

# MILLIE'S WAR

By

**Dorian Mode**

ORiGiN™  
Theatrical

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**DO** contract ORiGiN™ Theatrical if you have any questions about anything. At all. And we mean anything. One of us that works here (not me) has a peculiar interest in recording the unusual bird calls of the adult hoatzin (a species of tropical bird found in wet forest and mangrove of the Amazon and the Orinoco delta in South America) so we should be able to answer any questions you have about the Hoatzin. Plus we know some things about some other things too.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

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## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Dorian Mode is the author of the novels *Café in Venice* (Penguin) and *Mozart Maulers* (Penguin). He's written for *The Age*, *Sydney Morning Herald* and leading magazines and was the back-page columnist for *The Australian Writer's Guild Magazine*. His plays are published in Australia and the UK.

He has won several university scholarships and holds a Master's Degree and Doctorate and lectured in creative writing at Newcastle University.



*FOR SHERYL*

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## CAST

### **ALF**

President of the RSL Club, 60's. Tweed jacket, regimental tie, highly polished shoes, walking stick, sprig of rosemary in the lapel. RSL Club badge.

### **MORRIS**

Club Treasurer, 60's, hearing aid. cardigan, beret, sprig of rosemary in the lapel. RSL Club badge.

### **PERCY**

Club Secretary, 60's. Navy blue squadron jacket, cravat, thin moustache, sprig of rosemary in the lapel. RSL Club badge.

### **KEVIN**

Junior Board member. Mid 40's, overly tanned. Hawaiian-Shirt. Ray-Bans. RSL Club badge.

### **MILLIE**

20's, pregnant, 80's power suits, corn chip earrings, padded shoulders. Big hair.

### **ROSEMARY**

30's, short cropped punk hair. Dressed like an English Professor in sneakers.

### **BEV**

40's. Chain smoker. Short skirt. Push-up bra. Tobacco chuckle.

**PUNTER/SALVO/BRIAN (V.O.)** (if required, played by stagehand)

2 females, 4 males, plus stage-hand walk-ons where required.





*Photos: The Australian War Memorial*

Sample. D

**SETTING:** Returned Servicemen's Club (RSL) in regional Australia

**TIME:** 1980 something

**ACT 1 SCENE 1**

In the dark we hear 'God Save The Queen' by The Sex Pistols.

A spotlight is raised on a PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG QUEEN ELIZABETH in the back corner Stage Left.

As the punk rock soundscape fades, lights are raised. Our punk music melds with the dulcet tones of Dame Vera Lynn warbling 'The White Cliffs of Dover'. Soon Dame Vera fades and we hear the saccharine melodies of poker machines.

We hear an announcement: "number 15, yer pie and chips is ready to be collected from the bar."

Front Stage Right we see a round table set with four coasters.

Stage Left, BEV is cleaning glasses at the bar. A serving of pie and chips sits on the bar congealing. Our yawning barmaid furtively steals an occasional chip from the plate. PUNTER collects the meal and exits the stage.

In a far corner we see a twinkling Christmas Tree draped with yuletide decorations.

Stage Right back we see a row of poker machines.

Occasionally, throughout the performance, Punter wanders onto stage in the background with a beer or cigarette to play the machines in the shadows.

Front Stage Left we see a horizontal glass cabinet filled with war memorabilia. A spotlight illuminates its centrepiece: a flag with the Japanese Rising Sun.

ALF, MORRIS, PERCY and KEVIN enter and sit at the table.

We suddenly hear an announcement over the intercom.

**BRIAN (V.O.)**

Attention patrons...

A plastic Legacy-style torch  
lights in the corner of the stage.

**BRIAN (V.O.)**

Will you please be upstanding for the ode.

The quartet of old soldiers  
silently stand, turn and face west.

**BRIAN (V.O.)**

"They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old;  
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.  
At the going down of the sun and in the morning  
We will remember them. Lest we forget."

**CAST**

Lest we forget...

We hear the LAST POST.

**BRIAN (V.O.)**

Thank you patrons.

Lights are raised over the table.  
Kevin picks at a ukulele (quietly  
enough not to distract the  
dialogue).

Morris stands to read a note.

The soundtrack of the poker machines fades.

He clears his throat. This takes long enough for comic effect.

Alf, the Club President, irritably looks at his watch as the man continues to clear his throat: an small opera in phlegm.

He finally speaks.

**MORRIS**

(Clearing his throat, reading)

Sorry, gentlemen I've been eating a lot of cheese lately. Always risky. Had the plumber out twice this month to unblock the toilet. My Ivy loves French cheeses, you see. But too much phlegm. No wonder the Frogs surrendered in 1940. You can't win a war with cheese.

**KEVIN**

You might be lactose intolerant.

**PERCY**

My Doris has that. Sprinkled Parmesan cheese on her Lasagne once and she blew her dentures clean across the floor.

**MORRIS**

Really?

**PERCY**

Wouldn't have minded but we were dining at that revolving restaurant in that new Centrepoint Tower.

**KEVIN**

Centrepiece. Ahh, the great wastepaper basket in the sky.

Alf irritably looks at his watch.

**MORRIS**

My Ivy's keen to pop up and take a look. The restaurant's revolting, you say...?

**PERCY**

Revolving.

Morris adjusts his hearing aid.

**MORRIS**

Revolving? Oh dear. That won't do. I don't like heights. It's all right for you. You were a bomber pilot in the war.

**PERCY**

Just don't look down. That's what I used to tell the new boys.

**KEVIN**

I didn't know Doris wore dentures.

**PERCY**

Yes. Since '43. Had her remaining teeth knocked out for our wedding. So she could be fitted for dentures. People did that then. Cosmetic dentistry they call it now. But that's how we found out she was lactose intolerant.

**KEVIN**

Reckon I'm lactose intolerant. Every time I-

**ALF**

(Jumping to his feet)



I tell you something for nothing! I'm bloody 'you lot' intolerant. Get on with proceedings, Mr Treasurer! (sotto voce) Strike me pink!

Alf sits.

**MORRIS**

Sorry, Alf. Right you are.

He clears his throat.

**ALF**

And don't start that again. Get on with it, man.

**MORRIS**

Right you are.

**ALF**

And tell me. Why aren't we in the damn boardroom? Why are we stuck out here in the club.

**MORRIS**

Conference. Brian makes extra money for the club by letting out the boardroom to business groups. This one's a franchisees conference, I believe. Doggy Doo Dahs.

**ALF**

What?

**MORRIS**

It's a mobile dog grooming service.

Off stage we hear chanting:

*I feel great! Woof woof woof!*

*I'm a winner! Woof woof woof!*

**ALF**

Bloody disgrace! The boardroom is for the *board*!

**MORRIS**

Fair point, well made. Now, then. (reading) Absent from this evening's meeting, Mr Spencer Crombie. (to Alf) He's got trouble with his boils again. Absent Mr Jack Davis DFC - he's had a stroke and would be here but for dribbling down his shirt whenever he hears the sound of running water.

**PERCY**

(nodding)

Old Nev's had a stroke, too.

**MORRIS**

Who?

**PERCY**

You know. Old Neville Primrose. Flew Kittyhawks in North Africa. Played bowls with us that day when Darcy had trouble with his veins.

Alf irritably taps his watch at Morris.

**MORRIS**

(to Alf)

Yes, yes, of course. Sorry Alf. (reading) Absent Mr Gilbert Nuttle - (to Alf) - the bus doesn't pass his retirement village, anymore. He's written to the council about it. No reply. (to Percy) I formally ask the club secretary to make a note of that. Can I have someone second that?

**KEVIN**

(lazily raises hand)

Second.

**MORRIS**

Can you make a note of that please, Percy?

Percy scribbles in a note book.

Absent Mr Charlie Dawkins. He's had a triple bypass. Absent Mr-

**ALF**

Christ on bike! It's like the land of the living dead.

**MORRIS**

-absent Mr Tobias Cruickshank. Old Toby said he would be here but he's suffering with a lot of chaffing in the...Netherlands-

**PERCY**

Holland?

**MORRIS**

(pointing at his crotch)

The low countries.

**ALF**

(irritably, to himself)

Fat lot of use he would have been in the jungle fighting, Tojo.

Bloody chaffing!

**MORRIS**

(tapping hearing aid)

Toejam? That can happen in the tropics.

**ALF**

(fuming)

Look, can we have the absentee list *without* the usual medical reports, Mr Treasurer?

Bev - wearing a Santa Hat - sets four beers on the table. She drapes her impressive udders over Kevin.

**BEV**

There you are gentlemen. Courtesy of the management. Brian says sorry about the boardroom. We don't have a designated conference room yet. It's on the agenda but. Are yous okay out here in the bar?

**KEVIN**

Be happier if you sat on my lap, Bev.

**BEV**

(winking at Kevin)

Play yer cards, right, Sweetie and Santa will bring yer something special for Christmas.

**PERCY**

Yes, we're quite alright, luvvy. Thank Brian for us.

**ALF**

No we're not bloody alright! How dare Brian stick us out here for our monthly board meeting. Bloody disgrace. This club was built on the bodies of our former comrades.

**KEVIN**

(soto voce)

And here I was thinking it was built on a disused swamp.

**BEV**

Do you want me to fetch, Brian, Alf?

**ALF**

No. I'm already late. But I want it known that I'm not happy about this. Free drinks or no free drinks! The boardroom is just that: for the *board*.

Bev shrugs and leaves.

**MORRIS**

(indicating cast)

So to proceedings. Those present: Club Treasurer, Mr Morris Klein. Junior Board Member Mr Kevin O'Connell. Club Secretary Mr Percival Scott DFC and the honourable Club President Mr Alfred Watson A.M. O.B.E. M.M-

**ALF**

Yes. Yes. Yes. We don't need all the gongs every time, Morris. Let's just get on with it, shall we? I'm meeting my granddaughter for Chinese after this board meeting.

**KEVIN**

(singing, Python style)

*I like Chinese....I like Chinese...*

**ALF**

Shut up, fool!

Kevin shrugs and removes his Ray-Bans

**MORRIS**

You can't speak to Kevin like that, Alf. We need to respect our junior members. They're the future of the club.

Kevin was at Long Tan.

**ALF**

'Fake Tan' more like it.

**MORRIS**

No, not heard of that one. Is that in Vietnam? No, he was definitely at Long Tan. Weren't you Kevin? Tell him. Go on.

Kevin shrugs.

**KEVIN**

(thinking)

I was either in the Battle of Long Tan... or in a whore house in Saigon shagging a lass named Curly Shirley. She was a Saigon whore with a perm. That I *do* remember. The things that girl could do. You see, I was on these magic mushrooms at the time and-

**MORRIS**

But you were in D Company. Gary remembers you at the Bren Gun that day. Firing into the rubber plantation.

**KEVIN**

(thinking)

I do recall a lot of rubber...

**MORRIS**

(nodding to the others)

See!

**KEVIN**

(thinking)

Or was it 'rubbers'...?

**ALF**

If he's the future, God save us.

Kevin nods, pensively, still in thought.

**MORRIS**

That segues rather neatly into this new business.

**ALF**

What *new* business?

**MORRIS**

Women in war.

**ALF**

What bloody women in war?

**MORRIS**

A group of young women asked to join our ANZAC Day march next year.

**ALF**

Nurses?

**MORRIS**

Not exactly.

**ALF**

WAAFS?

**MORRIS**

Eh...not exactly.

**ALF**

Who are these women, then?

**MORRIS**

Feminists.

**ALF**

*Feminists?*

**MORRIS**

(nodding)

Feminists.

**ALF**

What do bloody feminists want with our march?

**MORRIS**

Say what?

**ALF**

What do they want, Morris?

**MORRIS**

(tapping his hearing aid)

What?

**ALF**

Turn up that *bloody* gramophone in your ear, Morris. What do they *want*, man?

**MORRIS**

Oh. I see. They wish to march to remember women raped in war.

Alf stands to his feet and points his walking stick at Morris.



**ALF**

Over my dead body.

Bev returns from the bar with a bowl of peanuts.

**BEV**

Necrophilia

**ALF**

What?

**KEVIN**

The rape of dead bodies. Necrophilia.

Kevin pulls out a ukulele and improvises a song.

**KEVIN**

(singing/playing joyfully)

*Her name was Maisie.*

*I thought her lazy.*

*But when I wooed her,*

*And later screwed her,*

*We never spoke again.*

*She was a corpse.*

**ALF**

Must you insist on bringing that bloody toy guitar everywhere you go?

**KEVIN**

Part of my therapy. My shrink said to manifest my demons through song.

**BEV**

Worked for Barry Manilow.

**ALF**

Why is it that so many of your lot came back psychotic? We saw much more action than your lot did. We coped. We got on with our lives without playing a tiny guitar and smoking marry-a-jew-arna.

**KEVIN**

Perhaps you repressed it.

**ALF**

(Gets to his feet)

Repressed it? *Repressed it?* Of course we bloody repressed it. We had a nation to build.

**MORRIS**

I think they came back a little damaged because the public shunned them, Alf.

Alf sits and sighs.

**PERCY**

True. They didn't have grand parades through the city like we did, Alf, if you remember.

**MORRIS**

That's right. Our fighting was for the greater good. To stop fascism. That's why I fought.

**ALF**

*Fought!?* You were a cook in the bloody desert. You mostly fought the Italians for chicken recipes.

**BEV**

God! That reminds me. Me chicken pies!

Bev rushes offstage.

**MORRIS**

(reflects, eyes glazed in memory)

True. What the Italians could do with a tomato and a little organo would make a sergeant of the mess weep.

**ALF**

Listen, you lot! I'm not having a gang of lesbians-

**KEVIN**

Feminists.

**ALF**

What did I say?

**KEVIN**

Lesbians.

**PERCY**

I heard him say lesbians.

**MORRIS**

I thought he said Libyans. I distinctly remember talking about chicken recipes in Libya. (to Kevin) I was stationed there in the war, you know. Now, the Italians could take some rice, a tomato and a stick of-

**ALF**

Morris! Can we please stick to the agenda for once.

Kevin strums a chord and sings.

**KEVIN**

(singing/playing)

*Agenda!*

*A mind bender!*

*Never meant to offend her.*

*But I had my agenda.*

*So I dropped my pants.*

**ALF**

Listen, fool. I'll shove that thing where the sun don't shine-

**KEVIN**

Melbourne?

**PERCY**

My niece lives in Melbourne.

**KEVIN**

They all wear black in Melbourne. I'm told it's to absorb the sun.  
Me? I love the sun.

Kevin removes his shirt and indicates his tan.

Alf is apoplectic with rage.

**ALF**

For the love of Mike! Put your bloody shirt back on, idiot. This is not a resort. (Turns to Morris and Percy) And you two. Every time we have a meeting we get off bloody topic and the damn thing ends up going for hours. I'm meeting my granddaughter for Chinese.

**KEVIN**

(singing)

*I like Chinese....*

Bev comes over with a plate of party pies.

**BEV**

Barry apologises for the inconvenience and would like you all to have dinner on us.

**ALF**

This is what he calls *dinner*? Luke-warm pies?

**BEV**

It beats 'shit on a shingle', Alf. Do you want 'em or not? Otherwise I'll take 'em home for me tea.

**ALF**

We don't want them. Take them away.

Kevin and Morris snatch a pie.

Bev exits the stage with the pies.

**ALF**

(over his shoulder)

And you can tell Brian to stick them where the sun don't shine!

**KEVIN**

Melbourne?

Bev returns with a bouquet of flowers and then exits the stage.

**ALF**

So now Brian's buying us flowers?

**PERCY**

No. These are from me. I thought the ladies might appreciate it. They're coming in to meet us to talk about joining the march. I see you're wearing a tie today. Good show.

**KEVIN**

Alf wears a tie to the beach.

**ALF**

I'm wearing a tie because I'm meeting my granddaughter. Listen, forget the flowers.

**MORRIS**

Ladies like flowers.

**ALF**

*Ladies?* If we're meeting a group of bloody feminists, they don't want flowers. They want...bloody overalls.

**KEVIN**

For painting?

**MORRIS**

(adjusting his hearing aid)

Someone said they're painting the boardroom today?

**PERCY**

They might be.

**ALF**

Listen you dribbling fools-

**PERCY**

Listen! Don't come all 'Captain Chocko Watson' with us. You're not an officer anymore. You're a retired accountant.

**KEVIN**

Yeah, you can only boss people around at the end of the fiscal year.

Bev returns with more flowers and a box of chocolates.

**ALF**

How many flowers did you buy, Percy? We'll be overrun by bees, next. Take all these flowers away.

**MORRIS**

Bees! That's reminds me. My Ivy said to ask. Are beehives tax-deductible?

**BEV**

(cleaning an ashtray)

Very popular in the late 60s. With the girl groups. Used to have one meself. Looked like Dusty Springfield only with bigger knockers. (She winks a curtain of eyelash at Kevin)

**MORRIS**

No...honey bees, I mean. Excellent for the garden.

**ALF**

Listen you two, idiots. During the war I had 46 men under me-

**KEVIN**

Kinky.

Alf pins him with a look before addressing the men.

Bev removes the flowers and sets them over on the bar.