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Immanuel Mifsud – Malta

Fl-Isem tal-Missier (tal-iben) (2010)

In the Name of the Father (and of the Son)

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Biography

Immanuel Mifsud was born in Malta in 1967, the youngest in a working class family of eight children. He has been active on the literary scene since the age of 16, when he started writing poetry and co-founded the literary group Versarti. He later founded several drama groups and also directed plays written by himself and by a variety of famous playwrights. He is a leading contemporary poet and fiction writer and some of his works have been translated and published in some European countries and the USA. His 2002 short story collection *L-Istejjer Strambita' Sara Sue Sammut (Sara Sue Sammut's Strange Stories)* won the Malta National Literary award and the same book was later nominated for the Premio Strega Europa prize. He has participated in prestigious literary festivals across Europe. Mifsud is a lecturer at the University of Malta, where he teaches modern Maltese poetry and theatre.

Synopsis

Back from his father's funeral, the narrator starts reading a diary his father kept during his days as a soldier during the Second World War. The diary is very scant, almost impersonal, but it is exactly this impersonality which pushes the narrator to re-examine the personal relationship he had with his father. The father, who the son knew only as a cripple after he had been injured in a motorcycle accident, had always tried to convince those around him that he was tough enough to withstand all hardship, and had tried to bring up his son in his mould. The narrator revisits his father's past, as well as his own, to look for cracks in this façade, to find signs of weakness and displays of emotion. This turns out to be an opportunity to also look back at his own upbringing and especially at the way he had been educated to become a man. Episodes from the past are recalled and examined for any light they can shed on the matter. The narrator is not only older, which makes him attach new meanings to old events, but he has also changed in two other ways, which both influence the way he now sees things: he has just himself become a father, and he has become a scholar. He has read things that his working-class father would never understand, let alone know that they would be used to understand him.

Fl-Isem tal-Missier (tal-iben)

Immanuel Mifsud

L-Addolorata. Fuq il-qabar t'ommok. Minn wara nuċċali b'lenti ħoxna u skura, rajt id-demgħa niezla. Ma kellhiex tagħmel hekk, imma qabżet u żżerżqet. Ħsibt li ma rajt xejn, imma jien kont qed inħarislek. Jien dejjem kont inħarislek lilek, dejjem nġhasses fuqek, ħalli nara kif qed iġġib ruħek. Bħal meta qbadtek titfa' idek wara dahrek u toħroġ qrun malli xi ħadd ma nafux qallek li alla jbierkek minkejja l-età, minkejja l-mankament li kellek f'sieqek ix-xellugija, minkejja x-xeni li rajt. Jien dejjem attent għalik kont inkun. U dakinhar rajtek b'did-demgħa niezla kollha mistħija, bħalma stħajt meta ġbidtlek l-attenzjoni għal demgħa niezla ma' ħaddek. Stħajt minni dakinhar, aktar u aktar meta mort nigħthannaq mal-fardal b'riħa taqşam ta' tewm u basal li kienet liebsa martek u ħabbart lil kull min kien miġbur li koint rajtek tibki.

Ma kontx naf li s-suldati jibku wkoll.

Kont naħseb li s-suldati kienu tal-azzar.

Kont naħseb li wiċċhom dejjem imqit u b'saħħtu u qawwi.

Kont naħseb li jien biss nibki, li jien biss nagħmel dak li mhux suppost nagħmel.

Bħal dakinhar.

Dakinhar.

Dak

kien iż-żmien meta kont tgħidli li jien ma nistax nibki. Jien tifel. Ma tistax issir raġel jekk tibki. Kif għadek tibki tifel bhalek? Int taqleb kulm'hawn, u tibki? Ma tistax tibki, fhimt? Ma tistax.

Imma jien nibki. U nisthi meta nibki. U nisthi għax jien mhux suppost nibki. U nisthi aktar għax – trid tkun tafha din? – nieħu gost nibki. Nieħu gost inħoss dak l-ilma sħun iġelben. Nieħu gost inħoss imnieħri jitrass, għajnejja jingħasru. Nieħu gost nara kollox imżelleġ.

Nieħu gost ma nobdikx.

Nieħu gost nibża' minnek għax int tal-biża'. Għax int tħares lejja u bil-ħarsa kerha li tagħtini twerwirni. U nibża' u nilbet.

Anki int tibki.

Suldat, anki int tibki.

Bħal dakinhar li miet ta' maġenbek. Ma bkejtx dakinhar li rajtu jintlaqat? Ma bkejtx?

Bħal dakinhar li rajt kollox jiġġarraf quddiemek.

Bħal kull meta tiftakar li t-tieg tiegħek sar ġo xelter.

Taħt dik il-lanterna

ħdejn dak il-kancell,

qalbi kif niftakrek

tistenna dejjem hemm.

Kont issejjaħli m'nn taħt l-ilsien,

u tgħid li tħobbni u dejjem int

Wie einst Lili Marlene,

Wien einst Lili Marlene.

Is-sigarett jitgħażzen fir-rokna ta' ħalqek. Il-kappell imniżżel għal fuq għajnejk. Humphrey Bogart. Casablanca. Tripli. Bengazi. Il-qmis bl-għonq illamtat. L-ingravata b'għoqda żgħira u ssikkata. Il-ħarsa. Il-mustacċi rqaq fuq wiċċ lixx, riħa ta' sapun tal-lehja kull filgħodu qabel ma tilhaq titla' x-xemx. *Wie einst Lili Marlene, Wie einst Lili Marlene.*

U allura fuq il-qabar tal-familja, xhin nara d-demgħa li mhux suppost rajt, nibqa' ssummat.

Jien, Ġużeppi Marija Mifsud, mill-Belt Valletta, bin Pawla u Salvu, proletarju u Soċjalist anki jekk jekk qatt ma qbadt u qrajt il-kotba l-homor (għax dawk miżmuma minn Ommna l-Knisja Appostolika rumana, u għax għalkemm naf naqra xi haġa, mohħi mhuwiex mixhut għal-qari ta' kotba tqalu ħżiena), suldat fit-Tieni Gwerra Dinjija, assenjat fuq il-kanuni anti-aircraft, niddefendi lil art twelidi mill-attakki mill-ajru tal-bgħula Faxxisti Taljani u ta' dawk il-ħnieżer Nazisti, nissogra ħajti għal art twelidi, għall-familja li Alla għoġbu jafdali, bit-tpingija fuq dirgħajja għax jien suldat proletarju, kapural, u mbaġhad surġent tal-King's Own Malta Regiment u r-Royal Malta Artillery, fuq Bigi u Tignè, ninxtewa bl-azzar jikwi, nitbagħal kif bdejt nagħmel minn tfuliti wara li ommi romlot għat-tieni darba, niġri fit-toroq b'żarbuna waħda biex ma ngħarraqx il-par shiħ, nagħmel dak li jiġi għal idejja ħalli mmantni lil ommi u lil ħuti iżgħar minni, u nitgħallem il-ħajja fil-kantunieri, fil-ħwienet tax-xorb jien u naħsel il-platti u t-tazzi kollha bżieq u zlazi u isfar tal-bajd moqli, jien u naqta' l-biljetti fuq tal-linja, jien u ngħawweġ dahri ganċ fil-fabbriki tal-Marsa u nimtela nugrufun u frak tal-faħam, jien u nibni l-muskoli, jien u nsir raġel kif għandhom ikunu l-irġiel, jien u nqaddes il-ħefa u nispira lill-Moviment tal-Ħaddiema, jien u ngħix u mmur u nimmira ħalli noqtol lil dak l-għadu li qed itajjar l-ajruplani ħalli jtajjarli rasi, jien u nsir, jien u nkun, jien u jien.

Ta' sebgħa u erbghin sena lqajt fi ħdani t-tmien wild, l-ghaxar wieħed li kellhom jghixu kollha. U lill-Mulej ghidtlu: Mulej, tkun magħmula r-rieda tiegħek, ghax avolja ħsibt li issa wasal iż-żmien li nistrieħ wara li rabbejt familja u ddefendejt lil art twelidi u l-Fidi Mqaddsa, il-Providenza Tiegħek ħarset lejja mis-smewwiet u lemħet il-ħila tiegħi u għarfet li għad għandi s-saħħa minkejja dak li ġrali u dak li rajt u dak li għaddejt minnu, u baġhtitli wild ieħor. Ma nafx kif se ngħajjex lil din iż-żieda mhux mistennija, imma nafda fik, Mulej, kif dejjem għamilt.

Ta' sebgħa u tmenin sena, Mulej, għoġbok issejjahli għal għandek.

Guzeppi Marija Mifsud, magħruf bħala l-Kikkra.

Ha nara tafx din: b'subgħajk ġo toqbitha u b'xufftejk ma' xoffitha. Ha nara, x'inhi?

U jien nihmar għax mohħi diġà thammeg, u nissuspetta li int indunajt u qiegħed tipprova tkejjal kemm thammeg diġà. *Isa, x'inhi? Subgħajk ġo toqbitha u xufftejk ma' xoffitha.* U jien nibqa' kwiet għax ma nafx x'int tistenna mingħandi: intix tara sirtx raġel jew għadnix it-tifel li dejjem kont. U mbagħad titbissem u tgħidli: *Kikkra, ħmar!* Sewwa, kikkra. Kont qed naħseb, fl-isqaqien imġiddma ta' moħi li jixbhu t-toroq li ggerrejt fihom b'żarbuna waħda, li kont qed titkellem fuq dik li kont magħha lbieraħ filgħaxija meta suppost mort nisma' l-quddiesa tal-Ewwel Ġimgħa tax-xahar. Il-Kikkra l-laqam tiegħek, hux hekk? Mifsud il-Kikkra.

Iż-żarbun tqil u iswed. Żarbuna mhux bħall-oħra. Suppost daż-żarbun jaħbilek il-mankament. Xi mkien lejn il-Madliena, suldat tiela' telgħa fuq mutur. Xi mkien il-Madliena, suldat mixħut f'għalqa mitluf minn sensih. Sena l-isptar militari ta' Bigi. Sena oħra fi sptar militari Londra.

Meta tasal tinxtehet fuq l-ewwel sigġu li ssib u tħoll iż-żarbun. Dejjem tħoll iż-żarbuna tax-xellug l-ewwel. U titlobni niġi nnehhilek iż-żarbun. U nħossu tqil meta fl-aħħar jirnexxili naqlaghhulek. U tghidli npoġġih pulit taht is-sodda. U timxi qisek dgħajsa fil-maltemp. U l-maltemp jihrax hekk kif tneħhi ż-żarbun. Minkejja s-sigaretti n-nifs jibqa' tajjeb u tinzel fil-qieġ nett it-Torri tax-Xgħajra ha ttella' r-rizzi. Għexieren ta' rizzi fil-bixkilli. Irejhu l-baħar. Jien ma nafhiex ir-riħa tar-rizzi, u t-Torri tax-Xgħajra ma nżilt qatt u l-qieġ skur ibezzagħni. Jien nibza', nibza' minn hafna affarijiet: miċ-ċimiterju li tħobb toħodni fih Hadd iva u Hadd le; miż-żwimel kbar tal-kavallerija tal-pulizija li teħodni nara; minn sieqek ix-xellugija mgħawġa ganċ; mill-klieb; mill-ġurati li jtiru maċ-ċentufolju fir-rokna tal-biħħa; mill-fekruna li daħhalt bla permess fil-barżakka li kont iġġorr lejn Tripli, lejn Bengaži; miċ-ċorma qtates jabqzu u jkattru u jwelledu fil-gwardarobbi ta' Leli Cousin li joqgħod maġenbna; minn Leli Cousin innifsu, irejjaħ l-għaraq, il-bewl, u s-sigaretti *Du Maurier*; mid-dlam li jaqa' kull lejla; mir-ragħad; mis-sajjetti; mit-terremot f'nofs ta' lejl fl-1972; mill-pressjoni għolja li tbat biha; minn leħnek meta tghollih; miċ-ċintorin li tibda tħoll jekk ma nobdikx; min-nuċċali ta' fuq wiċċek; mill-mustaċċi ppuntati; mit-tpingija ħadra fuq dirgħajk; mill-età tiegħek; mit-telfa t'ommi li nistennieha tiġi minn waqt għal iehor; mill-wiċċ sfigurat ta' Kristu msallab; mir-ritratt ta' ommok b'xoffitha ta' isfel imdendla; mill-istejjer kollha misteri taz-zija Stella li qatt ma rajt u tant xtaqt li niltaqa' magħha; mill-ħallelin li daħlu għand tar-Rex u fgawha wara li tawha xebgħa u ħadulha ħamsin lira; mill-fatati li tghid li kont tara fil-kerrejja ta' zitek Bażilka li kienet toqgħod il-Belt; minn tal-Labour meta kien u jgħaddu minn quddiemna jdawru lil Lorry jew lil Grima; mill-gvern li tak transfer vendikattiv

għax ma kontx tħasibhom, u kont tpaċpaċ kontrih; mill-ħolma li kont noħlom kuljum, ta' raġel moribond fuq sodda li narah imut u malli joħroġ l-aħħar nifs jaqa' pupu fl-art minn taħt is-sodda tiegħu; mid-dell li kien jġri warajja (hekk kont tgħidli: *Int anki minn dellek tibża'!*); fuq kollox: minnek.

Imlejtli l-ħolm bil-passi tqal tal-militar; bil-Bofors jisparaw; bit-twerdin tal-Istuka nieżel jogħdos. Imletjli l-ħolm bir-remettar tal-Faxx u tal-fizzjali Ingliżi jidduh f'sormhom bik, għax int daqsxejn ta' Malti tomgħod il-ħobż, iġġewweż il-ġobon tal-ħakk, u gġib it-tfal. U għedtlek kemm-il darba: *Dak is-salib x'nambuh fuq il-bandiera?* U int kont tkun pront toħroġ ir-ritratti, u tikxef il-farrett fuq koxxtok tax-xellug u tgħidli l-istejjer li kibru fl-umdità tax-xelter fejn kellek it-tieg fi Frar 1942. Imlejtli l-ħolm bl-eroj b'sidirhom beraħ, b'sidirhom mimli, b'sidirhom affrontat għal art twelidhom, għall-kuruna tal-Britannja tixxemmex fuq dil-gżira. Imlejtli tfuliti bil-ħoss tad-Dama Vera Lynn, *We'll meet again, don't know where, don't know when; but I'm sure we'll meet again some sunny day.*

On the 21st Dec 1939 I joined the British army and was enlisted in the 2nd Battalion. The King's Own Malta Regiment, this Regiment was stationed at St. Andrews barracks and we were instructed by the NCO's of different units. The first day that I spent at the barracks I was very happy, my comrades used to teach me how I must fowled the blankits and how to mount the equipment how to clean the Rifle.

Kont sibtlek id-djarju kannella skur u sraqtu. U żammejtu. *On the 21st Dec 1939 I joined the British army and was enlisted in the 2nd Battalion.* Ta' dsatax-il sena tawk azzarin bil-bajunetta u libbsuk uniformi u ħaduk lejn St Andrew's biex titgħallem tispara.

The following day I was marched to the Quarter Master store to collect the rest of my uniform after I had all my uniform I was told by the company sargeant major to take off my Plain clothes and to put on the uniform so I did as I was told. I put the army boots and socks and then I put on the overall dress and the equipment and a stif cap I tooked the Rifle and went the first time on parade I was placed at No 9 Squad under the Instructor L/c Homes of Royal Irish. The Instructor after he spoke to me and recognised that speaks english he told that I will be squad leader. From now on I started the army life.

In the Name of the Father (and of the Son)

Immanuel Mifsud

Translated from the Maltese by Albert Gatt

At the Addolorata. On your mother's grave. From behind the thick, dark lenses of your glasses, I saw the tear sliding down. It shouldn't have done that, but it did; it just popped up and slid down. You thought I hadn't noticed anything, but I was watching you. I was always watching you, always keeping an eye on you, to see how you'd behave. Like the time I caught you with your hand behind your back, making the sign of the horns when someone – I don't know who – commented on how well you looked, God bless you, in spite of your age, in spite of the permanent damage to your left leg, in spite of everything you'd been through. I was always on the lookout where you were concerned. And on that day, I was watching as this tear slid shamefully down, with the shame you had felt when I had once drawn your attention to another tear sliding down your cheek. On that day, I made you feel even more ashamed when, clinging to your wife's apron reeking of garlic and onions, I announced to all and sundry that I'd just seen you cry.

I didn't know that soldiers could cry too.

I thought that soldiers were made of steel.

I thought their face was always stern and strong and tough.

I thought it was just me who cried, just me who did things I wasn't supposed to do.

Just like that day.

That day.

That

was the time you used to tell me that I couldn't cry. I'm a big boy. You can't grow up and become a man if you cry. How can a boy like you still cry? How can you still cry when you're strong enough to tear this place apart? You can't cry, do you understand me? You just can't.

But I do cry. And I feel ashamed when I cry. And I feel ashamed because I shouldn't cry. And I feel even more ashamed because – do you really want to hear this? – I actually like crying. I like to feel that trickle of warm water. I like the constricted sensation in my nose, my eyes screwed shut. I like it when everything looks bleary.

I like disobeying you.

I like feeling scared of you because you're scary. Because you look at me and your withering look scares me. And I quail and move away.

You cry too.

You cry too, soldier.

As you did on that day, when the man at your side died. Didn't you cry on that day, when you saw him get hit? Didn't you?

As you did on that day, when everything was pulverised before your eyes.

As you do whenever you remember that your wedding ceremony was held in a bomb shelter.

Underneath the lantern

By the barrack gate,

Darling I remember

The way you used to wait.

T'was there that you whispered tenderly

That you loved me;

You'd always be

My Lili of the lamplight,

Wie einst Lili Marlene,

Wie einst Lili Marlene,

The cigarette hanging lazily from the corner of your mouth. Droopy-eyed. Humphrey Bogart. Casablanca. Tripoli. Benghazi. The stiff-collared shirt. The small, tight knot of your tie. That look. That thin moustache on a smooth face, the smell of shaving cream every morning before sunrise. *Wie einst Lili Marlene, Wie einst Lili Marlene.*

Which is why, when I see the tear that I wasn't supposed to see, there by the family grave, I am stunned.

I, Joseph Mary Mifsud, from Valletta, son of Pawla and Salvu, proletarian and committed Socialist, though I have never read the red books (because those are blacklisted by our Mother the Apostolic Roman Catholic Church and because I don't have a head for difficult, evil books, though I do know how to read a little), soldier of the Second World War assigned to the anti-aircraft cannon to defend my homeland from the air assaults of the Fascist Italian bastards and the Nazi pigs, risking my life for my homeland, for the family entrusted to my care by the grace of God, with a tattoo on my arm because I'm a proletarian soldier – first a corporal, then a sergeant in the King's Own Malta Regiment and the Royal Malta Artillery in Bigi and Tigné – my skin blistered by white-hot steel,

toiling as I had been doing since childhood, after my mother was widowed for the second time, running about the streets wearing only one shoe in order to make the pair last longer, taking on whatever jobs I could find to support my mother and my younger siblings, and learning the facts of life on street corners, rinsing saliva, sauce and fried egg yolk off plates and glasses in village bars, checking passenger tickets on the bus, bending double in the factories at Marsa and getting covered with soot and coal fragments, becoming a man as men are supposed to be, a hymn to barefooted humanity and an inspiration for the Workers' Movement, living and moving and taking aim at the enemy whose aeroplanes train their guns at my head, becoming, existing, being.

At the age of forty-seven, I welcomed my eighth child with open arms; he would have been the tenth had all my children survived. And I said to the Lord: Lord, thy will be done, for even though I thought I'd earned a rest, having brought up a family and defended my homeland and the One True Faith, thy Providence looked down upon me from on high and recognised my abilities and saw that I still had the necessary strength in spite of all that had happened to me, all I had been through, all I had witnessed, and thereby sent me another child. I do not know how I will support this added burden that came so unexpectedly, but I place my trust in thee, O Lord, as I have always done.

At the age of eighty-seven, Lord, you summoned me unto you.

Joseph Mary Mifsud, also known as *il-Kikkra*, The Cup.

Now, let's see if you can get this one: your lips against hers in a kiss, and one finger right through her orifice. Go on then, what is it?

And I go red. My mind has been sullied already and I suspect you've noticed and you're trying to see just how dirty-minded I've become. *Go on, what is it? Your lips against hers in a kiss, and one finger right through her orifice.* And I remain silent because I'm not sure what you expect: whether you're trying to see how much of a man I've become or whether I remain the little boy I've always been. And then you smile and say: *It's a cup, thicko!* Oh right, a cup. In the grimy alleyways of my mind that rather resemble the streets you used to run through half-shod, I was thinking you might be talking about this girl I was with last night when I skived off mass for the First Friday of the month. The Cup – that's your nickname, isn't it? Mifsud, *il-Kikkra*.

Those heavy, black boots. Mismatched. The boots that are meant to conceal your disability. Somewhere on the way to Madliena, a soldier riding a motorbike up the hill. Somewhere in Madliena, a soldier lying unconscious in a field. One year in the military hospital at Bigi. Another year in the military hospital in London.

When you get home you collapse onto the nearest chair and unlace your boots. You always unlace the left boot first. And you ask me to pull your boots off for you. And when I've finally pulled them off, they feel heavy in my hands. And you tell me to line them up neatly under the bed. And you roll along like a boat on a rough sea. And the sea gets rougher once your boots are off. No shortness of breath, in spite of all the cigarettes you smoke; you dive to the very bottom of the bay below Xgħajra Tower to bring up sea urchins. Scores of sea urchins in the wicker basket. They smell of the sea. I don't know the smell of sea urchins, and I've never been down to Xgħajra Tower and those dark depths scare me. I'm scared. I'm scared of a lot of things: of the cemetery you take me to every other Sunday; of

the big horses belonging to the mounted police that you take me to see; of your left leg, twisted out of all proportion; of dogs; of the grasshoppers that leap among the hundred-leaved roses in the corner of our yard; of the tortoise you smuggled in without a permit, hidden in the rucksack you used to carry en route to Tripoli, to Benghazi; of the litter of cats that jump about and multiply and give birth in the wardrobes in Leli Cousin's house next door; of Leli Cousin himself, reeking of sweat, of piss and of *Du Maurier* cigarettes; of the darkness that falls every evening; of thunder; of lightening; of the earth's tremors one night in 1972; of the high blood pressure you suffer from; of your voice, whenever you raise it; of the belt you begin to undo whenever I disobey you; of the glasses across your face; of your pointed moustache; of the green tattoo on your arm; of your age; of the death of my mother mother, which I expect any moment; of the disfigured face of Christ on the cross; of the photograph of your mother with her bottom lip hanging; of all the mysterious stories of my aunt Stella, whom I've never seen but whom I'd really like to meet some day; of the thieves who broke into Rexie's place and made off with fifty quid after giving her a beating and throttling her; of the ghosts you claim you used to see in the tenement building in Valletta where your aunt Basilica used to live; of the Labourites who would troop past our place escorting minister Lorry or minister Grima; of the vindictive state apparatus that transferred you to a different post at work because you couldn't keep your mouth shut and voiced your criticism; of the dream I used to dream every night of a moribund man whom I watched as he lay dying on a bed, a doll falling out from under his bed just as he breathed his last; of the shadow that doggedly pursued me (that's what you used to tell me: *You're afraid of your own shadow!*); and above all: of you.

You filled my dreams with the heavy tread of the military; with the crackle of Bofors guns; the screech of diving Stukas. You filled my dreams with regurgitated images of Fasces and the English officers taking the piss out of you, this little Maltese man chewing on bread, nibbling at hard white cheese and bringing forth children. And I asked you so many times: *What's that Cross doing on our flag?* And you would promptly take out your photographs, show off the scar in your left thigh and tell me the stories that had swollen in the damp of the bomb shelter where your wedding ceremony was held in February 1942. You filled my dreams with barrel-chested heroes baring their chests and standing, chest out, to defend their homeland and the British Crown, shining brightly above this island. You filled my childhood with the sound of Dame Vera Lynn, (1)*We'll meet again, don't know where, don't know when; but I'm sure we'll meet again some sunny day.*

On the 21st Dec 1939 I joined the British army and was enlisted in the 2nd Battalion. The King's Own Malta Regiment, this Regiment was stationed at St.Andrews barracks and we were instructed by the NCO's of different units. The first day that I spent at the barracks I was very happy, my comrades used to teach me how I must fowled the blankits and how to mount the equipment how to clean the Rifle.

I found your diary, bound in dark brown, and nicked it. And I kept it. *On the 21st Dec 1939 I joined the British army and was enlisted in the 2nd Battalion.* At the age of nineteen they handed you a rifle with a bayonet and dressed you up in a uniform and took you to St Andrew's to learn how to shoot.

(1) In the original text, this passage of ungrammatical English is a quotation from a diary and has therefore been left as it is.

The following day I was marched to the Quarter Master store to collect the rest of my uniform after I had all my uniform I was told by the company sargeant major to take off my Plain clothes and to put on the uniform so I did as I was told. I put the army boots and socks and then I put on the overall dress and the equipment and a stif cap I tooked the Rifle and went the first time on parade I was placed at No 9 Squad under the Instructor L/c Homes of Royal Irish. The Instructor after he spoke to me and recognised that speaks english he told that I will be squad leader. From now on I started the army life.

Acknowledgement

The lyrics of the song *Lili Marlene* are from the English version by Tommie Connor (1944).



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