, barely moving.

Humanity watches him from the tank.

Commander looks back.

A beat between both men.

Commander nods.

Humanity nods back, clicking something on the charge before
sprinting to the other side of the crater and crawling back
to the German trench.

Commander loosens his body.

The bomb TICKS.

He closes his eyes.

Darkness.

The sound of warfare.

The ticking of the explosives stops.

So does the gunfire.

He opens his eyes.

The fog's enveloped everything. He can barely see his own
hand in front of his face.

He's still in the crater, but he can't see the tank.

Slowly, he crawls into the deathly quiet No Man's Land.

The mud squelching beneath his boots, he drags his limp leg along.

Past mounds of bodies.

Through the fog, a beacon.

A tower of light.

He drags himself towards it--

But snags his arm on a piece of barbed wire.

He HISSSES in pain, wrenching it out of his now bleeding arm.

As he draws closer to the beacon it becomes clear it's not a light--

It's a TOWER OF FLAME.

A towering mound of bodies, immolating.

The BURNING HORSE seems to gallop past it and straight towards Commander--

He's barely able to duck out of the way as it dashes past him--

And into the fog.

He slowly brings his attention back to the mound.

Impossible to tell if they're German or British.

Commander takes a long look around himself.

Beat.

He thinks.

He grabs a stray rifle from the ground and with a great heave he gets to his feet, using the rifle as a walking stick.

He suddenly feels very very small in this wide hellscape.

And very alone.

He looks to where both trenches should be.

No gunfire.

He watches the flames burn in front of him.

Before the stench hits his nose.

COMMANDER (CONT'D)

Christ!

He recoils, covering his nose before lumbering away.

He stumbles through the fog blindly.

Far away, a SCREAM.

Commander hobbles on, panting.

He comes to the husk of a Mark IV tank.

He leans up against it, gathering his breath.

He closes his eyes once more.

But when he opens them, he isn't in No Man's Land.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - DAY

He's in a graveyard.

Thousands of unmarked graves as far as the eye can see.

A few rows ahead of him, MARGARET, the WOMAN IN HIS LOCKET, sobs before a grave, holding a POPPY over it.

Commander sees her.

His eyes go wide.

COMMANDER

Margaret!

He stumbles forward, carelessly blustering past floral dedications--

The gray sky above him SPLITS--

Rain falls.

Not normal rain.

Blood.

Commander briefly stops to wipe it off his face.

But the moment he obscures his own vision--

EXT. NO MAN'S LAND - DAWN

He's back in No Man's Land, the blood still falling down.
Commander looks wildly around.

COMMANDER
MARGARET!

A beat of silence.

Before the SCREAM through the darkness returns once more.

This time he gives it due attention.

Framed by the burning mound of bodies nearby, he lumbers towards the scream with his rifle as a walking stick.

The ground is littered with death and decay.

Horse carcasses hosting thousands of parasites.

Steel fragments from tanks and shrapnel are strewn through the wet mud, each now smeared crimson with the rain.

Eventually Commander can make out the silhouette of the screaming man taking cover behind an uprooted tree.

COMMANDER (CONT'D)
Hold on!

He hobbles as fast as he can--

But slows as he sees who it is.

GEAR OPERATOR.

He's propped up against the roots, body torn apart by the bullets from his death.

But he's very much alive, crying and screaming.

GEAR OPERATOR
COMMANDER! Oh thank God Commander,
you've got to get me out of here.

Commander slowly moves towards him, eyes wide.

GEAR OPERATOR (CONT'D)
The bastards got me...
(forced smile)
But I think I might just pull
through sir, what do you think?

Commander kneels down in front of him.

Only now does he see Gear Operator's clutching a revolver.
Pointing it at himself.

Gear Operator's teary eyes clock Commander's observation.

GEAR OPERATOR (CONT'D)
Better to die by one's own hand for
one's country than by the hands of
the...

He stops for a moment, then looks confused.

GEAR OPERATOR (CONT'D)
Commander?

Commander looks him in the eye, fear and concern.

COMMANDER
Yes?

Beat.

GEAR OPERATOR
Who were we fighting again?

Commander looks at him bewildered.

GEAR OPERATOR (CONT'D)
I can't rightly remember sir. I
just can't rightly remember.
(beat)
Do you suppose they can't remember
who they're fighting either?

Beat.

COMMANDER
We're fighting the Germans my boy.

Gear Operator nods.

GEAR OPERATOR
Ah, the Germans.
(beat)
Who are they then?

COMMANDER
Well, they're the Germans. They're
the enemy.

GEAR OPERATOR
Why?

Beat.

GEAR OPERATOR (CONT'D)
Sir?

COMMANDER
Yes?

Beat.

GEAR OPERATOR
I can't remember what my Mother
looks like sir.

A strange feeling of delirium takes hold of his face, sorrow,
laughter and confusion taking hold at once.

GEAR OPERATOR (CONT'D)
I can't tell the difference between
anyone anymore.
(beat)
I don't know who you are sir.

He slowly raises the pistol to his mutilated mouth.

GEAR OPERATOR (CONT'D)
I just want to go home--

Commander grasps the revolver, trying to pull it away--

COMMANDER
STOP! We can get you home!

Gear Operator doesn't respond, seized by something far more
primal.

They wrestle the gun--

Their fingers at the trigger--

Gear Operator's slips--

And Commander accidentally slides back the trigger.

Silence.

Commander's face ripple with horror.

COMMANDER (CONT'D)

No, no, no, no, no... I... I need help. I need help, anyone! I need help!

But as he looks to his hands.

No gun.

Indeed, as he looks to the base of the tree, Gear Operator seems to have disappeared.

He slumps against the tree.

Takes a few deep breaths.

The fog begins to lift.

The hellscape reveals itself.

Not just one burning mound of bodies, hundreds.

COMMANDER (CONT'D)

(weak)

Help...

Under a bloody sky.

Slowly, Commander's hands begin to loosen.

As his breathing slows...

And his eyes close.

FADE TO:

Darkness.

Silence.

Distant shouting.

The rumbling of wheels.

Muffled gunfire.

EXT. NO MAN'S LAND - DAWN

Commander barely opens his eyes.

Through bleary vision, he seems to be strapped to a small wooden cart, two soldiers rushing him back to the trenches.

Commander shuts his eyes again.

INT. TRENCH INFIRMARY - NIGHT

He opens them once more.

Still bleary, he's strapped to a hospital bed.

With a horrific bone saw, a NURSE is sawing THROUGH his black leg, flesh spewing, pus flowing.

He can't help but SCREAM in horror--

COMMANDER

HELP!

A DOCTOR races towards him with a syringe--

DOCTOR

God alive, did no one give him
bloody morphine?!?

The doctor rams the needle into Commander's arm--

Soon his eyes slide down once more.

INT. TRENCH INFIRMARY - NIGHT

He opens them once more.

He's on a bench.

The entire foundations shake as a mortar hits.

Beside him, a doctor.

DOCTOR

Commander? Can you hear me?

Commander looks at him blankly.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

Commander?

COMMANDER

(blank)

Help.

The Doctor looks him over once more.

He takes a breath.

DOCTOR
Commander? Can you tell me what
squadron you were part of?

Silence.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
How about the name of your unit?
The Fray Bentos? Come now, you're
heroes, you must know their names.

Silence.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
Their names Commander, tell me any
of their names.

Commander takes a breath...

COMMANDER
(blank)
Help.

The Doctor sighs deeply before standing.

DOCTOR
Just rest now, alright?

He stands.

Commander utters the same word over and over again, quietly
and monotone.

COMMANDER
Help, help, help...

A Nurse talks to the Doctor.

The Doctor shakes his head.

We watch Commander in his chair.

COMMANDER (CONT'D)
Help, help, help, help, help...

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. ASYLUM LIVING ROOM - DAY

A well kept asylum.

Commander sits in an armchair, staring out the window at a
tall strong oak.

A crude prosthetic has been fitted to his leg.

COMMANDER

Help...

He looks a little older, but not much.

Beside him, on two chairs is a couple.

MARGARET and a MAN, holding her hand.

Margaret looks at Commander with terrible sorrow.

Her wavering hand hovers over his.

She brushes it with hers.

On it, an ENGAGEMENT RING.

Commander looks down as the metal touches his skin.

Then back up to her.

For a moment she looks hopeful.

Beat.

COMMANDER (CONT'D)

Help, help, help...

The Man whispers something in her ear.

She nods, tearfully, and stands.

Commander doesn't watch, but his cries turn from whispers into screams.

COMMANDER (CONT'D)

(getting louder)

Help, help help help HELP HELP HELP

A nurse quickly ushers Margaret and her Husband out of the room as another dashes over to Commander and quickly injects him with a syringe.

Soon, his cries mellow out, growing quieter until he loses consciousness.

COMMANDER (CONT'D)

Help...

Before darkness takes him once more.

INT. ASYLUM LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - 1939

Much older now, Commander sits exactly where he was before, staring out at the tree.

The dying tree.

The asylum is empty. Decrepit. Dirty.

Flies buzz around molding roof tiles.

Something CRIMSON drips between them.

Smashed light bulbs.

Only two souls here now.

Commander's gown is stained with food and excrement.

Beside him, Driver, also older, in a shabby suit and tie.

He looks at Commander with a deep sadness.

DRIVER

How are you?

Beat.

COMMANDER

Help, help, help, help, help...

His voice isn't strong now. It's weak, frazzled...

Old.

Driver smiles sadly.

DRIVER

Yeah. Not too bad.

He gives his arm a shake.

DRIVER (CONT'D)

To this day the bloody thing gives me a damn hard time. Especially bad at Winter.

Beat.

They watch outside the window.

Scattered birdsong. No birds.

DRIVER (CONT'D)
Heard Margaret's doing well.
(beat)
She visit often?

COMMANDER
Help...

Driver nods.

DRIVER
She hasn't forgotten. I'm sure she
thinks of you every day.

A long beat. He doesn't believe it.

DRIVER (CONT'D)
You still got the locket?

COMMANDER
Help, help, help, help, help...

Driver looks him up and down.

With a grimace, he reaches into Commander's pockets.

Not finding anything, he searches the bedside cupboard.

He opens the top one, finding only a gargantuan SPIDER,
curled into a corner, watching him.

He slams it shut.

DRIVER
Bastards must have taken it, no
bloody dignity.

He sinks back down into his seat.

A long beat.

Another look out the window.

The sun seems strangely larger than usual.

Intense. Rippling. Closer to red than yellow.

DRIVER (CONT'D)
My... My son's been conscripted.
We've went and got in another war.

COMMANDER
Help...

DRIVER
Don't suppose this'll be the last
one either.

Driver looks him up and down, shaking his head.

DRIVER (CONT'D)
He'll be forgotten too.
(beat)
We all will.

His despair turns to pure, visceral, vicious hatred.

DRIVER (CONT'D)
For King and fucking country.

SMASH CUT TO BLACK:

COMMANDER (V.O.)
Help, help, help, help, help...

His cries continue as...

TITLES:

*"The old Lie; Dulce et Decorum est
Pro patria mori."*

-Wilfred Owen