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# Primordial Grin

The Strange Tale of Captain  
Henry J. Kelly and Corporal  
Edward Yedh

David Woodruff – Primordial Grin © 2017

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March 20, 1918, near the village of Le Veyguier, east of the old Somme battlefield.

Even inside the dugout you could see the flash of the artillery, and hear the dull thud of the explosions. It was always hard to tell if the shell landed nearby or if the shelter was simply so poorly put together that dirt fell from the ceiling regardless of the distance to the impact ... but this particular round shook the ground so hard that it had to be close ... as close as maybe a few hundred yards. The men standing in the dugout had a tough time standing on their feet. Major Utterson brushed debris off his desk without concern as he looked up. One had to expect the odd shell or two. Served to keep the men awake.

“Ah, Kelly,” he said politely. The men all seemed fond of Utterson and as far as officers went he was indeed genuinely likable. He motioned the Captain to take a seat.

Kelly was a large, immaculately dressed officer who jaunted about with something of a stylish cast, yet he was far older than the other men in the dugout, closer in age to Utterson’s superiors than to the other men in a battalion. He stood out, not because of his age, and not the result of his wearing cavalry boots while being in the infantry, but because they were polished within an inch of their life, unlike the other mud-caked boots worn by his ranked peers in the room.

Utterson observed him with an emotionless glance.

“Right, Kelly,” Utterson started in as the Captain sat down, “It is Captain Henry J Kelly is it not?”

“Yes, sir” the captain responded in a distinguished tone.

“Mind if I ask what the ‘J’ stands for,” Utterson remarked while flipping through the pages of what appeared to be an army service record, “Your paperwork doesn’t say. Not that I want to intrude, but I do want to make sure that I’m talking to the right chap, don’t you know.”

“Not an intrusion at all sir,” the Captain shifted uncomfortably in his chair, “as it happens it’s just ‘J’ sir. Nothing more. My parent couldn’t agree whether to name me after my uncle John ... the wealthy one ... or after my grandfather James who owned the publishing business. So they just used J. Turns out the money and the business went to my cousin Cecil in any case. If that is all the major required I’ll be going back to my unit sir.” He finished as he rose from this chair.

“Sorry, Kelly, but there is a bit more to it than that I’m afraid.”

“Oh?” The Captain slowly sat back down.

“I’m sending you black to Blighty,” Utterson commented flatly.

“Excuse me, sir?”

“Look, old man,” Utterson continued, “You’re just not cut out for this. Look at yourself. You’re dressed for dinner ... this is a combat unit. I need combat leaders. The boys tell me you never leave your billet. Saps the morale don’t you know. You’re ... you’re ... well, quite frankly, you’re not cut out for this kind of thing. Besides aren’t you a doctor? Shouldn’t you be in the medical corps?”

“Well, sir,” Captain Kelly stumbled over the words, “I’m not a medical man. Technically I graduated Cambridge with a degree in chemistry.”

“My God man,” Utterson called out, “shouldn’t you be back developing nerve gasses or something like that? You’d be far more helpful to be back there than with us in the field.”

Kelly’s face turned dull white at the mention of the prospect. Normally, that’s just an expression, but in this case it was quite literal. The blood drained from his face faster than if his jugular had been opened with a knife. The Captain looked genuinely shocked. “Heavens no! I couldn’t do that. That is not a fit job for a gentleman ... it’s not a fit job for anyone really.”

“I see,” the major responded disappointed, “Well, I’m assigning you to the training unit in Edinburgh then. It’ll take a few weeks for the paperwork to come through, so in the meantime, you are on inactive duty. Lieutenant Lanyon will be in charge of the company.” He scratched a few notes in Kelly’s file and then looked up, surprised to see the captain still sitting there. “Dismissed,” Utterson spat.

Kelly stood, gave a snappy salute, almost clicking his heels together as he did so, and exited the dugout.

Lieutenant Poole, Utterson’s aid, who’d been observing the entire time now approached, standing behind the Major’s right side. “Isn’t he the one sir?”

“Yes,” Utterson relayed, “Dr. Kelly. Spend two years at Avonmouth Docks working with the team on those captured German shells to recreate mustard gas. Seems to have cracked him up.”

“So they sent him to a front-line unit?” Poole snickered in bemusement at the high command.

“Seems he had some friends in Whitehall.” The Major related, as he jotted down a few more comments in the file, “There’s a note here from a Dr. Guthrie. Claims that seeing the effect of the gas used on our troops might just harden the man so that they could put him back to work.”

“Quite the white feather case, that one,” Poole snorted.

“Oh, I wouldn’t call him a coward, Mr. Poole,” Utterson retorted, “That one just doesn’t want to get his hands dirty.”

“In this war?” Poole snorted in derision.

“Quite.”

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Kelly stumbled out of the dugout and into the darkness. The shelling had stopped, but he still weaved back and forth like a drunken man. Not aware of the time, He found himself in the village. The town had been flattened by German heavy artillery fire, but he seemed to be standing in front of a small building that he had never noticed before. It was mostly intact, yet surrounded by rubble, the tallest pile of the local pulverized brick was no more than half a meter in height. Yet inside he could see the lights were burning through the impossibly unbroken glass, giving the building a ghostly glow in amidst the desolation of the adjacent ruins.

Entering, he found the atmosphere jovial with groups of British officers sitting around small tables chatting intensely. No one seemed to notice him as he entered. Suddenly a young civilian appeared at his side and gestured him to a table. Dressed as an aproned barkeep, the Captain sat and the rather

oversized man with the odd face spoke to him in French: “Welcome to Café Rene. Can I get you something? Perhaps a nice cognac?”

“No,” Kelly mumbled in rather awkward French, “I don’t drink.”

“Strange place for a man who doesn’t drink to find himself in,” the man proclaimed in a deep Gallic tone. Without being invited, this peculiar man casually sat down at the table with him. “Perhaps a cup of tea then? I can never understand what you English see in a cup of tea, but I can have the girls brew up a pot for you if you like.”

“Sorry,” Kelly apologized, “I don’t understand why I am here. I seem... It seems I’ve just been relieved.”

As if suddenly woken from a long stupor, the Captain’s face brightened with an air of demanding curiosity, “How can this place be here?” He grabbed the proprietor’s arm, “I don’t remember any buildings still standing.”

“I ask myself that same question every night,” the barkeep responded, “good for me the Germans have such poor aim. But then they used to frequent the place when they occupied the town. Perhaps they have been missing us deliberately so they can come back here if they retake the town. Personally, I’ve been thinking of moving, but with you British here, I still do some business.”

With a look of intuition, based on sizing up his customers for maximum sales, the barkeep stood up excitedly. “I know just what you need.”

Kelly just sat looking around the room until the man returned carrying a tray with a glass and an unlabeled oblong bottle. He set the glass on the table and pulling the bottle cork, pouring a radiant green liquid into the cup.

“Don’t you need a cube of sugar for Absinthe?” Kelly declared in an almost disinterested tone.

“Well,” the proprietor remarked, “I usually serve Absinthe as a frappé, with a humble syrup, water, and some crushed ice ... but this isn’t Absinthe. Besides I’m all out of ice.” He waited as the Captain simply gazed off into nothingness, neither looking at the glass or his surroundings. Finally, the barkeep interrupted his guest’s blank stare and gestured at the goblet of bright green liquid. “Drink up,” he said, “it’s on the house.”

Kelly picked up the stemmed glass and took a whiff of the aroma. It didn’t smell like alcohol, in fact, it had a rather artificial odor to it, more like a medical tonic than an aperitif. Almost as if compelled by an unknown internal desire, the captain raised the glass and downed the liquid in a single gulp.

Its effect was almost immediate. He did feel better. It didn’t have the warm glow one expected from spirits, rather it imparted a rather bizarre feeling of well-being, a release of sorts, a fulfilling sense of uninhibited freedom. Captain Kelly closed his eyes to enjoy the experience, but when he opened them he wasn’t in the café but in the forward company rifle trench.

Hours had drained by. Dawn was just about to break. And a knot of men were milling about in an excited commotion.

“Did you see that? Masterful it was, I tell you, masterful.” Lance Corporal Newcomen declared, “Alf a mo, now where did he get off to?”

"E was standin right over there I tell you, just a mo ago. Enfield go over there and ask the Captain where the Corporal gotten off to."

The mud caked soldier approached the captain in an unusually anxious state.

"Pardon me, sir. Have you seen Corporal Yedh about?" the soldier inquired. Kelly stepped back at the man's approach. As if in dread that some of the soldier's mud might abruptly migrate in his direction.

"Yedh, Yedh you say? Their's no Yedh in the company Enfield, you know that." Terrified, Captain Kelly responded in a daze, still trying to come to grips with how he got to the front line. He backed farther away from the grime covered private.

"Don't I know it, sir, but bloody good thing he was with us. You should have seen him sir, VC material I tell you, VC material that's what I say ..." The excited tommie stopped himself as he took in the sight of the Captain. "Are you all right sir?" he asked in a concerned tone.

Noticing that the private was gawking, the Captain looked down at himself. His uniform jacket was missing, his tunic was in tatters, hanging from his shoulders by mere threads and his trousers were covered in mud.

"Well apparently, I'm in need of a change in uniform," the Captain said, regaining some of his composure, "Have Newcomen report to my billet in 15 minutes, I'll want a report."

"Yes, sir," the private snapped a salute.

The Captain returned the salute and the private wandered off. The private's salute wouldn't have been odd on a parade ground but in this trench ... it was a bit more life than this unit could usually muster.

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Kelly felt a bit out of sorts. He had managed to put on a fresh tunic and had replaced his mud-soaked trousers. But now he stood staring, frozen, for a long moment at the shoes he'd taken off ... not his officer's riding boots mind you, but a pair of mud-caked soldier's boots. Then he noticed that some of the goo attached to the tattered leather was not just mud, but gooey filth mixed with the unmistakable gore of blood. Kelly took an astonished look at their size and held his feet up next to them. They here several sizes too small, he couldn't imagine getting his feet into them. His hands shaking, he even attempted to put one back on ... and failed miserably. He was still in his stocking feet, gawking at the undersized footwear in a partial state of shock when the two men from the patrol stepped up to give their report.

"Sir, you've got to tell the Major" spouted Private Enfield, "They're getting ready for something big over there ... something really big."

"You got this information from a patrol?" the tall Captain Kelly looked down at him incredulously, "who ordered this patrol?"

"Why you did, sir," Newcomen replied, "you told us to go to the forward trench and wait for Corporal Yedh. He was to take us over ..."

"Over?"

“Over to the German trenches,” Enfield interrupted, “You should have seen it, sir. There we were. There had to be a ‘undred of ‘em. An right smartly decked out they were too, packs tool kits the lot. Without ‘esitation, they opened up on us. Not like the regular boys, the kind that run off when you get inside their works, no sir. These ones held their ground right smart. Yedh jumped right in front of us, never seen anything like it. It was like they was firing blanks at ‘em.” Enfield’s face seemed to go pale, recalling the incident. The terror of the moment he was describing was so fresh in his mind that it was as if he was reliving the experience.

“They just bounced off him, like they was blanks. Left little holes in his tunic too,” Enfield swallowed hard at this juncture, “Then ‘e charged ‘em. No rifle, not even a trench knife. He grabbed the first one like he was some kinda rag doll and ripped out the bloke’s throat, he did ... using those great big of teeth of ‘is.”

“Teeth,” the captain inquired, “what do you mean teeth?”

“It’s the oddest thing,” Newcomen explained, “E has those dog teeth, what do you call’m ... incisors ... that’s the ticket.”

“More like fangs, I’d say,” Enright added.

“Yea,” Newcomen continued, “but growing out of the bottom of his jaw. And big ones too, covered up most of his upper lip when he gives you that quirky smile of ‘is. Short stocky fellow too, he is, build like me best pal Harry, he’s a wrestler down the Dock Street. So, he picks the first guy up and just rips out his throat with these great mucking fangs a ‘is. Then he kind of shook him like a lion in the London zoo with a fresh piece of meat. Make the man’s blood spirt everywhere, like a broken pipe. Then he throws the man’s body at ‘is fellows, like it was a game a candlepin bowling, you know ... like the Canucks do.”

Newcomen wiped his mouth as if he himself had just bitten the German soldier, “Then it goes off and ‘as a taste of two or three more. Enfield finally gets his jollies pickin of one with his rifle...”

“Ain’t no coward,” Enfield spat indigently, “you bloody wog.”

Newcomen give a private a hard jab with his elbow before continuing, “That’s when one of them filthy Huns threw a stick bomb at ‘em”

“Grenade,” Enright corrected him.

“Shut your face, private,” Newcomen snarled, “I’m talking to the Capin here. Like I was saying, he throws this grenade and it explodes right in the corporal’s face. Blows the front his tonic right off. Ignites the hairs on his chest like it was a lighter for a fag.”

“Not a mark on ‘em,” Enright remarks in an excited voice, “like he was wearing armor or something. But it blasted the mud clear off his chest!”

Newcomen looks at the private with a full degree of disdain, “Didn’t I tell you to close that pie hole of yours? Heh?” he turned back to the Captain, “He musta had something on under his tunic that’s what I say. Damn surprised that it didn’t just blow his bloody ‘ead off, it going off so close an all.”

“Corporal Yedh, you say?” It was as if the captain was just catching up to the beginning of the man’s report. “Did he give you a first name?”

“Edmund, I think” Newcomen turned his head trying to recall.

“Eddie ... Edward, that was it,” Enright added, convinced he had the answer. Lance Corporal Newcomen just gave him a sharp look and the private took a step back like he was falling back into line at attention.

“Sir, you’ve got to tell the major, sir. We’ve got to pull back, sir. Without the corporal, they got enough boys to overrun us in a minute.” Newcomen looked deeply concerned at this point, and more than a little bit frightened, “We should fall back to the reserve trenches and have the major plaster the whole place with artillery, sir ... spread them Huns all over the field like they was spreading manure ... pardon the language. Sir.”

Throughout all this description the blood had still not returned to the two men’s faces. Say what you wanted, Kelly was like a barrack’s room lawyer, when it came to the men inventing stories. He heard them all, but always in the vein of getting out of duty. Never as an after-action report of a raid, as this story was, and never once in such elaborate detail.

“Where did all this take place?” Kelly demanded.

“Right opposite the line ... right here. Come have a look yourself.” Newcomen sprinted outside, without even waiting to be dismissed and to Kelly’s own surprise, he followed. The Lance Corporal marched straight up to a V-shaped set of binoculars, designed to give the officers a view of the trenches without putting them at risk from the odd sniper’s bullet. He motioned the captain over to the eyepiece.

Spreading out before the captain’s lenses was a massive pile of German bodies, perhaps a hundred, perhaps more. They lay as if they had been mowed down by machinegun fire, but they weren’t in the nice neat little rows of men who had just stumbled where they had been felled by a hail of lead. These troops were tossed around like they were the playthings of some horrendous giant, in heaps and piles of mangled corpses. One or two had, the Captain noted, been felled by small arms fire, but the vast majority had the exact same wound. The front of their throats were missing, replaced by a bloody gash as if the manor’s Bulldogs had just had a field day on a flock of quail.

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Captain Kelly, now fully back in his spit and polish uniform, spent the greater part of that afternoon trying to explain the men’s report to Lieutenant Poole at the battalion HQ dugout.

“Look, Kelly,” the Lieutenant spoke with some disdain, “You’re inactive, it’s not part of your duty anymore. Just let the replacement handle it.”

“I really think you should bring this to the Major’s attention” Kelly insisted.

“Look, it really is no use.” The Lieutenant responded with annoyance, “the Major’s off at division HQ. Some kind of intelligence conference and he won’t be back for hours. Besides if something was brewing we’d have heard something by now. Somebody would have captured a deserter or two that would have spilled their guts out. You know how Jerry is, he’ll shell us for a week before he starts in on us ... plenty of time to pull back before they come rushing at our positions.”

Kelly wandered off in disgust, not because his concerns had been so shabbily attended to, but because he had been dismissed in so ungentlemanly a style by the Major’s aid. He crossed back through town.

On his way up to the dugout, he had looked carefully for the café ... indeed for any building that even remotely looked untouched ... and had found nothing. The village was a featureless heap of brick remnants and dust loosely organized into streets and alleys by the boots of the men as they marched to their positions.

Yet here before him it stood, in need of a lick of paint to be sure, but deeply intact.

The Captain was relieved, almost delighted, to finally find the place. He was beginning to believe the entire experience had just been a horrid dream.

The place was empty of customers, but the barkeep noticed him at once. "Welcome back Captain," he bellowed, "It's a little bit early in the day for you English ... still, a customer is a customer .... what can I get you? Heh?"

Henry J Kelly took a seat at the bar, as the aproned man stood mindlessly wiping the spots off a glass with a bar towel. "Do you have any more of that green concoction you served me last night?"

"Ahhh, you found that to your liking, did you?" the café owner smiled, delightedly. "Say what you will about the English ... but they have a special taste for drinks with that *unusual* quality." He placed the corked bottle on the bar with a glass. Kelly snatched the bottle off the bar and in a single frantic movement, uncorked it, and poured the bottle's green contents down his throat, without bothering to use the glass.

This time, although the concoction had the same taste, the effect was missing. "What's wrong with this?" Kelly demanded.

"Oh, you have to give it a minute to kick in, monsieur," he stated flatly.

Kelly now noticed that the bottle was empty, "Do you have any more?" He asked as he threw over a thousand Francs on the bar. "I will purchase all you can supply."

"That was my last bottle," the owner answered sheepishly.

"Can you get more?"

"I'm afraid not, monsieur," he replied, reluctantly handing back the Captain's money, "Shame as it is for a Frenchman to admit it, but the effect of this particular brew comes not from the ingredients, per se, but for certain impurities in the mixture. No one quite knows how to reproduce it, you see."

Kelly stepped back, knocking over the stool as he clutched the franc notes in his fist.

"Be careful, Captain," the barkeep warned, "the effect of that much taken at once can have ... shall we say ... unpredictable results."

As the barkeep went around the table to steady the officer, Kelly stood bolt upright, brushing the owner off as he approached. Again, he felt a warm feeling of freedom, the delightful taste of that comes from not having any regrets. The Captain smiled. His cares and his years seemed to fall away like leaves in an autumn meadow. He was overcome with a desire to ... indulge. The Captain took off his coat and unceremoniously threw it into a heap on the ground.

“What am I doing in this fool uniform again?” he bellowed.

“Would you like your old Corporal’s uniform once more?” the barkeep pronounced.

“Yes, and get me some proper shoes,” he demanded as the barkeep scurried off to the back room. “Wait a minute” he cried, slurring his words a bit over a pair of large, protruding tusks, “where are the girls?”

“Oh, I’m afraid you tired them out last night,” the peculiar café owner snickered.

“I suppose I did, didn’t I,” he bellowed, “I suppose I did at that!”

A stream enlisted of men now entered the café, led by Newcomen and Enright. One of them began to play on an upright piano, while the others began an orgy of drinking. Half-filled bottles began to rain down on the ground, splashing both liquid and shards of glass on the café floorboards. The café dissolved into a scene straight out of an American “B” western silent film, with more similarity to a Tom Mix short than to an establishment in the heart of France. Chairs came crashing down on the floor and into the walls, with the expected results. A set of scantily clad girls charged down the main staircase. One of them even threw herself into the ensemble by leaping off the top step, only to be caught by the arms of an anxious group of Tommies. All the while the barkeep stood by, unphased and unaffected by the destruction of his establishment. Taking a sip from a glass of wine, the look on his bemused face was one of honest remembrance rather than shock.

Night seems to fall quickly, with few even bothering to take notice. At last, the barkeep looked up at the café clock, hanging up on the wall behind the bar. He took another sip of his wine and noted the time. Just a few seconds before 4:30 AM.

Abruptly the party was interrupted by exploding shells. In an instant, the world turned to fire. Outside, the sky was lit up like it was midday, accompanied by a deafening roar.

“That’s our cue boys,” the big toothed corporal announced.

“Que,” private Enright shouted over the din, “that’s our signal to get the bloody hell out of here!”

Corporal Yedh picked up Private Enright and lifting him with ease into the air, looked up at his frightened face, his body uselessly dangling, “That’s our cue to go visit our friends the Germans ... RIGHT NOW!” He shrieked, throwing the private across the room.

“Are you mad?” screamed Newcomen, “We’ll be blown to bits out there.”

“Yes, because the stinking Germans are going to attack in a few minutes,” Yedh spat on the floor, delightedly. He stood, arms raised, as in praise to the God of War himself, backlit by the red glow of the burning sky. “You’ve got to like their style ... that’s what the Heinies have you know, style. I like the look on their faces when I kill them ... it’s like they can’t imagine that it could happen to them!” He turned to face Newcomen, “Run away, go ahead, and get plastered by this creeping barrage. ‘Tords the rear is where the shells I’ll be going. Like I said I’m off to kill a few Germans ... you think their own shells will be falling on them?”

Newcomen shook his head no as Yedh pushed him towards the door, “come on then, time to hunt some Krauts.”

The men, strangely inspired by the Corporals' bravado, were unexpectedly dressed in full kit, helmets on, bayonets fixed and ready for action. They piled out the door following the Corporal with the glow of hate in his eyes. Once the men were moving, he turned back to the doorway. There stood the barkeep, lazily cleaning a wine cup, standing before an old massive shell hole, half filled with water, surrounded by nothing but dusty streets. No café, no piano, no bar.

In the bright daylight caused by multiple exploding shells, the barkeep fluttered his towel at the departing men, "I almost pity the poor Boches ... I almost do ... but I don't" he smiled.

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The shelling had at last moved off and Major Utterson could at last stand again, although the ground continued to shake violently. Although the shelling had been extreme, it was over far too early. The Bose made it a habit of pounding the lines for days when they wanted to launch an offensive. This was far too short. The whole point of an offensive barrage was to leave the defender unable to respond. After just one German counter-attack near Amiens, Utterson wasn't able to spell his own name for an hour. Perhaps the German's had just wanted to get the Battalion's attention. Still best to get a handle on things and see what was what. "Poole, get a report from headquarters. Find out how things look on our flanks. Maidenhead, check the periscope, what can you see outside? Is the battalion standing to their positions?"

Paperwork littered the dugout floor, the report's pages shifting from time to time as more shells dropped in the distance. "Sir ... Sir ... the trenches are empty."

"Say what?" Utterson snapped, "What do you mean empty? How many men did we lose?"

"That's' just it sir," Maidenhead reported, "There's nothing in the trenches ... no men, no bodies, nothing at all sir."

"And the Germans?" Utterson snapped.

"No sign of them either, sir." Maidenhead swung the periscope in all directions once again to check for any sign of an advancing enemy.

"Sir," announced Lieutenant Poole, putting down the phone, "there are no reports from our flanks, sir. We've been cut off. I think the other units have been overrun."

Utterson picked up his hat and marched outside to see for himself. The sky was still lit up with flashes, although most of the gunfire had moved off to their rear. Sporadic machine gun fire could be heard and Utterson turned his field glasses to the north where he could see some movement. It was German troops, hundreds of them. They charged into the British works, bayonetting those who had not fallen in the initial assault. One dirty faced German stormtrooper turned and looked directly at him, his teeth gleaming white in the dark, pre-dawn sky.

Utterson stepped back and put the glasses down, then he turned in a panic to look to his front. There was something wrong. The ground before the trenches as a low lying flat piece of rolling land, the nearest heights a good two or three miles off. Now there as a ridge, just before the outer most British works. Utterson picked up his glasses to have a better look. In the flashes of the receding gunfire, he could see that it wasn't a ridge at all, but piles of torn and mutilated corpses. Standing in the wind was

one lone figure. Wearing only a helmet, belt, boots and the tattered remains of what once must have been a uniform, the creature stood in a half crouch, arms extended from his side, fingers spread wide.

For all practical purposes, he looked like a man out of time, some throwback to a prehistoric era of savagery and ferocity. The singular figure turned and in the broken light, Utterson could see two great fangs sticking out from the creature's lower jaw and extending out over its upper lip as if two great thumb-sized tusks were standing guard over this primordial being's blood-stained mouth. They dripped with a dark red gore.

"Sir," Maidenhead reported, "We've been ordered to withdraw, sir."

"What," Utterson shouted into the wind.

"We've been ordered to withdraw ..." he repeated slowly. "Shall I have the papers burned, sir?"

"No time," Utterson snapped back.

He looked on as Lieutenant Poole slowly walked out of the dugout holding a single sheet of paper. On it, paperclipped to the top was a small note. The page was from Captain Kelly's file. Poole just looked at Utterson, his eyes glazed over. The Major took the paper and read the note.

*Fooled you*, it simply read. Signed: The Right Honourable General Sir You Stupid Git, Lord Edward Hyde.

"Sir, the entire file, it's a fraud" Poole mumbled.

"Yes, Lieutenant I can see that." Utterson responded, "Never mind about that now ... it's time to go."

"Who the devil is Hyde?" Poole asked.

"For some reason, don't ask me why, I rather suspect he has something to do with our friend out there," Utterson pointed just beyond the main trench line.

Poole raised his looking glass to see and Utterson joined him. "Where sir?" Poole asked. Frantically, Utterson scanned the horizon for the misanthrope he'd just seen. But instead, he saw a man, in what appeared to be the same lack of uniform on his knees facing the dugout. "There," Utterson shouted. As both British officers watched he raised his head, both men could clearly make out the mud caked form of Captain and Doctor Henry J Kelly.

The two officers reluctantly watched as the Captain's shaking hands picked up a service revolver from the ground, placed it at his temple, and pulled the trigger. The shelling was still so loud that they couldn't hear the report of the revolver, they just watched as the body fell to the ground. "Let's get out of here. We'll pick up any stragglers on the way back."

"How should we report this, sir?" Poole asked.

"Oh, I don't think we should report this Poole," Utterson responded, "Somebody will just get all the details wrong."