

# HOMEFRONT

By Dean Feldmeyer

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## **STORY OF THE PLAY**

It's 1943, a time of hep cats, java jive, ration coupons, war bonds, zoot suits, and the jitterbug. On the Hoosier homefront, the Rev. Peter and Anna Farenkamp and their three children try to do their part by salvaging tin and paper, keeping a victory garden and buying bonds. Young Bernard dreams of becoming a drummer in Benny Goodman's band while the youngest, Luana, dreams about the latest teen heartthrob, Frank Sinatra. But the oldest, David, dreams of becoming a war hero and wants to join the Army the minute he turns eighteen in less than two weeks. He already serves as a junior air-raid warden watching for bombers and saboteurs even in their small town in Indiana.

Tension mounts when, in an effort to support the war effort even more, the close-knit family volunteers to let Rita and Louise Baxter live with them so the two V-Girls can more easily work at the defense plant down the block. A call from Louise's fiancé, who has volunteered for active duty in Europe, sparks in David a defiant determination to join the Army and fight fascism.

But Peter, who was an ambulance driver in World War I and has seen war up close, tries to dissuade him. Father and son clash in a powerful scene as David defies his father and leaves with an Army recruiter. Seven weeks later, after no communication during basic training, David, finally returns home in a touching scene of reconciliation.

Big band music, jitterbug dancing, humorous small town characters and strong family bonds make this a wonderful mixture of comedy and drama for audiences of all ages.

## **CAST OF CHARACTERS**

*(5 m, 7 w)*

**REVEREND PETER FARENKAMP:** The father.

**ANNA FARENKAMP:** His wife.

**DAVID FARENKAMP:** Their son, 17 years old.

**BERNARD FARENKAMP:** Their son, 15 years old.

**LUANA FARENKAMP:** Their daughter, 9 years old.

**RUTH ANN "RUTHY" DRESSLER:** The mail carrier.

**EMIT DRESSLER:** Ruth Ann's husband; an air-raid warden.

**CLEOPHA CURTIS:** An elderly neighbor.

**LOUISE BAXTER:** A V-Girl, 22 years old.

**RITA BAXTER:** A V-Girl, Louise's 20-year-old sister.

**SAM:** A friend of the V-Girls.

**PATTY:** A friend of the V-Girls.

## **SYNOPSIS OF THE PLAY**

**ACT I:** An August evening, 1943.

**ACT II:**

Scene 1: An afternoon two weeks later.

Scene 2: A couple of hours later.

Scene 3: A couple of hours later.

**ACT III:** Early evening, seven weeks later.

### **SETTING**

The front porch and steps of the Farenkamp house in Huntingburg, a small rural town in southern Indiana. On the porch are a milkbox, porch swing, several chairs, salvage bin of tin cans, and mail box (with letters inside). In Act III, we see a "V-Family" sign and a flag with one star hanging in the windows. A small "spotter post" consisting of an old chair and a small table is moved into the front yard area for several scenes.

### **PROPS / COSTUMES**

DAVID: Binoculars, newspaper or magazine, enlistment papers, flashlight, grocery store uniform, bags of salvage goods, suitcase, Army uniform with arm bands, duffel bag, Sinatra record.

ANNA: Tray with cookies, thermos, 2 glasses, apron, bowl of string beans, purse with coin purse inside, bathrobe.

PETER: Newspaper, three letters (mail), suitcases, handkerchief, telegram, briefcase, folded money.

BERNARD: Drumsticks, records, record player, small bottle of Coca-Cola, brown bag, zoot suit.

EMIT: Civil defense helmet, arm bands, swagger stick.

CLEOPHA: Cane, bathrobe, receipt.

LOUISE: Suitcases, records, record player.

RITA: Suitcases, watch.

PATTY: Suitcases.

SAM: Footlocker.

RUTHY: Mail bag and letters.

LUANA: PJ's (later covered with flour), jacks, small bottle of Coca-Cola.

### **SOUND EFFECTS**

"In the Mood," and "String of Pearls" by Glenn Miller  
"All clear" siren  
Telephone ringing  
Car horn

**ACT I**

*(AT RISE: A Friday night in August, just after dark. LIGHTS up, dimly, on front yard "spotter post" which DAVID has set up for himself. David sits on old chair next to a small table as BERNARD enters from the house onto the porch.)*

BERNARD: *(Singing.)* Sing, sing, sing, sing. Everybody's got to sing. Ya dat dat dah, ya dat dat dah, dat dah dat de dat dat dah ... *(Long drum improvisation that sounds like a lot of noise. Feigns surprise.)* David! Hey, devil, what say? How goes the war?

DAVID: *(Whispering.)* Will you pipe down? We're having a blackout. You're supposed to be quiet.

BERNARD: *(Picking up flashlight, turning it on, sneaking around, speaking in stage whisper.)* Yeah, the sky is full of Nazis tonight. Amazing how those crafty devils figured out how to make a plane fly clear across the Atlantic ocean, past the coast watchers, halfway across the country so they can bomb Huntingburg, Indiana. It's absolutely diabolical, I tell ya.

EMIT: *(From offstage.)* Dim that light!

*(DAVID takes flashlight, turns it off and puts it away. BERNARD takes drumsticks from back pocket and starts drumming on "air" drums.)*

DAVID: What are you doing? Put that away! They don't have to fly all the way from Germany, meatball. They smuggle the plane in piece by piece, then they assemble it and load it with bombs and ...

BERNARD: *(Stops drumming. Gives German salute, speaks in corny German accent.)* You vill go to Ameriga. Do you unterschtand? Ya vol, mein Furher. You vill schmuckle in ze aeroplane und ze boms. Und you vill find zis town in Indiana called Huntingburk, and you vill bomp it into ze dark ayches.

DAVID: That's not how it works! Will you pipe down?

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BERNARD: *(Drumming.)* And that's another thing. Why do we have to be quiet during a blackout? The lights go out and suddenly everything gets quiet. Listen. *(THEY listen a moment and then Bernard speaks slowly and loudly into the night.)* It's OK! They can't hear us. They're in Europe!

DAVID: *(Scanning the sky for enemies, deadly serious.)* Don't be so sure, little brother. Don't be so sure. I heard they caught some spies up in Chicago.

BERNARD: *(Leaning over the edge of the porch, ignoring DAVID.)* Bet you a nickel I can spit off of here and hit the tulip bed. Watch.

*(HE rears back and is just ready to spit when EMIT, dressed in civil defense helmet and arm bands, enters from SR.)*

EMIT: David Farenkamp? Is that you making all that racket? There's a blackout, you know!

*(BERNARD catches himself just in the nick of time, but now he has to find someplace to spit.)*

DAVID: No, sir.

EMIT: Well, David, why do you think all the lights in town are turned off? There's a war on.

DAVID: Yes, sir. I mean, I know there's a blackout, but I'm not making any racket.

EMIT: The enemy isn't only in the air, you know, David. The enemy is all around us, hunting for a weak spot. Watching and waiting for an opening. It's war, David. It's war. And only the vigilant can be victorious.

DAVID: *(Standing at attention.)* Yes, sir.

EMIT: *(Starts off.)* Ever vigilant, David. Ever vigilant.

DAVID: Yes, sir.

EMIT: *(Stops, but doesn't look back.)* And ... Bernard?

BERNARD: *(Slowly leaning off the porch, smiling.)* M-m-m-m-m-m?

EMIT: *(Casually.)* Bernard, if that hocker lands anywhere near me, I'm coming up there to put it back where it came from. OK?

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BERNARD: *(Swallowing.)* Yes, sir.

EMIT: *(Exiting.)* Goodnight, boys.

BERNARD: Goodnight.

DAVID: Goodnight, sir.

EMIT: *(From a distance.)* Ever vigilant!

DAVID: *(Waving.)* Yes, sir.

BERNARD: *(Using drumsticks like a microphone.)* Another old soldier walks slowly, majestically into the sunset.

*(LUANA enters from house, wearing pajamas.)*

LUANA: Hey, guys? Who's the old guy?

BERNARD: *(Helping HER up the ladder, grabs her and spins her around a couple of clumsy dance steps.)* Hey, groove girl. What's makin'?

LUANA: *(Embarrassed.)* Bernard! You're so silly. What's a groove girl?

DAVID: *(Peeved.)* Luana, you're not allowed out after dark. You know that.

LUANA: *(Dismissing HIM.)* Oh, David, don't be a meany. It's not that late. See any Germans tonight? *(SHE picks up flashlight and shines it into the sky.)*

DAVID: *(Almost disappointed, not seeing HER with the flash-light.)* No. Nothing tonight.

EMIT: *(From a great distance.)* Dim that light!

*(THEY all sit, stare at the sky for a beat.)*

BERNARD: You know what the Reverend says? He says that it's all a bunch of hooey. Not the Nazis, they're real. But he says that all this salvage stuff, and plane spotting, and air-raid wardens and blackouts ... he says it's just ... watchyacallit. Proper ... something.

DAVID: Propaganda?

BERNARD: Right! What's that mean?

DAVID: *(Exasperated and a little angry.)* Propaganda is lies. Dad thinks it's all a bunch of lies so they can get us all behind the war effort. Franklin Delano Roosevelt ... the President of the United States of America.

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