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Two Men on Top of a Hill

by Richard Rewell

He stood enjoying the warm whispering breeze caressing his face, listening to Private Jones, a rotund man in his twenties, humming something very melodic, complimented by the sounds of larks and grasshoppers.

“Rather nice countryside wouldn’t you say Jones?”

“I would Colour Sergeant. Beautiful. Bit like the valleys back home. Bit warmer mind. And bigger of course.”

Hands behind his back, the large frame of the NCO strode to the edge of the escarpment where he gazed smiling at the endless sea of rolling hills. I’m from Sussex. I like hills. The South Downs. Take the wife and girls there picnicking.”

“Got four daughters haven’t you Colour Sergeant?”

“I have Private. You’ve just had one haven’t you?”

“Yes, Colour Sergeant.”

“You wait lad ” smiled the NCO “ Four daughters and a wife. How do you like them odds?” he said as he shielded his eyes from the sun studying the horizon. Was that a dust storm?

“I don’t like them odds, Sergeant” grinned Jones before saying “You seen something Sergeant?”

“Not sure Jones.” Said the NCO returning to his soliloquy “My advice to you, is that having lived out- numbered 5 to 1, I’m always going to disappoint one female family member.

You've got to understand that when a female says 'Yes', she means 'No'. When she says 'We must discuss' she means 'You will do what I tell you'. And when there's that horrible silence lad, then be suspicious; you're in trouble."

"Understood Sergeant" said Jones nodding his appreciation of his Sergeant's advice. It was what the lads said about the Colour Sergeant: he looked out for his men, whether military or matrimonial.

"My eyes aren't so good. Be a good lad and go over to those rocks will you. Look to the south west."

"Yes Sergeant." Said Jones, who immediately trotted the 200 metres to a cluster of yellow rocks.

The Colour Sergeant turned and slowly walked away from the escarpment's edge and towards the path that would take him and Jones down to the other soldiers who were repairing the bridge and barn in the valley below.

Silence. No insects. No birds. Just that whispering warm breeze.

"Oh dear" thought the NCO 'Why is silence so worthy of suspicion' before glancing behind to see Jones sprinting towards him.

"Did you know it was them Sergeant?"

"No. I guessed. Now start singing. I hate this silence. Makes me feel like I'm back home. "

As Jones launched into "Bread of Heaven" the two men calmly walked down the hill to their base, the mission station of Rorkes Drift.