

# The Watchers Watched

*A One-Act Play about the Past, the Present, and the Grey Area in between*

by ROB DAVIS, 03 September 2021



***This description might be either printed in the production programme, or be delivered by a Narrator immediately before the action begins.***

Scene : on an old Royal Air Force wartime aerodrome is found the Watch Office, more popularly known today as the Control Tower. It is abandoned, windowless and derelict, almost empty except for some old chairs and a table. (*The photo above is RAF Coleby Grange {GPS 53.134855 / -0.492235} taken May 1991*). Large windows UC look out from the upper floor over the balcony to the main part of the former aerodrome, and a staircase entrance is just off to one side.

Two pairs of characters interact independently. **Lucy** and **Oliver** are a pair of military historians camping for the night in the tower to 'catch the atmosphere'. **Jack**, a Sergeant Pilot and **Kate**, a WAAF<sup>1</sup> administrative Officer, are in love and meeting in secret when the Squadron is stood down, whilst the tower is unoccupied. Neither couple is aware of the other.

***Scene : inside the upper floor of the Watch Office. As the curtain opens, the sun is starting to go down on a warm summer evening. Oliver and Lucy have backpacks and camping gear.***

---

<sup>1</sup> Women's Auxiliary Air Force

<b>Oliver</b>	<i>(Off, climbing the out-of-sight stairs, and calling back down)</i> This way, Lucy!
<b>Lucy</b>	<i>(Off; doubtful)</i> It all looks a bit dodgy, Ollie. Are you sure the building's safe?
<b>Oliver</b>	<i>(Just off)</i> Yeah, I'm sure! <i>(He enters)</i> The farmer said it was all ok, the floor's sound and the roof doesn't leak. <i>(Looking around)</i> It's perfect! <i>(He stamps his feet at random places on the floor, checking that the structure appears sound)</i>
<b>Lucy</b>	<i>(Entering and looking around)</i> Heck, no glass in the windows, but at least it looks like it won't fall in on our heads. Perfect? H'mmm ... it looks cold - especially at night!
<b>Oliver</b>	No, it'll be all right. We've got the camp beds and sleeping bags, and the weather's going to be dry. We won't get cold, I don't think.
<b>Lucy</b>	Yes, I guess you're right. It's more uncomfortable than cold, especially on those camp beds. But I don't care much for the dirt and the spiders!
<b>Oliver</b>	Come on, let's get set up, before the light goes. <i>(They remove their backpacks and start to assemble camp beds, sleeping bags etc)</i> Put the camping light on that table over there.
<b>Lucy</b>	<i>(She does so, moving the table nearer to the camp beds)</i> What do we know about this place, Ollie?
<b>Oliver</b>	It was a heavy bomber squadron base between early 1942 and the end of the war. One main squadron, which in 1944 grew into two as more aircraft were available and delivered. Originally the aerodrome would have been about 850 acres altogether.
<b>Lucy</b>	It obviously isn't that big now.
<b>Oliver</b>	No, it's shrunk down in size. Nowadays it's all agricultural land, only a few of the wartime buildings are left. You can see land scars of the aerodrome if you look on a modern satellite image view, because the crops don't grow so well where the concrete runways used to be.
<b>Lucy</b>	How many people would have been here during the war?
<b>Oliver</b>	About two thousand personnel here, making it all work as an operational base.
<b>Lucy</b>	That many people, two thousand, all fliers? Pilots, navigators and so on?
<b>Oliver</b>	No, only about three hundred airmen of various trades. Seven men to a bomber crew: pilot, flight engineer, navigator, bomb aimer, wireless-operator and then two air gunners. All the others were ground crew and support staff. Mechanics, cooks, fitters, riggers, armourers plus all the clerical administration people; Intelligence and so on. And of course a good number of women, filling in for a man's job and freeing him up for direct action.
<b>Lucy</b>	<i>(Pensively)</i> And ... how many of them were killed as the war went on?
<b>Oliver</b>	From here, just over a thousand, on operational flights. It's not widely known that a considerable number of airmen were also killed during their training, flying from other bases, all over the country.
<b>Lucy</b>	During training? Why was that, just inexperience?
<b>Oliver</b>	Partly, and of course bad weather took its toll. But many of the aircraft which percolated down to the training units had seen substantial front-line use with mainstream squadrons, flying on operational bombing trips. Such aircraft were likely to have been repaired after enemy damage, and generally be worn and what you'd probably describe as tired.
<b>Lucy</b>	H'mmm, hardly ideal. I mean, when you're learning to drive you wouldn't want to be in a clapped-out, much-repaired vehicle.
<b>Oliver</b>	Exactly. Not even with an experienced man as an instructor.
<b>Lucy</b>	But from here, a thousand casualties. <i>(She looks very thoughtful)</i> A thousand ghosts.
<b>Oliver</b>	Isn't that why we're here?
<b>Lucy</b>	You said we'd get the atmosphere. A thousand ghosts of dead airmen, that's a hell of a lot of atmosphere.
<b>Oliver</b>	You scared?
<b>Lucy</b>	No. Apprehensive perhaps. But not scared. <i>(Pause)</i> Not <b>really</b> scared, anyway.
<b>Oliver</b>	All right, Lu. We're all set up here. Let's take a wander around outside, I'd like to get some photos before the daylight's gone. <i>(He picks up his camera; they smile at each other and prepare to exit)</i>
<b>Kate</b>	<i>(Just off)</i> Hello? Who's on duty tonight? <i>(She cautiously peeks in, but is not aware of Oliver and Lucy, who are not aware of her. Seeing that to her the tower is deserted, she enters, exactly as Oliver and Lucy move to go out, passing between them)</i> Good, all clear! <i>(Lucy and Oliver exit, hand-in-hand. Kate moves to a window and, taking out a handkerchief, very obviously blows her nose and shaking her handkerchief, clearly as a signal to someone outside, before moving back</i>

	<i>into the centre and waiting).</i>
<b>Jack</b>	<i>(After a pause as if climbing the stairs, and then entering and looking around)</i> Blow me down, I never thought I'd get in up here! It's normally well off limits to us lot.
<b>Kate</b>	<i>(Mock seriously)</i> Sergeant! Aren't you supposed to salute an officer on entering a room?
<b>Jack</b>	<i>(Overly formally)</i> Yes'm. <i>(He starts a salute, but stops half way)</i> Suppose I don't, whatcha gonna do?
<b>Kate</b>	<i>(Equally overly formally)</i> I'd put you on a charge, <i>Sergeant</i> . Conduct unbecoming.
<b>Jack</b>	Damn it, I can't have that. <i>(He salutes, formally)</i>
<b>Kate</b>	Blow that for a game of soldiers! Get over here.
<b>Jack</b>	I couldn't agree more. <i>(They dive into each others' arms, and kiss)</i> But shouldn't it be blow that for a game of airmen?
<b>Kate</b>	Granted. I was definitely looking forward to some conduct unbecoming, anyway.
<b>Jack</b>	Ooooh, you naughty lady Section Officer <sup>2</sup> , you. <i>(They kiss again)</i> Are you sure we'll be safe up here?
<b>Kate</b>	Yes, it should be all right. There's no flying tonight, the Squadron is stood down and the Group Captain's taken the opportunity to go home on leave, so everyone's snatched the chance for a quiet time.
<b>Jack</b>	We've flown three ops in the last seven days. We could do with a few nights off. A stand-down sure brings about a huge collective sigh of relief.
<b>Kate</b>	I'm not saying that you could actually hear that, but it certainly made everyone relax. Talking of that, what did you tell your crew that you were doing, instead of buzzing off with them down to the White Hart?
<b>Jack</b>	I told them I was fixed up on a date with a WAAF, they swallowed that readily enough. But I didn't say who it was, I didn't want to start any rumours or get you into trouble.
<b>Kate</b>	<i>(Nodding, approvingly)</i> Good thinking, that man!
<b>Jack</b>	The Group Captain takes a dim enough view of one of his officers dating a WAAF 'other ranks' as he puts it, never mind one of his Sergeants dating a WAAF officer.
<b>Kate</b>	Bit of a First World War bulldog, isn't he? Yes, I've heard the saying. Officers' ladies, NCOs' wives ...
<b>Jack</b>	... and other ranks' women. Crude.
<b>Kate</b>	Well, he's an old-fashioned type. Anyhow, nobody should be up here, the wireless-room people are maintaining a simple listening watch over the road, and nobody will put a light on up here because of the blackout.
<b>Jack</b>	So we're safe.
<b>Kate</b>	Yes, for tonight we're safe. <i>(She hugs him)</i> But you may well be flying tomorrow, or the day after. And then you won't be so safe, will you?
<b>Jack</b>	No. But look, Kate my dear, I've got a great aeroplane and a crack crew. My blokes really know what they're doing. See here, when we got clobbered by flak on that last raid, do you know what it was that kept me going, kept me flying the aeroplane, giving me strength and determination to get back? Apart from the other chaps in the crew, that is?
<b>Kate</b>	Tell me.
<b>Jack</b>	It was the thought of you waiting here, watching out for me and my crew to come back safely home, and knowing that the love I have for you was stronger than some enemy anti-aircraft gunners' hate. Knowing that Kathryn, my lovely Kate, was thinking of me.
<b>Kate</b>	<i>(She dabs her eyes)</i> Nobody ever said anything like to me before. <i>(They embrace)</i>
<b>Lucy</b>	<i>(Walking in quickly, carrying a lighted hand torch, and looking flustered)</i> Where the hell did I put my mobile? <i>(She searches, and spots it on her camp bed.)</i> Phew, I thought for a moment I'd dropped it in the hedgerow. <i>(She picks up the phone and moves to the window UC which looks out over the aerodrome, then opens the phone. Her torch beam inadvertently shines out through the glass-less window-frame)</i>
<b>Voice</b>	<i>(Off; loud, bellowing)</i> Put that light out!
<b>Jack</b>	<i>(Breaks the embrace and quickly checks that to him, room is in darkness)</i> It's OK, it's not us!

<sup>2</sup> WAAFs had their own Commissioned rank structure, a Section Officer being the equivalent of an RAF Flying Officer = Army Lieutenant = Navy Lieutenant. WAAF Flight Officer = RAF Flight Lieutenant = Army Captain = Navy Lieutenant-Commander

	<i>(They embrace again)</i>
<b>Lucy</b>	<i>(Sarcastically)</i> Ha ha, very funny, Mr Air Raid Warden Oliver! <i>(She uses her hand to mask the torch beam and pockets the phone)</i> Put that light out, indeed! Where are we, 1944? Ha bloody ha!
<b><i>(As Lucy walks towards the exit, she passes extremely close to Jack and Kate, and then exits)</i></b>	
<b>Jack</b>	<i>(Easing Kate's head away, he takes an appreciative sniff at the air around them, and looks into her eyes)</i> Holy smoke, I just love that perfume. <i>(He sniffs again, in the direction Lucy exited)</i> It's very distinctive.
<b>Kate</b>	<i>(Very puzzled)</i> I'm not wearing any perfume.
<b>Jack</b>	Get on with you, it's wizard. I don't think we have anything like it. Is it a Yank one?
<b>Kate</b>	Jack, really, I'm not wearing any perfume. My Flight Officer doesn't like us to doll up when we're on duty, and if I had put something on, it might've given the game away.
<b>Jack</b>	Well ... it must be my imagination then. But anyhow ... I likes it ... whatever it is and wherever it came from.
<b>Kate</b>	It can't be anything more than the standard carbolic soap from the WAAFery.
<b>Jack</b>	Get on with you! <i>(He makes a show of sniffing all around her head)</i>
<b>Kate</b>	<i>(Shaking him off)</i> Give over! Now, come and settle down, Jack, I want us to have a serious talk. <i>(They sit at the table.)</i> I know I've mentioned this before, but from where I sit in the Adjutant's office I see a lot of what goes on, what you might call backstage, on a bomber squadron base.
<b>Jack</b>	Ha, I bet you see a lot of the nitty gritty and suchlike.
<b>Kate</b>	We do deal with some matters I can't talk about.
<b>Jack</b>	I bet. Who's been posted away after committing some dastardly crime, and so on.
<b>Kate</b>	Jack, you know I can't talk about that sort of thing, it's confidential. But this isn't like that.
<b>Jack</b>	Go on, then. What's on your mind?
<b>Kate</b>	<i>(Tapping the triple stripe chevrons on the upper arms of his uniform)</i> You're a Sergeant now, but if you were to apply for a commission, there's a good chance you'd get it. <i>(He starts to speak but she raises a hand and stops him)</i> No, hear me out. The Air Force needs good officers, you're a good NCO, a good pilot, and a good man to boot.
<b>Jack</b>	<i>(American accent)</i> Aw gee, shucks.
<b>Kate</b>	Jack, I'm serious.
<b>Jack</b>	<i>(Nodding)</i> I know. My flight commander, Squadron Leader Kennard, had a word with me just the other day, and he said he thought that I ought to apply, in fact he said if I did, he'd put in a word with the Wing Commander.
<b>Kate</b>	Well then, why not? I know Kennard, he's a good type, if he said that, he meant it.
<b>Jack</b>	Me, an officer? I dunno. It's all right for you, with your fancy private education.
<b>Kate</b>	Hardly fancy. It was a Convent, not exactly what you might think. Strict, but the fancy education, as you call it, was very good.
<b>Jack</b>	I know. And it gave you the kind of start in life that blokes like me can only imagine. Jack the lad, that's me. Two and a half years ago I was an plain ordinary bank clerk, living with my parents, stuck in a rut and counting myself lucky if I cleared five pounds a week. Now I'm a Sergeant, and here you are, a WAAF officer. My Dad's a bus driver, and my Ma's a dressmaker.
<b>Kate</b>	But your Dad must have been in the First World War, so I'm sure he'd be proud of you, now that you're a Sergeant as well as a Lancaster pilot.
<b>Jack</b>	He was just PBI - Poor Bloody Infantry - and he never got any further than Private in the Army, but yes, he was pleased as Punch when I got my wings and Sergeant's stripes.
<b>Kate</b>	I was never bothered by your background, Jack.
<b>Jack</b>	D'you know, I once heard some smarty-pants officer say that his wireless-operator had an accent which left him - and I quote - <i>(affected voice)</i> "safe from being offered the King's commission"!
<b>Kate</b>	<i>(Shaking her head)</i> That was plain bad manners, he shouldn't have said that sort of thing, especially about one of his own crew.
<b>Jack</b>	I know that right enough. But Kate, after the war you'll go back home and afterwards to some University, you'll get your degree, and then land some clever well paid job. But as far as I am concerned, in many ways the Air Force has been the best thing to have happened to me <i>(he takes her hand)</i> apart from you, anyway.
<b>Kate</b>	I'm glad about that, too.
<b>Jack</b>	Here's how I see it. The politicians gave me a war, the Air Force made me a pilot, then gave me

	a wizard crew and a Lancaster bomber. <i>(Laughs)</i> D'you know, I can fly a bomber to Germany and back, but I still can't drive a car! And on top of all that, the icing on the cake as you might say, was that if it hadn't been for the two of us tripping over some drunk in the blackout, I wouldn't have met you.
<b>Kate</b>	I don't know who that poor chap was, but I think we owe him a favour!
<b>Jack</b>	Dead right. But what Squadron Leader Kennard said, it did make me think about it, applying for a commission.
<b>Kate</b>	If you can get that kind of recommendation from someone like Kennard, it'd be a piece of cake. I know how it works, I've seen it from the administration side. You get yourself washed and shaved <i>(Jack acts this out as a parody)</i> , you put on your best uniform and then have an interview with the Commissioning Board. You walk in as a Sergeant, and if it all goes well, as I'm sure it would, at midnight that same day you're suddenly a Pilot Officer. It's not like the Army, when after a commission you get posted to a different unit. Here, you just go back to your crew and carry on as before.
<b>Jack</b>	Yes, I've seen it happen. You make it sound dead simple. Just like that, eh? Sergeant Jack to Pilot Officer Jack.
<b>Kate</b>	Mind you, you'd have to move your bags to the Officers' Mess.
<b>Jack</b>	If it wasn't for the fact that I'd have to leave the others behind, I wouldn't mind moving from our cold draughty Nissen hut on one of the dispersed accommodation sites a couple of miles away, to one of those rooms in the brick buildings here on the aerodrome. Steam heating rather than the old pot-belly stove that gobbles up what coke and firewood we can scrounge between us. And then having to either walk or find a bike to get back to the aerodrome.
<b>Kate</b>	You get to sign for drinks, instead of paying cash!
<b>Jack</b>	Yeah, and then get a Mess bill! <i>(They both laugh)</i> I know, if I was to apply for a commission, I reckon they'd give it me.
<b>Kate</b>	Don't you like the idea of being an officer? Taking the King's Commission?
<b>Jack</b>	I'm not against it in principle. But here's what I don't like, Kate, my lovely Kathryn.
<b>Kate</b>	<i>(Emotionally)</i> I love it when you call me that.
<b>Jack</b>	A Commission is all very well. But I just don't like the idea of me sitting up there in the cockpit with officer's rings on the sleeves and shoulders of my battledress and the other members of the crew, who are just as good at their own jobs as what I am with mine, have nothing to show but a set of Sergeants' stripes. It don't seem right to me, that's all. If I get it, they should all get it as well, that's only fair. We all do our own jobs, we all take the same risks.
<b>Kate</b>	Plenty of the other bomber crews have a mix of Officers and Sergeants.
<b>Jack</b>	Granted, but what other crews do, and how they do it, that's up to them. See, my two blokes Jacko and Denny are ace air-gunners, you know they shot down that Jerry night fighter a few trips ago? He would have right well done for us if my two chaps hadn't been alert and on the ball.
<b>Kate</b>	As well as being good shots! A gunner from another crew was once trying to explain to me how difficult air gunnery was.
<b>Jack</b>	Dead right there! But what did my two blokes get? Sweet Fanny Adams, although we stood 'em free drinks in the Sergeants' Mess the next time we had a night off.
<b>Kate</b>	That was the right thing to do. <i>(She looks around towards the staircase and cocks her head, as if she heard something; but then looks back at Jack)</i>
<b>Jack</b>	It sure was.
<b>Oliver</b>	<i>(Entering, excitedly, followed by Lucy and looking at his camera's display)</i> I think I got some really good photos, that one of the huts with the sun going down behind, see, it's a cracker. <i>(He shows it to Lucy, who nods)</i>
<b>Kate</b>	I bet shooting down enemy planes is thirsty work and I bet they made the most of it!
<b>Lucy</b>	Heck, I'm thirsty. What have we got to drink?
<b>Jack</b>	Beer, beer, beer!
<b>Oliver</b>	<i>(Fishing out a vacuum flask from his backpack)</i> Coffee in the flask, here you go. <i>(He pours some into the cup)</i>
<b>Lucy</b>	<i>(Hopefully)</i> Teeth in the coffee?
<b>Kate</b>	And whisky chasers, I bet, afterwards!
<b>Oliver</b>	The best Irish Whiskey. <i>(He produces a hip flask and doses the coffee, then puts the hip flask</i>

	<i>down on the table, close to Jack)</i>
<b>Jack</b>	Just a tot ... or maybe three! <i>(He picks up the flask, offers it to Kate, who declines, then he takes a swig. They both laugh and he replaces the flask on to the table)</i>
<b>Lucy</b>	<i>(Picking up the flask and drinking her coffee)</i> Now that's the only kind of spirits I'm interested in seeing tonight.
<b>Kate</b>	<i>(Taking Jack's hands)</i> Are you going to apply?
<b>Oliver</b>	You've come all this way and you don't want to apply yourself to the supernatural?
<b>Jack</b>	I'll think about it. But I can't do it without telling the crew first.
<b>Lucy</b>	I did when you first suggested it, but now we're here <i>(she looks around)</i> it does seem like there is a presence here. Something. I think I can feel it.
<b>Kate</b>	That's - again - the right thing to do. I knew you're a good man, you'd make a brilliant officer.
<b>Jack</b>	Kate, I love you. <i>(They embrace, passionately. Kate lifts his hands to her breasts, he looks questioningly at her, but she smiles and nods very positively)</i>
<b>Oliver</b>	<i>(Examining the room)</i> Yes ... there is a lot of emotion locked up in this room.
<b>Lucy</b>	I remember the first overnight trip we did, when we stayed at ... er ... wherever-it-was, in that old draughty hut, you said it was as if the bricks and mortar had soaked up the lives and feelings that happened here, all those years ago. All the people who had experiences here, and the buildings have kind of absorbed them.
<b>Oliver</b>	Yes, and along we come and all those feelings and emotions are unlocked and let loose on us. You know, I've been to some places where there's just nothing, no feelings at all, like a car battery when the lights have been left on all night.
<b>Kate</b>	How many ops have you done now?
<b>Oliver</b>	But here, it feels different ... maybe you're right about those thousand ghosts.
<b>Lucy</b>	You've done quite a few of these overnight trips - how many have you done now?
<b>Jack</b>	I've done twenty-three. Just seven more.
<b>Oliver</b>	This is the ... <i>(he counts on his fingers)</i> ... eleventh one. And the second with you.
<b>Kate</b>	And after that, what, the usual six months' respite?
<b>Lucy</b>	Wow. All that 'atmosphere'. You know <i>(looks around)</i> I can feel it.
<b>Jack</b>	Yes, we'll get sent off to train new crews.
<b>Kate</b>	This place ... will you miss it?
<b>Oliver</b>	If you can stand in a place like this, and not feel the past leaning on you, there's gotta be something wrong with you.
<b>Jack</b>	We just try not to think that far ahead. You can't dwell too much on ... the future.
<b>Kate</b>	I can't help it, Jack.
<b>Lucy</b>	Didn't you tell me about one person you went with who could actually hear voices?
<b>Oliver</b>	Blimey, yes, she was extremely psychic. We were at another old aerodrome in Lincolnshire in what was the Briefing Room, and she had a conversation with a wartime airman who just suddenly walked in, through a door that wasn't there.
<b>Lucy</b>	A door that wasn't there?
<b>Oliver</b>	Well, it wasn't there for us, it had been bricked up ... but it was there for him.
<b>Lucy</b>	What, a ghost or something? What did he say?
<b>Jack</b>	<i>(Looking round, nervously)</i> I think we'd better be more careful where and when we meet. If someone sees us in here, they'll want to know what the hell we're doing.
<b>Oliver</b>	He wanted to know what the hell we were doing there, dressed as civilians!
<b>Kate</b>	I know what I'd like to be doing. <i>(She embraces him)</i>
<b>Lucy</b>	Wow! What she do?
<b>Kate</b>	<i>(Mischievously)</i> So what <b>would</b> you say if someone just happened to walk in right now?
<b>Oliver}</b>	I told her to say
<b>Jack}</b>	I'd just say -
<b>Oliver}</b>	<i>(Together)</i> We're guests of the Group Captain!
<b>Jack}</b>	
<b>Lucy}</b>	<i>(They laugh)</i>
<b>Kate}</b>	
<b>Oliver</b>	So she did, and he went off quite happy about it.
<b>Jack</b>	I'd be on a charge, and you'd be posted to the Orkneys or some such other dismal place.

<b>Kate</b>	You know what they say about Orkney?
<b>Jack</b>	Yes. The first year you talk to yourself, the second year you talk to the seagulls.
<b>Kate</b>	And the third year the seagulls answer you back! <i>(They both laugh)</i>
<b>Lucy</b>	Have you got that Squadron history in your backpack? I'd like to have a look through it.
<b>Oliver</b>	Sure. <i>(He moves over to where they have left their kit, and has his back to Lucy)</i>
<b>Kate</b>	<i>(Sneezes)</i>
<b>Lucy}</b> <b>Jack}</b>	Bless you!
<b>Kate}</b> <b>Oliver}</b>	<i>(She blows her nose)</i> Thank you! What?
<b>Lucy</b>	You sneezed!
<b>Oliver</b>	I did not!
<b>Jack</b>	Not catching something, are you?
<b>Lucy</b>	I heard you sneeze.
<b>Oliver</b>	It wasn't me.
<b>Kate</b>	<i>(Snatching his hand)</i> Only you.
<b>Oliver</b>	You're hearing things. Not one of those supernatural spirits, was it? <i>(He gives her the book)</i>
<b>Lucy</b>	I definitely heard someone sneeze.
<b>Oliver}</b> <b>Jack}</b>	I'll just check nobody's around, snooping on us. <i>(They both walk around, peering into corners etc)</i>
<b>Kate</b>	Good idea.
<b>Lucy</b>	<i>(Whilst looking through the pages of the book Oliver gave her)</i> All those names. Do you know how many were taken Prisoner of War?
<b>Oliver</b>	About ten percent of those shot down managed to bale out and ended up in a camp in Germany.
<b>Kate</b>	Jack, we heard some good news the other day.
<b>Jack</b>	<i>(Still peering around)</i> Whassat?
<b>Kate</b>	It was about the Watkins crew - you know, Flight Lieutenant <sup>3</sup> Watkins, they went missing a couple of months ago. We had word via the Red Cross that all the crew survived, and are now prisoners of war, in one of the big camps. But they are all OK.
<b>Jack</b>	<i>(Enthusiastically)</i> Good show! Watko was my flying instructor when I was training. He's a great bloke. Hey, that's really good news! <i>(At this point he is facing away from Lucy. He reverses direction unexpectedly and cannons backwards into Oliver, who was also facing away)</i>
<b>Oliver}</b> <b>Jack}</b>	<i>(Staggering off balance)</i> What the bloody hell - <i>(They both look around, but not being aware of each other, take on very puzzled expressions)</i>
<b>Lucy</b>	<i>(Had been looking the other way, and turns round quickly)</i> What was that - did you trip over something?
<b>Jack}</b> <b>Oliver}</b>	It felt like I bumped into something - <i>(they peer around each other)</i> - or someone.
<b>Kate}</b> <b>Lucy}</b>	There's nobody else here!
<b><i>(All four of them move and peer around carefully and suspiciously, very close to the ones of whom they are not aware, but they find nothing out of the ordinary, and resume their seats)</i></b>	
<b>Jack</b>	I can't explain it.
<b>Oliver</b>	I dunno. One of your ghosts, d'you think?
<b>Jack</b>	The hell with it. Hey, something funny happened in the mess last night.
<b>Oliver</b>	I heard a really funny story the other day.
<b>Lucy}</b> <b>Kate}</b>	Go on then, tell all!
<b><i>(At this point, Jack and Oliver are seated facing each other, only a few feet apart, and speaking directly to their partners opposite, each unaware of the other)</i></b>	
<b>Jack</b>	A new pilot -
<b>Oliver</b>	- arrived that afternoon -
<b>Jack</b>	- and he went up to -
<b>Oliver</b>	- one of the experienced pilots -

<sup>3</sup> "Leftenant" not "Lootenant", please!

Jack	- and said could he please -
Oliver	- have some advice?
Lucy} Kate}	Go on, what the other chap say?
Oliver	He said sure, what -
Jack	- do you want to know?
Lucy} Kate}	And what was that?
Jack	He wanted to know -
Oliver	- what was the best thing to do -
Jack	- if his bomber was caught -
Oliver	- in an enemy searchlight beam.
Lucy} Kate}	Go on, go on!
Oliver	The experienced pilot -
Jack	- kept a dead -
Oliver	- straight face -
Jack	- and said -
Oliver	- the best course -
Jack	- of action -
Oliver	- was to -
Jack	- put on -
Oliver	- full left rudder-
Jack	- and fly in -
Oliver	- a very tight -
Jack	- anticlockwise circle - ( <i>gesticulating an aircraft turning in a circle</i> )
Oliver	- around and around - ( <i>gesticulating an aircraft turning in a circle</i> )
Jack} Oliver}	- the searchlight beam.
Kate	I never heard that one! Does it work?
Lucy	Does that trick work?
Oliver} Jack}	That's what the new chap said.
Lucy} Kate}	Well, does it?
Jack	Yes! As the searchlight beam -
Oliver	- follows you round - ( <i>gesticulating an aircraft turning in a circle</i> )
Jack	- and round and round - ( <i>gesticulating an aircraft turning in a circle</i> )
Oliver	- the bulb unscrews - ( <i>miming unscrewing a bulb</i> )
Jack} Oliver}	- and the light goes out!
<i>(They all laugh out loud)</i>	
Lucy	<i>(Yawning)</i> And talking of lights going out ...
Kate	Jack, we should be getting back to our stations. <i>(She takes his hand)</i>
Oliver	Yes, let's turn in.
Jack	I expect we'll be flying tomorrow, even if it's just an air test.
Oliver	Tomorrow, as they say, is another day.
Kate	<i>(Embracing Jack)</i> I love you, my very favourite Sergeant pilot.
Jack	I love you, my very favourite Section Officer. <i>(They kiss)</i>
<b><i>(Oliver and Lucy move towards their camp beds and as the other conversation continues, bed down for the night, cuddling up together in an semi-intimate way)</i></b>	
Kate	When do you get your next leave?
Jack	We're due for seven days' leave right after the next operation.
Kate	When you get that leave, can we ... you know ... go away somewhere? Together? Just us two? I'm sure I can swing some leave time to match yours, without too many awkward questions being

	asked of me.
<b>Jack</b>	Kathryn, my lovely Kate. <i>(He pauses, meaningfully)</i> Are you quite sure you want to do this ... go this far, I mean?
<b>Kate</b>	Yes. <i>(Hesitantly, embarrassed)</i> But I've never ... I haven't ...
<b>Jack</b>	I'm glad you told me. <i>(Taking her hands)</i> So am I.
<b>Kate</b>	<i>(Relieved)</i> Aren't we a right pair of sprogs? Do you ... er ... know what to do?
<b>Jack</b>	Theoretically. <i>(Quizzically)</i> Do you?
<b>Kate</b>	<i>(Smiling)</i> Theoretically.
<b>Jack</b>	H'mmm ... not exactly the kind of thing a Convent education prepares you for, I don't suppose.
<b>Kate</b>	Hardly! But ... surely there's been talk about this sort of thing, around the bar in the Sergeants' Mess? You must have heard someone talk about it.
<b>Jack</b>	Yes. I guess I've picked up some information from that kind of talk. Some of the blokes seem to brag about nothing else. It's crude enough.
<b>Kate</b>	<i>(Firmly)</i> I don't want us to be crude. I want us to love, properly, like you should do with someone you love.
<b>Jack</b>	Don't the girls in the WAAFery talk about it?
<b>Kate</b>	<i>(Slyly)</i> Not like your chaps, it seems. <i>(She winks, theatrically)</i>
<b>Jack</b>	<i>(Firmly)</i> It's a date. Kate, my lovely Kathryn, us together, mine, at last.
<b>Kate</b>	Don't they ask you for your marriage lines, if a chap and his girl stay together at a hotel?
<b>Jake</b>	They say that the posh hotels do, but not the ordinary ones. It's the war, I suppose, there's a lot of that sort of thing going on, these days. Fortunately!
<b>Kate</b>	<i>(Mock seriously)</i> Posh hotels, eh? Oh, so it won't be the Savoy then? <i>(She grins)</i>
<b>Jack</b>	'Fraid not ... for a privately educated girl, I guess the Savoy would have suited you well. <i>(Chuckles)</i> But the best I can do is probably the Railway Hotel <i>(shrugs, helplessly)</i> .
<b>Kate</b>	Whichever it turns out to be, I don't care, I can't wait!
<b>Jack</b>	Neither can I. I'll be bending the throttles on the way back from wherever we go, next time.
<b>Kate</b>	My love ... if you have to fly tomorrow, or the day after ... please come back.
<b>Jack</b>	I'll come back.
<b>Kate</b>	I'll wait for you.
	<i>(They kiss again)</i>
<b>Kate</b>	We'd better go away separately, or someone might see us together.
<b>Jack</b>	And then it'd be all over the Squadron before you could say "Lancaster bomber."
<b>Kate</b>	Go on then, before I change my mind about doing some conduct unbecoming.
<b>Jack</b>	<i>(As Kate takes his hands again and lifts them to her breasts)</i> Another time - another place.
<b>Kate</b>	<i>(Pulling his hands more firmly against herself)</i> Oh, yes please! And somewhere more private. Definitely more private. Where we can be quite sure that nobody else might be here <i>(she looks around)</i> watching us.
<b>Jack</b>	I love you. <i>(Decisively)</i> See, I'll apply for that commission. Pilot Officer Jack, yes, I'm starting to get to like the sound of that. <i>(He moves to the stairs and pauses in the doorway: aside)</i> Hey ... I didn't bring that flask of whiskey ... what the ... <i>(he looks back into the room, shrugs, and exits)</i>
<b>Kate</b>	Not a moment will I rest until I see you safe again. <i>(Seeing the whisky flask)</i> I think I'll have that tot after all. <i>(She drinks, pockets the flask, waits for a moment, then moves to the staircase and looks to ensure he has gone, and then also departs)</i>
<b><i>(The lights dim, signalling full night and a passage of time)</i></b>	
<b>Lucy</b>	<i>(Rising up on one elbow in her cot, looking at her watch and seeing that Oliver is sleeping)</i> Heck, three in the morning. What a place. <i>(She climbs out of her cot and wraps herself in a blanket)</i> A thousand ghosts. Now that's what I call an atmosphere. <i>(She turns on the camping light)</i>
<b><i>(Kate enters and stands by the window overlooking the aerodrome. Is she a real person come to the present times, or an apparition? We don't know)</i></b>	
<b>Lucy</b>	<i>(Moving to look out of the same window, and standing close to Kate; as if in a dream)</i> A thousand ghosts. D'you know ... I can feel it.
<b>Kate</b>	One thousand, three hundred and seventy-five.
<b>Lucy</b>	<i>(Dreamily)</i> As many as that?
<b>Kate</b>	Yes. Some lie now in Germany or occupied countries, and many are simply 'Lost Without Trace'.
<b>Lucy</b>	I've been to Runnymede, the memorial for those of 'No Known Grave'.

<b>Kate</b>	Too many names.
<b>Lucy</b>	Too many.
<b>Kate</b>	And one in particular.
<b>Lucy</b>	Your husband?
<b>Kate</b>	My - my - <i>(she sobs)</i>
<b>Lucy</b>	<i>(Takes her in a hug)</i> Your boyfriend ... your lover?
<b>Kate</b>	We never ... you know ... went all the way ... but we wanted to, we were in love. We planned to go off somewhere together on leave, but we never got the chance.
<b>Lucy</b>	What happened?
<b>Kate</b>	<i>(She separates, and wipes her eyes)</i> We used to meet here, when there was nobody on duty.
<b>Lucy</b>	I thought ... I just thought ... that it was something like that. We were here ... and I'm sure I felt something.
<b>Kate</b>	The last time I saw him, we were in here, on that last night.
<b>Lucy</b>	And then ... what happened?
<b>Kate</b>	It's simple. He's one of the one thousand, three hundred and seventy-five ghosts.
<b>Lucy</b>	<i>(Aghast)</i> You mean - he went out on a bombing raid -
<b>Kate</b>	- and never came back.
<b>Lucy</b>	<i>(Tearfully)</i> That's so very sad, that's awful.
<b>Kate</b>	I waited for him.
<b>Lucy</b>	But he never came.
<b>Kate</b>	No.
<b>Lucy</b>	And now, you've just come back to see the place again?
<b>Kate</b>	<i>(Moving away)</i> I just get drawn back here, to soak in the history of this place.
<b>Lucy</b>	<i>(Disbelievingly)</i> But ... you're here ... with me ... now!
<b>Kate</b>	No. Well ... yes ... kind of. I'm here in your space, you're here in my space, and for the moment we're in each others' time.
<b>Lucy</b>	What happened to him? What was his name?
<b>Kate</b>	His name was Jack. And what happened to him, I don't know, nobody knows. His aircraft was simply one of those chalked up as 'Missing' on the Operations Board. Missing. Just missing. Lost without trace.
<b>Lucy</b>	Afterwards - nothing at all?
<b>Kate</b>	No. <i>(Pause)</i> I have to go now.
<b>Lucy</b>	Is there something - anything - I can do for you?
<b>Kate</b>	Yes. Make sure they are not forgotten.
<b>Lucy</b>	<i>(Emotionally)</i> Having been here, I certainly won't ever forget.
<b>Kate</b>	Thank you. From us both. <i>(She exits, quietly)</i>
<b>Lucy</b>	<i>(Turns to the window overlooking the aerodrome)</i> No, I won't forget. Jack and ... who? I don't know her name. I should have asked her name.
<b>Jack</b>	<i>(Off, emotionally)</i> Kathryn, my lovely Kate. <i>(Harshly)</i> Hit and killed by some bloody random bomb when she was home on leave. Before we could ... before ... <i>(he sobs)</i>
<b>Lucy</b>	<i>(She retires to her camp-bed)</i> Heck, what a place. Emotion, it gets you by the throat.
<b><i>The lights dim to indicate a passage of time, and then come up as in full daylight, to show Oliver and Lucy packing up their camping equipment.</i></b>	
<b>Oliver</b>	<i>(Brightly)</i> Well, what did you think? Enough atmosphere for you?
<b>Lucy</b>	<i>(Meaningfully)</i> More than I bargained for.
<b>Oliver</b>	Scary, was it, Lucy my love?
<b>Lucy</b>	No, not scary. Not frightening. I'm not quite sure how to describe it. But I could definitely feel something in this place; intense, powerful, profound. I don't think I could put it into words, it was too much of an inner feeling. Like you said, about bricks and mortar soaking up emotions and incidents, and then releasing them to you. Now I understand what that means. Like one of those dreams you sometimes have, the ones that seem so very real when you wake up, and afterwards you can't quite shake it off.
<b>Oliver</b>	<i>(Nodding)</i> You're attuned to it all, I can tell. Receptive. Sometimes I wish I could feel it like you do. But I guess I'm just not receptive enough, unless it's really very strong. It was, once.
<b>Lucy</b>	What happened? Did you see a ghost, some kind of apparition? Or hear something from the

	past?
<b>Oliver</b>	No, nothing like that, nothing what you might call physical or even almost-physical. I went into an empty hangar up in Yorkshire. It was derelict and almost a wreck. But I had only gone inside ten feet or so, when I felt myself being pushed out, a most powerful feeling of trespassing, it was weird. That hangar was hostile to me.
<b>Lucy</b>	I liked that expression you made up, to describe the old hangars.
<b>Oliver</b>	Bomber Command's steel cathedral.
<b>Lucy</b>	<i>(Nodding)</i> Yes. Steel cathedral. Very evocative, very appropriate.
<b>Oliver</b>	<i>(Shaking his head)</i> It didn't want me in there. No matter how much I knew about the history of it, no matter how much I admired what had happened there. I knew I was not wanted.
<b>Lucy</b>	Be careful then, lest you find more than you seek.
<b>Oliver</b>	Good advice, yes. <i>(He takes a good look round the room)</i> C'mon, let's go. I know a great truck driver's café a couple of miles away, where they do an ace breakfast.
<b>Lucy</b>	OK. Ollie ... I want to do this kind of expedition again. There's more atmosphere here than I thought there would be, and I'd like to feel it some more.
<b>Oliver</b>	Sure. The farmer's fine with that, he said we could come back any time, but he added that some of the buildings will probably be knocked down soon. Before they fall down.
<b>Lucy</b>	I guess you can't expect them to last forever, just to please nutcases like us, who want to spend the night with a thousand ghosts.
<b>Oliver</b>	And he went on to say that the local Army unit asked permission to blow up this Watch Tower for an explosives training exercise. It will save him the bother of demolishing it, I s'pose <i>(he shakes his head, sadly)</i> .
<b>Lucy</b>	That's so sad. It will destroy all that emotion that's been locked up in here, all the feelings that the bricks and mortar have absorbed. It somehow just doesn't seem right. Kind of a sacrilege.
<b>Oliver</b>	Yes, you're right. But it's a sign of the times, I'm afraid, Lu. If this place has been knocked down, we can go somewhere else instead. I'll make a start with the bags, here, let me take yours down to the car. <i>(He takes the baggage and starts to leave.)</i>
<b>Lucy</b>	Just give me a minute here on my own.
<b>Oliver</b>	More atmosphere, eh, Lu? OK. I'll wait outside. Hey, don't forget my whisky flask. <i>(Exiting, lugging the baggage; just off)</i> Dammit, I wish I was as receptive as she is!
<b>Lucy</b>	<i>(Looks out through the window space over the aerodrome, and wipes her eyes before turning away. As she is about to leave via the staircase)</i> I had the most peculiar dream. I still don't know if it was a dream or ... just maybe ... it really happened. Kate ... and Jack? <i>(She looks around at the room, shakes her head, and as she goes out)</i> Kate and Jack. But it felt very real, to me, anyway. <i>(Looking around)</i> What the heck, where's the whisky gone? Oh well, I guess he must have taken it with him. <i>(Smiling)</i> How unreal is <b>that</b> ?
<b>Jack}</b> <b>Kate}</b>	<i>(Appearing very suddenly and quietly from the other side of the stage)</i> It was all very, very real. <i>(To each other)</i> I love you. <i>(They embrace)</i>
<b><i>(Kate separates from Jack and extends her arms as if preparing for a hug. She walks towards Lucy, who is at that moment facing away. This movement catches Lucy's attention; she turns back and starts forward, but stops just short of Kate, shakes her head as if very puzzled, and turns around again towards the staircase)</i></b>	
<b>Lucy</b>	So, it's just an old aerodrome, is it? <i>(She peers round again. Can she see Jack and Kate? We don't know. As she goes off)</i> Just an old aerodrome. But I won't forget.
<b>Jack</b>	<i>(Walking over to where Kate is left standing)</i> Just an old aerodrome.
<b>Kate</b>	Old airmen never die.
<b>Jack</b>	They simply fade away.
<b>They embrace, as the lights dim slowly and the CURTAIN falls.</b>	
<b>For 'playing out' music I recommend Roger Whittaker's "Railway Hotel" with Mike Batt's lyrics, some of which I've borrowed.</b>	

*"I found The Watchers Watched very moving. The characters are well-drawn and sympathetic, the dialogue seems plausible and admirably concise without being Hemingwayesque, and you used your deep understanding of the wartime Bomber Command milieu very effectively. I loved the adeptness with which you entwined the two couples in the same space without the dramatic*

*devices of ghostly presences from the past and the future and alternating dialogue being obtrusive. Most importantly, you touched my heart." - Graeme Roberts, Writer and Editor, USA*

I was grateful for some very useful comments from **Karen Loxley of Basingstoke**.

**You can download the most recent version of this play from**  
**<http://www.rodavis.webhop.org/writing>**