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It is the Great War. **CAPTAIN EAST** is at one end of the stage, **CAPTAIN WEST** at the other. These are two separate locations at either end of a long line of trenches.

Enter two carrier **PIGEONS**, one at each end of the stage. They stand to attention.

PIGEONS (*waving their wings*)

Coooo!

CAPTAINS

Ah, a message from headquarters!

The PIGEONS pass a letter to each captain.

CAPTAINS

Thank you. Dismissed.

The PIGEONS and CAPTAINS salute each other. Exit PIGEONS. The CAPTAINS study their letters.

COLONEL NORTH (*voicing the letters, offstage*)

Dear Captain East and Captain West,

I know you'll be delighted to hear: it's time for the big push. Your regiment and West's will go over the top tomorrow, one at 0600 hours while the enemy's still napping. When you reach their trenches, you'll hoist the flag and the other regiment will join you. I'll leave it you to decide who has the honour of going first - I don't like to have favourites. Good luck.

Colonel North

CAPTAIN WEST

Dash it all! It's only two weeks before my leave. Whoever goes first will get cut to ribbons.

CAPTAIN EAST

Bother! My trench foot is coming along nicely. Another two weeks and I'd be in a nice hospital.

CAPTAIN WEST

Better ring East and sort out who's going to be massacred. (Picks up phone) Get me Captain East, please. (*Aside*) East has a very quick mind, but I don't trust him.

Phone rings at Captain East's end.

CAPTAIN EAST

It's Captain West? Yes, put him through. (*Aside*) West is a clever man, but I don't trust him.

CAPTAIN WEST

Hello East. Rum show, these orders. I suppose we should toss a coin to see who goes first?

CAPTAIN EAST

(*quickly*) Right-ho. I've a sixpence. Heads or tails?

CAPTAIN WEST

Heads. Er... Hang on a moment. I feel awfully rum saying this, old chap, but... how the devil can I know, if you say it's tails, that it really is, and that you're not just saying so to save your own skin.

CAPTAIN EAST

(*looking disappointed*) I resent the accusation. However, if you have some other suggestion, I shall listen to it.

CAPTAIN WEST

How about we each choose a number and whoever is first to work out what they are multiplied together wins?

CAPTAIN EAST

That would hardly be fair. Mathematics was never my subject. And I believe you were an