

# PERSHING

## SCENE 14

*(GRACE and RISER stand at attention  
before PERSHING.)*

### PERSHING

Captain Riser. Chief Banker. As you may know, we're about to enter a new phase of this war. I trust Colonel Hitt has been keeping the Signal Corps briefed...?

### RISER

The Meuse-Argonne offensive, sir.

### PERSHING

Precisely. Chief Banker...?

### GRACE

I'm sorry, sir. I don't know anything about it.

### PERSHING

For four years, the Europeans have been dug in, fighting a war of attrition. I want to fight our kind of war — wide open and on the move. I believe we can break the German lines. And once we have them on the run, we'll never let them catch their breath! But for this strategy to work, I need my switchboards in the field to run like they do here at Chaumont. Chief Banker, how can we get our male operators up to speed?

### GRACE

Permission to speak freely, sir?

### PERSHING

Granted.

### GRACE

You'll never get them up to speed. You need us there.

### PERSHING

The thought has crossed my mind to give you what you want. But as a man who lost his wife, and daughters... I've always told myself I could never allow it. Now I wonder if I'm letting personal feelings cloud my military judgment. Captain Riser, you know what our women would face at the front. But you also know what they're capable of. What is your recommendation?

**RISER**

Sir, there's no question that Chief Banker and her team are the best at the job.

But what you're talking about isn't a job. It's war.

There's no reason to put our women in harm's way. I have some of our linemen being trained by Chief Banker's team, and they're making great progress. I promise: you'll have the best men available.

**PERSHING**

Thank you, both, for your time. That's what I needed to know.

*(Exit PERSHING. A tense silence.)*

**GRACE**

All this time... all this time you've been saying that General Pershing was keeping us here. But it's you! You're the one who's been holding us back!

**RISER**

I meant what I said. There's no good reason you need to be out there—

**#14 TWENTY**

**GRACE**

YOU CAN'T THINK OF ANY GOOD REASON MY TEAM  
OUGHT TO GO TO THE FRONT?

I CAN'T FOR THE LIFE OF ME UNDERSTAND  
WHY YOU WOULD SAY THAT!

WELL I COULD HAVE GIVEN YOU REASONS  
WE'RE READY AND UP TO THE TASK  
IF YOU WANTED REASONS, YOU ONLY HAD TO ASK!

I'LL GIVE YOU ONE — SUZANNE:  
SHOW ME A SOLDIER IN THE TRENCHES  
FILLED WITH AS MUCH RESOLVE AND FIGHTING SPIRIT

I'LL GIVE YOU TWO — LOUISE:  
FIND ME AN ARMY MAN WHOSE FRENCH IS  
ANYWHERE NEAR AS GOOD—I'D LIKE TO HEAR IT

I'LL GIVE YOU THREE — BERTHA  
LEVEL-HEADED BERTHA  
WHO SOMEHOW KEEPS THOSE CRANKY COLONELS CALM

I'LL GIVE YOU FOUR — HELEN  
TENDER-HEARTED HELEN