

Dearest Soldier - Love in War

True Accounts of the Civil War, A Play by Felicia Pfluger

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INTRODUCTION

Male Narrator: Separated. From those they loved - the Civil War Soldier was marching off to face the enemy battle. When a spare moment could be stolen, he would hastily scrawl a letter to his loved ones...

His wife, darling, or family left behind to await his return. These swift sketches into the past gives us snapshots into the soldier's spirit.

Some sweet, some satirical, some poignant, we see the depth and breadth of emotion that brings the past to the present.

Female Narrator: The letters returned were the musing of those left behind as they faced the battles of the home front – their hopes for reunification, the pain of separation, the home front struggle to carry on amid threats of disease, starvation – all while dreaming of an end to war.

Dearest Soldier is based on the care worn, collected letters written by soldiers to their loves, and the ladies to their soldiers.

(1:00)

THE BEGINNING

Ebenezer Wescott: Camp Randall, Madison, Wis., January 19, 1862. Dear Parents,
 Midnight we arrived at a hotel and ate. Come morning, we went to the Capitol, drew our uniforms, were mustered into the United States service, and, and now we are full-fledged volunteer soldiers of Uncle Sam! I feel as big as the rest of the boys in our new uniforms! Most of the Boys think they could whip the whole Southern Army, if they only had a chance.

Affectionately, Your Boy

Mother Wescott: Dearest Son,
 Little Aaron is running around pretending to be a soldier since you left. He is bent on being like his big brother.
 A Coyote got the cats. Now, the mice are overrunning the grain stores. I wish the coyote were as interested in mice as cats! Joe yips and hides tail whenever he comes around. For such a bark, he has very little bite!

I looked in your room last night and could have sworn to see you sleeping there. How I miss my sweet boy – and being able to fill your belly full! Despite the hardships, I am quite proud of my blue coat!

~ God speed, Your Mother

Ebenezer Wescott: Dear Mother,
 You know how Joe barks at the sheep and runs around? Well, that is our Captain's style exactly – you got to stand up straight and as stiff as a poker and salute him. It is not so with the other officers of the company. They are just as common and free as any of us and they are the ones that will stay with us.

Love to all the family. This letter is for all. ~ Your affectionate son.

Mother Wescott:

Ebenezer,

It brought a smile to our lips receiving your letter. We cannot help looking at Joe these days whenever he barks and chases his tail without thinking of other such inspired individuals! Hopefully his bite is worse than this bark on the battlefield.

Father is coming home from battle!!! His is making good progress healing and will be home again within a month if all holds.

Little Jamie has can't sleep these days. He crawls into your bed to be comforted by you... to find you gone, and wakes up Aaron with his tears. We all miss you and hold you in our prayers. ~ Mother

Ebenezer Wescott:

Dear Mother,

We woke to heavy firing. We loaded guns in a rush, driven back to the river - about as far as our home from the barn! A deep river behind us... and a vicious army in front of us. There were three things to do, surrender, swim the river or fight to the death.

Then it was that our artillery gun boats thundered, and our infantry poured in its fire. The Rebs fell back - the battle was over... We had not swam the river, nor surrendered and were not all dead!

But oh! Mother... We lost about 25 boys... Our 1st Lieutenant is a brick and as brave as a lion.

~ Please send all my love, Your Son

(2:40)

OUR ONLY LINK TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD

J.C. Morris: My Own Sweet Amanda,

It is a relief to let you know that I am among the living. We have been on a raid into Missouri, I am quite cold and sick. I wish your healing soup could speed the process. My feet are still damp and cold, with socks and shoes quite worn through.

Still, we captured and killed a good many. I am in hopes that I will get a whole package of letters from you in a few days. I never wanted to see you half as bad in all my life as I do now.

~ As ever, Your Jason

Amanda Morris: Darling Husband,

It seems our letters played hide and seek in the mail. I wonder which one won the race? The children crowded around to see what news from the front you brought. Spring is bursting everywhere. There is a new litter of puppies, and a new foal as well.

The sketches of these are included in the box. Our Sally has really grown as an artist! Little Joe has your eye and flair - and just lost his first tooth! Margaret darned the socks enclosed that will hopefully keep your feet dryer and the chill from you. Stay safe, my love. I long for the day I may see you walking up the lane home. ~Your Amanda

J.C. Morris: Dearest Amanda,

I would give anything in the world to see you and the children. I have no idea when I will have that pleasure. Your letters are all we see from the outside world. We hardly eat ourselves as we travel almost incessantly night and day.

Give my love to the old Lady and all the friends. My love and a thousand kisses to my own sweet Amanda and our little boys. How my heart yearns for you so dear to me. Goodbye my own sweet wife, for the present.

~ As ever, your devoted Jason.

(1:42)

LONELY HEARTS

Hattie: Dearest Soldier,

I am happy that I answered your "Lonely Hearts" advertisement in *The Waverly*, intrigued with your description. I look forward to hearing of your adventures.

The lightness of your jest amidst your circumstance warms my heart. I wish to add joy in a humble way, from afar.

I am a writer at heart, and may disappoint you, for I am no "Miss. Prim," who is etiquette bound... though my family might wish me more in that role... My laugh is too boisterous, my smile too spontaneous. It is to my smile that your "jesting" spoke. Hence, why this letter is finding you!

That is not to say that I dare not practice proper self-discipline. It is just that my eyes dance more than they should... as I long of adventure... unbecoming my stature as a young lady of breeding.

I am not one that enjoys to be fancily painted like a tea cup, but rather be seen in the humble way that the Lord has created me. As I share this with you, I must also say in honesty, that there have not been any complaints about my appearance to date!

I hope that you are warm in character, countenance, and person. I look forward to your letter!

~ Your lady in waiting, Hattie

Malcolm: February 9th 1864 Dear Hattie,

I enjoyed your charming little epistle! Before proceeding farther, truth and candor compel me to acknowledge that a little deception. My true description differs materially from the one "fancy painted," but I thought it was all for fun, therefore funningly gave a fictitious description as well as cognomen.

Be it known unto you then, this individual is twenty-nine years of age, five feet and eleven inches high, dark blue eyes, brown hair, and light (ruddy) complexion. There you have it.

How do you like the description? Me thinks I hear you answer. I don't like it so well as the advertised description! Well! I'll admit it is not quite so fascinating to a young lady as the fictitious one.

It is said, that a person's writing is indication of their character, if so, judging from your letter, I take you to be of one that class known as "romps" - a class by the way, which I rather admire!

Commend me to a girl who has life and animation enough to enjoy the harmless pleasures of this beautiful world, in preference to your "Miss Prim," who would not dare to laugh in louder tones than a whimpering sentimental snicker, for fear of overstepping the bounds of etiquette.

No indeed! None of your "Miss Prims" for me! I love the gaily ringing laugh of true and gladsome hearts. Of course, I would not endorse unladylike manners, but I believe in joyous feelings to cheer us through life's checkered pathway.

Your dearest soldier, Malcolm

Hattie:

Dearest Soldier,

Your honesty becomes you, and I thank you for the more accurate description of your handsome appearance than the one previously publicized. In truth, I like it far better than the fallacious one.

Upon reading this more appealing version, I was so moved that I almost... whooped... like a strapping young lad and danced a jig, much to my Mother's chagrin.

Though all this happened within my heart and mind only, I could readily hear my mother brim with joy at the idea that I might "Sing Hey Ho for a Husband" like my younger sisters already do - for the right proper Union gentleman...

Though my spirit is strong, my body is a might frail at present. I have returned from boarding school on account of delicate health to the comforts of hearth and home.

It might be that the mere presence of Boarding School are the cause for the afflictions that come upon girls like a plague.

If the Yankees were forced into a lady's preparatory school, the war itself might be won and you could return to home – and quickly dispatch yourself to make my acquaintance!

~ Your lady in waiting.

Malcom:

Dearest Hattie,

Could you have been within hearing distance when I read your letter, you would have heard a laugh that made this old tent ring, especially when I came to the sentence, "Sing Heigh Ho for a husband" - I just laid back in my chair and roared – that's decidedly rich!

I don't suppose that you entertain thoughts of Matrimony. Whoever knows a young lady that did? But if so you have my best wishes that your song may be speedily answered, on condition, *that I have an invitation to the wedding!*

You must be grateful to be with loved ones at home. I do not wonder at your hating boarding school, for they are about as injurious to girl's health, as beneficial to her education.

I firmly believe that hundreds of girls die annually from the pernicious effects of boarding school training. ~Malcolm

Hattie:

Dearest Soldier,

It is of utmost importance for the groom to attend the wedding, and I would never have a breach of etiquette of this kind!

However, it also proper for a gentleman soldier to give a portrait of himself to his intended, so he may be pined over accordingly.

Mirth has often escaped my days, and I now have a thinly veiled smile upon my face that I can hardly conceal.

In writing you to ease your burden, I received an unexpected gift, for your correspondence has given me more joy than I have bestowed upon you.

But enough of me and levity for now... I inquire now of your camp life, your bravery, and your daily challenges. Mirth and wit may leaven the bread of life, but we still survive on sustenance.

Your lady in waiting, Hattie

Malcolm:

Dearest Hattie,

I was formerly a private, but am now a Lieutenant in Uncle Samuel's Service.

With honor of a gentleman soldier, I enclosed carte-de-vistas, or photographs. The enclosed picture is not as good as it might be – though the eyes are too light, the features and general expression of the countenance are natural. Be kind enough to give a correct description and enclose one of your own sweet self.

As a description of "camp life," suffice it to say the "Blue Jackets" are comfortably situated - till they sally forth to - the traitorous "grey back" in battle array.

~ Your Dearest Soldier

(5:40)

WE MAKE IT CONVENIENT...

Josiah Banks: Dear Ma and Pa,

Scouting, we found two thousand bales of cotton on a plantation that we are now hauling. Uncle Sam will have something to say who it belongs to now.

This is the nicest looking Southern country I have seen. There is a lot of fruit here, watermelons, sweet potatoes... and everything else good to eat.

Of course, we do not take any of it, except that it "happens to be in our way" - so we make it "convenient" to have it in our way, See?

~ Your Josiah

Pa Banks: Dear Son,

Your story reminded me of one in my regiment. A negro came to our first Lieutenant to tell him where there was a big herd, of cattle twenty-five miles downriver. Fine Texas steers. Uncle Sam has plenty of use for such captures. Five hundred head and maybe more.

We took possession, dismounted the cannon and rolled them down the bank into the river, burned everything in the fort that would burn. Won't bring back my arm, but was a pretty blaze.

~ Hurry home, Pa

(:50)

SPARKLING EYES AND ROSY RED CHEEKS

William F. Testerman: Miss Jane Davis,

I hope the time will soon come when I can get to see you again. ...
You are the girl of my dreams. If it was not for you I would not be
writing by my candle tonight...

~ William F. Testerman

Jane Davis:

William,

Many miles separated us, yet in person, if my heart was like yours,
we would be united in heart - you need not doubt. Though we are far
apart at present my heart is with you every moment for I often
dream of you travailing the lonesome roads.

~ Love, Your Jane

William F. Testerman: Dear Jane,

The thought of your sweet smiles is all the company I have. Your
sparkling blue eyes and rosy red cheeks have gained my whole
affections. I hope for the time to come when we shall meet again then
if you are still in the notion that I am we can pass off the time in
pleasure.

My time has come for sleep and so I will end my few lines but my
love to you has no End. Remember me as ever your love and friend.

~ In Trust, William

(1:00)

MY DARLING KNIGHT

Philip H. Powers: May 6, 1864... My Lady Rose,

I will try and write you a few lines this lovely morning. Such beautiful spring weather gives me the longings for home. It recalls to memory scenes of long ago, to roam over hills, through ravines, by the dictates of my own will. Oh, my bright sunshine, I am happy that you have always been my one and only. ~ Philip

Rose Powers: My Darling Knight,

Your words warm me as the sun - yet in your absence the sun seems to shift to shadow and round me I feel but cold. There is always a lot to do in your stead - and I try to fill both your shoes and mine... but mine in all honesty fit within yours. I miss our days of family picnics and laughter, rolling down the hills together, and playing games. There is where I go in my dreams... to meet you.

~ Your Lady Rose

Philip H. Powers: How well do I remember the many happy hours, I have spent on just such mornings as this. How I longed to hasten away, to the sound of familiar voices, and the sight of familiar faces... The sound of little steps frolicking overhead.

But those days are gone. The kind voices, and bright smiles that once greeted me I no longer see or hear. I was free and happy but now I am living a life without pleasure.

I see and feel the coldness and selfishness of the world. I can see not one to whom I can pour out my sorrows or receive the answering sigh of sympathy. How I wish to cling to your gentle arms and rest upon your bosom.

~ Your devoted, battered knight

Rose Powers: My shining darling,

Your letter fills me with yearning for your presence. In the children's faces I see your smiles and hear your laughter. At least I have the solace of these reminders. I wish I could share them with you. I put upon myself your coat to feel your arms around me. How I wish this war was over.

~ Devotedly Yours, Rose

Philip H. Powers: Rose, My Sweet,

Today after drills, I found about a dozen ladies in camp - such hard-looking cases, that I was afraid to go close to. From the way they crowded around the band when it began to play, that some of them never had been from home before. How I miss my darling Rose. They all pale next to you, dear!

~ Your Phillip

Rose Powers: My Knight, My Strength,

Putting pen to paper is pulling upon my very soul. I have dreadful news. Please steel yourself, my darling... Scarlet fever has visited our home. Both our dear ones were struck down from it.

I did all that I could, but no amount of letting or healing could bring down the fever. Little Sam, always too frail, pulled through in the end... but is so weak that he still cannot walk or feed himself.

Darling, our... Smart Susie was taken to Our Heavenly Father... It aches so that that house is empty of her sweet song, her shining eyes... and Sam has lost his play companion and protector. He calls out for her in his sleep.

I am so very sorry my darling. You charged me with the care of our castle, and the fever has conquered our happy home.

~ Rose

Philip H. Powers: My fairest Rose,

I am glad that our Sam is better from what I had heard I was fearful he would not recover.

I never was so *crestfallen* as when I read your note telling me that Susie was dead. How little did I think when I left our house, 'twas the last *time* should see her? Oh, it seems so *confusing* that little *Susie* must die... She carried such a blinding light inside her.

But we don't know what is best... Nor can we see her till we can be together again in Heaven. I wish I was there to bear this burden with you and offer you my strength. All I can do is offer prayers up that you might feel some peace knowing that you, as always are a wonderful mother and wife, and the best of me resides with you...

~ Your loving husband, Phillip.

(3:20)

THE TIDE OF WAR

Gregory Prescott: My Dearest Wife,

I am hoping my dear wife, from day to day, that the tide of war may bring me nearer to you, and enable me to see you once more, but now that I am regularly enlisted in the Army again I have no freedom of action, and must bear and endure with what patience and fortitude I can command.

~ Remember, I am Yours, Gregory

Penny Prescott: Dearest Husband,

I came up here yesterday found all well and very glad to see me once more. Aunt Kitty is the same old thing - As good and kind as ever. And perfectly willing to kill me with eating. She sends her love and says she is not so much afraid of Yanks now. Aunt Fanny lives with her now. She is very infirm, and dreadful fretful - I return home this morning.

~ Yours in Haste, Penny

Gregory Prescott: Dear Penny,

It's exceedingly doubtful of this ever reaching you. The Enemy crossed and drove us out...and are running wild over this country plundering and robbing...

Unfortunately, we have but one brigade of Cavalry...And the force is by no means sufficient to oppose the Enemy, as they have some 14,000 Cavalry.

All is commotion here. With love to all ~ Gregory

(1:00)

DEAREST SOLDIER BOY

- Daniel Smithe: Dearest Mother,
- The sour music of the gun boats, field batteries and shells are bursting all the time. There is not a minute in the day or night we're not in peril. Yet, we do not seem to think of the danger until it is passed.
~Your affectionate son.
- Mama Smithe: Dearest Soldier Boy,
- We now write letters for the uneducated. In appreciation, our roof is being patched! We are cooking the big goose – and how I wish I could give you a big plump piece and steaming pudding.
- Little Erik is near as tall as I am now. He has taken to chopping the wood for us. He is so proud!
- A little secret for you – and a reminder. Lizzie's parents will now be reading the letters from her "intended" out loud, to keep her virtuous! Arthur chose to be "too passionate" in his verses. Her mother asked me if you are still unattached. Seems you might get your chance, after all! Remember to be honorable in whatever you choose to write the young ladies.
- I miss your violin music echoing through the house ~ Love, Mother
- Daniel Smithe: Dear Mother,
- Sickness struck among the troops. Bad water was the enemy. We haul in wagons upon wagons from several miles to find it's not fit to drink. We have lost dozens. Mother, you thought when I came away from home that I was so young that I could not stand the hardships. Well, I am, I aim to make you proud.
- ~ Give my love to all the family. Your Soldier Boy (1:20)

NO MISGIVINGS

Sullivan Ballou: My Very Dear Sarah,

I have no misgivings or lack of confidence of the cause I engaged... and my courage does not falter... I am willing, perfectly willing – to lay down all my joys in this life for the *freedom* of all.

Sarah, my love for you is deathless; and yet my love of Country comes over me like a strong wind and bears me unresistably on with all these chains of the battlefield. ~ Your Sully

Sarah Ballou: Dearest Sully,

Let's forgive our many faults and any pains caused. How thoughtless and foolish we have often been! How gladly would I wash out with my tears every little spot upon your happiness...

But something whispers to me – perhaps it is the wafted prayers of our little Edger – that you shall return unharmed.

~ Your Dearest Sarah

Sullivan Ballou: Dearest Sarah,

I wish we might still have lived and loved together, and seen our sons grown up to honorable manhood.

If I do not, my dear Sarah, never forget how much I love you, and when my last breath escapes me on the battle field, it will whisper your name.

If the dead can come back to this earth and flit unseen around those they loved, I shall always be near you. Sarah, do not mourn me dead; think that I am gone and wait for thee, for we shall meet again...

~ Your devoted Sully

(1:08)

SOMETIMES WE HAVE A PICNIC!

James Bailey:

Ma, Pa,

Picture a little space between the sand sacks, just large enough to put the muzzle of our guns through. We watch close, and if a Johnny shows his head, he gets a salute! The same with us, and you better believe we are mighty careful and they are just as careful about showing their heads as we are. But at night... we sometimes have a picnic!

They are just as sociable and friendly as if we were brothers. They always want some coffee and we give them some. When we part they will never shoot until they say, "Hello, Yank! You in your hole yet?" We answer, "Yes." "All right then." Maybe they blaze away a dozen shots or more and we do the same.

I am feeling well, except when I hear the bullets whistle. Then the cold chills creep up my back... I must be chilly all the time.

~ Love to all. James

Ma Bailey:

James,

A little secret for you – and a reminder. Lizzie's parents will now be reading her the letters from her "intended" from now on in order to keep her virtuous. Arthur chose to be "too passionate" in his verses. Remember to be honorable in whatever you choose to write the young ladies.

On the bright side, Lizzie might be available for you to court again soon! I know you must be grinning ear to ear!

~ Stay safe with your head low! Your Ma

(1:05)

VICTORY MARCH

Jane Stuart:

Darling Son,

Adam is home from war! He tells how he was part of the first Union Soldiers ever there and the people, especially the women, were nearly scared to death, but soon found out the Union were not a band of brigands or robbers come there to plunder them or kill them and they soon got over their fear.

God's Blessings, ~ Your Mother

Abraham Stuart:

Dear Parents,

We marched into the City of Vicksburg, the Rebel Gibraltar of the West! Rebels surrendered their arms and colors as we marched into the city to the music of more than three hundred cannon, beside fife and drums and brass bands! It was the finest Fourth of July celebration I ever attended – and will probably never attend another equal to it.

The rebels are jolly good fellows and are just as glad Vicksburg has surrendered as we are, and if they are they must feel mighty good. We captured about three hundred cannon and **thirty thousand prisoners!**

General Grant is the hero of the day down here now, but I don't think he could have accomplished much if not for the men in the ranks. He planned the moves and we, the boys that carried the muskets, did the work.

Oh, mother, father! I tell you it is a grand day; we are really proud of ourselves. We feel just as big as the generals do, if they do wear shoulder straps and swords and we carry the muskets.

~ Your Loving Son

(1:10)

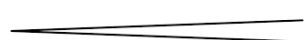
~ *Fine* ~


A Note from the Playwright

Dearest Soldier, Love in War was written in part based on the real tattered and torn letters that were scrawled, stained and precious carried to and from the battlefields. They are to be read as they were written, as cherished words wrote with prayers of longing, on precious bits of paper in the hopes of reaching loved ones. Some of these letters made it home to these loved ones with their soldiers loving embraces. Others were found on the fallen soldier who never made it home to his sweetheart, his parents, his children and his future.

Please read them in a real, conversational tone that you would use talking to a dear friend who you hope to share your life gladly with... and for. Enjoy the journey and we travel back through time with *Dearest Soldier, Love in War* is based on materials from *The Library of Congress Civil War* collection.

Notations to add in the script through the Master Class:

 = Slowly Speak Louder

 = Slowly Speak Softer

| (slash) = Breath mark to show emotion or thought.

___ (line under)/circling word/letter = Accent mark to bring out syllables or refine pronunciation.

 = Vibrato/quaver voice to show excitement, fear, or anticipation. Place over words.

About the Playwright, Felicia Pfluger

Felicia has always been a passionate story teller and creator. Though she may have made her mark as a ghost writer and playwright, but she was first and foremost, an artist, actress and director. She has acted as a dramaturg for hundreds of plays and specializes in bringing the audience socio-emotional healing, growth and realness through the stage. Felicia is known for developing incredibly strong chemistry and realistic performances that resonate with the audiences while inspiring actors to reach greater heights through her directing.

Her work is character-driven, focusing on pushing and pulling tension and crafting character chemistry on stage. She brings realness and vibrancy through the most mundane human interaction on stage and in her scripts. This realness and rawness of emotion resonates with audiences. Her works heighten comedic and dramatic emotions that “reach you when you least expect it”.

She is known for using not just words, but silence with strength in subtext that draws the audience in. “Silence shares yearning, healing, hidden hopes and broken dreams, “Felicia states, “It is a medium that deserves reverence.” She truly writes for actors in a way that empowers them to feel what they are playing was written specifically for them.

In addition to her reader’s theater plays, Felicia was given exclusive rights to write a stage version for the international best seller, *Politically Correct Bedtime Stories* for the theater company she founded, LATTE Theater. She has also written many works including: *Hooked on the Classics*, *Little Women*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Nevermore*, *a Poe Evening*, and *Course Correction*. “Creation is an imperative to me. Whether writing a book, play, composing, or painting, the process brings joy, understanding, and healing. There must be humbleness in creating”, Felicia shared.

Though Felicia has taught literature for many years and loves the beauty of the classics, she, “writes from intuition with a pressing need to soothe, to free, and share. It brings a sense of freedom, of spirit, of wildness, of healing”. Felicia’s counseling background naturally meshes with the needs of an actor, or audience to delve deeply into a character and have been known to help elicit understanding, healing and hope, on and off the stage.