

HALF A LEAGUE
(Working Draft)
BY SCOTT T. GARLAND
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as an unpublished dramatic composition

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The poem CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE was written by Alfred Lord
Tennyson and is open to public use.

HALF A LEAGUE by SCOTT GARLAND

PETER: Adult man/woman who thinks they are a 10 year old boy.
JIM: Adult man/woman who thinks they are a 9 year old boy.
SAM: Adult man/woman who thinks they are an 8 years old.
BILLY: A man who has stumbled into their world and is eager to leave.
SIR RUPERT: The memory of the man from their stories.

Scene

A junkyard with three very distinct trash piles. The lights raise on the piles and the sound of a steady drum beat. The "boys" emerge from their piles chanting. This sequence is a summoning, an awakening of the boys into their world.

PETER: Half a league, half a league,
Half a league onward,

JIM: All in the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

PETER: "Forward, the Light Brigade!

JIM: "Charge for the guns!" he said:

SAM: Into the valley of Death

ALL: Rode the six hundred.

PETER: Forward, the Light Brigade!"

SAM: Was there a man dismay'd?

PETER: Not tho' the soldier knew

SAM: Someone had blunder'd:

PETER: Their's not to make reply,

SAM: Their's not to reason why,

JIM: Their's but to do and die:

ALL: Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

(Drum beat ends.)

JIM: HAHA! It gets better every time I hear it.

PETER: Right so Jim, right so.

JIM: D'ya think we can do the part with the cannons now, Pete?

SAM: I'm tired.

JIM: Then sit out! We'll go on without ya.

PETER: Tut-tut, Jim. Never leave a man behind.

JIM: (petulant) But I wanna get shot at by the cannons!

SAM: Me too.

PETER: You want to get shot by cannon's too, Sam?

SAM: No, I want HIM to get shot.

JIM: Keep it up broken nose.

PETER: Alright, alright. We'll discuss the charge later. First:
assign tasks for the evening. Fall-in!
(JIM and SAM move excitedly into line.)

PETER: Now, as ever, our primary concern lies with the protection and
maintenance of our noble post. And how is this best accomplished?

JIM: Duty, sir.

SAM: Commitment to duty, sir.

PETER: Right and right-right. On the one hand we must protect the
post, on the other we must maintain it. One of you will be sent out
to scout the perimeter and ensure that there is no risk from the
outside, while the other will make sure there is no trouble on the
inside. I'm not going to lie to you boys, the one who goes out to
patrol may not make it back alive. And if they do make it back, I
can't promise you that they will return intact. Fingers may be lost,
limbs may be broken, your very minds melted by the horrors of which
they may face! Who among you possesses the strength, the courage, the
balls to stare death in the face and say "what are you lookin' at?"

JIM: (Barely containing his excitement) Will there be cannons?

PETER: There may also be cannons.

JIM: ME! ME! I got the balls! I do! I wanna stare death in the face.

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Oh please Pete? Please!

PETER: I don't know-

JIM: Pleeese Pete!

PETER: You've so much more to live for-

JIM: No I don't- Pete PLEEEEEEASE!

PETER: You're so young.

JIM: I'm almost 10, I've had a good run- PETE Pleeese!

PETER: And the latrines need a scrubbing ...

JIM: I'll do them when I get back, pleasepleasepleaseplease!

PETER: Very well, soldier. Your task this evening is to scout the perimeter and inform us immediately of any irregular activity. Understood?

JIM: Yes sir, thank you sir!

PETER: That means you're on upkeep, Sam.

SAM: Yes sir, thank you sir.

PETER: All right men: Dismissed!

SAM: Hey Jim. I hope you get shot this time.

JIM: (genuinely) Me too, Sammy. Me too. (JIM exits.)

SAM: What do you think he'll find out there, Peter?

PETER: I don't know, soldier. Maybe something, maybe nothing. But in looking for something or looking for nothing, he is kept occupied. And that's good enough.

(Looks at SAM, then the piles.)

Ahem!

SAM: Sorry Pete-sir. Sorry sir.

(SAM brabs a trash bin and strategically places bits of trash on each pile.)

PETER: Sam, where is your head at tonight?

SAM: Sorry, I've just been thinking, sir.

PETER: Thinking? Thinking about what? The charge? Your duties? Our cause?

SAM: Yeah, our cause.

PETER: Ah, that sacred duty that binds us to this place.

SAM: Yea...

PETER: Of course I don't have to remind you of the importance this post holds.

SAM: (disappointed) Oh ... sure ... you don't have to ... if you don't want to ...

PETER: ... but I suppose clarifying our objectives once more couldn't hurt.

SAM: Yay! (Sits close to PETER, like a child hearing a story.)

PETER: Listen closely, SAM, and I shall tell you the tale of: Sir Rupert. Many nights ago, before the first charge, I stumbled upon this very spot. And let me tell you, my young buck, it looked nothing like it does now ...

(PETER looks expectantly at SAM.)

SAM: Oh - What was it like?

PETER: Well, if you must know it was a waste land littered with trash.

SAM: I can't imagine ...

PETER: I had been traveling aimlessly for what felt like forever. I was exhausted from running so far for so long. And just as the sun began to set, a figure appeared before me. And that's when I met: HIM!

(Looks expectantly at SAM.)

SAM: Oh - Who, sir?

PETER: Well, who do you think? The one and only:

PETER: Sir Rupert!

SAM: Sir Rupert!

SIR RUPERT: I am Sir Rupert!

PETER: At the time I was scared.

SAM: Not you, Pete.

PETER: Yes, Sam. And you would be too in my place. This man was a fountain of awesome energy, greatness surged from each step. In his presence, one could not help but tremble. He looked me up and down and belowed:

SIR RUPERT: Who are you and what do you do?

PETER: I am Peter. I do nothing, I'm just a kid ...

SIR RUPERT: I think not!

PETER: From his side he pulled out a saber and began to chant:

(Drum beat starts)

PETER: The most beautiful words I have ever heard.

SAM: The charge!

PETER: Yes Sam, that noble charge.

SIR RUPERT: Half a league, half a league,
 Half a league onward,
 All in the valley of Death
 Rode the six hundred.

PETER: He recited it in it's entirety right in front of me. Sir Rupert leaned in close, looked me in the eye and said:

SIR RUPERT: What is nothing? It is not something!

SAM&PETER: Wha?

SIR RUPERT: Nothing is nothing! But something: is not nothing!

SAM&PETER: Yes ...

SIR RUPERT: Something is something! This is something! I am something! You! You are something!

SAM&PETER: Uh-huh ...

SIR RUPERT: And you, who are something, will make something ... out of: something else!

SAM&PETER: (Realizing) Oh!

PETER: He patted me on the head and then he was gone. Ever since I have dedicated every fiber of my being to the mission, which Sir Rupert had clearly charged me with: I turned the surrounding trash into piles, and made those piles into our post! To this day, I hold to the hope that Sir Rupert will return. That I may thank him.

SAM: That story, is the best story EVER!

PETER: Yes, it's quite good isn't it.

SAM: I get chills when you tell it, sir.

PETER: You should, for it is a chilling tale.

SAM: If only he hadn't left.

PETER: I know he had his reasons. Perhaps to find other lost children and show them how to make something out of something else. To rebuild this world one post at a time.

SAM: So that's why we ...?

PETER: Yes, that is why we recite the noble charge and maintain this post. And one day, if we're lucky, he will return and join us in our chant.

SAM: Will he come tonight?

PETER: Probably not tonight.

SAM: So you're not sure?

PETER: I don't need to be sure.

SAM: Why not?

PETER: Because I have a job to do: I don't need to be sure about

anything.

SAM: Oh ... Hey Pete. What were you running from?

PETER: Pardon?

SAM: You said you had been running. What from?

PETER: Nothing.

SAM: And when did I get here?

PETER: Soldier ...

SAM: When did Jim? Did we come together? Did we come with you-

PETER: Upkeep, Soldier! Move it! Move it! Move it! Move!

SAM hurriedly goes back to work, double time.

PETER: "Forward, the Light Brigade!"
Was there a man dismay'd?

SAM: Not tho' the soldier knew

PETER: Someone had blunder'd?

SAM: Their's not to make reply,

PETER: Their's not to reason why?

SAM: Their's but to do and die!

PETER: Into the valley of Death

PETER
&SAM: Rode the six hundred!

JIM: (Offstage) Incoming! Incoming!

(JIM dives in front of his pile, panting.)

PETER: At ease soldier. Catch your breath.

JIM: Get down! (He pulls them both down to him.)
(Hushed) ... I have something to report!

PETER: What's your report-

JIM: Shush! ... I was on patrol, sir, as ordered, sir, 'cause that was my duty, sir! And then I felt it, sir!

PETER: ... felt what?

JIM: A feeling, sir!

SAM: A feeling?

JIM: Ya, y'know that feeling that your not alone? I had that!

SAM: Whoa, I feel it too.

JIM: Of course you feel it, you're not alone.

SAM: My feeling was right!

JIM: No! That doesn't count.

SAM: Why not!

JIM: I was alone!

PETER: But, you had a feeling you weren't alone ...

JIM: SO: I headed straight back to here to make my report. Soldier Jim, sir, report over, sir. I am awesome ... Jim: out!

PETER: So ... I sent you out on patrol. You got a feeling ...

JIM: Yes.

PETER: Then you came back here?

JIM: Yes.

PETER: To report your feelings?

JIM: (Proudly) Yes!

PETER: Well ... good (PETER get's up.) ... Now I believe you agreed to scrub the latrines, yes?

JIM: But, wait Pete, what about my feelings?

SAM: Wanna hug?

JIM: No! We should go out on patrol!

SAM: You just went on patrol.

JIM: Yeah, we do it again, but this time in stealth mode.

PETER: The latrines are quite filthy, Jim.

JIM: (Petulantly) But they might blow me up with a grenade launcher!

SAM: He has a point, sir.

JIM: I do?

SAM: You do.

PETER: He does?

JIM: I do!

SAM: I'll stay here and maintain the post.

JIM: While we go out and look for possible intruders.

PETER: Well ... Very well. Hold the fort. Jim: take me to where you had your ... feeling.

JIM: This way sir!

(JIM and PETER exit in "stealth mode.")

SAM watches them leave. He looks up and hums a note.

Music plays in reply.)