

Arthur Rimbaud poet, rebel and revolutionary, explorer and gunrunner. THE DRUNKEN BOAT tells the story of his tumultuous life, from a bourgeois town in northern France to Paris, the Commune and Paul Verlaine, to the wild deserts of northern Africa.

THE DRUNKEN BOAT (LE BATEAU IVRE)

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**THE DRUNKEN BOAT**

**A LIFE OF RIMBAUD**

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A LIFE OF RIMBAUD

MENELIK

Our hearts grieve to  
hear the sad news of our  
friend Labatut. The  
Queen especially  
appreciated his  
charming ways...so  
French. So, what have  
you brought me?

RIMBAUD

2,000 Remingtons, in  
perfect condition.

MENELIK

Ah, if you had only  
come to me a year ago,  
when my need was  
greater. You know I  
have vanquished the  
king of Harar?

RIMBAUD

Yes, but you will need  
more than two Krupp  
cannons to defeat King  
John of Tigre.

MENELIK

You know, I'm on good  
terms with all your  
compatriots. I don't  
want to offend them by  
buying from you.

*THE DRUNKEN BOAT*

RIMBAUD

(impatiently)

A good number of them  
are dead. I am here.

With the guns.

Menelik regards Rimbaud coldly. The queen leans over, whispers something in the King's ear.

MENELIK

The Queen tells me  
you've been away from  
France too long, the  
charm has fled.

(beat)

The law of my country  
obliges me to confiscate  
your merchandise till  
we reach an agreement.

RIMBAUD

You can't do that!

MENELIK

It's for the safety of my  
people!

Rimbaud thinks a moment, decides to take a different, more moderate tack.

RIMBAUD

Is the King of Shoa a  
thief?

A LIFE OF RIMBAUD

MENELIK

I will buy your guns.  
But not at the exorbitant  
price you're demanding.  
I offer you a price by  
the gross.

RIMBAUD

This is not what you  
stipulated to Labatut.

MENELIK

Ah, Labatut. You  
remind me that he owes  
me 3,500 thalers toward  
the purchase of arms.  
I'll apply it as a credit  
toward this purchase.

RIMBAUD

He owes me money as  
well.

MENELIK

He owes money to  
virtually everyone in  
my kingdom. I expect  
you will reimburse  
these debtors.

RIMBAUD

I am not responsible for  
Labatut's debts!

*THE DRUNKEN BOAT*

MENELIK  
But have you not been  
judged heir of his estate  
by the Hazazze of  
Ankober?

Rimbaud just looks, doesn't say more, realizing he's being had.  
Rimbaud leaves, accompanied by Ilg.

ILG  
You are an unrivalled  
caravaner but not a  
merchant. You have too  
much pride.

INT. RIMBAUD'S HUT - DAY

Rimbaud is listening to the plea of a NATIVE WOMAN.

NATIVE WOMAN  
His last expedition, the  
Danakils--my husband--

She sobs.

RIMBAUD  
Yes...and Monsieur  
Labatut?

NATIVE WOMAN  
Promised to bring me  
gold when he returned.



A LIFE OF RIMBAUD

RIMBAUD  
I don't have gold, but  
this may help.  
(gives her money)

NATIVE WOMAN  
Thank you, monsieur.

She exits, bowing and thanking him effusively. Ilg enters.

ILG  
Word has spread of  
your generosity.

RIMBAUD  
I can't help myself.  
These poor people  
touch my heart.

DJAMI  
Monsieur Labatut had  
many  
creditors.

RIMBAUD  
I don't want to owe  
anything to anyone.

ILG  
You will need a very  
big heart or a lot of  
money.

*THE DRUNKEN BOAT*

EXT. RIMBAUD'S HUT - DAY

Rimbaud and Ilg exit the tent. A line of a dozen NATIVES forms a queue outside the tent, all waiting to be received.

EXT. WAY OUT OF TOWN - DAY

Rimbaud and Djami are riding mules out of town.  
A BEGGAR springs from a ditch.

BEGGAR  
(pointing)  
That's the mule I gave  
to Labatut!

RIMBAUD  
And my shirt too,  
perhaps.

ANOTHER BEGGAR materializes.

BEGGAR  
A thaler...for the love  
of the Virgin Mary.

RIMBAUD  
Too late now. Go see  
the king!

LATER

riding on a salt flat, the town in the distance in b.g., Djami riding at his side.

A LIFE OF RIMBAUD

RIMBAUD  
I'm left with the 15,000  
francs I had at the  
beginning, after two  
years of horrible fatigue  
and hardship. I really  
am a very unlucky man.

EXT. SQUARE IN HARAR - DAY

Rimbaud is engaged in a new business. Among the habitual merchandise we discern European products (cooking utensils, stationery, etc.). Rimbaud is bustling about, again setting an example of nose-to-the-grindstone work.

EXT. HARAR CAFE - DAY

Nearby some Europeans, among them TIAN and SAVOURE, are seated on the cafe terrace. Rimbaud stops near them, having moved their way with a mule loaded down with skins.

TIAN  
I heard you were  
returning to Paris for the  
Universal  
Exposition.

RIMBAUD  
I decided against it.  
Don't have the means  
and I can't leave the  
agency. The next one,  
perhaps. I'll expose the  
products of the country,  
or maybe I'll expose  
myself.

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