

Armistice Day

A short screenplay
By
Alex Broun

Email: abroun@bigpond.net.au

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EXT. WAR MEMORIAL. DAWN.

A suburban park at dawn on a quiet weekday.

As the sun begins to rise PHIL, a War Veteran in his late sixties, makes his way slowly through the park to a modest granite War Memorial.

He is dressed in suit, with medals pinned on his chest, and he uses an old wooden cane to help him walk.

Phil reaches the Memorial and bends down to look at some names engraved on a bronze plaque on the side.

He finds one name on the list and slowly rubs his fingers across the raised lettering.

He stands straight again then slowly makes his way to the front of the Memorial.

A small, sole wreath lies on the steps in front of the Memorial.

Phil looks down at the wreath in a moment of silent reflection.

He takes a a can of beer slowly from his coat pocket. He digs his fingers under the ring pull and opens the beer.

He pours some beer on to the steps of the Memorial next to the wreath. A beat.

He pours some more.

Suddenly there is a voice behind him.

KENNY (O.S.)
Wasting the good stuff there.

Phil turns slowly to see KENNY, a young man in battle fatigues, standing behind him, watching him.

Phil looks at him. Beat.

PHIL
Did you say something ?

KENNY
I said, you're wasting the good stuff there.

Kenny moves over to Phil.

KENNY
Should be pouring it down your mouth, not on the bloody steps.

Phil turns away.

PHIL

Just havin' a quiet beer with an
old mate.

Kenny looks down at the step, then back at Phil.

KENNY

Don't know why. Ain't gonna do him
any good.

Phil does not respond. He pour some more beer on to the step.

Kenny steps back.

KENNY

Careful grand-dad. You're getting
it on me camo's.

Beat. Kenny looks down at the medals on Phil's chest.

KENNY

So, how many ya kill ?

Again Phil does not respond.

KENNY

Hey crunchie bar, I said how many
d'ya kill ?

Phil has heard him now and is so stunned at the question, he
turns to face Kenny.

PHIL

Pardon me.

KENNY

Your hearing aid on the blink ?
(spelling out the words)
How - many - did - you - kill ?
You know ? Towelheads, Gooks,
Turks. How many did you blow away ?

Phil looks at him, unsure how to answer.

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. Killin' the enemy.

PHIL
Saving the lives of my fellow
soldiers.

KENNY
Yeah, by killin' the enemy.

Beat. Phil turns back to the Memorial. He places the beer can down, next to the wreath.

Kenny leaps up the steps now, getting between Phil and the memorial.

KENNY
And what were you packing ? Semi-
automatic, automatic. SK - 47. Or
did you pack the heavy artillery ?
The large calibre. Cause some real
havoc.

PHIL
They carried them.

KENNY
Who ?

PHIL
The enemy. They carried SK- 47s.

KENNY
That's right. Russian Assault
rifles. Bloody gooks. Gunned you
down.

Kenny kneels down, looking at the wreath.

KENNY
Bet you lost a few eh ? Saw a few
of your best mates picked off
before your eyes.

Kenny stands now, close to Phil. His tone is almost mocking.

KENNY
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 pats Phil roughly on the back.

Suddenly he pulls out a black texta from his pocket. He opens his shirt to reveal a T-shirt beneath it, which has been signed by different people.

KENNY

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

Kenny shows of some of the signatures proudly. He holds out the pen to Phil. Then he pulls it back.

KENNY

But only if you've actually done the business. Put a few Towelheads down. Every man who's sign this shirt is a certifiable killer.

PHIL

You want me to sign your shirt ?

KENNY

You bloody deaf ? That's what I said. But only if you've done the business.

Kenny leans in close to Phil. He whispers, almost conspiratorially.

KENNY

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 'em, free of charge. Our guests.

Kenny moves away now, throwing his arms wide. Yelling out at the park, the suburb, the country.

KENNY

Bloody tragedy, bloody national
tragedy. These slapheads you fought
so bravely against are now
destroying our country - from the
inside.

Phil looks at Kenny.

PHIL

I fought in the war for young
people like you.

Kenny turns and comes back to him, throwing his arms around Phil's shoulder.

KENNY

That's what I'm saying.

PHIL

I fought so you could have life.

KENNY

And I'm grateful. But now, you're
great victory is being tarnished.
The gooks are taking over.

Kenny moves away, expansive once more.

KENNY

So I say bundle 'em all up. Smoke
'em up out of their little Viet
towns, their little rickshaws - put
'em all on a boat and send 'em back
where they come from.

Kenny moves back in, punching Phil in the arm, laughing now.

KENNY

Eh, punch a few holes in the side
first though.

(mimes drowning)

Glug, glug, glug. 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.

(MORE)

KENNY (cont'd)

Show some spirit. Spirit of the Anzacs.

Phil looks at Kenny now, anger growing on his face.

PHIL

What did you say ?

KENNY

Spirit of the Anzacs. You know, on the beaches ?

Kenny moves up and down the steps now, re-enacting a battle.

We intercut quickly between different shots, angles of Kenny, creating a feeling of the speed and confusion of battle.

KENNY

Outta the boats -
 (CUT)
 charging up the hill -
 (CUT)
 Machine guns
 (CUT)
 whistling all around.
 (CUT)

Kenny mimes being shot in the shoulder.

KENNY

Taking one in the shoulder
 (CUT)
 but still pounding on -
 (CUT)
 Higher and higher -
 (CUT)
 to where the Lebos
 (CUT)
 were hiding in their trenches -
 (CUT)
 like frightened little rabbits.

We go back to a single shot of Kenny again, coming slowly towards Phil.

KENNY

Something to be proud of. To believe in - in the middle of all this chaos. Something pure. 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 - killin' Jews !

Beat. Phil fixes Kenny with a cold stare.

PHIL
Do you know what today is ?

KENNY
Bloody War Day.

PHIL
It's Armistice Day. Today was when
the papers were signed to end the
First World War.

KENNY
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 has heard more than enough. He pushes past Kenny and
heads away down the stairs.

KENNY
Hey grand dad. Where ya going ?

PHIL
I have nothing more to say to you.

KENNY
Hey, just remember - you fought for
me.

Phil turns to face Kenny. Beat.

PHIL
We may have made a grave mistake.

Kenny is stung by this.

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

Kenny moves close to Phil. He looks around, checking no one
is around.

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 goin' down. And the Towelheads. They're on our list now. For what they done. To the Towers, to our friends and allies. To 'Nulla. They're going down too.

Kenny's volume grows now, almost bragging.

KENNY

They'll be praying to Allah alright. They'll be praying to Allah for their friggin' lives.

Phil looks at Kenny. He turns once more and starts to walk away. Kenny calls after him.

KENNY

Hey ! Ain't you gonna at least sign me shirt ? Show 'em the spirit of the Anzacs.

Phil stops. Slowly he turns to face Kenny. He extends his hand.

Kenny smiles and bounds over to him.

KENNY

Alright.

Kenny holds out the texta to Phil.

Suddenly Phil grabs Kenny's arms and twists it behind Kenny's back, spinning the younger man around.

KENNY

(impressed)

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

Phil twists harder. Kenny starts to wince with the pain, his face growing red.

KENNY

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

Phil forces Kenny down on to his knees, leaning over him. Kenny is almost crying in pain.

Phil is inches from Kenny's face now.

PHIL
 (slowly and deliberately)
 Don't - ever - use - that - word -
 again.

Phil holds Kenny for one more moment, Kenny almost whimpering in pain.

Phil releases Kenny and he sprawls on the granite floor.

Phil turns and makes his way slowly away from the Memorial.

Kenny slowly gets to his knees. He watches Phil go.

KENNY
 (calling after Phil)
 Yeah ? Well up you too. Dropkick.
 Has been. Bet you didn't kill
 anyone. Bet you were in a office.
 Admin, yeah that's you. Pencil
 neck. Got your medals for counting
 paper clips.

Kenny sees the beer. He runs to it and quickly starts chugging it back.

KENNY
 Hey dickwad, I'm drinkin' your
 precious mates beer. What do you
 think of that ?

Kenny screws up the empty can now and throws it at the memorial.

Phil keeps moving slowly away, out of the park.

Kenny is furious. He kicks the wreath down the stairs.

KENNY
 Anzac. You ain't an Anzac's
 asshole. You don't know what
 killin' means. But don't worry -
 we'll show you. We'll friggin' show
 you.

Phil has now almost disappeared, out of the park and walking away down the street. Kenny screams after him.

KENNY
 I can say what I like. You can't
 stop me.

He stands on the steps, waving his arms and chanting.

KENNY
 Anzacs ! Anzacs ! Anzacs !

He continues chanting as the picture fades to black.

In black the chanting continues for several seconds:

KENNY (O.S.)
Anzacs ! Anzacs ! Anzacs !

Replaced by "Armistice Day" - Midnight Oil.

End film.