

*(The following two excerpts may be used royalty free for auditions.)*

**AUDITION #1 -- for 2 m**

*(RUDYARD KIPLING is asleep at his desk and in the throes of a nightmare about his son who has been declared "missing" in the war. FRANK DOUBLEDAY, Rudyard's publisher and friend, enters, approaching Rudyard's sleeping form. Frank speaks with a slight Brooklyn accent.)*

**FRANK:** Rudyard, old man. Wake up.

*(FRANK rouses RUDYARD.)*

**RUDYARD:** Frank!

**FRANK:** Looks like you were giving that dream the what for.

**RUDYARD:** I was dreaming of India again. I can't seem to stop. Maybe these dreams are fate telling me to go back.

**FRANK:** England would miss you. I dare say England needs you right now, RK.

**RUDYARD:** England needs no one.

**FRANK:** I read the news about John in the paper. I'm so sorry.

**RUDYARD:** Right. Well -- we carry on, don't we.

*(A pause.)*

**FRANK:** So -- what's lurking in that typewriter of yours? Something I might be interested in publishing?

**RUDYARD:** I'm contemplating a war history.

**FRANK:** But the war isn't over, RK.

**RUDYARD:** I've been in the field. I've seen so many things -- there's much to write, and I'd best get started now.

**FRANK:** I've been thinking about a collection.

**RUDYARD:** A collection of what?

**FRANK:** A collection of your stories -- the light-hearted ones -- for children. Your *Just So Stories*, maybe a bit of *The Jungle Books*? Maybe we could dedicate the collection to John.

**RUDYARD:** I'm not interested in any confounded children's collection right now, Frank. There's a war on -- and I must be the man to support the efforts.

**FRANK:** I'm not saying it's not important, RK. I just feel that it might be a good idea for you to step away from it and grieve for your son.

*(RUDYARD turns away from Frank. FRANK looks at him for a moment with concern.)*

**FRANK:** *(Cont'd.)* We've been friends a long time, haven't we. Been through some rough patches. I just want you to know ... I'm still here if you need me.

*(A beat. HE starts for the door. RUDYARD stops him when he starts to speak.)*

**RUDYARD:** Carrie and I received the war office telegram. As far as their accounting goes, John was declared "missing." I've seen enough of this war to know what that means. John's poor body cannot be found -- for whatever horrible reason. Yet the unreasonable part of me wonders if he's still alive because the word "missing" is so inconclusive. Missing suggests that something can be found.

**FRANK:** You said yourself you've seen what this war looks like from the front lines. As difficult as it is, I think you should allow yourself to grieve and let go.

*(FRANK puts a friendly hand on RUDYARD's shoulder.)*

**FRANK:** *(Cont'd.)* This wasn't your fault.

**RUDYARD:** Such easy words to say.

**FRANK:** I'm sorry. I'm afraid I've got to dash away. I'm having a quick visit with James Barrie. He's got another story, and I promised I'd be at his place by two. I'll come by later on?

**RUDYARD:** That would be splendid. I know Carrie would enjoy that too. The poor thing, she's taking the news of John very hard.

**FRANK:** Consider it done. I'll drop by in two hours. And do me a favor, old man. Take a break from that war history -- just for a little while.

**RUDYARD:** Give my regards to Barrie.

#### **AUDITION #2 for 1 m, 1 f**

*(Kipling's wife CARRIE is pacing the floor, devastated her husband has helped their teenage son John enlist to fight in WWI.)*

**CARRIE:** Have you not listened to a word I've said?

**RUDYARD:** Carrie?

**CARRIE:** Do you deny you were instrumental in Bobs signing the paperwork for John to join the Irish Guards?

**RUDYARD:** We've been through this, Carrie.

**CARRIE:** War is an ill thing --

**RUDYARD:** Yes, war is an ill thing -- as I surely know. But it would be an ill world for weaponless dreamers if evil men were not now and then slain.

**CARRIE:** And why should it be our son who slays these dragons? Why not -- Jack Tar?

**RUDYARD:** I think that's the most selfish thing I've ever heard you say, Carrie.

**CARRIE:** Well, pardon me for wanting to protect my only son.

**RUDYARD:** John is a strong, able, and clever young man. He needs no woman's protection.

**CARRIE:** And you, Rudyard -- how dare you help sign his death warrant? You and Bobs have given him leave to take a tremendous risk.

**RUDYARD:** Risk and war are bunkmates.

**CARRIE:** I do not find that remark witty in the least.

**RUDYARD:** It wasn't meant to be witty, it was meant to be pithy. I do not understand how you can be so emotionally wrought over something as simple as a signature.

**CARRIE:** That's all this is to you? Do you not feel anything over this news?

**RUDYARD:** I am pleased for my son. When's dinner?

**CARRIE:** What if he were to die?

**RUDYARD:** Something we shall all do one day. I intend to do it brilliantly.

**CARRIE:** I am quite serious about this.

**RUDYARD:** God would not squander a soul as good as John's. I recognize there is risk, Carrie; I'm not a chump. But the cause must outweigh it. John understands this, and is ready to make that commitment to his country.

**CARRIE:** John cares for his country, but he cares even more for your love and affection. He is doing this for you.

**RUDYARD:** Where's Elsie? We should have dinner.

**CARRIE:** Rudyard, look at me.

*(RUDYARD gives HER a look like a child who is no longer interested in discussion.)*

**RUDYARD:** Why can't we stop this talk and just be silly? You speak yards and yards about ridiculous feelings. It's making my ears bleed.

**CARRIE:** Not everything in life can be "just so," Mr. Kipling.

**RUDYARD:** Mr. Kipling? Ho! Now we're being clever.

**CARRIE:** You cannot take your emotions and tie them up in tidy packages and place them somewhere to be forgotten.

**RUDYARD:** Words, words, words. How you prattle on yet say nothing!

**CARRIE:** Your son is not "nothing"! *(A tense beat.)* John is going to war, and you must accept the notion that he may

not come back. Are you willing to let those feelings come forward if that be so?

**RUDYARD:** You are speaking with a woman's sensibility. A man -- a man must be held to a different standard...

**CARRIE:** A higher standard, you mean?

**RUDYARD:** I didn't say that. Just...different. Carrie, give me leave to do as I see fit. Do not break me open like a melon and scoop out the insides hoping to find some foreign fruit. You'll find me a much happier husband if I am not continually henpecked.

*(RUDYARD checks his pocket watch, in a dismissive gesture toward his wife.)*

**RUDYARD:** *(Cont'd.)* Where the deuces is Elsie? It's half past six.

*(It is clear to CARRIE that the discussion is over. A tense silence fills the room.)*

**CARRIE:** I feel as if I'm on a ship just launched to sail, and you are watching me from the dock, unmoving and unflinching.

*(With emotion, CARRIE moves to RUDYARD and places her arms around his shoulders. He is unaffected by the embrace. This does not go unnoticed by Carrie.)*

**CARRIE:** *(Cont'd.)* I love you, Rudyard, but we are drifting so very far apart.

*(CARRIE exits. RUDYARD watches her leave.)*

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