

SOLDIER BOY

CAST: Politician

Boy

Soldier

Girl

Mother

SETTING: Bare Stage

All asides are delivered directly, intimately, to the audience

Lights up on POLITICIAN

PART 1 ANTIQUITY

POLITICIAN: Barbarians at the gates! Invaders on our shores! Terror in our homeland! (aside) That doesn't sound good, does it?

My fellow citizens. We are facing a national crisis. Now has come a time for sacrifice. To preserve my way of life, you must...(offstage) What? What?

Oh...Indeed, to preserve our way of life...(chuckles towards offstage)...you must...(looks off)...Alright, alright. Indeed we must prepare to sacrifice. To sacrifice some comfort, to sacrifice some gold...(aside) some of your gold, actually...to sacrifice some of your sons, (next line a la Groucho) some of your daughters - and maybe just a little bit of your personal freedom.

But in return, I promise you a spectacle unlike any you've ever seen...a stirring struggle for national honor...a war to end...(looks off, giggles)...all wars.

MUSIC: 1st verse Dylan's Highway 61 Revisited

SOLDIER comes on stage, consults with POLITICIAN

BOY: (rushing on stage) They're animals!! Savages!! How could they do it?!?
(aside) How could they have done this...to...to...innocent people!?!?

SOLDIER: (appearing at his side/w clipboard) They're animals.

BOY: That's right!

SOLDIER: Savages.

BOY: You just don't do that!

SOLDIER: We need to pay 'em back.

BOY: (noticing SOLDIER for first time) That's...right.

SOLDIER: You want to pay 'em back, don't you?

BOY: Uh...

SOLDIER: THINK...about what they did.

BOY: Uh...yeah.

SOLDIER: Don't you want to pay 'em back? Are ya with me?

BOY: Yeah!

SOLDIER: Make your mark here. (BOY hesitates) RIGHT NOW, BOY!

(BOY hurriedly puts thumbprint on clipboard; then gives weird salute-SOLDIER gives perfunctory salute back; BOY wanders off)

POLITICIANS: How we doin'?

SOLDIER: Terrific. Flockin' in like lemmings. We're going to run out of forms soon.

POLITICIAN: We can always get more forms.

(POLITICIAN and SOLDIER share big laugh)

SOLDIER: Who was that wise sumbitch who said, the most dangerous creature on earth is your average 18 year old boy.

(GIRL wanders on stage; looked up and down by POLITICIAN and SOLDIER)

POLITICIAN: He was probably the father of your average 17 year old girl.

(POLITICIAN and SOLDIER share another big laugh; step aside)

POLITICIAN: Keep 'em coming.

SOLDIER: Right.

(POLITICIAN/SOLDIER move aside; BOY and GIRL meet centerstage.)

BOY: Hi.

GIRL: Hi.

(pause)

BOY: How was school?

GIRL: O.K.

(pause)

(simultaneously) BOY: I guess you heard about...GIRL: Oh, yeah, I heard it's terrible...

(pause)

BOY: I've joined up to fight.

(pause)

GIRL: Oh...(torn)...I'm so proud of you.

(they hug)

MOTHER: Children.

BOY: Mother. Mother, I'm going to war.

MOTHER: Oh, my son. (they hug) Your father would have been very proud.

GIRL: Your father was a hero, wasn't he?

MOTHER: Yes, he was. The Battle of the Purple Sea. That's where we lost him. And now my son is following in his footsteps.

(BOY does a take – aside - at that pronouncement of his doom)

MOTHER: Another hero in the family.

BOY: Goodbye, Mother.

MOTHER: (with an embrace) Goodbye.

BOY: (shy) Goodbye.

GIRL: Goodbye.

SOLDIER: (grabs BOY) Let's go.

GIRL: Wait!

MOTHER: Wait!

SOLDIER: He's mine now. Let's go! (pulls BOY downstage, then moves aside; BOY freezes)

(MOTHER and GIRL come together and sing first verse of "Soldier Boy.")

MOTHER/GIRL: Soldier boy, oh my little soldier boy

I'll be true to you.

You were my first love

And you'll be my last love

I will never make you blue

I'll be true to you (SOLDIER moves into scene)

In the whole world

You can love but one girl

Let me be that one girl

For I'll be true to you.

(MOTHER/GIRL fade)

SOLDIER: You're mine now, boy. And that means you're not a boy anymore. Do you know what you are now?

BOY: Uh...a man.

SOLDIER: No, you're not a man! YOU...ARE...A...

BOY: Uh...something degrading...like...I don't know, an animal, a worm...

SOLDIER: What are you talking about? No, you're a MACHINE! A machine! A killing machine.

BOY: (nods, then after thinking it through) What's a machine?

SOLDIER: Oh, yeah, they haven't been invented yet. (aside) Uh, military's working on some prototypes. Keep it to yourselves. Or I'll have to kill you. (back to BOY) You're a machine...a...a mechanism...no...a force! A force that will act without thought or will!

BOY: (questioning) Without thought...or will...

SOLDIER: That's the spirit! (Claps him on the back, gives him a weird salute, which BOY returns)

(POLITICIAN enters. SOLDIER moves to him.)

SOLDIER: We're ready now, sir.

POLITICIAN: For what?

SOLDIER: Uh, the war...to end...

POLITICIAN: The war to end? We can't have that!

SOLDIER: Not exactly. The war to end...all wars.

POLITICIAN: Oh...r-i-g-h-t.

(POLITICIAN and SOLDIER share big laugh. POLITICIAN enjoys it with sustaining giggles.)

SOLDIER: Uh, excuse me?

POLITICIAN: Yes, yes?

SOLDIER: Supplies?

POLITICIAN: Oh, yeah, funding just came through. (Hands him a sword.) (aside,winking) Got it at a good price, too. Lowest bid.

(SOLDIER moves back to BOY, hands him Sword. Starts to walk away.)

BOY: Uh...what?

SOLDIER: (over shoulder) Attack.

BOY: Wha...

SFX: Advancing army; heavy footsteps, howls, drums, clank of weapons and

armor

BOY: (scanning horizon) Miles of men...and boys...(aside) machines...spread across miles of land. Carrying every conceivable kind of tool...or...or thing to destroy other men...and boys. Rocks, sticks, fire, burning oil, horses, elephants, swords, spears, axes, arrows! Thousands of them, coming right at thousands of us.

Only a teenage boy...at his sexual peak, just blasting off into this new body of his that's turning into a man...angry at the world, totally pissed at this bunch of boys and men coming towards him...only a boy armed with miraculous healing powers, able to recover from drinking massive amounts of alcohol...or getting hit with numerous rocks, sticks, swords...etc...only a boy sure he'll live forever... young, dumb and chockfull of cum...only that teenage boy could find something like this...very, very cool.

(BOY freezes)

POLITICIAN: But oh, they do. Without these boys – whose brains are not even formed enough yet to recognize danger – (looks heavenward) – Thank you thank you for your oh so intelligent design – boys who should still be under the loving care of their mothers – without them – this world could never have been fought for – this world could never have been won.

SOLDIER: Reminds me of me...when I was just a lad.

(POLITICIAN and SOLDIER share laugh, move off.)

SFX: Music to be determined behind...

(BOY performs Japanese sword routine)

(Blackout on boy; He exits, POLITICIAN enters)

POLITICIAN: Wasn't that something? Didn't I tell you? Didn't that get your blood stirring?

Wars are great for culture. Gives us all kind of glorious new songs and stories.
(aside) Plays.

One of my favorite war poems...(he comes closer to audience)

They came at us from the left

They came at us from...

(aside) Now, I wonder was that my left, or their left...must have been my left...

They came at us from the left

They came at us from the right

(aside) I guess it doesn't matter who's left, huh? They were surrounded. (aside)
I wasn't there.

They...

(MOTHER and GIRL rush in)

MOTHER: Where's my son? Is my son...?

POLITICIAN: Your son? Hey, you! (SOLDIER enters; to him) Seen her son?

SOLDIER: Not anymore.

(POLITICIAN and SOLDIER share big laugh)

POLITICIAN: M'am, did you happen to vote for me?

MOTHER: Yes, I did.

POLITICIAN: Then I'm sure your son was a hero. Take over.

MOTHER: WAS...a hero?

SOLDIER: (to MOTHER) M'am...we regret to inform you...

SONG: Final verse of Dylan's Highway 61 Revisited

PART 2 OUR HERITAGE

(Lights fade, then back up on POLITICIAN.)

POLITICIAN: (in thought, pacing) Mmmm. Let's see...Aaaah! Protect the freedom of people in OTHER lands. That's the ticket! Spread the freedom of our land abroad. And in so doing – spread our culture, our values, OUR way of life.

And that means freedom, and justice...and...and tolerance...and justice...(aside)
Did I already say that? Damn...and liberty...(off) What do you mean? That's the same as freedom? Aaa, you know what I'm talking about.

(aside) And if they don't want it, we're just gonna make 'em want it!

(POLITICIAN steps aside. BOY and GIRL enter.)

BOY: I'm just not sure...is it our country's job to go in there, and clean up their mess?

GIRL: I know. But those people are suffering.

BOY: I know.

GIRL: Murder. Famine. Genocide. Someone has to do something.

(SOLDIER enters)

SOLDIER: And I know just who that someone is. Congratulations. (Shakes BOY's hand. Turns to girl.) You'll be proud of him, won't ya? Won't ya? (she nods, forced, and embraces him) See. She's proud of ya. (winks, nudges a couple of times). See you in boot camp.

BOY: Wait a minute. I have to think about this. I know people are suffering. But I'm not sure I totally agree with this war. I'm not sure about war in general. I think there's got to be a way to settle...

SOLDIER: (conciliatory) I understand. War is evil. It's wrong to kill. You know what?

BOY: What?

SOLDIER: It doesn't matter! Cause...(he turns to approaching POLITICIAN)

POLITICIAN: You're Drafted!!!

(POLITICIAN and SOLDIER share big laugh, move off; MOTHER appears)

MOTHER: Children.

BOY: Mother. I...(hesitates)

MOTHER: What is it? What's wrong?

BOY: I've been drafted.

MOTHER: Oh, no. Oh no. (moves to BOY to embrace him.) You must, you must be careful, so careful. Here, have a cookie to take with you. (BOY takes cookie, puts it in pocket) Some small token of home. We'll...we'll pray for you.

(SOLDIER appears)

MOTHER: But we've had so little time.

SOLDIER: That's always the way, isn't it. Let's move out. (SOLDIER grabs

BOY and moves him aside. They freeze.)

(MOTHER and GIRL come together and sing, slowly, second verse of “Soldier Boy.”)

MOTHER/GIRL: Wherever you go
My heart will follow
I love you so
I’ll be true to you
Take my love with you
To any port or foreign shore
Darling you must feel for sure
I’ll be true to you.

(MOTHER and GIRL move aside)

SOLDIER: All right. You’re in a different kind of war here. This isn’t going to be a stand-up fight. They’ll be coming at you from every angle – from behind every door, behind every bush. (aside) It’s really pretty unnerving. You won’t be able to tell your allies from your enemies. In this kind of war, you know who your best friend is?

BOY: Uh...you?

SOLDIER: Me? Don’t be crazy. I’m not going anywhere near this thing. No, it’s your gun. (hands BOY a gun) Live with it. Learn it. Love it. It’ll save your life. (aside) Or, then again, it might not. (starts to move away)

BOY: But...

SOLDIER: What?

BOY: That’s it? You’re sending me over there? No more training? No more...

SOLDIER: All right. All right. You want a tip from an experienced campaigner?

BOY: Yeah.

SOLDIER: The women you’re gonna come across over there? (wink, nudge) Always wear a condom.

SFX: Music Beginning of Creedence' Run Through The Jungle

BOY: They ship us thousands of miles away from home. Strange land. People looking at us like we were the bad guys, not the ones trying to help. Different language, different life. Hot as hell, all day and all night long.

SFX: Explosions, automatic weapon fire

Then attacks started. Snipers. Small bands of rebels. Dedicated, dangerous. Suicide bombers...men, women, children. (pause – shaking head)
My best friend died in my arms. (BOY freezes)

POLITICIAN: (stepping in) Fellow citizens...(looks off)...these are fellow citizens?...(makes a face like he smells something bad.) All right. Hey, I have good news tonight. The war is going great! Don't listen to the media. Don't believe their slanted stories, their video, their casualty reports...

MOTHER: (coming up to him with GIRL) Casualty reports?

POLITICIAN: Now, now, m'am, let's just gloss over those, huh?

MOTHER: But my son is over there!

POLITICIAN: Now, m'am, did you happen to vote for me?

MOTHER: Yes. Yes, I did.

POLITICIAN: Aren't you wonderful. Well, I'm sure your son is just fine, in fact I'm sure he's a hero. And if he comes back home...

MOTHER: IF???

POLITICIAN: When...when...when he comes back home he's going to be greeted by cheering crowds, ticker tape parades, adoring girlfriends, money paying for a fabulous education that's going to give him an impressive job going nowhere in a society built around the rich, the finest medical care for any amputations, brain damage...

MOTHER: What?

POLITICIAN: When he comes back home...

MOTHER: When is he coming back home?

POLITICIAN: Well, as you know the military has decided to extend all troops' tours for another...(aside) what'd we say?...two years...

(SOLDIER steps in, gestures, with fingers, “3”)

POLITICIAN: Ouch.

MOTHER: Another two years? Who did this? (POLITICIAN gestures with head towards SOLDIER.) The military...?

POLITICIAN: Y-a-a-ah, the military. Hey, get over here!!

SOLDIER hurries over

POLITICIAN: Extending the troops' tour. Tsk Tsk Tsk.

SOLDIER: But...

POLITICIAN: Look at this poor woman...(displays her)...worrying herself to death. (leads her away) M'am, you can be assured I'll be looking into this, (aside)...at least until the next election...and if need be, heads will roll...

SOLDIER: But...(moves off)

POLITICIAN: Well, not exactly roll, but if there are wrong-doers or incompetents, they'll be forced...to take lucrative consulting jobs in the private sector. Don't worry, M'am, after all, we are your government. (sends her off) (aside) You know, if it weren't for people, I could something done around here.

SOLDIER comes up to BOY

SOLDIER: How's it going there, killer?

BOY: It's tough, sir. We don't know what we're supposed to be doing over here. We don't know who the enemy is. We...

SOLDIER: Fine, fine. Well, you'll be pleased to know that I'm here visiting the battlefield, escorting, among others, the stars of the latest hit reality tv shows back home, as well as a couple of pro footballers...not to mention the youngest, most buxom actress/model/whatevers we could find (aside)...that's how we got the football players to come...plus...(POLITICIAN steps up) a politician on a public relations boondoggle. There's going to be a show for you tomorrow...provided you're still here.

(SOLDIER and POLITICIAN share a big laugh, then move away)

BOY: Most of us came over just looking to survive. Some of us thinking we could do some good. All of us afraid. Afraid of dying. Especially afraid of killing. (aside) We got over that one.

BOY: (eating cookie) We had just went into a small village suspected of being a rebel stronghold. Strolled right through the middle of town. Nothing out of the ordinary.
Then...

SFX: Small arms fire, eventually rockets begin and build. BOY mimes shooting with rifle

BOY: We laid down a suppressing fire. Tried to avoid civilians. Took shelter in the nearest buildings.
More and more of 'em. Get over there, cover that side.
Rockets...Rockets!!! INCOMING!!
Within an hour, half of us were down. Get on the radio. Where's the radio?
This was a trap. We need help.
Keep 'em off me! Johnny! Zak! Let's head that way, more cover there.
Johnny! Johnny! Zak?
Oh God. It's just me.....momma.

LIGHTS Blackout

SFX: Final automatic weapon bursts

MOTHER: (from upstage...anguished scream!!!)

PART 3 THE FUTURE

SFX: Music; Beatles All You Need Is Love

POLITICIAN: (moving into the light, giving the peace sign a la hippies, saying "Peace" and shaking hands a la in church)) No, please, please, Hold your applause. Please. Thank you.

Yes, as we commemorate this special day, honoring those who've served their country, indeed have given their lives for their country, we can take special satisfaction that now, finally, in the middle of the 26th century, we have finally, totally, eliminated warfare on this planet. (aside) Not counting a few police actions, clean-ups, strike breaking...y'know.

No, no, please, please. It's been years since young boys (and girls) have had to go into battle against other young boys and girls.

Fortunately, for the brotherhood of our planet, we now only have to face intergalactic warfare, where now we can just go up nto space and kick the hell out of some alien race of bastards. (aside) What are those things up there anywhere?

They sure as hell ain't people. Ever seen anything like them?
(2nd aside) And man, if you thought war on earth was profitable, wait till you get a load of what we can take in going into other worlds.
No, no you're too kind.

SOLDIER: (moving into scene) The plan is waiting for a go. Pre-emptive attack on Planet J12's moons – armed and ready.

POLITICIAN: What's the plan?

SOLDIER: Nukes, followed by bio-dusting, and (aside)...just for good measure...one more round of nukes.

POLITICIAN (whispers) No Z Bomb?

SOLDIER: (returns whisper) We're not authorized to drop the Z Bomb.

POLITICIAN: (still whispering) Not authorized! Who cares?

SOLDIER: But this plan should put the fear of God in 'em.

POLITICIAN: Fear of who?

SOLDIER: God. (POLITICIAN shows no sign of recognition). Guy who used to be on the dollar bill. That we trust.

POLITICIAN: Oh, yeah. Him. Well, what are waitin' for? Let's attack.

SOLDIER: Right on. Preparation underway. (pulls out cell phone, starts putting in numbers. Notices POLITICIAN looking over his shoulder.) Latest cell phone, can prepare the launch right from it. (aside) I have unlimited preemptive attack minutes. This also takes great video, 3D. Here, see.

(SOLDIER and POLITICIAN get lost admiring video of themselves.

POLITICIAN & SOLDIER adlib...oh, very nice. That's great. POLITICIAN: Can you photoshop cheering crowds around me? Maybe put me in a flight jacket? SOLDIER: Sure, sure.)

(BOY and GIRL come up to them; POLITICIAN ignores them)

BOY: Excuse us, sir. Sir.

SOLDIER (coming aggressively forward): Who are you? What's your name? Social Security number? Passport. Bank of America citizenship number. Republican Party Patriot Card. NRA membership number...NNA membership

number...(aside) That's the NRA's sister organization...The National Nukes Association...DNA sample, just all the usual stuff.

BOY: Actually, sir we're reporters.

POLITICIAN: Eww.

SOLDIER: Little young to be reporters, aren't ya?

GIRL: For our school newspaper.

POLITICIAN: (to SOLDIER) But they're just the right age to go into the military.

SOLDIER: Hmm. That's right.

POLITICIAN: We're having trouble filling the ranks, aren't we?

SOLDIER: Yeah, people have gone so crazy nobody wants to kill anybody anymore. We need people to fight this war with Planet J12.

POLITICIAN: Did we try the engineered attack against our own land or people, thus enraging the populace enough to go to war?

SOLDIER: Yeah. They didn't buy it this time.

POLITICIAN: How many people do we need for this war?

SOLDIER: Just two. The attack commander and his backup.

POLITICIAN: We just need two, and we can't get 'em?

SOLDIER: What can I say? People are crazy.

POLITICIAN: Hmm, so you're reporters, huh?

GIRL: Yes. And we'd like to ask you a few questions about this upcoming war?

POLITICIAN: Shoot!

BOY: Why are we attacking the moons of J12?

GIRL: The people of J12 – whatever they are - are a peaceful race.

BOY: And most of them – whatever they are - actually live on the surface of

J12's moons.

GIRL: And that's because J12 is basically a planet of vast lakes and oceans of oil.

BOY: Is that why we're attacking them?

POLITICIAN: Good questions. (aside) Actually the oil's just a smokescreen. A war somewhere else gives you the chance to take over your own country. Or planet.

That's where the real money is.

Tell me, have you two cub reporters ever been embedded?

(BOY/GIRL look at each other)

GIRL: Oh, no, we've just parked a couple of times.

POLITICIAN: No, no, Embedded is what a good reporter does, getting right in the middle of the action. Traveling with the troops as they encounter the enemy and fight for freedom.

GIRL: Well...

POLITICIAN: Think of the grade it'll get ya! And your school will be the only school with reporters right on the scene.

GIRL: Well...

SOLDIER: So, are these troopers all ready?

BOY: What?

(POLITICIAN jabs SOLDIER)

SOLDIER: I mean, the troops are ready. Ready to go.

BOY: Wait...

POLITICIAN: This is going to be one hell of a story.

SOLDIER: Let's move to the space ship. Here, take my phone with you. (hands it to boy.) Just hit pound. Hit it a couple of times. (aside) Pound! Get it?

MOTHER: (coming into scene) What's going on?

GIRL: We're going to be embedded with the troops.

MOTHER: What troops?

SOLDIER: Hurry along now, soldie...I mean, SO, you can get there on time.

POLITICIAN: Yes, we must think of their education.

MOTHER: What troops?

GIRL: The troops that are going to fight the war.

MOTHER: What war?

POLITICIAN: M'am, did you vote for me?

MOTHER: No one voted for you. And you still won. (aside) They're still re-counting the South American ballots.

POLITICIAN: Well, since I won, and since I am your leader, I suggest you trust me.

BOY: Wait a minute. Something's not right here...

POLITICIAN: Oh, it's as right as it's ever been.

BOY: This phone...

MOTHER: (looking over his shouldler at it) I know this phone. I saw it in an ad. That's an NNA phone...

SOLDIER: I'll take that back for now.

MOTHER: What was that ad? It was short, memorable...

SOLDIER: Just nuke 'em. (aside) I love that ad.

MOTHER: You were sending these children to war!

POLITICIAN: Yeah? So. That's the way wars are fought. With kids like these. Full of hopes. Full of dreams. Easy to trick. Kids so young that when they get killed, they've barely been on this planet long enough to register.

MOTHER: That's horrifying!

POLITICIAN: That's life.

SOLDIER: Let's go, kids. I mean, troops. Ship's ready. Time to go to war.

MOTHER: But they didn't sign up for any...

POLITICIAN: Doesn't matter. They're already in the computer, aren't they?

SOLDIER: (checking phone) Oh, yeah. Yeah, here they are.

POLITICIAN: See, it's out of our hands.

SOLDIER: Ya gotta go, guys.

POLITICIAN: Just like your fathers...and mothers...before ye.

(POLITICIAN and SOLDIER behind GIRL/BOY, pushing them upstage.)

SOLDIER: The attack's scheduled. We don't want to be late, do we?

POLITICIAN: And anyway, the sooner we get this attack, and this war over with, the sooner we can get on with lucrative rebuilding plans, making that planet safe for its people...or whatever they are.

SOLDIER: You forget, after this attack, there won't be any of their people...or whatever they are...left.

POLITICIAN: That's makes it even more lucrative. Without any people – or whatever – we can get something done.

(BOTH SHARE BIG LAUGH)

(BOY steps out and around)

BOY: No!

MUSIC: Thunderclap Newman's Something in the Air begins, will play out through end of show and into intermission

SOLDIER: What do you mean, No?

BOY (grabbing GIRL): I mean, No! No more!

POLITICIAN: What do you mean, no more?

BOY: No more war. That's it. We're done.

POLITICIAN: Oh, yeah?

BOY: They're not attacking us! We don't need to attack them!

SOLDIER: You think you can just stop a war that easy?

POLITICIAN: You think everybody can just say "No!" and that can stop a war?

(POLITICIAN, SOLDIER laugh loudly...BOY, GIRL, MOTHER stare at them. Laughter begins to slow. Die. POLITICIAN, SOLDIER look around for support. There is none.)

POLITICIAN: (aside) OK, cute, very cute. Maybe that kind of thing works on stage, or in the movies, or on HBO...

BOY: (goes right up to him) No! No more war. That's it. We're done. (moves back to GIRL.) If you're so hot for this war, why don't you just go fight it yourself! (POLITICIAN moves away, unsteadily.)

(BOY grabs GIRL's hand. Stares at POLITICIAN. SOLDIER moves towards him. MOTHER moves forward with BOY)

MOTHER: No. I didn't vote for him.

(BOY looks to MOTHER, who nods. BOY/GIRL leave stage. MOTHER stares at POLITICIAN, shakes head in pity, walks slowly off.

POLITICIAN: All right! You'll see ! You'll miss it! You'll miss war! You don't know how good you've had it! You've got to be willing to kill! That's how you live the good life! (Looks towards SOLDIER, shakes head in disgust – at his fate as much as anything – and walks off proudly.) Aaah, wait til you ready my book, you'll see...!

(SOLDIER is confused; then looks towards audience.)

SOLDIER: Take 15. Smoke if you got 'em.

(SOLDIER exits)

END

