

Today Is Friday, Ernest Hemingway

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Three Roman soldiers are in a drinking-place at eleven o'clock at night. There are barrels around the wall. Behind the wooden counter is a Hebrew wine-seller. The three Roman soldiers are a little cock-eyed.

1st Roman Soldier-You tried the red?

2d Soldier-No, I ain't tried it.

1st Soldier-You better try it.

2d Soldier-All right, George, we'll have a round of the red.

Hebrew Wine-seller-Here you are, gentlemen. You'll like that. [He sets down an earthenware pitcher that he has filled from one of the casks.] That's a nice little wine.

1st Soldier-Have a drink of it yourself. [He turns to the third Roman soldier who is leaning on a barrel.] What's the matter with you?

3d Roman Soldier-I got a gut-ache.

2d Soldier-You've been drinking water.

1st Soldier-Try some of the red.

3d Soldier-I can't drink the damn stuff. It makes my gut sour.

1st Soldier-You been out here too long.

3d Soldier-Hell don't I know it?

1st Soldier-Say, George, can't you give this gentleman something to fix up his stomach?

Hebrew Wine-seller-I got it right here.

[The third Roman soldier tastes the cup that the wine-seller has mixed for him.]

3d Soldier-Hey, what you put in that, camel chips?

Wine-seller-You drink that right down, Lootenant. That'll fix you up right.

3d Soldier-Well, I couldn't feel any worse.

1st Soldier-Take a chance on it. George fixed me up fine the other day.

Wine-seller-You were in bad shape, Lootenant. I know what fixes up a bad stomach.

[The third Roman soldier drinks the cup down.]

3d Roman Soldier-Jesus Christ. [He makes a face.]

2d Soldier-That false alarm!

1st Soldier-Oh, I don't know. He was pretty good in there today.

2d Soldier-Why didn't he come down off the cross?

1st Soldier-He didn't want to come down off the cross. That's not his play.

2d Soldier-Show me a guy that doesn't want to come down off the cross.

1st Soldier-Aw, hell, you don't know anything about it. Ask George there. Did he want to come down off the cross, George?

Wine-seller-I'll tell you, gentlemen, I wasn't out there. It's a thing I haven't taken any interest in.

2d Soldier-Listen, I seen a lot of them-here and plenty of other places.

Any time you show me one that doesn't want to get down off the cross when the time comes-when the time comes, I mean-I'll climb right up with him.

1st Soldier-I thought he was pretty good in there today.

3d Soldier-He was all right.

2d Roman Soldier—You guys don't know what I'm talking about. I'm not saying whether he was good or not. What I mean is, when the time comes. When they first start nailing him, there isn't none of them wouldn't stop it if they could.

1st Soldier—Didn't you follow it, George?

Wine-seller—No, I didn't take any interest in it, Lootenant.

1st Soldier—I was surprised how he acted.

3d Soldier—The part I don't like is the nailing them on. You know, that must get to you pretty bad.

2d Soldier—It isn't that that's so bad, as when they first lift 'em up. [He makes a lifting gesture with his two palms together.] When the weight starts to pull on 'em. That's when it gets 'em.

3d Roman Soldier—It take some of them pretty bad.

1st Soldier—Ain't I seen 'em? I seen plenty of them. I tell you, he was pretty good in there today.

[The second Roman soldier smiles at the Hebrew wine-seller.]

2d Soldier—You're a regular Christer, big boy.

1st Soldier—Sure, go on and kid him. But listen while I tell you something. He was pretty good in there today.

2d Soldier—What about some more wine?

[The wine-seller looks up expectantly. The third Roman soldier is sitting with his head down. He does not look well.]

3d Soldier—I don't want any more.

2d Soldier—Just for two, George.

[The wine-seller puts out a pitcher of wine, a size smaller than the last one.

He leans forward on the wooden counter.]

1st Roman Soldier—You see his girl?

2d Soldier—Wasn't I standing right by her?

1st Soldier—She's a nice-looker.

2d Soldier—I knew her before he did. [He winks at the wine-seller.]

1st Soldier—I used to see her around the town.

2d Soldier—She used to have a lot of stuff. He never brought her no good luck.

1st Soldier—Oh, he ain't lucky. But he looked pretty good to me in there today.

2d Soldier—What become of his gang?

1st Soldier—Oh, they faded out. Just the women stuck by him.

2d Roman Soldier—They were a pretty yellow crowd. When they seen him go up there they didn't want any of it.

1st Soldier—The women stuck all right.

2d Soldier—Sure, they stuck all right.

1st Roman Soldier—You see me slip the old spear into him?

2d Roman Soldier—You'll get into trouble doing that some day.

1st Soldier—It was the least I could do for him. I'll tell you he looked pretty good to me in there today.

Hebrew Wine-seller—Gentlemen, you know I got to close.

1st Roman Soldier—We'll have one more round.

2d Roman Soldier—What's the use? This stuff don't get you anywhere. Come on, let's go.

1st Soldier—Just another round.

3d Roman Soldier—[Getting up from the barrel.] No, come on. Let's go. I feel like hell tonight.

1st Soldier—Just one more.

2d Soldier—No, come on. We're going to go. Good-night, George. Put it on the bill.

Wine-seller—Good-night, gentlemen. [He looks a little worried.] You couldn't let me have a little something on account, Lootenant?

2d Roman Soldier—What the hell, George! Wednesday's payday.

Wine-seller—It's all right, Lootenant. Good-night, gentlemen.

[The three Roman soldiers go out the door into the street.]

[Outside in the street.]

2d Roman Soldier—George is a kike just like all the rest of them.

1st Roman Soldier—Oh, George is a nice fella.

2d Soldier—Everybody's a nice fella to you tonight.

3d Roman Soldier—Come on, let's go up to the barracks. I feel like hell tonight.

2d Soldier—You been out here too long.

3d Roman Soldier—No, it ain't just that. I feel like hell.

2d Soldier—You been out here too long. That's all.

CURTAIN

The End