

OUT OF BATTLE

scena for tenor, baritone and piano

by

Trevor Hold

(Late Autumn: sometime in the late Middle Ages,  
somewhere in England. Two soldiers, escaped  
from battle, are resting in a barn.)

1.

DUET. 1

BOTH

Who won? Who knows?  
Who knows? Who cares?  
The food is bad and so's the pay.  
The end's the same whichever way.  
You're treated like a piece of dirt  
Whether you win or lose.

1ST SOLDIER

What's Victory to us?

2ND SOLDIER

I lost an eye in victory.  
I lost a brother the selfsame day.

BOTH

And when the dices fall the other way  
We end up in a billet  
Snug in the arms of a cosy whore!  
There's often a sting in Victory  
And compensation in Defeat.

It's all much of a muchness,  
A job of work to do,  
As a cobbler's paid to mend a shoe  
Or a priest to say a prayer.  
What matters is that we're still alive,  
Have stayed at the right end of a pike,  
Have come out of battle with nothing more  
Than cuts and bruises.

There's no fun in being dead,  
Battered down in the cold, cold clay.  
There'll be time enough to look Death in the eye  
Some other day.

Meanwhile we must wait around in this stinking hovel,  
Fadge with cold and boredom  
Till the dawn breaks through.

2.

SOLILOQUY 1

1ST SOLDIER

There's three things make my pulse run fast:  
A beautiful woman -- drink -- and good company.  
But most of all -- a woman.

I love them all:  
The red-haired, the raven-haired,  
The auburn-haired, the golden-haired,  
The scrawny, the brawny,  
The pert, the coy,  
The lady and the dairymaid:  
They're all the same beneath the skin.

I knew a lady once,  
A thoroughbred was she.  
(I shan't mention names  
For fear of embarrassment.)  
She called me in one day  
When her husband was awa-  
Gone off a-hunting, so she said.  
"Come in, young man, I've a job for you to do."  
What her game was, well I knew,  
But I played along with her.  
(What could I lose?)  
So it was, "Yes, madam!" and "No, madam!"  
(And three bags full, madam!)  
And "Glad to be of help, madam!"

(The job was done in a trice --  
It doesn't take long to oil a lock.)  
And then we came to the nub of the game;  
She played it all so coy:  
All hoity-toity-like.  
"Oh no!" she cried,  
"Don't be so uncouth!  
I've never been...  
Ooh! ooh! ooh!"  
(That soon stopped her mouth!)

But give me a simple dairymaid any time.  
None of your stop-go there,  
None of your coy hypocrisy:  
Two minds, two bodies in one accord.

Ah! what would I give for a plump young maiden now!

3.

DUET 2

BOTH

It's been a bloody day,  
We'll not mince matters.  
Let's hope that we don't see many of its like.

We reached the farm at midnight,  
Demanded food and shelter;  
But the fool of a farmer tried to resist,  
The fool! The fool!  
We slit his throat like a hag.

1ST SOLDIER  
2ND SOLDIER  
BOTH

Then some of our soldiers  
Rounded up the womenfolk,  
Dragged them to the barns...  
I don't agree with that!  
I'd have none of it!  
But war is war...

It's been a squalid day,  
Nothing to boast about.  
Let's hope that we don't see many of its like.

2ND SOLDIER

We fired the house as we left  
And marched all morning  
Over bog and moorland.

1ST SOLDIER  
2ND SOLDIER  
1ST SOLDIER  
BOTH

Mud to the thighs, water in our boots,  
Through scrub and heather  
Clothes shredded to pieces.  
Nothing could be more dismal,  
Nothing more dispiriting.

1ST SOLDIER  
BOTH

At noon we met with a band of ruffians,  
The same who had plundered our baggage-train.  
A shabby trick, quite without principle.  
We made short work of them.  
Vengeance is fine! saith the Lord.

It's been a savage day,  
No doubt of it.  
Let's hope that we don't see many of its like.

1ST SOLDIER  
2ND SOLDIER  
1ST SOLDIER  
BOTH

We later came upon a greasy alderman...  
Trying to slink past us in an ox-cart...  
Hidden beneath some straw...  
He screamed like a rabbit when we caught him.  
We prised him out and pinned his pelt  
Like a stoat to the nearest tree.

2ND SOLDIER  
1ST SOLDIER

A shabby profiteer!  
I hate their guts!

BOTH

As night drew in  
And the cold grew bitter  
We heard that enemy soldiers  
Were on our trail,  
So we split up into pairs for safety  
To lie up till morning.

It's been a sickening day,  
Let's try to forget it...

4.

SOLILOQUY 2

2ND SOLDIER

There's a strange quietness in the air tonight.  
No owl hoots,  
No cat wails.  
Just snores and grunts from the dreams  
Of a sleeping soldier.

The earth has sucked the colours from the sky,  
From tree and hill, from everything.

Not a star twinkle,  
Not a light shines.

The night is as black as a raven's wing.

O God! will morning ever come?  
How can we be certain of the dawn?  
Could not the darkness remain forever?  
A dawn has broken every day,  
But - who knows? -  
This might be the endless night  
That the wise men predicted.

It is dark.  
I am cold and hungry.  
I am afraid...

5.

DUET 3

BOTH

Strange sounds echo through the darkness,  
Owl-like, but not of any owl.  
Crouched in this hovel,  
Unable to sleep for cold,  
We wait, bored and hungry,  
For dawn, or death.  
Like cornered rats  
We watch for the unexpected movement,  
For stifled cough or crack of twig.  
Wait for the sudden thrust of knife beneath the ribs....

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Music completed: February 1982

Trevor Hold

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# OUT OF BATTLE

scena for tenor, baritone and piano

Grevor Hold  
(1982)


## DUET 1


Tenor 

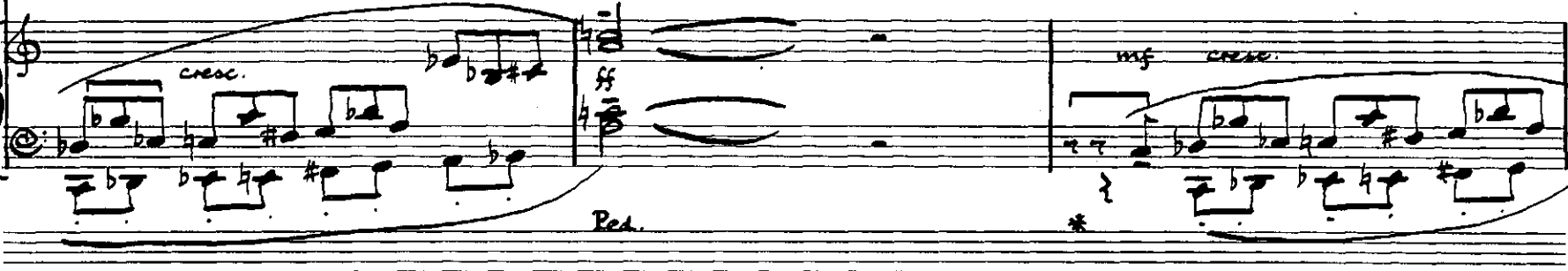
baritone 

FAST: 

piano 

Tenor 

baritone 

piano 

Tenor 

baritone 

piano 

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treated ... like a piece of dirt Whether you win or lose. ...

Red \* Red. \* Red. \* Red. \* (no ped.)

Detailed description: This system contains the first two lines of music. The top line is the vocal melody in G major, with lyrics: "treated ... like a piece of dirt Whether you win or lose. ...". The piano accompaniment is in the left hand, featuring a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes. Pedal markings are present below the piano part: "Red", "\* Red.", "\* Red.", "\* Red.", and "\* (no ped.)".

... What's Vic-tor-y to us? ... to us? ...

dim. --- (mf) ---

Detailed description: This system contains the third and fourth lines of music. The vocal melody continues with lyrics: "... What's Vic-tor-y to us? ... to us? ...". The piano accompaniment continues with similar rhythmic patterns. A dynamic marking "dim. --- (mf) ---" is written above the vocal line. A blue watermark "Preview File Only" is visible across the system.

... lose an eye in

(2) I mf

Detailed description: This system contains the fifth and sixth lines of music. The vocal melody continues with lyrics: "... lose an eye in". The piano accompaniment continues. A dynamic marking "mf" is present. A blue watermark "Preview File Only" is visible across the system.