

Armistice Day

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a short play

by

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“You're watching people fighting
You're watching people losing
On Armistice Day”

- **“Armistice Day”, Midnight Oil**

Cast

PHIL a Korean War Veteran, 70s

KENNY a young man, 20s

Setting

War Memorial in a large city

Time

Armistice Day. Dawn.

ARMISTICE DAY

War Memorial. Dawn.

PHIL, a War Veteran, dressed in suit and with medals pinned on his chest, stands in front of the Memorial in silent reflection.

KENNY, a young man in battle fatigues, approaches. He looks at **PHIL**.
Pause.

KENNY: How many did you kill ?

PHIL DOES NOT RESPOND.

KENNY: Hey Grand-dad, I said how many did you kill ?

PHIL: Pardon me.

KENNY: Your hearing aid on the blink ? How many did you kill ? You know ? Wogs, Niggers, Gooks. How many did you blow away ?

PAUSE.

PHIL: I'm not sure.

KENNY: Come on grand dad. Don't be modest. You're among friends now. How many ? Five, ten, fifty. Got some nice medals there, must've killed a few.

PHIL: I was given these for acts of bravery.

KENNY: Exactly. Killing the enemy.

PHIL: Saving the lives of my fellow soldiers.

KENNY: Yeah, by killing the enemy.

PAUSE. PHIL TURNS AWAY.

KENNY: And what we're you packing ? Semi-automatic, automatic. SK - 47. Or did you pack the heavy artillery ? The large calibre. The big boys. Cause some real havoc.

PHIL: They carried them.

KENNY: Who ?

PHIL: The enemy. They carried SK- 47s.

KENNY: That's right. Russian Assault rifles. They had them. Bloody gooks. Gunned you down. Bet you lost a few eh ? In your own Company. Saw a few of your best mates picked off before your two eyes. Held them in your arms as they struggled for their last breath.

PHIL: I lost a few. We all did.

KENNY: Too right. Damn shame. Bloody shame.

KENNY PULLS OUT A BLACK TEXTA. HE OFFERS IT TO PHIL.

KENNY: Will you sign my fatigues ? Add your initials to my personal roll of honour.

HE SHOWS PHIL HIS SHIRT SLEEVE WHICH HAS A FEW AUTOGRAPHS ALREADY SIGNED. PHIL LOOKS AT HIM.

KENNY: But only if you've actually done the business. Only if you've put a few Gooks down. Every man who's sign this shirt is a certifiable Gook killer.

PHIL: You want me to sign your shirt ?

KENNY: If you've done the business. And I'd say looking at you - you have. I mean, you're talking to a fan. You and me, grand dad. We're on the same side. See, what I reckon is you done a good job right. Went to New Guinea, France, Africa -

PHIL: I served in Korea.

KENNY: Exactly Korea. The forgotten war. You went there and you did 'em in. Blew 'em away. Repelled the invaders.

PHIL: It was an internal conflict. We were defending the South.

KENNY: By killing Gooks. And now, what are they doing ? Letting 'em in. Inviting them, free of charge. Our guests. Fucking tragedy, national fucking tragedy. These gooks who you fought so bravely against are now destroying our country - from the inside.

PHIL: I fought in the war for young people like you.

KENNY: That's what I'm saying.

PHIL: I fought so they could have life.

KENNY: And I'm grateful. But now, you're great victory is being

tarnished. The gooks are taking over. So I say bundle them all up. Smoke 'em up out of their little China towns, their little rickshaws - put 'em all on a boat and send 'em back where they come from. Eh, punch a few holes in the side first though, so it sinks on the way. Service to humanity.

PHIL: I fought for the people of South Korea.

KENNY: That's right - the good Gooks. But we ain't got none of them. They're all bad Gooks - ones we got here. Time to mobilise. A call to arms. Show some spirit. Spirit of the Anzacs.

PAUSE.

PHIL: What did you say ?

KENNY: Spirit of the Anzacs. You know, on the beaches ? Out of the boats, charging up the hill. Machine guns whistling all around. Taking one in the shoulder but still pounding on. Higher and higher to where the Gooks were hiding in their trenches like frightened little rabbits. Something to be proud of. Something to believe in - in the middle of all this chaos. Something pure. The birth of a nation. Anzacs.

PHIL: I don't think you know what that word means ?

KENNY: I know what it stands for but. It stands for - killing Gooks !

PAUSE.

PHIL: Do you know what today is ?

KENNY: Fucking Anzac Day.

PHIL: It's Armistice Day. Not Anzac Day. Today was when the papers were signed to end the First World War.

KENNY: Fucking big mistake that. War's not over Grand-dad. War's just beginning.

PHIL: Today is when we honour the dead. We remember.

KENNY: Exactly. Remember not to let them die in vain.

PHIL MOVES OFF.

KENNY: Hey grand dad. Where you going ?

PHIL: I have nothing more to say to you.

KENNY: Hey, just remember - you fought for me.

PHIL TURNS AND FACES KENNY. PAUSE.

PHIL: We may have made a grave mistake.

KENNY: No mistake matey. You won. You fuckin' kicked their slanty little arses - and now me, and blokes like me, are carrying on the battle. Preserving the spirit. The spirit of the Anzacs.

KENNY MOVES CLOSER.

KENNY: Listen, you're a bit past it but if you're still keen for some active duty we can let you come along. Watch some Gooks going down. And the Currymunchers. They're on our list now. For what they done. To the Towers, to our friends and allies. They're going down too. They'll be praying to Allah alright.
They'll be praying to Allah for their fucking lives.

PAUSE. PHIL LOOKS AT KENNY. HE TURNS AND STARTS TO EXIT.

KENNY: Ain't you gonna sign my shirt ? Show 'em the spirit of the Anzacs.

PHIL STOPS. HE TURNS AND GOES BACK TO KENNY. HE COMES VERY CLOSE TO HIS FACE. SUDDENLY HE GRABS PHIL'S ARM AND TWISTS IT BEHIND HIS BACK.

KENNY: Hey, what's this ? Some kind of combat move. Cool.

PHIL TWISTS HARDER.

KENNY: Hey stop it Grand dad. You're hurting me. Stop it.

KENNY GOES DOWN ON TO HIS KNEES. PHIL LEANS OVER HIM.

PHIL: (SLOWLY AND DELIBERATELY) Don't- ever - use - that - word - again.

PHIL RELEASES KENNY'S ARM. KENNY SPRAWLS ON TO THE FLOOR. PHIL TURNS AND EXITS.

KENNY WATCHES HIM GO.

KENNY: Yeah ? Well fuck you too. Dropkick. Has been. Past it. Bet you

didn't kill anyone anyway. Bet you were in a fuckin' office all the war. Administration, yeah that's you. Fuckin' pencil neck. Got your medals for counting paper clips. Anzac. You ain't a fuckin' Anzac's arsehole. You don't know what killing means. But don't worry - we'll show you. We'll fuckin' show you. I can say what I like. You can't stop me.

HE STANDS AND BEGINS CHANTING.

KENNY: Anzacs. Anzacs. Anzacs.

HE CONTINUES CHANTING AS THE LIGHTS FADE.

END PLAY.