

Chronicles from the Great Uprising

Chapter 1:

Zig and More

by Marine Auriol
translated by Sarah Françoise

The action takes place over ten years.

Characters:

Zig *8 or 9 at the start of the play*

More *20 at the start of the play*

By the end of the play, both are ten years older. Their clothes are the same, but with time have become worn and ill fitting.

Soldier 1

Soldier 2

Luke *early thirties*

Hugga *an old man with a walking stick*

PART ONE

Scene One

A minefield, mist, barbed wire, and every now and again, in the distance, the barking of dogs, men and machines. Shadows pass silently, like aging ghosts, avoiding the field. It is almost dark, almost nighttime. Whispers.

Enter Zig. He is 8 or 9. He is dirty, scratched, and wearing an eye patch. He enters the minefield, at first cautiously, attentive to every sound. Then, gaining in confidence, he moves a little faster. He jumps from left to right, laughing, as though he were playing hopscotch. Suddenly we hear the sound of a landmine that has been triggered. Zig almost loses his balance, finds it again and stops still. Minutes pass. The barking has stopped. Silence all around. All you can hear is the panting of Zig, who dares not move.

Time passes.

Three soldiers enter. They are carrying rifles and big rucksacks. They do not see Zig.

Soldier 1 They must have crossed the line yesterday.

Soldier 2 I wouldn't be so sure. Not with all those squadders hanging around the place.

Soldier 1 If I had the chance, I'd kill them all.

Soldier 2 Whose spot is this, anyway?

More It's mine.

Soldier 2 Ok. Good luck.

Soldiers 1 and 2 exit, leaving More behind. His back is turned to the minefield. He takes a cigarette out of a packet and puts it in his mouth.

Beat.

More You got a light, kid?

More turns to Zig and waits. Zig searches his pocket and takes out a small box of matches, which he throws to More.

More Thank you.

More lights up and inhales deeply. He remains silent. Zig watches him.

More Been there long, kid?

Zig remains silent.

More Are you dumb as well as blind?

Zig remains silent.

More Don't worry about the gun, that canteen'll finish you off. I just want to know how long I've got to wait. They say the toughest one held out for two weeks. Two weeks without eating or drinking, or sleeping, both feet stuck on his canteen. The lads say that in the end -I mean, when he couldn't keep still any longer and he blew up- there wasn't much of him left to pick up.

Silence.

Zig Two hours.

More What?

Zig I've been here two hours.

More It's only the beginning then. We could be here for a long time. They say you're trained for this, to stand still until help comes. Problem is, help won't come in your case.

Zig Why not?

More Because of me. It's my spot here. Right here where I'm standing. And they train us too, to stay still, eye on the visor waiting for a squadder's head to come into the firing line. And bang. I can wait a long time too. As long as it takes. Who knows, maybe we'll both beat the record. Are you up for that? Because if you think you're gonna blow up before two weeks, tell me now. It's not worth me watching you die slowly if I can't beat the record with you.

Zig What will you do if I tell you I can't do it?

More If you can't do it, kid...

Zig Stop calling me kid. My name's Zig.

More I'm not allowed to call a squadder by his name.

Zig Why not?

More It's against the rules.

Zig What rules?

More Our rules. The rules of the ACFP.

Zig ACFP?

More The Armed Commando For Power. Don't you know anything, kid? How old are you?

Zig Don't know.

More What do you mean, you don't know?

Zig I just don't.

More Were you around on the day of the Great Uprising?

Zig No.

More Then you can't be ten yet.

Zig So it's ok for you to know how old I am but not my name.

More Yeah.

Zig Why?

More Age is a statistic.

Zig And a name?

More That's personal data.

Zig So?

More I don't know. The rules of the ACFP say you're not allowed personal data. They say it stops us from doing our job properly. Personal data is useless for killing.

Zig Useless?

More That's what they say.

Zig What about me, am I allowed to know your personal data?

More I don't know. The rules don't say anything about that. A squadder's never asked me for my personal data before. I don't think I can give it to you.

Zig Why not?

More I don't know. The rules...

Zig I thought the rules didn't say anything about that.

More Yeah, but...

Zig But what?

More Nothing.

Silence.

Zig Well?

More The lads call me More.

Silence.

Zig Why?

More It's because of a Frenchman who fought with us. He used to say to me: "Les squadders, je les veux morts". So the lads started calling me that, More.

Silence.

Zig Are you married?

More Where have you been hiding? Don't you know that ACFPs can't have wives?

Zig I've been hiding on the Western line.

More Personal data. Don't want to know.

Zig But you asked me where I'd been...

More Yeah, but it wasn't really a question.

Zig What was it then?

More A turn of phrase.

Zig What's the difference?

More Well, a question is "have you got a light, kid?" and a turn of phrase is "where have you been hiding". It doesn't need an answer.

Zig I don't get it.

More Obviously. You're just a squadder.

Silence.

Zig More, what's a squadder?

More It's someone like you.

Silence.

Zig What's someone like me?

More It's someone who's against the Power.

Zig What's the Power?

More Those who govern the Zone.

Zig What's the Zone?

More That's where the Power governs.

Silence.

Zig Where's the Zone?

More It's everywhere.

Zig Oh.

Silence.

Zig More?

More Yes, kid.

Zig Why are squadders against the Power?

More I don't know, kid. They say that on the day of the Great Uprising, the world separated in two. Those who were for the Power and those who were against.

Zig And you, were you for or were you against?

More Me, I must have been about your age, maybe a little older. I didn't really understand. I followed my brothers.

Zig I don't have any brothers. I'm all alone, with Luke.

More I don't want to know, kid. Personal data.

Zig Sorry.

Silence.

Zig More?

More Yes, kid.

Zig What's it like to have brothers?

More Well, it's good.

Zig Oh.

Silence.

Zig How is it good?

More Well, I don't know, kid. It's good, that's all. You ask some funny questions.

Silence.

Zig More?

More What, kid.

Zig The guy who stayed two weeks, how did he take a piss?

More I don't know. D'you need to go?

Zig Yeah. A bit.

More A bit or a lot?

Zig A bit, I think.

More Well, you can wait then.

Zig Yeah, I think so. But what about after?

More After what?

Zig Well, when I really need to go.

More We'll see.

Zig Ok.

Silence.

More takes another cigarette out of his packet. He plays with it for a bit and puts it behind his ear.

Zig Aren't you going to light it?

More Not yet.

Zig Why not?

More Because of rationing. One a day, kid.

Zig Stop calling me kid. My name's Zig.

More Can't do that.

Zig That's crap.

More Hey kid, watch that tongue of yours. Think of your mother. You think she'd be proud to hear you talking like that?

Zig I haven't got a mother.

More Course you've got a mother. You think you just popped up out of the ground?

Zig I haven't got a mother. Luke says they found me when I was really little in the middle of a field full of canteens. So yeah, maybe I did pop up out of the ground.

More Don't be stupid, kid. Your mother must have left you there for a squadder to pick up.

Zig I haven't got a mother. Why would a mother leave her kid in the middle of a canteen field? Hey? Can you answer that? And anyway, if she did then she wouldn't be a

mother any more. A mother doesn't do things like that or else she's not a mother anymore.

More Calm down, kid. I'm only saying...

Zig I know what you're doing, you're only saying that so I get angry, so this canteen blows up, so all that's left is little pieces of Zig and then you can put a tick in your notebook. That's what Luke says. Every time someone blows up on a canteen, there's always someone around to put a tick in their notebook. But I'll never be a tick in your notebook. Because I'm gonna stay here longer than two weeks. If I need to, I'll stay here my whole life.

More That's right, your whole life until you blow up. Until you're only little pieces of kid, until you're only a tick in my notebook.

Zig You'll die before me. I swear you will, More. And now I really need a piss.

More searches his rucksack and finds an empty plastic bottle, which he throws to Zig.

More There you are, piss in that.

Zig catches the bottle. He watches More for a bit and undoes his flies.

Zig Thanks.

More You're welcome, kid.

Dark.

The noise of machine guns, machinery and people dying can be heard. War noises.

Scene Two

Two weeks have gone by. It's morning. More is lying down with his rifle close to him. Zig is still standing on his landmine. He looks very tired. He's swaying slightly.

Zig *whispering*

I'll do it, I'll do it, I'll do it, I'll do it. I've got to hold on until Luke comes. He's coming soon. He'll open this canteen and we'll go away together. Yeah, we'll go away. We'll cross the Eastern line. We'll both go and see what's behind the Eastern Line. I've got to hold on until then. He'll come with Hugga. Hugga's the best with canteens. Sleep. Soon I can lie down and sleep. I'll sleep all night and all day, too. Then we'll cross the line. Maybe More's asleep. More asleep. More sleep. Why isn't Luke here yet? More doesn't sleep that often, we should take advantage. Maybe he's dead. Well, he's not moving. I can't tell whether he's dead or not. Hey, More? Are you sleeping or are you dead? Hurry up, Luke. If he's asleep he'll wake up soon. But if he's dead, then we've got plenty of time. I'm tired, Luke. Stand up straight and stay very still. Breathe calmly. That's what Luke said when I was training. Move an inch and you're dead. Come on, Zig, just a little bit more. You can stay on a canteen for a long time, all you need is the will. I don't know if I want to stay much longer. Hey More, you sleeping?

More No, kid, I'm thinking.

Zig What are you thinking about?

More I'm thinking that you're delirious. That means it'll be over soon.

More stands up, counting on his fingers.

More Hey kid, you know what?

Zig No, I don't know anything. That's what you always say.

More You've just broken the record, kid. Two weeks. Two weeks we've been here, the two of us, me on my spot, you on

your canteen. D'you think you can stay a bit longer? The lads are never going to believe this. Two weeks. A little squadder-nobody breaking the record.

Silence.

Zig More?

More Yeah, kid.

Zig What are we going to do now?

More Now what?

Zig Now that we've broken the record.

More I don't know, kid.

Zig What do the rules say?

More I don't know. It's never happened before. I suppose we have to wait and see.

Zig See what?

More How long you can stick it out for, for the new record.

Zig So I'm going to be a new record?

More Well, yeah, I guess.

Zig That's great. I've never done anything like this. Soon there'll be a Zig record. Hey More, am I allowed to give my record a name? Can I name it after me?

More I don't think so, kid.

Zig What did people say for the other record?

More They said, the record of the squadder who lasted two weeks.

Zig Yeah but I've been here more than two weeks.

More Well, they'll say, the record of the squadder who lasted more than two weeks.

Zig That's too long. The Zig record sounds much better.

More Do what you want, kid. In any case, once your record's official, you won't be around to call it anything. So for now call it what you want.

Silence.

Zig More?

More What.

Zig When will it be official, the Zig record?

More When you're dead.

Zig Oh. What if I don't die?

More What do you mean?

Zig What if I don't die. What if I stay on this canteen for years and years. Long enough so you die before me. Long enough for Luke and Hugga to come and kill you and to liberate me.

More Then there'll be no record.

Zig Why?

More Because I won't be there to tell the story. And no one is going to believe you.

Zig Yes they will. Luke'll believe me, and Hugga, and all the other people I tell.

More Yes, but it won't be the same. It won't be official. Only squadders'll know about it.

Zig Does that make it less good?

More I don't know about that. It just won't be official.

Zig At least it won't be a tick in someone's notebook. It won't be the record of the-squadder-who-lasted-two-weeks. It'll be the Zig record.

More What's so awful about being a tick in a notebook, Zig?

Zig I don't know. I don't like it, that's all.

More That's not good enough. Go on.

Zig Luke says that...

More I don't give a damn what your squadder says, I want to know why you don't like it.

Zig I'll have to think about it.

More Well think about it, then.

Silence. More searches in his bag and finds an apple. He rubs it against his sleeve to make it shine, then bites into it. Zig is thinking.

Hey, kid!

Zig is still thinking.

Kid?

Zig thinks.

More Kid, I think I know why. You're like this apple. You don't want to be eaten but you can't help it, it's in your apple nature to be eaten. In fact, you're an apple that wants to be a pear. Except you forget that it's also in the nature of a pear to be eaten. And the apple that wants to be a pear can't help it either. However hard it tries, it'll still be eaten. Unless it lets itself rot, in which case, apple or pear, no one'll want to eat it. Not because it chose to rot, but because it's disgusting to eat a rotting pear. You would rather let yourself rot to avoid being eaten. What you

don't see is at the end of the day, the result is the same.
So, little apple, am I wrong?

Zig Yes.

More Are you sure?

Zig Yes, I'm not an apple, much less an apple that wants to be
a pear. And anyway, I wouldn't let myself rot. I'm just a
little boy, stuck on a canteen and I don't want to be a tick
because...

More Yes, kid, because...?

Zig Because I don't want to die.

*Silence. More bites into the apple, but without the same pleasure. He
looks at Zig, who is staring at him, proudly. More throws the half eaten
apple to him. Zig turns it around in his hand.*

He bites into it.

Same noises as in the end of Scene One.

Scene Three

A month has passed. More is lying flat on his stomach, looking through the visor of his rifle. Zig is looking into the distance. They must have spotted something.

Zig I'm telling you there's no one there, More. You must've dreamt it.

More No, kid, I swear I saw a shadow. It was just like in training. Someone creeping about. Someone who doesn't want to be seen. Someone who's being very careful not to make any noise and who's slowly getting closer. Next time he moves I'll fire two. Bang bang. We'll see if he wants to come any closer. Keep still, I don't want him to see us. And don't think of warning him or else, record or no record, one of these shots is for you. Understood, kid?

Zig Understood.

More Quiet I said.

Zig But you...

More Shut up!

Silence. Long and heavy. Suddenly, More fires two close shots.

More There, I think I got him. Even if I didn't, he won't come any closer now he knows I'm here. It's a shame for you, kid. No one's going to come and help you now.

Zig remains silent.

More Cat got your tongue?

Zig You told me to shut up so I'm shutting up.

More It's not lasted very long.

Zig I've got to talk, otherwise I get bored.

More So you're not too upset?

Zig Why should I be upset?

More Because now your little friends won't come any closer. So no 'liberating' you.

Zig Don't worry too much about me.

More thinks.

More What does that mean?

Zig It just means that I'm not upset.

More Kid?

Zig Yes, More?

More Explain?

Zig I can't.

More Come on, kid, tell me.

Zig I can't, it's against the rules.

More What rules?

Zig Your rules, the ACFP's. I thought they said no personal data. Well, I think this is personal data.

More So now you're thinking.

Zig I think. I've got plenty of time to think when you sleep. Nights are really long when you snore.

More Me, snore? I don't snore. I don't sleep either.

Zig Course you don't.

More If I slept, your little friends would have come to get you already.

Zig Maybe they hadn't tracked me down yet.

More What do you mean, hadn't?

Zig Nothing.

More I don't believe you.

Zig ...

More You think they've seen us, and that they're going to attack? You're dreaming, kid. I've got a gun. What are they going to do, throw stones at me while I shoot the sitting ducks down, one after the other?

Zig Yeah, you're right More. There's nothing they can do against your gun. And there's nothing I can do about this canteen. Even when you're snoring. I wouldn't know where to start. Luke didn't have time to teach me how to open one up. Well, I know how to do it, but not when I'm standing on top of one. I can do it when I'm next to one. It's easy. All you need is a good penknife. And anyway, the one I'm standing on is a really basic model, the kind where all you need is three minutes to gut it before it guts you. Push the knife to the right and abracadabra, you bleed it to death. Do you know why it's called a canteen?

More No.

Zig I think it's because it looks like one. It's the same shape. There's the little lid, there, and when you open it with the knife, this liquid comes out. It's like water, except it really stinks. Like the swamp behind the big rock in the desert. You know the one. It's the big rock that looks like a tired old man, leaning on a cane. I call it Hugga's rock. Because Hugga's old and he leans on a cane. Anyway, the swamp behind Hugga's rock, it stinks. It stinks. It stinks like some creature's gone and died in it. Seriously, the canteens smell the same. You don't believe me.

More Yes I do. Well, I don't know.

Zig What do you mean, you don't know. You've never smelled the water in a canteen or you've never smelled the water in the swamp behind Hugga's rock?

More Neither.

Zig What! You've never opened one up?

More No.

Zig Don't you know how to open one?

More No, they don't teach us how to open them, just to hide them in fields where squadders usually walk.

Zig That's silly. So, if an ACFP steps on a canteen, he doesn't know what to do?

More No, kid. That's the way it is. We lay them and we make sure we don't step on them.

Zig Why don't they teach you how to open them?

More I don't know, kid.

Zig I think I know why.

More Tell me, I'm dying to know.

Zig So that you never do it.

More Very insightful.

Zig No, you don't get it. That way they can be sure you'll never open someone else's mine.

More What do you mean?

Zig Well, in case you're tempted to open up some kid's mine.

More And why would we want to do that?

Zig I don't know. You might.

More Don't count on it, kid. An ACFP'll never want to open a squadder's mine, kid or no kid.

Zig You can't say that.

More What do you mean, I can't say that. Of course I can say that. I know the ACFP. Not one of us would ever disable a squadder's canteen. Too dangerous.

Zig Why do you say it's too dangerous? That's not true.

More Yes it is. Squadders want us dead. We know that. Picture it, kid. You've got the squadder stood on his canteen, and the ACFP on his hands and knees opening it up with a penknife. You can be sure the squadder'll jump him as soon as he's finished.

Zig Yeah but the ACFP has the knife in his hand. I've got nothing in my hand. Not even a stone. And even if I did have a stone or a knife, I wouldn't win. In real life stones can't beat scissors.

More I've always found that game stupid.

Zig Yeah, me too.

Silence.

More Hey kid?

Zig What?

More Was it your little friends earlier?

Zig Don't know.

More Don't you find it odd?

Zig What?

More That they haven't come yet.

Zig How long is it now?

More Almost a month. Twice as long as the record.

Zig I think I'll be here a little while longer.

Silence.

More Your squadders, they must have left a while ago. Crossed the Eastern line. You know what's behind the Eastern line?

Zig No, do you?

More No. The lads tell stories. They say there's a giant base of squadders, killer swamps with insects as big as my fist, an ocean, a volcano, a flower.

Zig A flower?

More Yeah, that's what one of the lads said. A flower that survived the Great Uprising, really small, pink and green. He says it's protected by an army of squadders who'd be willing to die for it.

Zig He's mad!

More You reckon? I don't know, would be nice if it were true...

Zig You think all those squadders would risk their lives crossing the Eastern line to protect a flower?

More No, you're right, that's stupid. Besides, everyone knows that no flower survived the Great Uprising. And why would the Power be that bothered about the Eastern line, if all that was there was a flower.

Zig Silly.

More Yeah, it is silly.

Darkness. The same noises, only closer.

Part Two

Scene One

Years pass. Zig is still stuck on his canteen, More is still there with his rifle. Zig has grown, his clothes no longer fit well. More is looking unkempt.

Lights go up. Zig is alone, standing on his landmine.

Zig More, More, More, have you gone? Where are you More?

More *entering*

It's ok, it's ok, I'm here kid.

Zig Where were you?

More I went for a little walk, to stretch my legs.

Zig What did you see?

More Nothing.

Zig What do you mean, nothing?

More Well, nothing, the area's been empty for a while. You can't even hear the moles anymore.

Zig Yeah. Maybe it's all over.

More What do you mean, it's all over?

Zig Maybe there's no more Power, no more Eastern line, no more ACFP.

More No more squadders?

Zig No, that's impossible. I'm still here.

More So am I.

Zig Yeah, but maybe there's only us left. And everyone else is gone.

More Dead?

Zig Maybe.

More Well?

Zig Well, what do we do?

More Nothing, we wait.

Zig What are we waiting for?

More You, for your canteen to blow up. Me, for someone to come and relieve me of my duty.

Zig But maybe there's no one left to relieve you, not if they're all dead.

More What are you trying to say?

Zig How long are you going to stay here?

More Until someone comes to take my place.

Zig What if no one comes?

More Shut up, kid. An ACFP never leaves his spot unwatched.

Zig Oh yeah, and what were you doing five minutes ago? And what do you do every night when you snore? Isn't that leaving your spot unwatched?

More Shut up, kid. Listen.

Zig What?

More Listen.

Zig What, there's nothing to listen to, it's been weeks since we've heard anything but silence.

More That's odd.

Zig Yeah, it's odd.

Silence.

Zig Can you finish the story, More?

More Where was I?

Zig The swing...

More I might skip that bit.

Zig No, More, you promised me you'd tell the whole story. I want to know. How was it?

More You sure you want to know, kid?

Zig Yes, I want to know.

More It's the most frightening bit, you know.

Zig Yes, that's what you said last time, but this time I want to know. What happened, then?

More Ok, ok, I'll tell you. I can't have been much older than four or five, the first time. Mikki and Klo, they were used to it.

Zig How old were they, Mikki and Klo?

More Around ten.

Zig Had they been on it before?

More Oh yes, they were used to it. They took me there after lunch. I remember looking back one last time at the front door, a bit worried. Like I might never see it again. Mikki was holding my hand. He was saying "go on, be a man, it'll be over soon". I had a knot in my stomach. Klo was walking in front, head high. Then we got to a gate... You're sure you want to know, kid? It's not pretty, you know...

Zig I don't care, go on, More, tell me... What was there behind the gate?

More Ok. Behind the gate, there was a load of kids. All I could see were their backs, they all seemed really tall. I must have been the smallest there. I squeezed Mikki's hand really hard. You wouldn't believe how frightened I was. Klo shouted something, I didn't hear what, and all the kids turned around. They all looked at me, there was something

really nasty or really unhappy in their eyes. I wanted to cry and tell Mikki that we'd come back another time, that I wasn't ready, but Mikki was dragging me by the arm. I couldn't go back. The kids made room to let us through. And then I saw it...

Zig The swing? Well, what was it like?

More Calm down, kid, let me do my build up... It gives me goose pimples just to tell it. In front of me was this enormous frame and a tiny piece of wood hanging from two ropes. My heart was beating so hard I thought it was going to jump out of my chest. Mikki pulled me over and sat me on it. He leaned over to me, looked me straight in the eye and said: "this is it, there's no going back now, hold on to the ropes, it's going to go really fast". After that, he tapped me twice on the head and smiled. He went behind me, I could hear him walk backwards, I couldn't turn round. He started to run and suddenly...

Zig What, what did he do?

More He pushed me in the back very hard. I started to scream. I was thrown forward, I thought I was going to fly off and crash onto the ground, but I didn't. I went very high then I came backwards and each time, Mikki pushed me harder. All the kids were laughing around me. My fingers were clenching the rope and I was still screaming and then...

Zig Yes...?

More Then I realised it didn't hurt and that it was rather nice to have that flying feeling. So I started to laugh with the others and Mikki stopped pushing. I went less high and then the swing stopped all by itself. I got off, I was still laughing and all I wanted to do was to go back on it.

Zig They'd lied?

More Yes... What they'd described as an instrument of torture to make me a man was in fact a great game... After that I went back there every day and I always wanted to go higher. I really miss that swing, kid.

Silence.

Zig More?

More What, kid?

Zig Do you think one day I'll see a swing?

More I don't know, kid... You know, I haven't seen many swings since the Great Uprising...

Zig Maybe one day you could build a swing... For when you have kids.

More I've already told you, an ACFP can't have a wife, and that means no kids.

Zig Doesn't that make you sad?

More No... the Zone, I don't want one of my kids to go wandering there... I don't want him to go wandering onto a canteen, because as you know, I can't teach him how to open them up...

Zig You see, it is shit they don't tell you how to open them.

More Ok kid, I'll grant you that. It's shit, but that's the way it is.

Zig What if one day there weren't any canteens, no ACFP, no Zone, no squadders, no Eastern line...?

More You think we'll be around to see that?

Zig I don't know... Maybe it's already happened and we don't know about it. Maybe they've made peace behind our backs and they forgot to tell us. Maybe they've started building swings for kids and maybe the ACFP have found some wives...

More Yeah, and maybe all this is for nothing...

Zig It's possible More, listen, we haven't heard a thing in weeks, we haven't seen a shadow in weeks ... No moles, no machine guns, no screaming... We don't know what's going on... Maybe the world's stopped going round and we'll never even find out.

Silence. More looks around, waiting for a noise that doesn't come. Suddenly he stares fixedly into the distance. He whistles twice and waits. Nothing responds. He continues to stare and whistles again. Still nothing.

More Maybe you're right, kid.

Zig So what are we going to do?

More Nothing, we wait. One day someone'll come and find us and tell us what happened.

Zig What if no one ever comes?

More Someone'll come. Someone'll come.

Dark. Silence.

Scene Two

It's night time. More is lying at the front of the stage, sleeping. Zig is standing on his canteen, perfectly still. He watches More sleep. He sighs. He clicks his tongue three times. More moves in his sleep but doesn't wake up. Zig clicks his tongue three more times. More remains sleeping. Very carefully, Zig steps off his canteen. It does not blow up. He leaves the field and walks towards More. He stretches silently, walks up and down, clicks his tongue again, listens, no answer. He comes close to More and lies down next to him. He watches him sleep.

Zig *softly, so as not to wake More up*

I envy you... you look so quiet. Every night you sleep like that. And I watch you sleep every night. I'd like to be able to sleep like you. What do you dream about, More, when you're sleeping? If I ask you one morning, you'll say that you don't dream because you don't sleep. You're in an ACFP kind of sleep. On the lookout. If you needed to, you could grab your rifle and put a bullet in my head. I'll watch you lie to me without you knowing that I know you're lying. You sleep like a child, More, and you lie like one. You're not a soldier. Although you'd like to be. It's too hard. Much easier to play the part of the perfect ACFP: no personal data, no wife, my spot, the Zone, the Power, squadders, I don't sleep. You don't believe that. No one else does but they all pretend. I'd like to have a brother like you. An older brother who plays his part well.

More stirs in his sleep.

What about you More, would you like to have a little brother like me? A little brother to watch you sleep and to watch you lie. To admire the world you're giving him. 'Cause that's what you're doing, More. You're giving me your world. The one you've been building, the one you pretend not to believe in so others won't look too closely at it. Your world that's disappearing a little more each day. It makes you sad, More, but it doesn't stop you from sleeping. I envy you... I don't know what my world looks like. I tried to build it, to open all the doors, but there are too many and I can't choose. Luke says...

More stirs.

Oh yeah, I forgot, you don't like it when I talk about Luke. Whenever I do you stir. Maybe you're afraid of him or maybe you don't like him. I think if I spoke to Luke about you he would feel the same. Luke tells me about his world as well. He's also good at playing his part...

More stirs even more.

Alright, I'll stop. You're not going to wake up are you? I've still got things to say to you and it's easier when you're asleep. Mikki and Klo were lucky to have you for a little brother. What's become of them now? Are they disciplined ACFPs? Maybe they've changed their names as well? I'd like to know what your name is, More. Your real name, the one your mother gave you. I ask you every night but every morning you forget to answer. A name's important. I'd like to know what my name is. Not Zig, my real name, the name my mother gave me. Hugga thought of Zig, but he's not my father. Do you think I'll know who I am one day, More? D'you think one day I'll see a man and a woman and I'll be able to say "they're my parents"? I'd like to but I don't think I will. It's like that story of the flower behind the Eastern line. You want to believe it's true, but at the same time you know it's not.

More yawns and stretches like someone about to wake up. Zig watches him, hesitates, gets up and runs back to his canteen. More jumps up, grabs his rifle and aims.

More Kid?

Zig Yes...

More Did you hear anything?

Zig No...

More That's odd. I could've sworn...

Zig You must have been dreaming.

More Yeah, probably... I thought... I can't have been dreaming because I wasn't sleeping.

Zig Well, what?

More Nothing... it's stupid. It's like someone was whispering in my ear. You know what, kid, for a moment I thought it was you.

Zig That is stupid.

More I know.

Dark. Silence.

Scene Three

More is squatting by his rucksack, from which he retrieves: a blanket, a saucepan, some dried food, a gun, a knife, some ammunition, a compass... He piles things up. He's looking for something that he can't find and it annoys him. He mutters under his breath. Zig watches him, amused.

More I can't believe this. Where have I put it?

Zig 'There a problem, More?

More I'm looking for something...

Zig Yeah, I can see that... what are you looking for?

More Something. It's none of your business.

Zig Go on, More, tell me, I might be able to help.

More And how exactly are you going to help, kid, stuck over there on that canteen? Anyway, how can you just stand there for that long? You've got to tell me now. No one can stand still that long without sleeping. What's your secret?

Zig It's a secret... I can't tell you, but if you tell me what you're looking for, I'll give you a clue.

More None of your business.

Zig My secret's none of yours, then.

Zig smiles. More stops rummaging and looks at him. He sighs.

More I'm looking for the picture of Mikki and Klo, when we started with the ACFP. I had it last week. It can't have just disappeared.

Zig Are you sure you put it in your bag?

More Yes, I always put it in the same place, so that I don't have to hunt around when I want to look at it. But it's not there now.

Zig Maybe someone stole it.

More Who? We haven't seen anyone in two years.

Zig Three.

More Three what?

Zig We haven't see anyone in three years.

More Is that how long we've been here, me on my spot and you on your canteen?

Zig Yeah.

More It's not a record, kid, it's a miracle. No one's going to believe us...

Zig Believe us?

More ...no one's going to believe me. How do you do it?

Zig Mystery.

More Go on, give me a clue.

Zig No.

More Why not? I told you what I was looking for.

Zig Yeah, but I've changed my mind.

More That's cheating, kid.

Zig Yeah.

More That's a first.

Zig Yeah.

More Watch it, kid. I've got ways to make you talk.

Zig Really, like what?

More I could ration your food... I didn't have to feed you, I did it because I couldn't stand listening to your tummy rumble.

Zig Go on then, ration me. That'll be another mystery for you to solve!

More What's up with you today, kid?

Zig Weren't you looking for that picture?

More Fine, if you don't want to talk to me...

More starts rummaging again through the piles he made earlier but he still can't find it. Zig takes the photo out of his shirt pocket and looks at it discretely. He puts it back into his pocket.

Zig More?

More What.

Zig Where are they now, Mikki and Klo?

More stops rummaging.

More On the picture...

Zig Are they dead?

More I don't know. Last time I saw them was a long time ago.

Zig How long?

More How long have we been here?

Zig Five years soon.

More Five years ago, then.

Zig Do you miss them?

More As much as you miss your eye, I suppose.

More watches Zig, who touches his eyepatch.

Zig That much?

More nods.

More How did it happen, kid?

Zig You really want to know?

More nods.

Zig Are you sure you're allowed?

More No, but never mind, I want to know...

Zig I was really small so I can't remember.

More Oh well, never mind.

Zig But Hugga told me.

More Oh.

Silence.

More Well?

Zig Hugga told me that when I was little, I loved playing in minefields.

More Nothing's changed there, then.

Zig No. One day, Luke told me that I wasn't allowed to play in a field they'd just discovered. They said it was more dangerous than all the others, canteens everywhere and all of them really difficult to open. I had to go and see for myself. I hid in the bushes and looked into the field. I didn't go in but every day I crept a bit closer. One day I got too close and I stepped on one. I was too young to know you shouldn't move until someone comes and opens it, and I was right on the edge of the field so I jumped...

More And the canteen exploded?

Zig No, I was too light to trigger it but when I jumped I landed head first on some barbed wire that Luke had put there. Hugga says I was lucky just to lose the one.

More You know what, kid? For once I agree with your squadder.

Silence.

More Why do you always go into minefields?

Zig I don't really know.

More You must know.

Zig I don't know, I'm attracted to them. Like a magnet. I can sniff them out. I know where they are.

More You didn't sniff this one out.

Zig Maybe I had to step on it.

More You're a fatalist, kid.

Zig What does that mean?

More It's when you believe that what is meant to happen will happen whatever and you accept it.

Zig Maybe I'm a fatalist then.

Silence.

More I think it's something else...

Zig What?

More I think you're looking for someone in those canteen fields...

Zig You think I'm looking for my mother.

More Maybe.

Zig Yeah, maybe. And maybe that's where she's looking for me.

More Maybe.

Zig D'you think one day we'll find each other?

More I don't know, kid. No one can tell. What do you think?

Zig I don't know. If I find her, I don't think I'd know what to say. We'd just stand there, in the middle of a field of canteens, looking each other in the eye and not knowing what to say, and not moving in case we set them off. Maybe it's better if we never find each other.

Silence.

More What are you going to do after this, kid?

Zig After this? I thought there was no after for me, and all I had to look forward to was to be a tick in your notebook?

More That's what I thought as well, but I'm starting to believe it less and less.

Zig You don't believe in the record anymore?

More I'm starting to believe in miracles. Five years we've been here, kid, five years. You're almost a man now and I'm almost an old man.

Zig But you're young.

More In years I'm young, but look at me, I can barely stand up, I'm tired, I've had enough of all this, kid. I'd like to call you by your name.

Zig What's stopping you?

More I don't know anymore... I'm tired... You keep watch, I'm going to sleep for a bit.

Zig Ok More, have a rest, you'll feel better tomorrow.

More lies down clutching his worn jacket against him. He falls asleep almost immediately. Zig watches him for a moment and steps off his canteen carefully. He comes close to More, takes the photo of Mikki and Klo out of his shirt pocket and puts it in More's hand. He strokes More's face gently.

Zig It's almost over, More. Don't worry, you can have a rest soon.

Dark. We hear birds singing.

Part Three

Five years have passed. Zig is now a young man. His clothes are torn, he's wearing More's jacket. More looks much older, the lines on his face are deeper, he's dirty and tired.

More is squatting at the front of the stage, he's eating a bar of dried food. Zig is watching him.

Zig Was that the last one?

More *his mouth full*

Yes... You're sure you don't want any?

Zig You eat, I'm ok.

More How do you do it, kid?

Zig I've got used to small rations.

More I can't believe you're growing so much eating so little.

Zig Yeah...

More eats in silence then grabs the water bottle and gulps it down.

Zig More...

More What is it, kid?

Zig You should drink at the stream.

More Why? There's nothing wrong with this water.

Zig If you say so.

More I say so. Thirsty?

More throws the water bottle over to Zig, who looks at it and throws it back.

Zig No, I'm ok.

More You don't eat, you don't drink, I really don't know how you do it, kid.

Dark. Nighttime. More is sleeping. Zig is standing next to him. He clicks his tongue three times. Someone replies with the same noise.

Zig *whispering*

Luke?

Luke appears. He's More's age but he looks younger, fresher.

Zig It's ok, he's sleeping.

Luke How is he?

Zig Not great.

Luke It'll be over soon...

Zig Perhaps. Have you got the pills?

Luke *Takes a box out of his pocket.*

Here, your ration for the next ten days. Does he suspect anything?

Zig No, he still thinks it's a miracle.

Luke We'll see you in ten days?

Zig Ok... Tell Hugga he's nearly ready, I'm waiting for the signal.

Luke It'll be time soon.

Zig I know.

Day. Luke has gone. Zig is on his canteen. More walks up and down with difficulty, holding the rifle on his shoulder.

Zig More, you should get some rest. What's the point...

More I can still do it, kid. I thought I heard a noise last night.

Zig It must have been a deer.

More Since when have there been deer on my spot?

Zig Since the birds came back.

More How long have we been here, kid?

Zig Ten years, More, I keep telling you.

More I'm hungry kid, I've got to shoot a bird.

More aims and shoots.

Dark. Nighttime. Zig is squatting next to More, who's asleep. He covers him with the blanket. Someone clicks their tongue three times. Zig replies by doing the same. Luke appears.

Luke Well?

Zig Not yet. He's not ready yet. It won't be long. But he's getting suspicious.

Luke You mean he's going mad. With all the shit we're putting in his water, it doesn't surprise me.

Zig We can't wait much longer. It's getting dangerous. At this rate he might want to finish with me.

Luke *gets a gun out and gives it to Zig*

Don't worry. If he looks like he's going to shoot you...

Zig *taking the gun*

Yes, but that would mess up the plan. I haven't been standing here for ten years to mess things up because of that shit you're feeding him.

Luke Ok, we'll bring the doses down. What about blanks?

Zig No, it's too early. He's still shooting birds. We have to wait.

Day. Luke has gone. More is sitting. He's rocking from side to side. Zig is on his canteen.

More What's happening to me, kid? What's happening... I'm going mad, aren't I? Why? I'm trained for this. There's a flower, kid, behind the line. I see it at night. We're fighting for a flower. It's beautiful. No, it's just shit. Listen to the birds. If they've come back, it means there's flowers everywhere. So why are we still fighting. Why? Do you think it's all over and nobody's told us? Do you think I'm going mad? What's happening? What have you done to me? It's you, I know it is, it's your fault. Why am I the only one going mad? Tell me. Are you going to tell me, kid?

Zig Calm down More. It'll be over soon.

More No, it won't be over soon. I know it. It's getting worse. Why are you doing this to me?

Zig I'm not doing anything.

More You're lying. I can see you at night, you get off your canteen, you float in the air you walk around the stars and you laugh. All night long you laugh and you stop me from sleeping. Why do you do that?

Dark. Night. Luke is next to Zig. More is crying in his sleep.

Zig Enough.

Luke Zig, be serious.

Zig I am being serious. Stop drugging him. He's going mad.

Luke You know the risk.

Zig I don't want him to crack up because of the shit you're feeding him. He'll come to us, by himself. He was starting to trust me. It might be too late already. If he doesn't get

any better, I'll tell him everything and in the state he's in it's not me he's going to shoot.

Luke You want to throw away the last ten years? Forget the brothers we lost to the ACFP?

Zig Yes.

Luke No feelings, Zig, you know the rules. You're playing a dangerous game. You know that if it doesn't go to plan you'll have to...

Zig I know.

Day. Zig is on his mine. More is lying on his stomach. He's calmer.

Zig You look better today, More.

Silence.

I saw a pheasant this morning, you should try and kill it.

Silence.

More, you've got to eat...

Silence.

What are you going to do, when they come to relieve you of your duty, if you haven't even got the strength to salute...

Silence.

Do you want to tell me a story, More?

Silence.

Tell me about Mikki and Klo...

Silence.

You've got to move, More, or you're going to grow roots, like me on my canteen.

Silence.

You should come over and see, I'm starting to grow buds.

Silence.

More... that's enough now, wake up... I'm bored of talking to myself.

Silence.

More...

Silence.

Come on More, make an effort. Please.

Silence.

What would Mikki and Klo think, seeing you like that?

Silence.

Why aren't you talking More? You haven't spoken in a week. I'm getting worried here.

Silence.

If you're tired, at least lie down and have a rest.

Silence. More decides to lie down and curls up on the ground.

There you go. Have a rest, you'll feel better.

More I've lost, Zig.

*More closes his eyes. Zig looks at him, sadly. Darkness.
Dawn. More is still curled up on the floor. Zig and Luke are standing right behind him.*

Luke It's now, Zig. Or never.

Zig It's too early.

Luke No. Hugga gave the go ahead.

Zig I can't.

Luke You have to Zig. You know you do. The last barricade has fallen.

Zig It's too early...

Luke You haven't come this far to stop now. We haven't come this far to stop now. His gun's loaded with blanks and anyway, he's too feeble to use it.

Zig He's not ready...

Luke We can't wait. They're gaining land, it's a question of hours and you know that.

Zig He's not ready!

Luke So get him ready, Zig.

Zig I've been getting him ready for ten years, I know what he's like and if I tell you he's not ready then he's not ready.

Luke Zig...

Zig Stop it, I said no.

Luke We won't hang around for you. We're doing it later, Hugga has decided and that's final. Your mission is almost over but if you don't want to finish it off, someone will for you and you know it won't be the ending you wanted.

Zig Ok ok... tell Hugga he'll be ready... just give me time to talk to him.

Luke The sun's coming up. You've got one hour, no more. It won't be in your hands after that.

Zig nods, resigned. Luke shakes his hand and exits. Zig returns to his canteen, turns to More, looks at him, walks towards him and sits down next to him. He remains silent for a while.

Zig softly

I don't like this More... But I have to do it. You've got to understand... you have to understand me. I had to do it. It's difficult. I don't really know how to explain. How did this start? Yes, I can start there if you want. Fifteen years ago... Does this story really start fifteen years ago? Of course not, but you have to start somewhere, don't you? Well, fifteen years ago, one of ours, a 'squadder', found a list – a 'preliminary evaluation'. A list of all the ACFPs that the Power wanted to keep an eye on. Your name was on it with some notes. You hadn't completely convinced them when you joined. They'd noticed some weaknesses. Your brothers, mainly. You weren't the only one on the list with weaknesses. Well, our side decided to use that. They elected five children and trained them for three years. I was one of them. When we were ready, they sent us out to minefields near each of your spots. Of course the canteens had been emptied some time ago and they'd cleaned out the zone. Then we waited. You had to trust me, really trust me. Your ACFP reflexes had to break down. You had

to become my friend. It took some time but it happened,
More. Who knows what happens next. It's up to you now...

More turns around and opens his eyes.

More I've lost Zig...

Zig No you haven't More, not yet. There's a chance you can
still win, you're going to have to grab it.

*Behind them Luke and Hugga, an old man leaning on a cane,
approach softly. Luke is holding a machine gun.*

More I've lost Zig.

Hugga So it's true. He's calling you by your name...

Zig *turns around abruptly*

You said an hour!

Luke Time is ticking on.

Hugga And he looks ready.

Zig He's not.

Hugga Yes he is. Aren't you More?

*More stands up, cocks his rifle and shoots at Huggaa. The gun goes off
but nothing happens.*

Zig You see.

More looks at his rifle, understands and throws it onto the floor.

More I've lost Zig.

Hugga I can see that.

Hugga nods to Luke, who arms his machine gun and aims at More. More gets a gun out and points it at Luke.

Zig What are you doing... stop it now.

Hugga Just a precaution, Zig.

Zig gets a gun out and aims at Hugga.

Luke What are you doing, Zig?

Zig Just a precaution, Luke.

More I've lost Zig.

Zig No, not yet. Trust me, you haven't lost yet.

Hugga Does More know about the wider picture, Zig?

Zig What do you mean?

Hugga I think our new friend needs to know all about your role in this. Especially where it concerns his brothers.

Zig What are you playing at?

Hugga No, what are you playing at Zig?

Luke It's just the procedure, Zig.

More I've lost Zig.

Zig More, please, whatever they say, you have to believe me, it's got nothing to do with me.

Hugga So More, do you want to know what happened to Mikki and Klo?

More I've lost Zig. I've lost...

Hugga Do you want to tell him Zig, or shall I?

Zig Don't listen to them, More... I've had nothing to do with it. I never told them about your brothers.

Hugga If you won't tell him, I will.

Zig Shut up!

Zig unlocks the safety catch on his gun and aims it at Hugga.

That's got nothing to do with why we're here.

Hugga That's where you're wrong Zig. It's got everything to do with why we're here. Can More really trust you? Can he be sure you didn't betray him? It's the moment of truth, Zig... We'll soon find out if you accomplished your mission.

More I've lost Zig.

Zig More, I'm your friend, don't forget that, whatever they say.

Hugga So, which one shall we start with, Mikki or Klo...? Of course, both stories end the same way...

More I've lost Zig.

Hugga I do think we went over the top on the doses, Luke.

Luke agrees, smiling.

Hugga You don't know this More, but with the blessing of your new friend we have been copiously drugging you lately...

Zig I was against it More, I swear.

More I've lost, Zig.

Hugga Yes, we know. But that's not the point. Mikki and Klo... Let's start with Klo since you're incapable of choosing yourself. Thanks to the information you gave Zig we found him. He'd been sent to the Eastern line. Front line if you need to know. He was a good soldier, not like Mikki. But he comes later. Well, during one of his incursions into the enemy zone, Klo got his foot caught in one of our canteens. A

nice big canteen, not like Zig's, no, a real working canteen. He didn't even have time to shout for help. Bang, he died a hero. That was Klo. Mikki's is another story. Our side were working undercover in his office. He used to sit at a table, drawing up lists of reserve ammunition for the ACFPs. We followed him to his miserable flat in the civil servants' quarter and stuck a pen in his throat. He bled to death clenching a picture of you three against his heart. If it makes you feel any better, he died thinking about you. There you go, you know how your brothers finished, up to you whether your friend Zig is responsible for it...

More I've lost, Zig...

Zig More, please, I've got nothing to do with it. I never told them about your brothers.

Hugga So More, what do you think? Do you believe him?

More I've lost, Zig...

Hugga If you trust him, you can leave with him and join our ranks...

Zig You're going to make everything fuck up. Why would he join the ranks of those who murdered his brothers?

Hugga He's a soldier, he understands that combat leads to sacrifice, don't you More... In any case, if we hadn't taken care of Mikki, the Power would. He was trafficking ammunition to one of our sections. He was avoided the torture and shame of a public execution. There is another possibility of course. Maybe we never laid a finger on Mikki and Klo because Zig never told us about them...

Zig This is bullshit. More, you've got to believe me, I never told them about your brothers.

More I've lost, Zig.

Zig Never said a word about Mikki or Klo.

Hugga Then how do we know they exist?

More hesitates and aims at Zig. Zig continues to aim at Hugga but looks at More.

Zig Please More, you've got to believe me. They were listening from the start. They were the ones who gave me food and water. They kept watch overnight so I could sleep.

More I've lost Zig.

Zig No More, I swear... Put your gun down. Please.

More *violently*

I've lost, Zig.

Zig aims at More. Luke puts his gun down.

Hugga Here we are. The moment of truth.

Zig Shut up. More, please, listen to me. I don't know what happened to Mikki or Klo, I swear. I never said a thing. You have to believe me. My only mission was to be your friend. That's what I am, More. Your friend. Put your gun down, please More. When you've done that we'll both go to the Eastern line. We'll go and see what's behind it. Or we'll go and find Mikki and Klo, find out what's become of them. Just the two of us. But you've got to put your gun down first. We have to do it together. I'm going to count to three and on three we'll both put our guns down and leave for the Eastern line. We'll be safe there. We'll rest. It'll be good More. The two of us. We'll find out if there's a flower we can protect. Wouldn't that be good, More, if you and I had to protect a flower? We'd do it together. But you've got to put your gun down. I'll count to three. More, look at me. You know I'm your friend. You know... Come on More, I'll start to count now. One...

More and Zig start to lower their guns.

Zig Two...

Their arms are almost down.

Zig Three...

Neither of them drops his gun. They look at each other in silence.

Hugga That's sorted then. You're one of ours now, More.
Welcome.

More I've lost, Zig...

Suddenly, More aims at Hugga. Before he has time to shoot, Zig shoots More.

Zig No!

More is shot in the chest. He falls down. Zig drops his gun and runs to More.

Zig *crying*
More, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to...

More *between hiccups*
I've lost Zig.

Zig More, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to...

More Immon.

Zig What?

More My name is Immon.

More dies. Zig cries next to him. Hugga comes close.

Hugga *reaching out to Zig*
Welcome. You're one of us.

Zig looks at Hugga, crying, and then looks at More. He dries his tears with the back of his hand and closes More's eyes. Hugga helps him to his feet. They embrace. Luke approaches. Zig embraces him. They look at More a last time and exit, leaving his body behind.

Dark. Noise of war.

The End.