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Translated from French by Brian Cole

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## AFTER THE BATTLE

3

## AFTER THE BATTLE

**DRAMA.** After a major battle, only three soldiers survive. To pass the time, one soldier proposes that they play “The Last Survivor Game” in which they all draw straws, and the one with the shortest straw has the right to kill the other two. The other two soldiers think that their fellow comrade is either joking or has gone mad, but they soon realize they have no choice but to play the game if they are to survive.

**Performance time:** Approximately 20-30 mins.

AFTER THE BATTLE  
4

**CHARACTERS**  
(4 flexible, extras)

**ANDREW/REBECCA:** Cynical, self-confident corporal who is always spick and span; wears a uniform; flexible.

**DENNIS/HEATHER:** Disillusioned but clear-thinking soldier; wears a uniform; flexible.

**MICHAEL/SARAH:** Slovenly soldier without scruples; wears a uniform; flexible.

**SOLDIER:** Uniform is torn and covered in blood; flexible.

**EXTRAS:** As Soldiers.

AFTER THE BATTLE  
5

SETTING

A devastated battlefield.

SET

**A devastated battlefield.** The sky is grey. Dead soldiers and the remains of tanks and other miscellaneous metal carcasses are scattered about.

AFTER THE BATTLE  
6

PROPS

Dummies wearing military uniforms  
Bag  
3 Military rifles (fake or can be implied)  
Dirty tangle of string

SOUND EFFECTS

Explosion  
Columns of smoke  
Sound of bomb detonating  
Whistling sound  
Thick smoke

AFTER THE BATTLE  
7

"AFTER THE RAIN...SUNSHINE.  
NOW IS THE SILENCE—  
THE DEEP SILENCE  
THAT FOLLOWS THE BATTLE.  
NOTHING ELSE."

—ANDREW

## AFTER THE BATTLE

(AT RISE: A devastated battlefield. The sky is grey. The remains of bodies, tanks, and other miscellaneous metal carcasses can be seen scattered about. Michael is turning over dead bodies and searching them thoroughly. From time to time he mutters some indistinct words, gesturing as if addressing invisible listeners. He puts some things in his bag. Andrew and Dennis look at Michael from time to time. They look tired, especially Andrew who often looks down at the ground.)

ANDREW: *(With an air of resignation.)* How banal it is...death. Here everything is the same. It is the same smooth desolation. Nothing else. It is distressing...always the same as far as the eye can see.

DENNIS: Yes.

*(Michael is still busy robbing corpses, occasionally turning one over to search the pockets then pushing it back with his foot.)*

ANDREW: *(Self-righteously.)* After the rain...sunshine. Now is the silence—the deep silence that follows the battle. Nothing else.

DENNIS: Yes.

ANDREW: Is that all you can say? *(Dennis does not answer. He is looking the other way. Points at Michael.)* Look at that vulture! He at least does not talk metaphysics! He does not ask himself useless questions. He makes efforts to survive, that's all! See how busy he is with the corpses! He just loves it! The animal! How comforting it is... *(Picks up gun.)* ...to think I could shoot him down like that—absentmindedly—without thinking. How easy it all is sometimes.

DENNIS: *(Sighs.)* Yes.

AFTER THE BATTLE

9

ANDREW: At last, a reaction! Why do you sigh? (*Dennis does not answer.*) Huh? Why don't you answer? Is "yes" all you can say?

(*Pause.*)

DENNIS: "Oui," "yes," "ja," "sí," "da," "igen," "tak," "taip" —  
ANDREW: Is that all?! I don't need a course in foreign languages! Use your mother tongue!

DENNIS: I don't know what my mother tongue is. I never knew my mother or my father, anyway. This language is mine, but I don't know where I get it from. That's all.

(*In the distance, Michael is still going from one corpse to another.*)

ANDREW: It's really you who I should bump off. (*Points to Michael.*) He, at least, knows what he wants. He doesn't annoy people with his feelings. He acts! He is effective, while you, with your beaten-dog look — (*Slight pause.*) Let's hope he finds something good to get our teeth into.

DENNIS: Okay, what are you waiting for? Get on with it!

ANDREW: What?

DENNIS: (*Provocatively.*) Kill him. Kill him since this gives you such pleasure. In war everything is permitted! Get him out of our hair! (*Pause.*) After all, what he is doing is amoral —

ANDREW: Amoral? What do you mean, *amoral*? Stripping the corpses?

DENNIS: Yes.

ANDREW: They are dead. It is not important. We are alive; that is all.

DENNIS: No. It is amoral all the same. Alive or dead, it's the same thing. It is wrong —

ANDREW: You can be awfully boring with your morality! "Alive or dead, it's all the same!" That means nothing. Nothing at all. (*Indicating corpses.*) They serve no useful

AFTER THE BATTLE

10

purpose... *(Pause.)* ...except perhaps to feed the living!  
*(Dennis does not reply. Michael moves farther and farther away. To Dennis.)* Cretin! Idiot! I really should kill you! I don't know what holds me back!

DENNIS: Why? Just now he... *(Indicating Michael.)* ...was the one you wanted to kill!

ANDREW: I don't know. You or him...it's all the same.  
*(Pause. Thinks.)* No, I prefer to kill you...simply to prove your theory.

DENNIS: What theory? I have no theory.

ANDREW: Yes, you have. You said the living and the dead are all the same.

DENNIS: Well?

ANDREW: *(Irritated.)* Just try to understand! If living and dead is all the same...if I kill you, it makes no difference!

DENNIS: That is absurd. *(Points to a corpse a short distance away.)* I might as well shoot him!

ANDREW: *(Laughs.)* No, it's not so funny! Him I don't know. It is too easy. And, then...he is already dead. You cannot kill a dead man! It's a simple question of logic!

DENNIS: *(Shrugs.)* If you say so. *(Looks into the distance. Long pause.)* You think we are the only survivors?

ANDREW: I don't know. I don't care. *(Moves closer to Dennis.)* Listen, we could play a game to pass the time.

DENNIS: *(Distrustful.)* What game?

ANDREW: Look, let's suppose we are the only survivors...  
*(Points at Michael.)* ...he and we.

DENNIS: You think there are no more on the other side?

ANDREW: That's not the point! I am speaking about us, our army.

DENNIS: So?

ANDREW: So, we draw straws. The one who draws the shortest has the right to kill the other two!

**[END OF FREEVIEW]**