

THE PROFESSOR - MALE

The professor is visiting the grave of his brother who died in the Great War. He enters stage left, as though seeking a particular grave and then stops by one on stage.

Ah there you are.

he pauses.

It's taken me a lifetime...

Shakes head- that's not right.

No.

Pause

I wanted to...no that's not right....

Another frustrated pause.

I'm here because.... no, that's not right either...

He's starting to get a bit tetchy- with himself. The words just aren't flowing.

This isn't going as I had hoped. Perhaps I shouldn't have come here. Perhaps I left it too late.

He gathers herself together, goes to leave and turns to say one final goodbye. What comes out is a stream of consciousness- an outpouring of thoughts and feelings that have been build up for half a century.

You see, it's been... forty years since we were last together, but I can still remember your smell. You'd cut yourself shaving that morning and it hadn't quite healed. We walked to the railway station together, talking about your wedding plans and what I was and wasn't to talk about in my best man's speech. I was excited and proud that my big brother was going off to fight in the Great War and I was convinced that you were going to defeat the enemy single handed. I never entertained the possibility that you would never come back. But here you are in this foreign field with hundreds of others who never came back; many of whom are long forgotten. It's sad, yes, very sad.

He looks around and reflects.

They told me that you were liked, respected, trusted loved even by the men under your command and that you died storming a machine gun nest that would have decimated an entire platoon. I gather that one man- a private, risked his own life to bring you back to British held territory and then held you in his arms as you left this world. I didn't hear that officially of course; I learned all this from one of your men who I met at a memorial service some years later. All we ever received from the army was the official message. It came in the form of a scroll, if I recall, signed by the King with his own rubber stamp. Which was nice.

He sits.

I had hoped that when I finally came here that I'd be able to tell you that your sacrifice had made a difference, that the world emerged from that cataclysm a better place and that mankind and learned to be at ease with itself and resolve its differences without bloodshed. Alas it was not to be. Within two short decades of the end of the Great War, another dark cloud fell across the world as a madman let slip the dogs of war. It was war on an industrial scale, with great machines of death screaming across the skies while innocent people who did not fulfil his vision of perfection were massacred for no reason other than their creed, colour or being born different.

Hhe calms down after getting agitated!

I knew that somehow, in my own way that I had to prevent evil from winning. I had to do my bit. And I have in my own way. I've sought out wrongdoing at every turn and pursued those who do terrible things. Seemingly the most unremarkable people are capable of the most dreadful acts, driven by all manner of desires; envy, greed, fear, jealousy, love. I never understand how love - such a beautiful natural feeling can drive one person to harm another. But it does and they do, and I do my best to stop them. Now I can

hear you now, complaining that I shouldn't be doing all this, that no good will come of it and it'll only get me in to trouble. Perhaps. People do regard me as somewhat of interfering old codger- usually after they've been arrested.

I've never felt in any danger during my .. exploits. I've always known that you were looking after me during all the years since you left us. I have always felt you near. You were my big brother and always will be. But I am an old man now in the twilight of my years. Oh I have had a good life so you should not feel any remorse or recriminations for what happened.

Believe me I do not regret one day, one day of the life I have had. But, as I said, I am old and soon we will be reunited, together again in eternity. But I will go to the grave knowing that I was true to my beliefs and I hope, I proved to you that you were not mistaken in yours.

Goodbye William. I can go now.