

Temelun, 12, daughter of Genghis Khan

Ciqala, 20s, daughter of Native American chief

Elizabeth, 30s, Civil War era woman dealing with the loss of her son

Anne, 20s, World War I Nurse

Miranda, 17, modern teenager

OPEN CURTAINS. The stage is black. None of the characters can be seen. Suddenly, their voices echo out in the darkness, one after the other.

Temelun: My childhood.

Ciqala: My father.

Elizabeth: My son.

Anne: My brother.

Miranda: My world.

Spotlight on Temelun.

Temelun: Everyone knows the Mongols. Ruthless, ravaging conquerors. Leaving conquered nations in ruins as they continue to pillage and plunder, having no remorse for the deaths they've caused. Everyone loves a scapegoat. A sacrificial lamb. One who gives up its life for the sake of someone else so they can win a war you were conditioned to believe in—

She realizes she may not have been talking about the goat.

Temelun: My name means iron. I think it's fitting. Tough as iron. Ready to fight the way iron should be. Always ready to conform. To prepare. To obey. My father, Genghis Khan, married off my three sisters before I was old enough to understand why. No picturesque, fairy-tale ideas of love. No preparations to march down the aisle in ceremonial gowns. I was a child when I

watched my sisters, Alaqui-Beki, Checheyigen, and Al-Atun, all beautiful, strong, and powerful women, be married off by my father for the sake of a political alliance. When it happened I didn't even know what those words meant.

She looks down, letting her childhood innocence peek through.

Temelun: I think I know now though. I think about it all the time. What it means. It means hiding in the corner and praying to Tenggeri that I won't be next. It means always knowing that if my father wants to speak to me, I should be prepared to be sold off to the highest bidder for his conquests. It means giving up everything. For war. My father's war. It means losing my childhood. Please. I just want the war to stop.

Lights down on Temelun. Spotlight on Ciqala.

Ciqala: My father was the strongest person I know. Chief of our tribe. Not a day went by when he didn't speak of the love he had for his people. And more importantly, his family. Even in times of war, he wanted nothing more than peace with the other tribes. One day, at a festival, we were singing and dancing and just.... enjoying *life*. When it happened. We were ambushed. I saw the terrible reality of war that day. My brothers were slaughtered before my eyes. My best friends and I—

She trails off.

Ciqala: When they had finished, nothing but ruins remained. I was one of the few left alive. They could've left. They could've left us to deal with our grief and suffering in a proper way, and allow us to rebuild. We could have established *peace*.

She seems to struggle with these next few words.

Ciqala: Instead they forced me to watch the execution of my father. I watched as he struggled, fighting against it. I saw in his eyes the moment he gave up hope. And in those same eyes, the ones that would always tell me the great tales of our people before bed, the ones that would sing me a traditional song whenever I had a nightmare— I watched as the light in those eyes that had always been there, faded away forever. War. Because of war, I lost my father...

Spotlight on Ciqala and Temelun.

Ciqala and Temelun: I just want the war to stop.

Spotlights off. Spotlight on Elizabeth. She is dressed in dirty, 1860s/70s clothing.

Elizabeth: *(she should be very expressive, and hysterical by the end)* They called the war brother against brother. Highlighting the horrors of pitting our nation against itself and creating the deadliest war in American history. I told them not to go. But my husband is a passionate man. When he sees a cause he cares for he latches on to it, fighting for it for everything he has again and again and again until— He raised our son the same way. So it must've been me that encouraged him to join the other side—

A beat.

Elizabeth: *(she is a heartbroken mother)* Brother against brother. What about *father against son?* I could never stop thinking of them. Not only what would I do if one of them didn't come back but what if it was the other that dealt the fatal blow? Is a mother's heart meant to endure such grief?

She pauses, ringing her hands together. She's crying. Hysterical.

Elizabeth: I was so happy when I found out the war was over. My babies were coming home. I waited all day at the door, wiping my hands on my skirt frantically as I watched the roads, waiting for them to *come home*. My husband arrived. He barely said a word as he stepped off the horse and went inside. I knew then. But I couldn't believe it. I waited all night long. It wasn't until my legs collapsed from exhaustion that I knew it was over. My son, oh my son. And someday I wonder if it was my own husband who— Oh my son.

Spotlight on Elizabeth, Ciqala, and Temelun.

The Three: I just want the war to stop.

Spotlight on Anne. She is a young, excited woman in 1910s era clothing.

Anne: I was so excited when I heard that I might be able to serve in the war... Overseas can you imagine? Of course it's not a vacation but just think of it! I was so excited to serve as a nurse just as my grandmother had done. I may even be able to change something— Create life in the midst of death. Oh how excited I was when I was allowed to join. I was even more excited when Alex, my beloved brother, oh how incredible, was assigned to the same regiment I would be serving in. My greatest fear, that we would be separated, would be nothing more than the incoherent bumbling of a worried sister. We would be together, serving on the borders of Russia and fighting for our country side by side. Well, he'd be fighting.

She laughs, but pauses. A beat.

Anne: I told my mom when we left that I wouldn't be affected by war. We'd revolutionized. No more brutality and dying by the sword. But everyday, I was forced to confront the horrid sight of men, flesh rotting off their bodies in the trenches, wearing the most horrid masks to guard from the potential of chlorine gas. Watching them place bets and joking about who they would send

into No Man's Land first should the food begin to run short. Even now that it's over, their faces still haunt me as I close my eyes and beg to be taken into the peaceful escape of the night—

She reaches out as if trying to cling to the sleep that escapes her.

Anne: But one face haunts me among all the rest. And I remember the day so vividly in my mind, seemingly more so with each passing day. It was cold, though that wasn't particularly unusual. We were in Russia after all. The ground was wet, and we were more afraid of losing men to frostbite and hypothermia than anything else. That's why I didn't notice when the fighting began to pick up. I was working on a patient, fighting desperately to both keep him alive and all of his fingers attached. Before I knew what was happening my brother's body, sweet Alex, was laid in front of me, and I was in a desperate struggle to keep him from bleeding out. Finally, as he was laying there in my arms, I saw the final remnants of life fade out in his eyes. I lost my brother that day.

Beat.

Spotlight on all the girls except Miranda.

Four Girls: I just want the war to stop.

Lights up on Miranda, but not from the spotlight. Instead, her face is illuminated by a small phone in her hands. She is scrolling, and you can hear the videos she's watching in the distance. War, politics, chaos. She shuts off her phone.

Miranda: War. Noun. A state of armed conflict between different nations or states or different groups within a nation or state. Death. Noun. The end of life. I have a thousand definitions memorized. Hundreds of hours of education behind me, countless days of pouring over

textbooks, and probably a thousand tests and quizzes aced without a second thought. Yet still, if you were to ask me a skill that required true problem solving—

Spotlight briefly on the rest of the girls.

Four Girls: How do we stop the war?

Miranda: I wouldn't be able to tell you. Everyday when I open my phone I'm met with the horrifying images of loss and calls for peace or calls for the violence to continue and I don't know what to do because I think people have forgotten that it's people that we're dealing with and not numbers. My greatest fear is that one day I'll become a statistic.

She turns on her phone and starts to scroll.

Miranda: Oh look! I'm one of the 29% of Americans who doesn't think Alexander Hamilton was a U.S. president! I'm one of the one-third of people excluding children who sleep with a comfort object. Oh! And according to this, I may be one in two women who will get cancer in their lifetime. Maybe I'll go off to war instead. Become one of the half a million who die from it every year. That would make the estimated death count of all of human history jump up from one billion six hundred and seventy million to one billion six hundred and seventy million and *one*. Not that significant right? I haven't lost a brother to war. Or a father, or a sister, or an uncle, or a son, but I will tell you what I've lost. *I'm losing my world*. But what would happen if we said—

Spotlight on each girl as they speak.

Temelun: I just want the war to stop.

Ciqala: I just want the war to stop.

Elizabeth: I just want the war to stop.

Anne: I just want the war to stop.

All: I just want the war to stop.

Lights down. Spotlight on Miranda.

Miranda: Look at everything we've lost—

Temelun: My childhood.

Ciqala: Father.

Elizabeth: Son.

Anne: Brother.

Miranda: My world.

Beat.

Miranda: We just want the war to stop.

BLACKOUT.