

WE GO TO THE SUNSHINE... *etc*

WE KNOW THE WAY... *etc.*

WE KNOW THE WAY... *etc.*

Together: { WE GO TO THE SUNSHINE... *etc*
WE KNOW THE WAY... *etc.*

[Exit SAILORS. JACK finds Uncle Tom's button]

EXTENSION:

There are numerous websites with information about Jamaica, and the West Indies in general. A child's guide to Jamaica, as well as a site about Scrimshaw are featured among the links on our website: see the 'Button Box' background information page at www.starshine.co.uk.

ALICE Fantastic! Fancy sailing to Jamaica!

JACK Granddad, what's this one? It's been carved with two initials. Looks like a 'T', and... what's this one?

[ALICE looks over JACK's shoulder]

GRANDDAD I can tell you without even looking. That belonged to my great Uncle, who was called Tom. He fought in the Great War, way back in 1916, and he carved this button for his sweetheart, Emily.

ALICE *(pointing)* Look, the 'E' and the 'T' are interlinked... Ahh...

JACK So was your Uncle Tom a hero? Did he get medals and stuff?

GRANDDAD Well, he fought in France, near the River Somme. Have we still got those postcards, dear?

JACK What postcards?

[GRANDMA looks for the cards as she speaks]

GRANDMA On the thirtieth of June 1916, Emily and Tom sent each other a postcard. Turned out to be the last ones they ever wrote, sadly.

CHILDREN Why?

[GRANDMA finds the postcards, as well as a locket]

GRANDDAD Because the very next day there was a dreadful battle – the Battle of The Somme. Uncle Tom never came back.

ALICE How awful...

GRANDMA Here are the postcards – and this old locket was Emily's.

[GRANDMA hands one postcard to each of the children.]

ALICE This one's from Emily – June thirtieth, 1916

[Enter EMILY, stands Upstage Left]

JACK *(showing ALICE)* Wow, look at Tom's writing! How neat is that?

[Enter TOM, stands Upstage Right]

GRANDMA (showing the locket) Look – here they are in Emily’s locket.

ALICE They look much younger than I imagined...

[During the intro, TOM & EMILY go silently to take the postcards from JACK & ALICE, who stare at them sadly. EMILY also takes the locket from GRANDMA. TOM moves D/stage Right, EMILY D/stage Left to sing their song, not looking at each other.]

UNCLE TOM’S BUTTON (© Tr 8)

[During Emily’s verse, TOM mimes writing his card]

Emily THINKING OF YOU, TOM.
IN THE GARDEN AS I WRITE
YOU ALWAYS SEEM NEAR.
IN THIS LOVELY PLACE, (looking at the locket)
ON THIS SUMMER DAY I’D LOVE TO
SEE YOUR DEAR FACE.
COME HOME SAFELY...
PLEASE COME HOME TO ME.

[During Tom’s verse, EMILY puts the locket around her neck, and then re-reads her card]

Tom EMILY, I MUST SHOW NO FEAR
NOW THE DAY OF DUTY IS NEAR.
THOUGH THE GUNS FALL SILENT, WE KNOW
IN THE MORNING WE HAVE TO GO.
I PRAY THAT WE SOON WILL BE TOGETHER.
VERY SOON WE’LL SEE.
IF TOMORROW DOESN’T LAST FOREVER - WAIT FOR ME.

[TOM & EMILY repeat their verses, singing together, or the choir could sing these two parts. Then TOM & EMILY exit slowly, in different directions. GRANDMA dabs her eyes with a tissue. JACK fiddles in the button box, for the ‘ivory’ button.]

EXTENSION:

The backdrop to Uncle Tom’s Button is the first day of the Battle of the Somme, the worst day for casualties in the history of the British army, and in total there were well over a million British, French and German lives lost in the battle. We should imagine Tom writing home in this context of the evening just before this dreadful event began. See the 'Button Box' background information: www.starshine.co.uk.

ALICE That’s so sad...

JACK Hey, Grandma! What are you doing with an ivory button in your box? Elephants are an endangered species?

GRANDDAD So am I! Isn’t it tea time yet?

[GRANDMA tuts and shakes her head. JACK passes her the button. GRANDDAD sneaks another sweet.]

GRANDMA Oh, that’s a very old button – I think it’s Victorian.
The elephant must have died at least a hundred years ago,
so we’re all right.