

Soldier God

by Jay Dover

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CAST: SOLDIER ONE
SOLDIER TWO

PLACE: A bombed-out house in an American suburb

TIME: Near future, Christmas Day, just before midnight

Lights up on the living room, rubble, broken furniture, glass. A large window upstage. Snow falling outside. Two soldiers sit against the wall and frame the large window. They are tired, cold, dirty. Their guns and packs sit nearby. SOLDIER ONE wears a dark green uniform and cleans his bayonet knife. SOLDIER TWO wears a dark grey uniform and drinks from his canteen. Downstage center is a dead body, partially rolled into a carpet.

ONE

So the young priest says to old priest, 'she ain't my mother, father, but damn, she's sure is holy!'

(laughs)

Love that joke. That's what so great about the Truce. We can tell each other jokes like that and not get killed. Unless they ain't funny. Then all bets are off, huh?

SOLDIER ONE pokes his bayonet in the direction of SOLDIER TWO, he tenses, grabs rifle.

ONE

Hey man, whoa. Relax. I'm just messing around. Just trying to enjoy some Peace and Joy. For a change.

SOLDIER ONE finishes up his bayonet, stows. Checks his watch. SOLDIER TWO checks his watch.

ONE

Don't suppose they worked out a truce for New Years. I could get used to this. But, they need meat for the grinder, huh? Messed up is what this is, man. Messed up.

SOLDER ONE searches his jacket. Finds a pack of cigarettes, takes one out, motions the pack to SOLDIER TWO, who motions "no thanks".

ONE

What's the matter? The Lord don't let you smoke?

TWO

I smoke.

ONE

A cigarette from an Unbeliever. Can't have that, can we. Gotta be a Cigarette from Jesus. Tobacco and fire blessed by the Holy Spirit in the Name of the Almighty God of Camel Unfiltered.

TWO

I don't want to smoke *right now*.

ONE

Yeah? Well, get with the program, buddy. Now is all we get.
(lights cigarette)
But that ain't what the Lord says, does he? The Afterlife. Now that's where it's at. Kill the unbelievers, then take their smokes. That the way it goes? Thought so.

TWO

It's not that.

ONE

It is that. You people started this shit. We were just sitting around, screwing our wives, raising the kids, watching the game, drinking beer. Normal civilized shit. But not you people. Singing and praying and going to church wasn't good enough. Had to start "saving" everybody by bombing the shit out of everything. Complete bullshit is what it is. You people got Jesus wrong. You save people by living with 'em, talking to 'em, working things out, not by blowing their fucking heads off, for fuck sake. I mean, look at this shit. Fuck it. I'm tired of trying to be all Christmas and shit with you. Fuck the truce. Merry fucking Christmas.

SOLDIER ONE busies himself with his pack.

TWO
Faith is complicated.

ONE
Hey, thanks for that.

TWO
I'll take that cigarette after all.

ONE
Yeah? That what Jesus would do?

TWO
I like to think so.

ONE
Forget it. Too late. Times up.

SOLDIER ONE reaches into his jacket, SOLDIER TWO reacts, reaches for gun. A short tense moment as SOLDIER ONE slowly takes out the pack of cigarettes, tosses them to SOLDIER TWO.

ONE
Man. You people gotta get a sense of humor. And get laid. Preferrably both at the same time.

SOLDIER ONE tosses SOLDIER TWO his lighter. Lights, tosses it back.

TWO
Yes. Maybe.

ONE
See. There you go. If you people could take a joke, maybe we wouldn't be fighting this stupid Holy War. Man, that's messed up ain't it? Holy War in America.

TWO
We're fighting for what is right.

ONE
Yeah? What's that?

TWO
The Divine Word of God. It is a noble fight.

ONE
Yeah, looks pretty noble in here.

TWO
There are things worth dying for.

ONE

Yeah? Name one.

TWO

God. Family. Country.

ONE

That's three.

TWO

That's one.

ONE

Oh yeah. One nation under God or else we kill you.

TWO

If you were attacked as we were, you would do whatever...

ONE

Attacked? YOU GUYS took over the Air Force, started dropping bombs and shit.

TWO

We were attacked by sin. You wouldn't understand.

ONE

Yeah? Did sin kill her?

(referring to the body)

Some big ass sin walk in here and blow her brains out?

TWO

You do not believe. You can't understand our cause.

ONE

See, that's the fucking problem with you people! Nobody can fucking talk... Fuck!

(calming down)

You know, when this Truce started, I saw this house and I thought, I'm going go in there and live like a normal person. Like I just got done working a site and I'm home with my wife and kids and I'm fucking flipping channels from the Lazy Boy, having a smoke and nobody is fucking shooting at me. That's my Christmas present this year. But I walk in and find you sitting here and since this is the Truce, I can't do anything about that. So here's the deal: You want to talk normal, like a couple of neighborhood guys sitting on aluminum chairs yelling at the kids to stay off the grass, fine. But you wanna go all Jesus and Holy Almighty God on my ass...

(zippers his mouth)

I'm tired, I'm cold, I can't remember the last time I was warm, and I am sick of looking at fucking dead bodies.

SOLDIER ONE rises and pushes away the dead body.

ONE

When the signal comes, we can kill each other all we want. Until then, I'm having a smoke and getting some Peace. Jesus would do the same if he had a Truce. You do what you want.

SOLDIER ONE takes out another cigarette, lights it, sits back down.

TWO

Yes. He would.

ONE

Damn right, he would.

A short pause as they smoke. SOLDIER TWO finishes his.

TWO

This is my first Christmas with snow. I'm from San Diego.

ONE

Yeah?

TWO

Born and raised.

ONE

How you like it?

TWO

Oh, it was great. The beaches are really nice and the people were very friendly...

ONE

No, I mean the snow.

TWO

Oh. I'm getting used to it.

ONE

If you grew up in Detroit, you'd still never get used to it.

TWO

Is that where' your from?

ONE

Yep. Snow and crime, that's Detroit. Froze my ass off working construction. Wanted to get out to California couple years ago, take the kids to Disneyland, whole thing. But you guys started a Holy War and fucked that idea.

(MORE)

ONE (cont'd)

(pause)

Shit. Sorry. What did you do in San Diego?

TWO

Do you have another cigarette?

ONE

Yeah, sure.

Soldier Two gets cigarette, lights.

TWO

I'm a dentist.

ONE

No shit.

TWO

Children mostly. Braces, cavities. Nothing major.

ONE

Man, wouldn't have pegged you for a dentist. I can't stand getting that novocaine, the drills. I hate going to the dentist. No offense or nothing.

TWO

None taken. How about you? What do you do?

ONE

Construction. Had my own company. Remodels mostly. Kitchens. Tons of fucking kitchens. Once all those cooking shows took off on satellite, everybody suddenly needed a new kitchen. Got so bad I couldn't even go into my own. Made good money though. That was before the War. Nobody cares about countertops anymore. Married? Got kids?

TWO

Two sons. My wife passed four years ago.

ONE

Sorry.

TWO

She's in my prayers. Everyday. She is why I fight.

ONE

I gotta wife. Three daughters. Six, eight, and ten.

TWO

Even numbers.

ONE

Yeah. Next year they turn odd again, huh? Hey' I got some pictures.

SOLDIER ONE takes out a picture from his jacket, wrapped in a plastic sandwich bag. He shows SOLDIER TWO.

ONE

Jane, Ellen and Samantha. They were a lot younger when this was taken.

TWO

Nice smiles.

ONE

Damn right, cost me a fortune thanks to guys like you. Got leave at the end of next month. Be nice to see 'em when I walk in the door. So you got yourself a couple of boys?

TWO

Matthew is nine. John just turned thirteen.

ONE

Are they're both enlisted...

TWO

Yes, they are enlisted and are Crusaders for Christ.

ONE

Man. You worried about 'em?

TWO

They are doing the Lord's work. They are guided.

ONE

Where they stationed?

TWO

I don't know.

ONE

What the fuck. Really?

TWO

It's better that way. Keeps our focus on our sacred mission. Our duty must only be to Christ.

ONE

Jesus, I don't know how you can do that. If my daughters had to enlist and I didn't know where they were, I'd be going crazy insane right now.

TWO

The Lord keeps them safe. He is their Shepherd.

ONE

Guns are keeping 'em safe, buddy. Not a some shepherd in a bed sheet.

TWO

I thought this was a truce.

ONE

Right. Sorry. Just two dads smoking and shooting the shit.

(pause, then referencing the
dead body)

Wonder if she had kids. Huh? Hey, you think she had kids? This was probably a nice house one time. Christmas tree over there. TV there, stereo. Fireplace. Wonder what the mortgage was on this. She probably bought that rug herself.

TWO

It is a tragedy.

ONE

Damn shame is what it is.

(pause)

You got any hobbies?

TWO

Excuse me?

ONE

Hobbies. Got any?

TWO

Oh. Uh, yes. I like to fish.

ONE

No you don't. No way.

TWO

Yes. I fish. On a boat.

ONE

No fucking way! I love fishing. I'd be fishing right now if I wasn't shooting at you people. What kinda fishing you do?

TWO

Deep sea, mostly. Marlin, shark, blue fin.

ONE

No shit. I do mostly lake. Trout and pike. A couple of buddies and me go up to Saginaw and do some fly fishing. It's beautiful up there. Trout are huge, just huge. Ice fishing on Michigan if the weather's right.

TWO

My boys and I went to Alaska for halibut a couple of years ago.

ONE

Yeah? How is that to catch?

TWO

Easy. You just keep the line as still as you can, when you feel the hitch, pop it. Not much of a fight, though it's heavy reeling.

ONE

Always wanted to fish Alaska.

TWO

It's beautiful country. God's country.

ONE

I heard.

TWO

I think the best fishing in the world is in Alaska. Fishing with my boys there is a memory I will cherish forever.

ONE

Man. Never took you for a fisherman.

TWO

Small world.

ONE

Damn right. See? This is how it should be. Just a couple of guys, raising our kids and fishing. Keep the personal shit, personal, huh? Hell. In another life, maybe even you and me could be fishing buddies.

TWO

Maybe.

ONE

That would be something wouldn't it? Believers and non-believers fishing. Bet they love that back at HQ.

(pause)

Look. I just gotta ask you something, though. And I don't wanna start nothing here, alright. But it's been bugging the crap out of me. How can you people send your children off to war? They're just kids. I mean, your own sons.

TWO

Faith is complicated.

ONE

Ain't nothing complicated about war, buddy. Ask her.

TWO

You won't understand because you don't believe.

ONE

We're both fathers. I understand that and what you people make your children do is beyond... it's fucking crazy.

TWO

You know the story of Abraham?

ONE

You're kidding me, right?

TWO

It is about the Power of Faith.

ONE

I know what it's about.

TWO

Are your daughters alive?

ONE

What? What kind of question is that?

TWO

Are your daughters alive?

Yeah, they're alive.

TWO

How do you know?

ONE

Because I know.

TWO

You have no evidence they are.

ONE

They're fucking alive, alright.

TWO

There it is.

ONE

There what is?

TWO

The power of faith. You have no physical evidence that your daughters are living and well and yet you are very passionate in your belief that they are and this belief is as real to you as this house, your gun. You are a man of enormous faith and belief. In this we are united. Maybe you should come over to our side. God is a loving and forgiving God.

ONE

Maybe you shouldn't make your kids fight your wars. Men fight wars. Not kids.

TWO

Depends on the war.

ONE

War is war, buddy.

(to the body)

This is war. Rolled up in a carpet in your living room on Christmas fucking day. You people crossed the line. That's why you gotta be stopped.

TWO

As you must be also.

A bell tolls in the distance. They both check their watches. Through the window faint flashes of light, far off explosions are heard.

ONE

Shit. Some fucking Christmas present, huh?

TWO

Not the Guiding Star of David I imagined.

ONE

Damn right.

SOLDIER TWO begin assembling his gear, SOLDIER ONE follows suit.

ONE

Well, maybe the Turce did some good. If guys like you and me can sit here, smoke, talk about fishing and not kill each other for at least twelve hours, then who knows. One day soon we all go Christmas shopping at the mall, wash our cars in the driveway, watch the game with a beer in one hand and a remote in the other. Living the American dream.

SOLDIER ONE is busy loading up his pack and doesn't see SOLDIER TWO taking out a handgun.

ONE

Hey, you know what? All this time we've been talking and I don't even know your name.

(rising)

My name is Jim.

(seeing the gun)

What the...

SOLDIER TWO shoots SOLDIER ONE violently. He falls in a heap. SOLDIER TWO holsters his gun, takes out a small cross from his bag, kneels down next to SOLDIER ONE. He makes the Sign of the Cross and quickly, fervently prays over SOLDIER ONE's body. He rises, kneels over the dead body in the carpet, prays. He rises quickly, takes out a tunic from his pack, puts it on. It is decorated with the Sign of the Cross on a Shield. He looks like a Crusader. He quickly makes his way out of the room, like a soldier. Flash of light, explosions.

Lights fade.

End of the play.