



CASTLES

OF

STEEL

BY

NICK WRAY

A PLAY FOR RADIO SET AGAINST

THE BATTLE OF JUTLAND 1916

CASTLES OF STEEL

A 60-minute radio drama set against the Battle of Jutland, 1916

BY NICK WRAY

“One man can lose WW1 in an afternoon...
...but which man is it?”

Part 3 of 5 (Scenes 15 – 21)

The full text of ‘Castles of Steel’ by Nick Wray is now available
on Amazon in print and e-book. [Click here.](#)

More information at: www.castlesofsteel.com

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Biography

Nick Wray is a freelance writer who also works on 'Futures' projects. Nick has written for the *Independent*, *Screen Digest* and *Viewfinder*, as well as other publications and media. Nick has an MA in Interactive Media from the Royal College of Art and his polemic on the digital world, *The Living Garden*, won the ICL-Fujitsu prize for innovation in media. Nick's short play 'Heart of Glass', about Google Glass, was recently shortlisted by the Finsbury Theatre, London 'Little Pieces of Gold' competition.

Nick is currently working on '[Lunch with Jason King](#)' - a collection of short stories & bedtime tales from the past, present & future of the Digital Age.

CAST & FANTASY CASTING SUGGESTIONS

Gunner Armstrong (middle aged) - **Bernard Hill/Jerome Flyn/Robson Green**

Vice-Admiral David Beatty – Jellicoe’s second in command (the cruiser fleet) – **Matthew MacFadyen/ Peter Firth/ Michael Fassbender/Anthony Hopkins/Christian Bale**

Winston Churchill – Voice talent/doubling

Jack Cornwell (16 year old boy gunner from Leyton) – Voice talent

Lily Cornwell – Jack’s mother – **Julie Walters**

John ‘Jacky’ Fisher (Ex-First Sea Lord and naval driving force of the Dreadnought) – **Ian Holm**

Lieutenant Grant – Jellicoe’s gunnery officer – **David Tennant/Ewan McGregor**

Admiral John Jellicoe – Commander in Chief of the British Grand Fleet (the Battleship fleet) – **Ralph Fiennes/Jeremy Irons/Colin Firth/Ben Kingsley**

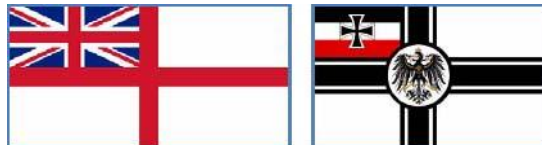
Lord Kitchener (Secretary of State for War) – Voice talent

Lieutenant Ralph Seymour (‘Flags’) – Beatty’s signal officer – **Kenneth Branagh/Rupert Everett**

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This work ‘Castles of Steel’, a play for radio, is a *fictional interpretation and re-telling* of the real events and characters in the contentious WW1 naval engagement of 1916 known as the Battle of Jutland, in which the British and German fleets met *en masse* for the first and only time during the course of the First World War...

*



Production notes

Lightest to heaviest ships have different acoustics to establish size:

HMS Chester (Jack) Lightest armoured scout: highest pitched engines, but harmonic.
A happy ship.

HMS Lion (Beatty) a large cruiser: acoustic mid-range bass, but dissonant. HMS Lion's engines etc. always have a discordant quality (rising with the action)

HMS Iron Duke (Jellicoe) Largest battleship: deepest, most powerful, but also harmonic acoustic. Include theme of chess clock ticking (UNDER) each time scene opens

“Der Tag!” Map of the Jutland/Skagerrak battle area

The ‘Jutland’ battle area (blue, below) where the British Fleets (commanded by Jellicoe & Beatty) Met the German Fleets (Hipper & Scheer) in 1916



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SCENE 15.

EXT – STRAND NEAR CHARING CROSS. EVENING

FX NOISE ON STREET. HORSES AND VEHICLES.

FISHER: I thought you wanted to escape the War Room to get some air, Winston?

CHURCHILL: No. To get some smoke, Fisher!

KITCHENER: Let me.

FX SOUND OF MATCH BEING STRUCK TO LIGHT CIGAR.

CHURCHILL: (SUCKING ON CIGAR) Thank you, K.

FX CHURCHILL PUFFING ON NEWLY LIT CIGAR.

FISHER: You're always blowing smoke, Winston. Filthy habit. We should be getting back to the War Room.

KITCHENER: (BEAT) Oh look at that! In the window.

FX CHURCHILL AND FISHER LOOK IN TOYSHOP WINDOW. FAINT
SOUND OF MODEL CLOCKWORK TRAIN

Someone I know would love a train set like that.

CHURCHILL: Rather fine isn't it.

KITCHENER: German, I think, by the look of it. Chilly, isn't it? Let's go in!

FISHER: Oh really!

FX SOUND OF DOOR OPENING AND SHOP BELL AS THEY ENTER.

KITCHENER: Look, Fisher. It's perfect. The rails, the crossings. Look, those little sheep grazing above the tunnel. Every detail. Even the signals work.

FX SOUND OF MODEL TRAIN COMING OFF TRACKS.

FISHER: Signals or no, it appears to have come off the tracks.

KITCHENER: Oh dear.

CHURCHILL: Fisher's right. Let's get back to the War Room and see what's been happening.

FX SOUND OF DOOR OPENING AND SHOP BELL AS THEY LEAVE.

Taxi!

FX MOTORISED TAXI PULLS UP, CHURCHILL, FISHER & K ENTER

FISHER: The Admiralty. And hurry.

SCENE 16.

EXT – HMS CHESTER. FORWARD OPEN BACKED GUN TURRET

FX HMS CHESTER STEAMING AT SEA. WHISTLE OF INTERCOM

GUNNER ARMSTRONG: Gunner Armstrong, f'ward turret 'ere? (PAUSE) Fishing boat?
Aye, aye, Sir. We'll keep our eyes peeled.

JACK CORNWELL: What's up?

GUNNER ARMSTRONG: We're changing course to have a gander at a bleedin' trawler.

JACK CORNWELL: Are we going to see some action, then?

GUNNER ARMSTRONG: Not unless the Kaiser's on board with his *rod* out! (LAUGHS)

VOICES: SOUND OF GUN CREW LAUGHING.

JACK CORNWELL: What's so funny? Why's everyone laughing?

FX SOUND OF SHIP CHANGING COURSE AND HEADING INTO
WIND

SCENE 18.

EXT – HMS CHESTER. FORWARD OPEN GUN TURRET.

FX SOUNDS OF SHIP’S ENGINE STRAINING AT SPEED. WAVES
CRASHING.

JACK CORNWELL: It’s just a little fishing boat.

GUNNER ARMSTRONG: (INHALES) I can smell their warships, even if I can’t see ‘em, I tell you.

INTERCOM VOICE: (DISTORTED) Beyond the trawler. Enemy cruisers sighted, North East.

GUNNER ARMSTRONG: Told you! Right. We’ve done our job. We’ve found the enemy. Let’s scarper. Time for us to get well away from here as quick as we can.

JACK CORNWELL: Turn tail and run!? You said I’d get to fire the gun!

GUNNER ARMSTRONG: They’re beyond our range, Jack. Our guns is pea shooters compared with the Hun’s. No point in hanging around for trouble now we’ve sighted them. It’s going to get like Piccadilly Circus round here in a minute.

FX WHISTLE OF GERMAN SHELLS FOLLOWED BY NEAR MISSES,
AND SHOUTS

(UNDER) So when's Beatty going to tell us to fall back?

SCENE 19.

INT – BRIDGE (WHEELHOUSE) OF HMS LION. BEATTY ENTERS.

FX HMS LION. TRAVELLING AT SPEED. BACKGROUND ACTIVITY OF OFFICERS SCANNING HORIZON. FLURRY OF ACTIVITY AS REPORTS START TO COME IN

SEYMOUR: I can hardly see a thing?

FX VERY DISTANT SOUNDS OF GERMAN SHELL SALVOES FIRED AT CHESTER

BEATTY: Well someone's bloody firing, Seymour!

SEYMOUR: What? Where? Where?

FX MORE VOICES CALLING COMPASS POINTS 'NORTH, NORTH EAST'

Did you say North, North East or North, North West? There! A signal flag. Commander Beatty, Sir! *Chester's* sighted the Hun!

BEATTY: (LACONICALLY). So what has the Kaiser rustled up for us, Seymour?

SEYMOUR: German Cruisers, Sir. Two, five, no four. Wait. The smoke's clearing (BEAT) ten! No, eleven, twelve, fifteen. More over there, sixteen, seventeen, nineteen. It's *all of them!*

BEATTY: (LESS ASSURED) All of them? The admiralty said just a handful.

SEYMOUR: I can see at least 20 cruisers.

BEATTY: And German battleships?

SEYMOUR: No Sir. I'll radio Admiral Jellicoe and report our position and //

BEATTY: // Not yet. We can still manage. Our cruisers versus theirs. Let's have some fun!

SEYMOUR: (INCREDULOUS) Sir? (PAUSE) Our orders, Sir //

BEATTY: I'm the Captain of this bloody ship, Seymour! Not you, not Grant and not Jellicoe!

SEYMOUR: Sir.

BEATTY: Signal cruisers: close with the enemy. Range 12,000 yards. We'll still be beyond the range of their twelve inch guns //

SEYMOUR: // but we'll be able to hammer them with our 13.5's.

BEATTY: Precisely Seymour. We'll make a sailor of you, yet!

VOICES: (LAUGHTER FROM OTHER OFFICERS ON DECK)

BEATTY: Seymour.

SEYMOUR: (EMBARRASSED) Sir?

BEATTY: Hoist the following signal for the cruiser squadron: 'Engage the enemy more closely.' Oh, and Seymour.

SEYMOUR: Sir!

BEATTY: Bring me my hunting horn, too.

SEYMOUR: (PLEASED) I took the liberty.

BEATTY: (LAUGHS).

FX BEATTY BLOWS FOX HUNTING HORN

SEYMOUR: *Chester's* coming under heavy shell fire, Sir. Her captain requests permission to withdraw?

BEATTY: Not now, Seymour. We've got a war to win.

FX SOUND OF MORSE CODE IN BACKGROUND

SEYMOUR: Sir! We've just got a signal from Admiral Jellicoe. He's asking for our position?

BEATTY: Later, later. The Hun's within our grasp. Signal all cruisers. Close to 12,000 yards. Then fire at will.

FX SHELL FIRE FROM LION AND SISTER CRUISERS

Damn it. We're missing by miles. Signal all ships. Full-speed ahead. Close to 10,000 yards.

SEYMOUR: 10,000, Sir? But then we'll be within range of their guns //

BEATTY: You do your bloody job, Seymour, and I'll do mine.

SEYMOUR: Sir! (INTO INTERCOM). Flag signal to all cruisers. Close to 10,000.

BEATTY: (THROUGH BINOCULARS) 12,000 (PAUSE) 11,500 (PAUSE), 11,000

FX SHELLS FROM GERMAN SHIPS START TO LAND CLOSER IN THE SEA. SOME DISTANT EXPLOSIONS

SEYMOUR: Christ that was close! Looks like the *Chester's* been hit, too.

SCENE 20.

EXT – HMS CHESTER. FORWARD OPEN GUN TURRET.

FX SOUNDS OF SHELL FIRE FROM GERMAN HIGH SEAS FLEET.
HITS AND NEAR MISSES. SHIPS ENGINES STRAINING AS VESSEL
ZIG ZAGS TO ESCAPE

GUNNER ARMSTRONG: When's that (SWEARING DROWNED BY LOUD AND NEARBY
EXPLOSION IN THE SEA.) Beatty gonna' get us out of this!
We're a scout not a //

FX SOUNDS OF SHELLS LANDING IN SEA CLOSE TO HMS CHESTER

Jesus, wept. That was close.

JACK CORNWELL: No. Oh no!

GUNNER ARMSTRONG: (WORRIED) Jack? Let me see. Let me see.

JACK CORNWELL: I'm bleeding, they've, they've//

GUNNER ARMSTRONG: (LAUGHS) You're all right, Sonny, Jim. You've just pissed
yourself! Don't worry. We've all done it, Jack-me-lad.

JACK CORNWELL: (STARTS SOBBING IN BACKGROUND)

GUNNER ARMSTRONG: (UNDER) And we'll be doing worse if we don't get the hell out
of here, soon.

FX MORE VOLLEYS AND NEAR MISSES IN THE SEA

GUNNER ARMSTRONG: Christ, they' got our range.

FX MORE RAPID VOLLEYS LAND CLOSELY

(IN FALSE SPIRITS). Bit close for comfort, eh Jack?

JACK CORNWELL: (SOBBING) I want to go home. I want to go home.

GUNNER ARMSTRONG: So do I mate! (SINGS LINE FROM HEARTS OF OAK) 'Steady Boy Steady!'

JACK CORNWELL: Let me go, let me go.

GUNNER ARMSTRONG: Come here me old cock sparrow. You can't go running around on deck.

JACK CORNWELL: (HYSTERICALLY) Let me go!

FX MORE VOLLEYS AND NEAR MISSES IN THE SEA

GUNNER ARMSTRONG: (RESTRAINING JACK) Sorry, Jack me lad.

JACK CORNWELL: (HYSTERICALLY. SOBS)

GUNNER ARMSTRONG: Stiff upper lip, eh? You don't want to get us all court marshalled now, do you?

JACK CORNWELL: (HYSTERICALLY. SOBS)

GUNNER ARMSTRONG: We'll be right as rain. Once Jellicoe's battleships get here, they'll give 'em a fourpenny one, you'll see.

FX MORE RAPID VOLLEYS LAND CLOSELY

We'll bugger the Boche bastards, you see.

(WRESTLING WITH HYSTERICAL CORNWELL). You just rest down for a mo' in the corner, our Jack. You, you guard them tins. I've stashed away some Bully Beef and mustard. In case we get peckish later. You can make us some doorsteps? Thick enough to stop a bullet or two.

FX ANOTHER VOLLEY OF NEAR MISSES EXPLODES IN THE SEA

JACK CORNWELL: (SOBBING HYSTERICALLY) My cards! I've dropped me cards?

VOICES: Now pack it in Jack. Leave 'em. It's raining steel out there.

JACK CORNWELL: (HYSTERICALLY) Let me go. Leave me alone. Let me go. I want to//

FX ANOTHER VOLLEY OF NEAR MISSES EXPLODES IN THE SEA

GUNNER ARMSTRONG: //Jack! Come back. You'll get yourself killed.

FX MORE VOLLEYS TWO NEAR MISSES IN SEA, THEN THIRD
MAKES DIRECT HIT ON FORWARD TURRET. SOUNDS OF
BURNING, MOANING AND CONFUSION. SOUND OF DEBRIS
FALLING. RINGING, AS IF LISTENERS' EARS ARE RINGING JUST
LIKE THE GUN CREW'S

VOICES: (CRIES & MOANS OF INJURED GUN CREW)

FX RESCUE CREW RUNNING TO TURRET. FIRES BURNING

VOICES: (VOICES Off) Put out them fires.

FX HOSES DOUSE FLAMES

GUNNER ARMSTRONG: (DAZED) Where's Jack? Jack? Oh no, not Jack?

JACK CORNWELL: (WEAKLY MOANS)

GUNNER ARMSTRONG: (SOFTLY) Jack! (CALLING OUT) Over here! He's alive!
(NORMAL) Hello shipmate. How we doing?

FX GUNNER ARMSTRONG MOVES CLOSE TO CORNWELL

JACK CORNWELL: (MOANS LOADER IN PAIN) Mum. Mum. It hurts, it really hurts.
Stop it hurting, mum. Please mum. (LOUD) Please!

GUNNER ARMSTRONG: (UNDER. APPALLED) Oh Jesus wept, Jack. No.

JACK CORNWELL: (SHARP CRY OF PAIN)

GUNNER ARMSTRONG: (QUIETLY) Now, Jack, me boy. Try and keep still. You just lie there, and take it easy. Don't you move a muscle. (LOUD) Where's the surgeon? Get the//

FX ANOTHER VOLLEY OF NEAR MISSES EXPLODES IN THE SEA
AND OBSCURES SWEARING

//-ing surgeon!

GUNNER ARMSTRONG: This'll help, Jack.

JACK CORNWELL: (SCREAMS OUT IN PAIN) Oh it hurts. It hurts.

GUNNER ARMSTRONG: I've got to stop the bleeding Jack, just hang on. (SHOUTING ANGRILY) Stretcher crew. Here, now! On the double, you bastards!

JACK CORNWELL: (SHOUTING IN PAIN) My legs. My legs. Why can't I feel my legs?

FX FADE UP FLAMES AND NEARBY EXPLOSIONS

SCENE 21.

INT – BRIDGE (WHEELHOUSE) OF HMS LION.

FX MAXIMISE HMS LION'S DISSONANT SOUND SIGNATURE.
GERMAN SALVOES FOLLOWED BY EXPLOSIONS

BEATTY: What the bloody hell's happening, Seymour.

SEYMOUR: I, I,

FX SOUND OF GERMAN SALVOES FOLLOWED BY EXPLOSIONS

Christ that was close! The *Chester's* been hit.

BEATTY: I don't give a damn about our bloody scouts. Where are my cruisers?

FX SOUND OF MUFFLED BUT MASSIVE EXPLOSION AS HMS
INVINCIBLE ALSO EXPLODES

What the?

SEYMOUR: (INCREDULOUSLY). *Invincible's* gone.

BEATTY: What do you mean, 'gone'?

SEYMOUR: She's blown up.

FX SHOCKWAVE HITS BRIDGE. WINDOWS BREAK.

SEYMOUR: That's the shockwave.

FX SOUND OF GERMAN SALVOES FOLLOWED BY TWO MORE
MUFFLED BUT MASSIVE EXPLOSIONS

BEATTY: What the blazes?

SEYMOUR: (INCREDULOUSLY) *Invincible*. It's impossible.

FX TWO AFTER SHOCKWAVES HIT BRIDGE.

(DAZED, UNBELIEVING) One. No, two more! Another two.
Three cruisers. Gone.

BEATTY: Gone? What do you mean? Gone where?

SEYMOUR: (STUNNED) They, they've exploded.

BEATTY: Give me the binoculars.

FX WE HEAR SOME CRIES OF HELP AS THOUGH LOOKING
THROUGH THE BINOCULARS BRINGS US CLOSE TO THE
SURVIVORS

SEYMOUR: (INCREDULOUS) *Invincible. Indefatigable. Queen Mary.* Three cruisers. A thousand men in each. Gone.

BEATTY: What are you babbling on about?

SEYMOUR: Three thousand men. Gone. In an instant.

BEATTY: Then there's something wrong with those bloody shits [SIC]//

SEYMOUR: (ANGRILY) // Sir?

BEATTY: I said, I said, (BEAT) there's something wrong with our bloody ships.

FX WE HEAR SAILORS CRIES GETTING LOUDER AS LION NEARS SURVIVORS.

SEYMOUR: Men in the water, coming up, fast. Poor sods, they're screaming!

BEATTY: Of course, they're not. They're cheering. Don't you see? Those poor stupid, wonderful bastards. They're cheering us on. *Tally ho! Tally ho!*

FX BEATTY BLOWS HUNTING HORN. FADE CRIES AS LION CONTINUES PAST MEN IN WATER AT FULL SPEED

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