

JOHN & TIMMY

ACT ONE, scene 2

AT RISE: JOHN and TIMMY enter the apartment. TIMMY carries a bouquet of red roses. JOHN has just concluded a joke and they are both laughing.

JOHN: I haven't told that one in years.

TIMMY: I was considered a very funny fellow, thanks to you.

JOHN: Hello? . . . Anybody home? *(No answer.)* Still at her mother's.

TIMMY: *(Indicating the roses.)* I better put these in water.

(They move into the kitchen. TIMMY puts the roses in a vase.)

JOHN: Stand another beer?

TIMMY: Sure.

(JOHN gets two bottles of beer from the refrigerator.)

JOHN: How did you remember all those jokes of mine?

TIMMY: Just came to me.

JOHN: I don't remember most of them myself. *(Hands TIMMY a beer.)*

Here you go.

TIMMY: Thanks.

JOHN: What'll we drink to?

TIMMY: The Chicago Cubs.

JOHN: Think it'll help them?

TIMMY: Can it hurt?

JOHN: (*Raising the bottle.*) To the Cubs.

TIMMY: To the Cubs.

(*They both drink.*)

JOHN: Sixteen to three.

TIMMY: I'm still glad we went.

JOHN: So am I. That was a beautiful catch Ott made.

TIMMY: Yes.

JOHN: For a moment I thought he lost it in the sun. (*Timmy says nothing. JOHN drinks.*) So they really went for the old man's jokes?

TIMMY: Especially the ones about Uncle Mike.

JOHN: Such as?

TIMMY: The Pennsylvania Hotel gag.

JOHN: Columbus told that one to the Indians.

TIMMY: Uncle Mike was a famous man in our outfit.

JOHN: Joking aside, he was quite a guy. Stood six-three. Weighed close to two-fifty.

TIMMY: I remember his picture.

JOHN: He was in the Spanish American War.

TIMMY: I know.

JOHN: Got hit by a bullet once that knocked him out. When he came to, he was lying in a field full of wounded men. The ones that were sure goners were marked with yellow tags so no one would waste time on them. The others had blue tags. Mike found a yellow tag around his wrist. The fellow next to him who was unconscious had a blue one. Quick as a wink Mike

switched the tags and . . . How about that? I'm telling *you* war stories. Go on – you do the talking.

TIMMY: About what?

JOHN: You must have seen some pretty bad things.

TIMMY: Not as much as a lot of others.

JOHN: Maybe you'd rather not talk about it.

TIMMY: I don't mind.

JOHN: I'd like to hear what you have to say.

TIMMY: I don't know how to begin.

JOHN: Anything that comes to mind.

TIMMY: Want to hear the bravest thing I ever did?

JOHN: Yes.

TIMMY: The first night we were in combat I slept with my boots off.

JOHN: Go on.

TIMMY: That's it.

JOHN: You slept with your boots off?

TIMMY: Doesn't sound like much, does it?

JOHN: Not off-hand.

TIMMY: The fellows who eventually cracked up were all the guys who couldn't sleep. If I hadn't decided to take my boots off I'd have ended up being one of them.

JOHN: I see.

TIMMY: Want to know the smartest thing I did?

JOHN: Sure.

TIMMY: I never volunteered. One day the Lieutenant bawled me out for it. I said, "Sir, if there's anything you want me to do you tell me and I'll do it. But if you wait for me to volunteer you'll wait forever."

JOHN: What did he say to that?

TIMMY: Nothing printable. The fact is I wasn't a very good soldier, Pop.

JOHN: You did everything they asked you.

TIMMY: The good ones do more. You'd have been a good one.

JOHN: What makes you say that?

TIMMY: I can tell.

JOHN: Well, thanks.

TIMMY: You're welcome.

JOHN: It's one of the big regrets of my life that I was never in the service.

TIMMY: I know.

JOHN: The day World War One was declared I went to the recruiting office. When they learned I was the sole support of the family, they turned me down.

TIMMY: I know.

JOHN: A lot of guys made cracks. Especially guys like Clayton and Harper who waited to be drafted and then wangled safe jobs at Governor's Island and the Navy Yard. . . . I fixed their wagons one night; sent the army flying one way and the navy the other. That was the last about slacking I heard from *them*. . . . Still it bothers me – missing out on the whole thing. . . . I keep wondering what difference it might have made in my life. . . . And then I wonder how I'd have made out. . . . I wouldn't have settled for a desk job. I'd have gotten to the Front.

TIMMY: I'm sure of that.

JOHN: But once there, how would I have done?

TIMMY: Fine.

JOHN: How do you know?

TIMMY: You're a born fighter.

JOHN: They say a lot of fellows who were terrors as civilians turned to jelly when they heard those bullets.

TIMMY: Not you.

JOHN: It doesn't seem so. But you can't be sure. . . . That's always bothered me. (*Drinks the last of his beer.*) How about another?

TIMMY: Fine.

JOHN: Maybe we shouldn't.

TIMMY: Why?

JOHN: Your mother blames me for your getting sick last night; says I encouraged you to drink too much.

TIMMY: It wasn't what I drank. It was the excitement.

JOHN: That's what I told her.

TIMMY: *I'll* open two more.

JOHN: All right.