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LOTTY'S WAR

BY GIULIANO CRISPINI



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AUTHOR'S NOTE

On 28th July 1940, German forces bombed the harbour of St Peter Port on the island of Guernsey. Abandoned by the British government islanders caught by the advancing enemy endured five years of occupation. They had to learn to live, work and survive with their captors.

This play is about what it is to be human in the throes of war. It explores where the moral lines between what is right and what is wrong blur.

It asks the question, "What would you have done?"

Giuliano Crispini

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

GIULIANO CRISPINI

Giuliano is a writer, director and producer. He trained at the Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts and has gone on to work on many projects throughout the UK in TV, film and theatre.

A special mention must be given to Clare Slater, who helped *Lotty* on her journey with her incredible dramaturgic skills.

For Guernsey and all its forgotten heroes

The first draft of the play was produced on the island of Guernsey at the Princess Centre for Performing Arts in 2008.

Charlotte (Lotty) Hervé – **Katie Howell**
Ben De Carteret – **James Joyce**
General Rolf Bernberg – **Michael Fenner**

Directed by **Iain Davie**
Set by **David Crisp**
Lighting by **Julian Adams**

Cast of the 2016 touring production:

Charlotte (Lotty) Hervé – **Victoria Emslie**
Ben De Carteret – **Mat Ruttle**
General Rolf Bernberg – **Ian Reddington**

Understudy Lotty and Ghost – **Daisy Ward**
Understudy Ben De Carteret – **James G Nunn**
Understudy General Rolf Bernberg – **Nick Warnford**

Original Director – **Bruce Guthrie**
Associate Director – **Carla Kingham**
Dramaturg – **Clare Slater**
Set Design – **Victoria Spearing**
Costume Design – **Suzie Tidy**
Sound Design – **Mike Walker**
Lighting Design – **Elanor Higgins**
Guernsey Patois Translations – **Hazel Tomlinson**

CHARACTERS

CHARLOTTE HERVÉ	Lotty. Guernsey girl. Seventeen years old at the start of the war.
ROLF BERNBURG	A general of the occupational forces. Forty one years old at the start of the war.
BEN DE CARTERET	Guernsey boy. Seventeen years old at the start of the war.
GHOST	A seventeen-year-old Slavic worker.

SETTING

A house on the island of Guernsey, 1940–1945.

The Bailiwick of Jersey and Bailiwick of Guernsey are two British Crown dependencies in the English Channel, near the coast of Normandy. The Channel Islands were the only part of the British Isles to be invaded and occupied by German forces during World War II.

SCRIPT NOTE

A . indicates a beat, an unsaid thought.

ACT ONE

Scene One

28th June 1940.

It's a perfect summer's day on the island of Guernsey. A typical Guernsey kitchen. On the dresser is a 1930s radio.

There is a kitchen door leading to the back garden, and an internal door leading to (off stage) a hallway, stairs and front door.

We spend quite some time in this kitchen. It's still. Idyllic.

The sound of running around outside, and teenage laughter.

LOTTY *bursts into the garden. She is wearing her working dress. She is full of life. She is carrying a pair of shorts.*

LOTTY *J'ai gogni! [Guernésiais, the local patois: Winner!]*

Enter BEN out of breath and not amused. He is wearing one shoe, socks, and a shirt. The other shoe is in his hand. He is still waiting to grow into his body. He is missing his shorts and braces.

BEN *Chena né caonte pas. [That doesn't count.]*

Give them back!

LOTTY *Avànce-té laong derrière. [Come on slow coach.]*

BEN Tu n'dis jomais qué ch'tait enne reisse! [*You never said it was a race!*]

LOTTY You're not going to be a sore loser again are you?
All's fair in love and war Benjy boy!

LOTTY enters into the house. She turns on the radio. A lively song of the era bursts out.

BEN All's fair?! You're a smelly old cheat and you know it.

He grabs for her. She darts out the way in delight.

LOTTY Here. You'd better be quicker getting out the water next time.

She throws him the shorts and goes to pour herself a glass of water. This is clearly her house.

BEN puts the shorts on as quickly as he can. Then sits on the floor to put on the other shoe.

BEN I have a hole in my sock now thanks to you. I'm going to be for it when Mum sees.

LOTTY Well you'd better learn to sew, hadn't you.

She approaches him. He grabs her legs and pulls her to the ground. She squeals in delight as he tickles her.

Ah! No! Stop! Please! Stop it! Ah! I'll get you! Seriously!

BEN Cheat your way out of this then Miss Big Head!

He pins her. BEN kisses LOTTY. She responds. It is passionate and heated. She breaks away suddenly.

What?

LOTTY My Dad.

BEN Is he here?

BEN *almost jumps out of his skin. He's released his grip on her. She takes the opportunity to flip him over and get the upper hand. She tickles him.*

Ah, no, wait, stop!

LOTTY You're so easy.

She smushes his face before getting up.

Oh, I love this song.

She dances.

BEN You're ridiculous.

LOTTY T'es tout à fait niais. [*You're ridiculous.*]

She pulls him up off the floor. Making **BEN** *dance to the music.*

BEN Do you think you'll go? Join your mum in England with the Ladies College lot?

LOTTY It's a fuss about nothing.

BEN My dad doesn't think so. England have abandoned us. "We're of no strategic importance."

LOTTY *breaks away. She starts looking through the kitchen drawers for something.*

LOTTY Your dad, Ben, has a lot of opinions. What on earth would Germans want with Guernsey. Besides, he thinks you're a faster tomato picker than me, and we all know that's not true.

BEN We should try and get a boat as soon as possible.

LOTTY Go. Stay. Evacuate the island. Don't evacuate the island. If the Bailiff can't decide what we should do, then it can't be too serious.

LOTTY *finds the pliers she was searching for.*

BEN Lotty –

LOTTY Come on – they're waiting for us at the harbour.
That lifeboat receiver's not going to fix itself.

There's an unusual rumble overhead. It gets louder very quickly.

The two teenagers look petrified and young.

There's a murderous roar of bombing far too close by.

The radio takes over the noise with a hellish, distorted crackling.

Intermittent BBC news reports, music of the 1940s, sounds of battles, bombing, chaos. Coverage updates on the allies being pushed back through Europe and Hitler's ruthless advance is heard. Churchill's historic speech comes through on the radio stating that our beloved Channel Islands are to be sacrificed to the German advance. We then hear that St Peter Port Harbour has been bombed and there are casualties.

A soft, sad tune cross-fades onto the radio.

Scene Two

1st July 1940. Four days later.

LOTTY and BEN are dressed in black. Plates and bottles and food leftovers are everywhere. **LOTTY** is tidying up as the radio plays.

BEN Veis-tu tous ches restànts. [*Look at all these leftovers.*]

LOTTY I'll take some to Mrs Wilson later tonight.

BEN You can't be out at night now.

LOTTY Of course I can.

BEN You can't, it's not safe.

LOTTY Well that's just ridiculous. What is some German soldier going to do if he sees me carrying a plate of ham sandwiches at dusk?

BEN .

Give Mrs Wilson a drink and there is no stopping her. When she laughs she sounds like that puppy of hers barking.

.

LOTTY I can't get his face out of my head. It didn't look like him. None of them looked like, people, any more.

BEN The Germans will be called to account, just like last time.

But for now they're here. They've said they will leave us alone if we –

LOTTY Oh come on! How can you believe that? They were given these islands and the cowards couldn't help themselves. Couldn't help having a bit of target practice...

BEN Please calm down –

LOTTY Don't tell me what to do –

They are both beaten.

BEN Why didn't you get on the boat with your mum, last week?

Did you stay because of me?

The song on the radio finishes. For a moment it's quiet.

LOTTY I stayed because I didn't want to leave my dad. And because of you.

A new song begins. She kisses him kindly.

And because there was a bumper crop this year, so the island couldn't afford to lose its fastest picker. War or no war.

BEN I'm glad you stayed.

LOTTY You wouldn't cope without me.

Do you think there's any hope of us leaving?

BEN The harbour was destroyed in the raid. It's just you and me now.

LOTTY And your mum.

BEN What German wouldn't be scared of her? Things could be worse. Besides, we have each other, you know, we're family...

LOTTY Pass me those plates please?

He picks up plates from the table and passes them to her.

BEN ...so I was thinking, why not make it official?

LOTTY I'm a bit old to be adopted.

She turns to BEN.

BEN *gets down on one knee.*

Oh my God –

BEN I'll make you so happy.

LOTTY Ben. This is too much.

BEN No, you're right. Sorry I just thought, perhaps something positive.

LOTTY It's my dad's funeral...

BEN Of course... Sorry. Sleep on it.

LOTTY Thank you.

She kisses him on the cheek.

BEN Let's just get your things and get to mine before dusk.

.

LOTTY I'm staying here.

BEN My mum's expecting us.

I said that we –

LOTTY I live here, Ben.

BEN Well, after everything... I thought...

LOTTY It's a very kind offer, but I'd prefer to stay here.

BEN Lotty – I don't think that's a great idea – not now they're on the island –

LOTTY This is my house, Ben. I was born upstairs. This is my house.

.

BEN How about I run and get some bits, and I stay here tonight too? Just until... For now.

To keep you company. I'll sleep down here in the armchair...

LOTTY We'll both sleep upstairs. I'll sleep in Dad's bedroom. You can take mine.

BEN Right.

I am not going to let anything happen to you.

I'll be back as soon as I can.

LOTTY I'd be back faster.

BEN I know you would.

***BEN** exits through the kitchen door. **LOTTY** is very much alone. The radio music is sad, but comforting.*

*She continues to clear and gets taken up with the music. She dances a little. She turns around, and sees a tall, handsome **GERMAN GENERAL** in the other doorway. **LOTTY** screams. She instinctively grabs the knife by her side and stands squarely in defence of her kitchen.*

*The **GENERAL** doesn't blink.*

They stare at each other, neither moving.

*The **GENERAL** breaks the stand-off by gently reaching out and turning off the radio. **LOTTY** flinches.*

GENERAL Good evening.

He speaks with a German accent, but his English is good. He sounds friendly.

You live in an occupied territory and you leave your front door open? I know it's an Open Island now, but nonetheless...

LOTTY Get out of my house.

GENERAL My name is General Bernberg.

LOTTY Get out!

GENERAL What's yours?

LOTTY steps forward, with the knife at arm's length.

I don't think you should be playing with that.

LOTTY Get out of my house.

GENERAL Get out of my house, General Bernberg, sir.

If you refuse to introduce yourself, then this will certainly be harder.

Your house has been commandeered as my personal residence. I believe your Government sent you a note?

LOTTY A note?

GENERAL Of instructions. Did you not receive it?

LOTTY No. I've been busy.

GENERAL I would prefer it if you put the knife down.

Somehow he wins.

Now – you realise you are trespassing. Are you going to leave or shall I have you removed?

LOTTY I live here.

.

GENERAL Who else lives here?

LOTTY Just me.

.

GENERAL I do need a housekeeper and I shall need breakfast and dinner cooked daily.

LOTTY No.

GENERAL No?

LOTTY No.

GENERAL You refuse?

LOTTY Yes.

GENERAL Don't you like your home? What's wrong with it?

LOTTY I love my home very much.

GENERAL I'm doing you a service. You get to stay in the place you love and make sure it's kept in order.

LOTTY This is my home, it is not for sale, it is not for rent and it certainly is not here to be, commandeered.

GENERAL I see. You won't mind if I get a second opinion?

The GENERAL drags a previously hidden and petrified BEN into the kitchen from the hallway.

LOTTY Ben –

BEN Lotty...

LOTTY If you dare touch him I'll –

GENERAL Before we say anything we regret I shall make a proposal. I shall stay here as your guest. In return, I shall arrange for the protection of your home. And your friend.

LOTTY I will not serve a Nazi.

The GENERAL turns, dragging BEN.

BEN No –

LOTTY Have the house. I'll collect my things.

GENERAL That is not the proposal. Do as you are told and we shall live peacefully. Cause me trouble and there will be consequences. Do you understand?

.

.

An uneasy understanding passes between the GENERAL and LOTTY.

Good.

The GENERAL throws BEN in the direction of the front door. We hear him run out and slam it behind him.

.

The GENERAL looks around. Opens the pantry cupboard. Inspects the back door's lock.

My bag is outside.

.

.

Begrudgingly, LOTTY exits towards the front door. The GENERAL takes his first seat in his new home.

.

LOTTY *enters with the bag.*

Danke schön.

.

I will need something to eat. What do you have?

LOTTY There's some sandwiches...and gâche.

GENERAL Gâche?

She points at the fruit bread.

The remains of a feast.

.

The GENERAL takes a bottle of wine out of his bag. No one moves. LOTTY realises that she's meant to prepare this meal. Reluctantly, she gets a plate and a glass. She gathers some sandwiches and pours a glass of wine. She

is shaking. She goes to put the bottle back on the table and knocks the full glass over.

LOTTY Sorry! ...General Bernberg... Sir.

GENERAL These things happen.

No one moves. LOTTY is expected to clear up the mess. Eventually, reluctantly, she does so.

You haven't told me your name.

LOTTY Charlotte Hervé.

GENERAL Charlotte.

LOTTY *brings over the sandwiches.*

Excellent. I shall call you Charlotte and you will call me General.

LOTTY (*exploding:*) You have no right –

GENERAL I have every right, Charlotte. This is our island now.

You should go to bed now.

LOTTY *doesn't know what to say. She starts to leave the kitchen.*

I'll take the master bedroom.

A distorted refrain from the earlier radio music, disintegrating into white noise.

Scene Three

9th July 1940. The next morning.

LOTTY *is drinking tea at the kitchen table. Alone. Has she slept at all?*

The GENERAL enters from the hallway.

He sits at the head of the table.

GENERAL Good morning.

LOTTY *stares at him.*

Coffee please.

LOTTY *stares at him.*

.

Thank you.

.

She stands to fetch the coffee.

White noise.

Scene Four

10th July 1940. The next morning.

LOTTY *is drinking tea at the kitchen table. Alone. Has she slept at all?*

The GENERAL enters from the hallway.

He sits at the head of the table.

GENERAL Good morning.

LOTTY *stares at him.*

.

She stands to fetch the coffee.

Thank you.

White noise.

Scene Five

11th July 1940. The next morning.

LOTTY *is staring out of the kitchen window. Alone. Has she slept at all?*

The GENERAL enters from the hallway.

GENERAL Good –

LOTTY *(without turning around:)* Coffee's on the table.

GENERAL Thank you.

He sits at the head of the table. Takes a sip. It doesn't taste good.

LOTTY *looks at the radio. Turns it on. A happy tune.*

Disintegrates into white noise, halting music and broken news reports slowly fuse back together as the radio tells us that war continues on the continent, and on the occupied island of Guernsey.

Scene Six

12th September 1940. Two months later.

LOTTY *is frying bacon and eggs. Badly. She is paying much more attention to the BBC news report on the radio. It cuts out at a crucial moment. She picks it up, opens up the back, fiddles with a wire, it jumps back in.*

The GENERAL enters, buttoning up his cuffs, and inspects his cremated breakfast in the frying pan.

GENERAL Good morning.

Did you sleep well?

He turns off the radio. LOTTY stiffens, before serving him coffee.

I did also.

Danke.

LOTTY *serves the breakfast. It looks awful. He tastes. She watches.*

Salt, please.

LOTTY *passes the salt.*

Sit.

LOTTY *doesn't sit.*

Are you not hungry?

There's plenty of food.

This silence every morning is quite unappetizing.

LOTTY I've nothing to say.

GENERAL I find that hard to believe.

.
LOTTY Fine – where is it you go every day?

GENERAL I'm sorry?

LOTTY Where do you go? When your officers pick you up each morning? Do you walk the piers? Sit in the tearoom and watch the world go by? Stand on the corner of Fountain Street and terrify people? What do you do?

GENERAL What do you do every day?

.
LOTTY Very little.

GENERAL Listen to music?

.
I have an office. A control point.

LOTTY Where is it?

Is it a secret?

GENERAL No. I believe it was the Bailiff's office.

LOTTY And where's he now? The traitor...

GENERAL He was a sensible man –

LOTTY He turned the island over –

GENERAL He was a sensible man. Who no longer has an office.

.
LOTTY What's it like, in town?

GENERAL Normal.

LOTTY How do you know what normal is like here?

GENERAL It is the same everywhere. People go to work. People go home. It's normal.

LOTTY It isn't normal for Guernsey to be occupied.
Watched and guarded –

GENERAL Did you not have laws before? Police?

The rules are just different now.

LOTTY The Guerns won't just have rolled over. We're fighters –

GENERAL No. Guernsey is Germany now. It was handed over, without a fight. Most people have decided to recognise the changed situation, and are adapting.

LOTTY Most?

GENERAL A small handful still need persuading.

LOTTY Good for them.

.

GENERAL Some of your fellow islanders tried to escape to England in a fishing boat yesterday. All access to vessels will be denied from now on.

LOTTY What will happen to them?

GENERAL The perpetrators will be executed.

Maybe people will think twice.

LOTTY Do you know their names?

GENERAL What does it matter?

LOTTY They'll have families, and friends. They're people

...

GENERAL I do not. I have bigger things with which to concern myself. These eggs are overcooked.

LOTTY I'll cook them less tomorrow.

GENERAL And my boots need polishing.

LOTTY Yes, general.

GENERAL See how much better it is to have a bit of conversation over breakfast?

LOTTY Yes, general.

GENERAL It's a fine day today. It would be good for you to go into town.

LOTTY Really? Today? That would be – thank you.

.
These past weeks, I've longed to paddle in Fermain Bay –

GENERAL You can't go there.

LOTTY But – you allow me out but you forbid me –

GENERAL All the beaches have been mined.

LOTTY Oh.

GENERAL So don't go there.

LOTTY No.

GENERAL I have never locked the door, Charlotte.

LOTTY No, because you always carry a gun. Like your hobnailed patrol outside.

GENERAL "Hob-nailed"?

LOTTY Their boots. Clip-clopping around my house every hour.

GENERAL Ah yes, schuhnagel. Hob-nailed. I see. Today one of my officers will drive you into town, where you will get a ration book.

LOTTY What?

GENERAL Everyone on the island is now being rationed.

LOTTY Even the Germans?

GENERAL No, we have our own supply lines.

LOTTY Of course. Different rules.

General, I would prefer to walk into town.

GENERAL One of my officers will drive you.

LOTTY But I would prefer to –

GENERAL You will be driven.

LOTTY The whole island will see me...

GENERAL In a German military car?

LOTTY In a stolen car with a swastika on it –

GENERAL They will be jealous. Civilians on the island
are no longer allowed to drive.

LOTTY Since when?

GENERAL Since people started attempting to escape.
And since we learned that there are British military
personnel hiding on the island.

LOTTY There are?

GENERAL We believe they are being helped by islanders.
So we must restrict everyone's freedom until they have
been found.

You will also register for your ID card today.

LOTTY Yes, general.

LOTTY May I do a little shopping?

GENERAL What do you need?

LOTTY Some stockings and...

GENERAL And...

LOTTY Other things...

I need to go to Boots...the chemist...for ladies
provisions.

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