

This story excerpt comes from Chapter 5, Book 1, 'THE PLATOON – ADVENTURES IN AFRIBERJA'

A freshly minted army captain takes command of a small platoon of unruly recruits (including a card-shark genie, a volatile dwarf, a nag of a fairy and a techno-chemist). Their mission impossible is to rid a region in Afriberja of over 200 bandits.

At this point in the story the captain is meeting the members of his platoon for the first time.....

“Alright, simmer down”, commanded Ansile with an air of steel, “I want all of you to separate into your own specific platoons. Rectangles of seven by five *would* be nice.”

A few murmurings went through the assembled battalion and the recruits dispersed into six individual platoons with ten left over.

‘Let me guess?’ thought Ansile, ‘They’re mine.’

“Anything the matter Captain An-se-el?” asked Captain Cloggs.

“Nothing to worry about”, replied Ansile calmly, trying to suppress his anger at having his name mispronounced for the twentieth time since he had stepped foot into the Barracks.

‘I might as well start’, Ansile urged himself mentally as he walked down the lines of soldiers.

First platoon: Not bad.

Second, Third and Fourth: Good.

Fifth: Loose bayonets.

Sixth: Over polished rifles.

Seventh Platoon: Dwarf.

That caught Ansile’s attention. He back stepped two paces.

Surrounded by soldiers of the expected height, the dwarf was dressed in the usual blue shirt, dark grey trousers, yellow ochre belt, rusty red boots and wide brimmed oxblood coloured hat of the Ogurtian Army uniform. Due to the

dwarf's stature: the sleeves of his shirt were rolled up, grey trousers were cut to where the knees of a regular uniform appeared, his boots were stuffed with paper to make them fit; and the hat covered nearly a third of the dwarf's face.

'Oh no. Not that lot!' thought Major Cranford in despair.

Captain Cloggs and the Sergeant Major were thinking relatively the same thing.

"Name?" enquired Ansile, actually interested.

"Who wants ta know?" came the dwarf's grumbled reply from between a thick brown moustache and an equally dark hairy beard.

"To Rastus or Not to Rastus, that doth be the query?" asked Ansile reciting Shymann yet again.

"What?! That ov'rweight, under brain'd moron!" exclaimed the dwarf in disgust, his furry eyebrows rising up into the oversized hat.

"So you're a Rellingtan man?" queried Ansile.

"Private D. Da Warfe, silents E", introduced the dwarf, "I'd nev'r touch that Rastus with a ten yard arm pole in me life!"

"And what made *you* enlist in His Imperial Majesty's Armed Forces?"

"Ta see whats it's like ter fights someone other than *Rastus* for a change", replied Da Warfe.

Looking down the line of soldiers to the man standing beside Da Warfe, Ansile saw an even stranger sight, "Err...What's *his* name?"

Da Warfe followed Ansile's line of sight, albeit at diminished angle, to the soldier standing next to him.

This soldier was dressed in military finery which would have looked commonplace about 150 years previously, all brass and bright colour and absolutely no camouflage.

On top of the soldier's grey hairs sat a tall white pith helmet with the Ogurtian Army Crest: A wreath of laurels and an arm holding up a sword. He wore jet black trousers, held up by a well-polished belt; the shoes on his feet were in pristine condition; a pair of large tinted spectacles lay straddled across his stout nose; under his nose the soldier had a well-trimmed grey moustache. His main weapons were an antique musket rifle with its bayonet firmly attached and the long rapier housed inside its scabbard on his left hand side.

"That's Private-Corporal Grimsby", answered Da Warfe, "Bit hards of hearin' sir."

"Zzzz!" snored Private-Corporal Grimsby quietly.

