

(Name of Project)

by
(Name of First Writer)

(Based on, If Any)

Revisions by
(Names of Subsequent Writers,
in Order of Work Performed)

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(Current Writer, date)

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THE REVISIONIST

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com

Cast of characters:

Helen/ Maria (played by the same actor)

Young Konrad/ SS Man / Young Ozols/Shane/ Ivan (played by the same actor)

Konrad Senior/ Ozols Senior/ SS Sergeant (played by the same actor)

Bailey

The Jew

Journalist

The Teacher

Immigration Officer

The Judge(s)

AUTHOR'S NOTES

This play is inspired by the events which became known as the Darville/Demidenko affair. In 1995 Helen Demidenko had won every major literary prize in Australia, including the Vogel, the Miles Franklin and the Australian Literary Gold Medal for her novel *The Hand that Signed the Paper*. The book, which the author described as “faction”, was purportedly based closely on her family history in the Ukraine during the Second World War. Despite the unsettling nature of the book which blamed “Jewish Bolsheviks” for the Ukrainian famine in the 1920’s and attempted to exculpate the Ukrainians for their involvement in the persecution of the Jews, little mention was made in literary or historical circles of whether the story was in fact authentic. Within 12 months of her success, Helen Demidenko was exposed as a fraud, the daughter of English immigrants with not a trace of Ukrainian blood. Her real name was Helen Darville. A fierce debate arose over her right to tell such a story regardless of her nationality and whether the “precocious nature of her talent” as believed by some, obviated the need for historical accuracy. Endorsements were removed from the book which sold even more after the fraud was exposed, but the issue of the novel’s contribution to the literature of Holocaust Revisionism was ignored by all but the ardent but little heard few.

The rise of this novel coincided with revelations that Australia was a repository for large numbers of former SS from Eastern Europe who migrated to Australia in the post war years. While Jewish organisations both here and overseas have lobbied the Australian authorities, no suspected war criminal living in Australia has been ever deported or tried for his crimes, despite recommendations from the Australian Department of Public Prosecutions. These events proved to be the inspiration for *The Revisionist* and the convergence of narratives which detail the crimes of real life suspect Karlis Ozols along with Helen’s imaginary Nazi relative.

David Blackman

PRODUCTION NOTES

The set is sparse, shadowy. The only area on stage that could be fixed is the garage in Act One and BAILEY'S desk in Act Two.

Books are scattered at the front of the stage. HELEN picks whichever is closest as required by the action.

In Act Two KONRAD SENIOR and YOUNG KONRAD are ever present, like spectral figures lurking in the background, constantly watching the action unfold.

The roles of the TEACHER, JUDGES, IMMIGRATION OFFICER can be played by the actors playing BAILEY or the JEW where appropriate.

ACT ONE SCENE ONE

LIGHTS. The SS SOLDIER is standing in the door frame as the sun sets. He scans the stage with his torch before finally settling on the silhouette of a body lying on its back. The body moves slightly. A groan. The SS SOLDIER unslings his rifle and aims it towards the SOUND. A VOICE calls from offstage in Ukrainian. He relaxes and shoulders his rifle.

LIGHTS. The deck of a ship. KARLIS OZOLS, played by the same actor as the SS SOLDIER, scans his new surroundings. He no longer carries his rifle. He removes his helmet and takes off his SS jacket revealing civilian clothes underneath. He pulls out a packet of cigarettes and lights one. He considers taking his shirt off then changes his mind. SOUND of the hustle and bustle of a busy immigration port.

HELEN'S VOICE

"The evidence establishes a strong prima facie case of guilt of war crimes against the accused, Karlis Ozols, a naturalised Australian citizen. The evidence establishes four counts of genocide..."

LIGHTS on the IMMIGRATION OFFICER standing behind a camera.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER

Turn your head a little to the left.

OZOLS does so.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER

That's it. Now don't smile.

Flash of a camera.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER

Welcome to Australia.

LIGHTS. The SOUND of the national anthem. The IMMIGRATION OFFICER taps OZOLS on the back. They both stand to attention. OZOLS notices the body lying on a towel. LIGHTS. HELEN sits up. She is wearing a bikini and hat. A book rests across her lap. They notice each other.

HELEN goes back to her book. OZOLS undresses and lies next to her. HELEN sits up and faces the audience. With every sentence, there is an urgency, a belief, that what she is saying is of vital, historical importance.

HELEN

I never really knew who I was, growing up. It's always difficult when you're a half-caste..not aboriginal, in that sense, but half ethnic and half Oz..Osstralian. Dad...well Dad's Ukrainian. Mind you he looked like any other Aussie with his rugged features and wavy blond hair. The "Beautiful Balts" they were called. Because they weren't like migrants from other countries. They could almost pass for Australian. But at certain times...you realised just how different you were. Anzac Day was one of them. No poppies on the lapels or commemorations in the house. No talk of relatives who fought at Lone Pine or Tobruk. When they played the old specials on TV my family fell silent, turned the channel or more often than not switched back to speaking in Ukrainian which ticked me off to no end. It was always hot where we lived, even on Anzac Day. And while the other kids went to see the old diggers march through the city streets, my parents drank slivovitz and played cards till the sun went down. Made it that much easier to sneak off and feel like any other teenager, even just for a little while...

LIGHTS. MUSIC from the late eighties blaring over the sound system. HELEN is at the local swimming pool on a hot summers day. SOUND of children playing in the background. Warnings from the lifeguards to those in the water. SHANE, played by the same character as OZOLS, sits up.

SHANE

What are you reading?

HELEN

History...

SHANE

(kidding)

Yeah? Which part?

HELEN

The part that people don't know too much about.

Pause.

HELEN

Shane, do you know anything about what your parents did in the war?

SHANE

Parents? Grandparents you mean.

HELEN

Grandparents then.

SHANE

Sure. Granddad fought the Japs at Bougainville. His brother was killed at Tobruk.

HELEN

Perfect.

SHANE

Perfect?

HELEN

The classic Aussie war story.

SHANE

What are you talking about? One's dead, the other still lives in a veterans hospital.

HELEN

Why?

SHANE

Some explosion ripped off his face.

HELEN

Sorry.

SHANE

We don't visit much. At least Mum doesn't want us too.

HELEN

Do you think they killed anybody during the war?

SHANE

How would I know. Bougainville was pretty nasty. Hand to hand fighting that sort of thing.

HELEN

Do you think they shot unarmed prisoners?

SHANE

Everybody did Helen. Christ they were going to invade Australia...I think.

HELEN

If war criminals were living around here...were your neighbours, friends, what would you do?

SHANE

I don't know. Tell the government, or the police.

HELEN

Even if you knew them...liked them even?

SHANE

Christ you're freakin' me out Helen. Why don't you read something else.

Pause.

HELEN

My family might have done things...

SHANE

What sort of things?

HELEN

I'm not really sure...

SHANE

Look, it might be Anzac Day...but it was all a long time ago. Nobody wants to bring it up so just leave it.

HELEN

That's easy for you to say Shane. Look at you. No one's ever gonna question your family...who you are or where you came from.

SHANE

You're just as Australian as I am Helen.

SHANE stands up.

SHANE

Better roll over you're lookin' like toast.

SHANE suddenly leaves.

HELEN

Hey where are you going?

SHANE

Takin a dip...

SHANE exits.

HELEN

But if they were Shane. What if your own family were considered war criminals. What would you do?

LIGHTS.

HELEN

(reading from the book in her hands)

"The victims of the crime were mostly Jewish men, women, and children. They numbered thousands. On the evidence presented, there is a prima facie case that the accused committed four crimes of genocide in and around Minsk between July 1942 and September 1943. At the time, the accused was a Lieutenant in charge of a company of about a hundred men. A number of his men will give evidence against him."

LIGHTS. KONRAD SENIOR, appears at the pool. He scours the pool area looking for HELEN. HELEN notices him but does not try to draw his attention. He finally notices her.

KONRAD

Lulo tn tyt pobnw eapae? (What are you doing here?)

HELEN

Speak in English...

KONRAD

(Annoyed)

Your father know you dressed like that?

HELEN shakes her head.

KONRAD

You lucky this time I no tell him.

HELEN

But you haven't before.

KONRAD

Get your things. We go.

HELEN slowly gathers her things.

KONRAD

Where your sandals?

HELEN

I didn't bring'em.

KONRAD

Tn he kpawa hice unrahha. (You look like a Gypsy).

HELEN

I'm not a Gypsy...

KONRAD

You come to my place I fix you old pair before father see you.

LIGHTS. HELEN and KONRAD are in his garage. A work bench lies to one side. An old radio sits on it. There are racks and bookshelves filled with memorabilia, an old but still functioning record player, old paintings and photographs mixed with tools and gardening utensils. There are a couple of old antique chairs. KONRAD tinkers away at his tool bench fixing HELEN'S sandals as HELEN scans tell tale evidence of KONRAD'S life among all the clutter.

HELEN

If Dad isn't around, there's always Uncle Konrad. He's at least sixty but strong as ever. Uncle Konrad loves the sun, said it reminded him before the war when he was growing up in the Ukraine. Usually he'd wear a shirt in summer, even on the hottest days. It was the first time I noticed the scar under his armpit. Dad has one just like it. Uncle Konrad tries to talk like other Australians but they just look at him like something from outer space. No matter what anyone thinks he's my uncle and he has secrets that only his family will ever know. Maybe that's why he spends so much time in his garage, fixing...collecting things. And there was nothing Konrad couldn't fix. And he collected all sorts of junk just to prove it. It was a veritable trash and treasure shop. Stuff he'd had since the war when he first migrated. Pride of place was this old trunk he brought with him. The thing was falling apart but there was no way he'd get rid of it. Uncle Konrad would virtually live in that garage wearing these gold framed glasses he's had since the war and just tinker about. I was fascinated by it all. It was as if each time I came around there was something new to discover, but for Uncle Konrad, it was all history. The history of his life.

KONRAD

So why you no at school?

HELEN

It's Anzac Day. They're commemorating the dead from all the wars.

KONRAD

(Wearily)

Helen, so many people die in wars...so many places.

HELEN

Why don't you march Uncle Konrad. Didn't you and Dad fight?

KONRAD

(Evasively)

March only for Australian soldiers....not want "wogs"...

HELEN

It's a way of honouring the past.

KONRAD

Sometimes the past not worth honouring. Best left alone.

KONRAD hands her the sandals.

KONRAD

Sandals ready you try on.

HELEN

I want to know.

KONRAD

Want to know what?

HELEN

Come on Uncle Konrad. I heard mum and Dad talking about stuff you kept from the war...how it could get you in real trouble some day...what kind of trouble?

KONRAD

Some things, no-one understand.

HELEN

What do you mean?

KONRAD

Your father, he tell you anything about the war?

HELEN

Just that you fought against the Russians for a little bit.

KONRAD is silent.

HELEN

That was all wasn't it?

KONRAD

Isn't enough?

HELEN

Tell me your story Uncle Konrad. I don't know anything about my own family. No one talks.

KONRAD

This your father's job. Not mine.

HELEN

Dad's even worse than you. I know there's so much there. The whole world ought to know.

KONRAD

Know about what?

HELEN

Your side of things.

KONRAD

I don't want world to know.

HELEN

You have to. Or at least some of it...before the war...

KONRAD

Before sometimes worse.

HELEN

Please...

KONRAD

I can't tell you...so many memories...

HELEN

Do you have any photos from the war Uncle Konrad.

KONRAD slowly gets up and pulls an old photo from a drawer. But he does not hand it over. HELEN gently touches his hand. He relaxes his grip as if relinquishing power with the photo. HELEN takes it from his hand.

HELEN

Is that you?

KONRAD

Yes.

HELEN

What kind of uniform is that?

KONRAD

What matter? Soldier's uniform.

HELEN

So you were just like any other soldier during the war...

Pause.

KONRAD

(Evasively)

We part of Ukrainian Militia...

HELEN

Did the Militia give you that scar under your arm?

KONRAD

Why you ask?

HELEN

I'd just never seen it before.

KONRAD

Was tattoo of blood type...in case we wounded.

HELEN

Why did you get rid of it?

KONRAD

War over...no longer necessary.

HELEN

You look great in the uniform...so handsome!

KONRAD

We much younger then...had reason to smile.

HELEN

Where they really that bad Uncle Konrad?

KONRAD

Who?

HELEN

The Germans...the SS...with all the lightning insignia and skulls and cross bones on their uniforms. You must have run into them during the war...

KONRAD

The SS brutal, tough soldiers...but no different from others. Fight. Kill. Die.

HELEN

Kill who? Women and children?

KONRAD

In war Helen, so much bad happen.

HELEN

Who is that standing next to you. I've seen a photo of him with Dad as well.

KONRAD

That is Ivan...

HELEN

Ivan the Terrible?

KONRAD

Ivan the Terrible does not exist.

HELEN

You talked about him a long time ago...I remember.

KONRAD

You were too young-

HELEN

No uncle...Ivan the Terrible. Even you called him that.

KONRAD SENIOR

You want to know about Ivan...?

HELEN

(Suspiciously)

He was a friend of yours wasn't he?

KONRAD

Ivan and I...work together...even before war.

HELEN stares intently at the photo. LIGHTS on IVAN looking out at the audience. His face is a picture of stone.

HELEN

Was he really as bad as they say?

SOUND of Jazz music. IVAN'S face starts to relax. IVAN and KONRAD smile at each other. There is an air of pantomime to IVAN'S actions.

KONRAD

Worse, and other times he total opposite, gentle man. Ivan love to sit by himself play jazz records and hum along...

HELEN

You're kidding.

KONRAD

I don't kid over something like this.

HELEN

But they say he loved to kill the Jews, that he used to make them do things like he enjoyed it. Is that true?

KONRAD

Ivan brave man, tough man...lose whole family...

IVAN pulls out some photos and looks at them painfully yet lovingly.

HELEN

He had a family?

KONRAD

Six kids! Wife, he show me photos once, almost break down in tears.

HELEN

What happened to them?

Pause.

HELEN

It's alright. Whatever it is you can say it.

KONRAD looks about the garage, not quite sure whether to believe her. LIGHTS. The JEW is carrying a bomb with a large wick attached to it.

KONRAD

Bolshevists burn down his house with family inside...Phoosh! Just like that, all gone.

The JEW throws the bomb at IVAN. SOUND of an explosion. Horrible screams of children. IVAN'S face a mask of pain and torment.

HELEN

Who were the Bolsheviks uncle Konrad?

KONRAD

Communists.

HELEN

Was that all they were?

KONRAD

What you try get me to say?

HELEN

Nothing. So they killed all his family. I don't know how anyone would get over that, no wonder...

KONRAD

Exactly, no wonder.

IVAN stands up a hollow man bent on revenge.

KONRAD

That's why when I see these trials of so called war criminals, people don't know what happened...vengeance inside all our hearts! But Ivan, when he have few drinks he become tender, soft.

HELEN stares at the photo some more.

HELEN

Why is he carrying a sword Uncle Konrad?

KONRAD

No reason. For show.

IVAN draws his sword.

HELEN

I get the shakes just looking at him.

KONRAD looks at the photo with a measure of pride.

KONRAD

Even German SS afraid of Ivan.

HELEN

(Pleading)

I want to know what really happened during the war. I don't care what side you were on.

The flashes of a camera illuminate IVAN about to swing his sword across the passive figure of the JEW. He turns briefly to the camera, smiles, then goes back to his task. Flash of camera. HELEN watches. LIGHTS on the TEACHER.

TEACHER

When you're ready Helen...

HELEN takes a moment. She continues to stare at the slowly dying body of the JEW. IVAN cleans his sword. It is a repulsive image but HELEN looks on, entranced.

HELEN

"It is utterly impossible for me to build my life on a foundation of chaos, suffering and death. I see the world being slowly transformed into a wilderness, I hear the approaching thunder that, one day, will destroy us too, I feel the suffering of millions. In the meantime, I must hold onto my ideals. Perhaps the day will come when I'll be able to realise them....And finally I end up turning my heart inside out, the bad part on the outside and the good part on the inside and keep trying to find a way to become what I'd like to be and what I could be if...if only there were no other people in the world..."

The JEW is dead.

TEACHER

You may want to take a little time to digest the full meaning of these words.

HELEN

Why am I reading this?

TEACHER

What was that..?

HELEN

Why am I reading this?

TEACHER

To learn about the past Helen, so we have a better understanding of the future. That's why we learn history.

HELEN

Even if it only presents one side of the story.

TEACHER

What did you say?

HELEN

These words...are only one side of the story.

TEACHER

How so?

HELEN

(Annoyed)

Well, it's as if there was no reason for it, that it was just spun out of thin air.
Good versus evil..democracy triumphing over fascism.

TEACHER

What? World War Two?

HELEN

You know what I'm talking about.

TEACHER

No I don't.

HELEN

What happened to the Jews.

TEACHER

You mean the Holocaust.

HELEN

Whatever you want to call it.

TEACHER

That's what they call it.

HELEN

There were other holocausts. No one talks about what the Turks did to the Armenians or the Communists to the Ukrainians. They starved them...robbed them of their food, their culture, tried to turn them into Communists. It was like a Holocaust, even if it wasn't as...well publicised.

TEACHER

You think that's the only difference.

HELEN

My family suffered thanks to the Russians, the Bolsheviks. Nothing against any kids in the class but this is what happened. So when the opportunity came for revenge people took it.

TEACHER

Your relatives..?

HELEN

I didn't say that. Just people you know? People in that part of the world who had everything taken away from them and when the Germans came were given the chance to take revenge.

TEACHER

Take their revenge on whom?

HELEN

Their enemies. Who else?

TEACHER

That doesn't make the murder of six million irrelevant.

HELEN

I didn't say it was irrelevant did I.

TEACHER

No but you were implying-

HELEN

Millions of people died in the Communist famine. I'm not making that up. Real people like my family. People they knew...

TEACHER

So the Holocaust doesn't matter.

HELEN

No I'm not saying that, but it's just all so one sided. And the Germans, or anyone who sided with them are supposed to be evil.

TEACHER

No one said that. Look...Anne Frank was a writer Helen. Her voice touched millions. You need to be able to empathise with what she went through. Now why don't you read that passage again. This time, really try to put yourself in her shoes.

HELEN stands there book in hand. She slowly places it on the desk in front of her. LIGHTS on YOUNG KONRAD in full SS uniform standing guard over the JEW who is lying prostrate on the ground. HELEN looks on fascinated. She becomes MARIA.

TEACHER

Helen...

MARIA

“From my father’s shop which looked over the camp we could see them. I was always curious, watching as the trains rolled through the gates, their fingers visible through the boards of the cattle cars...moans and pleas for water could be heard. The smell was terrible. Sometimes we would see them through the electrified fence...weeks, months later...so much smaller...less human, and then one of them would rush the fence and fall to the ground. From where we sat, they looked like insects under a flame...”

YOUNG KONRAD lights a cigarette. He looks over at HELEN and smiles flirtatiously.

MARIA

“I would ask father why they would do this. He say look on the horizon on certain days, you understand...”

HELEN, totally engrossed by the scene, begins to walk over to the JEW.

YOUNG KONRAD

You can touch her..she won’t bite.

HELEN hesitates.

YOUNG KONRAD

Go on. She can’t harm you.

HELEN gets very close. The JEW turns and reaches out to her. HELEN turns away in horror. YOUNG KONRAD laughs. HELEN begins to be sick. LIGHTS on KONRAD and HELEN in the garage.

KONRAD

Why you not go home first...?

HELEN

There’s something I have to ask you...

KONRAD

What is it...

HELEN

Why don’t we have any Jewish friends?

KONRAD

Why you ask this question?

HELEN

I don't know...we were reading about this Jewish girl who was killed during the war-

KONRAD

You want to know.

HELEN

Yes.

KONRAD

I tell you. When we get here after the war Helen, everybody keep to themselves...different language, strange customs or none at all. We find each other, Ukrainians, Poles, Latvians. I want cause no trouble for anybody Helen, Jew or anybody. One time your father and I in delicatessen, only few around in fifties so migrants from all over come to one run by Polish couple. We in back of line we see Jewish man in store saying storekeeper cheat him of change, accuse him of being thief. His English no good so owner no understand his problem. People waiting in line get angry, start saying things to Jewish man-

HELEN

How did you know he was Jewish?

LIGHTS on the JEW and YOUNG KONRAD doing an exaggerated pantomime of the story; the JEW, still in his concentration camp uniform, staring at YOUNG KONRAD, recognising him, accusing him, then going on the attack and pushing him.

KONRAD

Like you know somebody Aussie and not...wog!Your father go to help man, he understand little Yiddish from Jews in Ukraine during the war. He how you say, fix change for Jewish man. Old man satisfied, your father help him outside. I finish buying groceries, go outside, Jewish man holding finger in your father's face, tell him he is Nazi, remember him from war. He start shouting, people stop in street-

HELEN

Did he remember him?

KONRAD

Your father's face collapse in sadness. He no hurt this man. Jew see blond hair Ukrainian, we are all killers to them. In those days Jews have lots of power. Right after war everybody feel sorry for them.

HELEN

They went through a lot.

KONRAD

We all suffered Helen. They start to push government around, the Lefties see Nazis hiding in every corner. Your father and I stand out like is nobody's business. They say Australia is...

HELEN

Rife..?

HELEN

(Solemnly)

Rife...with former Nazis, war criminals. We no war criminals. But everywhere we go we see our names in the papers...

HELEN

But they didn't send the Nazis to the gas chambers did they Uncle Konrad...

KONRAD takes the book from her hands. He reads the title.

KONRAD

(Contemptuously)

"Diary of Anne Frank"...You want to be like this girl?

HELEN

I thought I did. As I said the lines, all that was going through my head were people suffering and dying like I was looking over the killers shoulders.

KONRAD

That was what make you sick?

HELEN

How else should it? I'm reading some of the most famous words in the English language and my heads in a cess pool of carnage...and I was watching the victims, like they deserved their fate. Did the SS really do all those awful things?

KONRAD pulls out a photo from his pocket.

KONRAD

War not always about hate..

KONRAD hands her the photo.

HELEN

Who is she?

KONRAD

Someone I know...another life.

HELEN

She's beautiful...especially in that dress.

KONRAD

I buy for her.

HELEN

Were you in love?

KONRAD

Of course...

HELEN

What was her name?

KONRAD

Enough! No more...please.

HELEN

Tell me about her Uncle Konrad.

KONRAD

(Hesitant)

Maria. Her name was Maria.

HELEN

Why didn't she come with you to Australia?

KONRAD

Was very difficult come to Australia. Families separated. Only men allowed for work, families come later. I have to leave her behind.

HELEN

That must have been very hard. What about Maria..did she know what was going on?

KONRAD

Maria...not want to concern herself with these things.

HELEN

How is that possible...

KONRAD

Helen...those days not know what tomorrow bring.

KONRAD reaches to the record player and places the needle on the record. MUSIC. LIGHTS.

HELEN

On every Anzac Day, the teachers would quiz us about our family history...kids would bring some memento from battles past. One kid brought a huge dagger with a swastika on it. Showed it to everybody at school till one of the cleaners from Latvia told him to hide it or else! When it came to my turn all I could think of was those uniforms I'd seen the night before on TV with the runic symbols on the collar and a skull and cross bones on the cap. What could I tell my teachers? I recognise those uniforms. I saw one folded neatly in an old trunk in the back of my uncle's shed.

KONRAD opens the trunk and pulls out an SS uniform and holds it on front of him. LIGHTS. MUSIC. YOUNG KONRAD appears, singing with great gusto to an old Ukrainian folk tune. His SS uniform is dishevelled and unbuttoned. He is obviously drunk. KONRAD SENIOR looks at him and smiles. MARIA sits nervously by herself. YOUNG KONRAD struts towards her. He offers her a drink.

MARIA

I don't drink.

YOUNG KONRAD

Suit yourself.

MARIA

Not with a stranger anyway.

YOUNG KONRAD

What about if I'm not a stranger?
(She smiles.)

MARIA

Who taught you to dance?

YOUNG KONRAD

My father.

MARIA

He must have been a proud man.

YOUNG KONRAD

The Bolsheviks killed him.

MARIA

I'm sorry.

YOUNG KONRAD

No matter. Lots of death around these days. What's your name?

MARIA

Maria. And yours?

YOUNG KONRAD

Konrad.

MARIA

That's a nice name.

She touches his hair.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Where did you get such blond hair?

YOUNG KONRAD

Born that way. C'mon, let's go outside.

MARIA

Where do you want to take me?

YOUNG KONRAD

(Smiling.) Just for a walk.

LIGHTS. Music gets louder. They kiss.

MARIA

Where do you work?

YOUNG KONRAD

With this uniform where else around here?

MARIA pulls away.

YOUNG KONRAD

Does that scare you?

MARIA

No. Father always say they are bad people who steal.

YOUNG KONRAD

Doesn't matter now. Pretty soon, none of them left.

He grabs her tightly.

KONRAD (CONT'D)

I want you...now.

MARIA

Not here, my father...

YOUNG KONRAD

I come back tomorrow.

MARIA

What kind of work you do for Germans?

KONRAD

Look on the horizon. You see...

LIGHTS. HELEN turns towards the horizon.

HELEN

“In the course of committing these crimes Karlis Ozols and his company have been directly or indirectly involved in the mass murder of thousands of innocent civilians...The three principle killing methods were open air shootings gas vans and death camps. On the 28 July, that is four days after the accused arrives, there was a mass killing of Jews in the Minsk ghetto, which was then torched by the accused. The fires were said to have been burning for days with the smoke blanketing the sky.”

LIGHTS. KARLIS OZOLS is standing in a dock awaiting sentencing.

HELEN

“It is important to note that this man is the highest ranking alleged war criminal living in Australia. His alleged war crimes are of far greater magnitude than the others...”

YOUNG KONRAD kisses her fiercely. Smoke covers the horizon. LIGHTS. The flicker of a movie projector. YOUNG KONRAD and MARIA hold each other tight and stare out (as if looking at the screen) like two children going to the movies for the very first time. YOUNG KONRAD points out some amusing moments to MARIA. LIGHTS set briefly on KONRAD SENIOR beating the JEW violently with a piece of wood. The JEW is wearing a knapsack. The film ends. YOUNG KONRAD and MARIA clap appreciatively. They turn towards each other and kiss passionately. YOUNG KONRAD begins to lift up her dress then looks around quickly to see if anyone is watching. The JEW lies prostrate on the ground. KONRAD SENIOR walks away. SOUND of a baby crying.

YOUNG KONRAD looks for the sound and goes over to the knapsack next to the JEW. He carefully opens it and pulls out a newborn baby. He takes it to MARIA. LIGHTS. A bucolic setting. YOUNG KONRAD and MARIA are seated by the edge of a river. She is nursing a child.

MARIA

Are you going to tell me?

YOUNG KONRAD

Tell you what?

MARIA

What's going on over there? The smell, it's not like before.

YOUNG KONRAD

Burning...we're burning everything.

MARIA

Everything?

YOUNG KONRAD

Get rid of all the evidence.

MARIA

Why do you have to do it?

YOUNG KONRAD

Jobs too good for the Germans.

MARIA

Too good for you. The Germans have no shame.

YOUNG KONRAD

We are almost done. Seems as though gassing and burying weren't good enough for Mr. Himmler.

MARIA responds to the baby's suckling.

MARIA

Ouch! She's just like you, can't get enough.

YOUNG KONRAD

Maria, I may have to go soon, to the front. The Germans have realized they are losing the war.

MARIA

I don't want to lose you. And neither does your daughter.

YOUNG KONRAD

Does this mean you love me?

MARIA

Why else would I put up with all this?

YOUNG KONRAD

I'm going for a swim.

MARIA

Take everything off. If you are leaving me I want to enjoy every bit of you. At least before the sky is completely black.

LIGHTS on the SS SERGEANT played by KONRAD SENIOR. He is glaring at the half dressed YOUNG KONRAD. YOUNG KONRAD notices him and quickly puts on his tunic and grabs his rifle. He looks visibly scared. MARIA stays in her own world, nursing the baby and smiling at YOUNG KONRAD.

KONRAD

Stand to attention you savage?! What do you think you're holding there? A plough? How do you expect to kill Jews if you don't know from which end to hold the rifle. How about we play you a little music to make you feel better huh?

SOUND of Wagner.

SS SERGEANT

Much better. ACHTUNG! Now when the Jews are brought out I want you to act like it's a normal work day understand. No need to set off a panic. When I give the signal, line up in a single file over here and bring your rifle to firing position. On my order, you will fire and this time aim for a target you can hit. The Reich can't afford to waste extra ammunition on you lot!

YOUNG KONRAD fumbles with his rifle as he tries to get it into firing position.

SS SERGEANT

You fucking Ukrainians are a joke! Don't stare at'em. This is a bloody execution. You're going to kill them! Now aim.

YOUNG KONRAD takes proper aim.

SS SERGEANT

That's right. Press the rifle into your shoulder. Look carefully through the front site.

YOUNG KONRAD starts shaking.

SS SERGEANT(CONT'D)
STOP SHAKING YOU DUMB BASTARD!

YOUNG KONRAD steels himself for what he is about to do.

SS SERGEANT
FIRE!

LIGHTS on the JEW wearing a knapsack. SOUND of a volley of rifle shots. He falls to the ground. SOUND of baby crying from the knapsack.

SS SERGEANT
CAN'T YOU HEAR IT? FINISH IT OFF BEFORE I FINISH YOU!

YOUNG KONRAD fixes a bayonet to his rifle. He walks over to the body of the JEW. He prepares to plunge the bayonet into the knapsack. The JEW, still alive, looks up. LIGHTS. HELEN and KONRAD SENIOR are in the garage. She furiously strides towards KONRAD.

HELEN
Why didn't you tell me...

KONRAD
I should tell you everything I do in war...

HELEN
But they were killers...

KONRAD
You think only SS kill Helen....?

HELEN
The Holocaust...the Jews...you were all in the SS who did it...!

KONRAD
Everyone kill Jews...or watch...or turn their backs...

HELEN
There were soldiers who didn't...

KONRAD
Australian soldiers?

HELEN

I'm not kidding! I thought you fought for your country...for Ukrainian nationalism...?

KONRAD

We did. We join SS because they come to us...wanted us. We no care for black uniform, flashes on collar...only want to fight. Helen, you fight you kill.

HELEN

Women, children...civilians.

KONRAD bows his head in silence.

HELEN

Do you have photos of that. I know you keep them separate Uncle Konrad. You won't let me look at them. Dad told me...

KONRAD

Your father say too much!

HELEN

Why keep them in the first place.

KONRAD

You want to see these kind of photos Helen I show you...

In what appears like some magic trick, KONRAD pulls out another photo and holds it up to HELEN'S face. It appears to come out of nowhere. She stares at it transfixed.

KONRAD SENIOR

The Jews try to hide their children in knapsacks...avoid deportation, knock them out with chloroform to stop crying when they pass checkpoint. I do security...baby start crying. The German sergeant in charge start beating Jew...show no mercy. He going to kill him on the spot-

HELEN

So you stabbed him through his knapsack...?

KONRAD

No. I bayonet baby inside it.

HELEN

What?

KONRAD nods his head.

KONRAD

You want to know about war. This is war.

HELEN

You knew there was a child...

KONRAD stares at her in disbelief.

KONRAD

Child belong to father...both our enemies.

HELEN

I can't believe it. Is this about a "free" Ukraine?

KONRAD

What you think German going to do Helen?

HELEN

Kill them both I suppose.

KONRAD

Yes. Kill them both. Not before he make them wish they dead.

HELEN

That doesn't justify it!

KONRAD

I put end to misery. For him, torture before heading to gas chamber, and baby...thrown alive in oven or roasting on sulfur pit-

HELEN

STOP IT! I'VE HAD ENOUGH!

KONRAD

(Fiercely)

You want to write family history. You asked, beg me to help you.

HELEN

But this?! Who would have thought...

KONRAD

I act in mercy...for both of them.

HELEN

Both?

KONRAD

Father see dead baby...lose mind. German Sergeant laugh. Jew look at me, begging for end...

HELEN

What did you do...

KONRAD is silent.

HELEN

(Pleading)

What did you do.

KONRAD

(Ashamed)

I shoot him between eyes. German sergeant take photo...I buy from him...want no one to see. One time, Maria and I, go to movies in Warsaw, see "Fantasia." Watch the dancing whales...for a moment forget the world we live in. After film, we see Jews come past, beaten by their own people, militiamen recruited by the Germans. Kapos. They use heavy pieces of timber. Children already lay dead on the street. I could tell Maria about to be sick. We watch, helpless until Ukrainian pulls away the most violent of the kapos. Maria could not understand how he could do this to own people. Some things you should never see Helen.

HELEN

There's talk...that they're going to get ex-Nazis like yourself no matter what.

KONRAD

I no Nazi! They were all pigs. The Communists and the Germans.

HELEN

But you worked for them. You put on a Nazi uniform.

KONRAD

What choice did you think we have? You sit here in this country so damn lucky, it's a disgrace! You have no idea what we went through.

HELEN

Tell me then! I want to know.

KONRAD

Helen we see so much death, never want to speak about it-

HELEN

But what if they come after you? What then? I have to know.

KONRAD

Listen Helen, this is history no one wants to believe. How could Jews be bad, hurt others...

HELEN

You didn't have anything to do with the Jews...

KONRAD

I saw with my own eyes! They torture our people, starve old women and children. So they wear Russian uniforms, all the Commissars, the secret police were Jewish. They give all the orders.

HELEN

You didn't kill them...?!

KONRAD

Helen, we no look to hate. No choice-

HELEN

So you joined the Nazis.

KONRAD

The Nazis recruit us, give us food, shelter, uniforms. When they invade Russia, they become our salvation.

HELEN

The Nazis...?

KONRAD

I no joke about this Helen. They did not come to slaughter us, unlike Communists. Before you know it, all the Jews are in camps, ghettos, waiting naked beside pits. We told by German officer, you want revenge, here is your revenge!

HELEN

So you shot them.

KONRAD

The Jews were taken into batches, men first, from the collecting point to the ditch. I work in camps...

HELEN

What did you do there.

KONRAD pauses for a moment.

KONRAD

I work in gas chambers...

HELEN

My God, you lied to me! How could you?!

KONRAD

I NO LIE! NEVER! YOU UNDERSTAND?

HELEN

But how could you?!

KONRAD

ENOUGH! DON'T ASK NO MORE. GET OUT OF HERE BEFORE I...

HELEN

(Defiant)

Before you what?! Treat me like you did them?!

KONRAD raises his arm menacingly. HELEN goes in for the kill.

HELEN

Jesus Christ you helped murder all those people! These were harmless children...old people...I can't believe it...

KONRAD

It is war! And what do you think happen if we refuse? You think Germans say no problem, go home, forget we even ask? Germans kill anybody. Soon only way we can work is to drink, wipe out memories. I look in faces of old people I no longer see oppressors, I realize these are not my killers, my enemy. (Pause.) One time, Ukrainian guard, he refuse to shoot old man who could no longer walk. Officer turn and shoot guard. No choice. No choice. Each day funeral pyres burn, wipe out crimes but we no forget.

HELEN

But don't you feel any guilt for what you did?

KONRAD

I just wish it never happened. Wish the Jewish Bolsheviks never came, not learn to hate. But I wanted revenge. They take everything away from us, killed all our loved ones...

HELEN

So you killed theirs. Why didn't you tell me before?

KONRAD

What? When you were fifteen years old.

HELEN

But I wanted to tell your story.

KONRAD

What story you think I have huh?

HELEN

I don't know.

KONRAD

(Dismissively)

No like what you learn at school...see on TV. You have no stomach for my tale Helen.

HELEN

I know that...

KONRAD

NO YOU DON'T KNOW!

HELEN

I want to write your story but...I didn't think it would be like this.

KONRAD

So far I protect you...

LIGHTS on HELEN.

HELEN

"At the pits, the accused killed people, probably Jews and commanded the SS guard there...Jews and others. Men women and children were brought to these pits...The killings were open air shootings. The Jews were taken into batches, men first, from the collecting point to the ditch. Trucks then brought the Jews in batches to the ditch, where they were unloaded with the help of rifles and whips. They had to take off their clothes and submit to searches. Then they were shot either in front of the ditch or by the sardine method in the ditch by the SD units commanded by the accused. Some of the women when they saw their fate would jump in holding their children..."

KONRAD

Helen I see things...you look long enough you lose your mind.

LIGHTS.

HELEN

Nightmares haunted me for days. Images of bodies, families led to the slaughter. I would find myself crying over the most innocuous thing...a commercial for babies nappies, young girls in their summer dresses off to school. Anything that could be defiled by brute force. I thought I would never speak to my father and uncle again. How could I? What did reasons matter. Everyone has an excuse, a reason for their actions. But what right did my uncle have to live peacefully, without fear of retribution? I waited for the inevitable hardening of my heart towards my own family, an unbreakable callous of shame.

LIGHTS. In what appears to be a reprise of the scene in the opening of the play, YOUNG KONRAD enters scanning the stage with a torchlight. He is sweating profusely and red in the face, in the grip of a terrible rage and panic. He is almost out of breath. LIGHTS on MARIA.

MARIA

What are you doing her? If the Germans find you-

YOUNG KONRAD

Those son's of bitches!..Fuck them and all their mothers!

He throws his cap on the floor.

MARIA

What's the matter?

LIGHTS on KONRAD SENIOR in the garage. He addresses the audience.

KONRAD

The Germans tell us so much Helen. That we be free once we do enough killing. When is enough? When they say so. Then we will have a free Ukraine. What not to believe? They give us food, uniform, things...but that is all. Hope gone. Germans treat us like Russians. If we disagree with German he shoot you. So we drink. Morning till night. Kills everything just like bullets, only we wake to new day and try to forget all over again. No feeling left. You pretend you can but you too are dead.

YOUNG KONRAD

I'VE HAD ENOUGH! I CAN NO LONGER DO THIS MARIA!..I am a man...a human being...

MARIA fearful of his rage, goes to YOUNG KONRAD and tries to sooth him.

MARIA

Tell them you won't...

LIGHTS.

KONRAD

We all knew it would happen. Treblinka was to be shut down and a living hell disappear. The whole town was upset for their own reasons and me for mine. But the Germans were losing the war and didn't want to leave a trace. Prisoners sensed the change and many escapes happen those last few weeks. Big shoot outs with the Germans. Ukrainians very confused. Some give guns to the Jews so they have fighting chance.

But others scared for their families, know Germans kill Ukrainians as reprisal for any disobedience. Germans have a kind of evil inside of them, kill anyone.

YOUNG KONRAD

(To HELEN.) You don't understand...they kill Ukrainians just like the Jews...one of the guards today, he refuse to kill Polish Jews, say they not Bolsheviks, they cut him down like a dog...BASTARDS! I SHOW THEM KILLING! I KILL EVERYONE OF THEM AND THEIR MOTHERS! ANIMALS...

YOUNG KONRAD collapses in a heap and curls up into a little ball. He is sobbing. MARIA is overcome with tenderness. She holds his head in her lap.

MARIA

No Konrad, don't...please. If anything happen to you...

YOUNG KONRAD

Fucking animals, all of them...filthy disgusting pigs...I have become just like them Maria...I am no better...

MARIA

What happen to you Konrad...to hate so much..?

YOUNG KONRAD, like a wounded animal gathering itself for a final lunge at its attacker, gets himself to his feet. There is more than a touch of the messianic and melodramatic in his delivery. MARIA watches mesmerised by his oratory. LIGHTS on the JEW standing defiantly in a Russian military uniform circa 1930 with a big red star on the chest. It should look like a picture from a propaganda poster of that period. KONRAD slowly notices the presence during the monologue and directs his animus towards the JEW.

YOUNG KONRAD

I tell you...One day I come home find my dog skinned alive hanging from front door. Jewish Bolsheviks already come they kick my family out of our home, find my father and children like beggars in street with few possessions...they force us to live in hovel...I say something they beat me up for my troubles...I forced to go to Communist school were we beaten up again and locked in cupboard by the Jewish Commissar, then I..I tied to post and flogged by the Jewish Bolsheviks, get white scars on back...no take shirt off ever. Hate start to burn in heart...When the famine come my mother's breasts go dry...cannot feed her baby...CHILDREN ARE DYING LIKE FLIES ALL OVER THE UKRAINE!! My heart turn to stone.

Mother go to the Jewish doctor who tells her he doesn't treat animals so she leave and her baby die...a farmer is murdered by Bolshevists, his body taken to the doctor who spit on body...potbelly children sit on dirty streets waiting to die...each village leave pile of bodies fresh each morning to bury...our lives worthless in the eyes of new oppressors, the Jewish Bolshevists!

YOUNG KONRAD is emotionally drained. The JEW stands triumphant. YOUNG KONRAD almost collapses. MARIA grabs him. LIGHTS. KONRAD SENIOR walks over to HELEN.

KONRAD

(Pause.) Your father and I swore we not rest until kill every Jew Bolshevist we get hands on. When SS come, that time come.

HELEN wraps her arms around his shoulders.

KONRAD

I sense they are getting close...

HELEN

Nothings going to happen.

KONRAD

I don't know what I do Helen. Name in papers again...Helen, they kick me out call me war criminal!

HELEN

They're not going to do that. I won't let them.

KONRAD

How you stop them?

HELEN

I'm going to be a writer Uncle Konrad.

KONRAD

Helen, nobody, nothing stop them. They have too much power.

HELEN

I'm going to write about everything that happened to you and Dad, to all the Ukrainians. I'll make them understand.

KONRAD

Nobody believe you Helen. Nobody.

HELEN

Look at me uncle Konrad. I know what you've done. It's alright. I forgive you. I really do.

HELEN has her arms lovingly around the both of them.

End of Act One

ACT TWO

LIGHTS on BAILEY looking over the contents of a book he has just read. The JUDGE does not have to be visible onstage and the dialogue can be performed by numerous actors; VOICES coming from around the space.

BAILEY

I have to admit..in some passages, it does almost feel like it's...

BAILEY struggles to finish the sentence.

JUDGE

Like what?

BAILEY

Oh...I don't know. Anti Semitic...?

JUDGE

That's right it could....but that would be a hasty judgment.

BAILEY

Why.

JUDGE

Because she's tried to get into the hearts and minds of people we only know as monsters, and made them real people...people you can sympathize with...people you can understand.

BAILEY

But did they...Jews are all over this book as rabid Communists. I know they had a soft spot for Socialism. There was Trotsky...

JUDGE

He was the core of the Communist Party.

BAILEY

But didn't Stalin purge the Jews from the Communist Party later on?

JUDGE

They've always been there. My point is that when it mattered they were the chief operatives in Stalin's machine.

BAILEY

Really? "Jewish Bolshevism" responsible for the deaths of thousands...

JUDGE

Millions. Stalin allowed Jews to contribute to the brutal crushing of Ukrainians by collectivization and starvation.

BAILEY

But does it mean they..controlled Bolshevism?

JUDGE

They were the brains behind its terror!

BAILEY

But...how do we really know...

Pause.

BAILEY

You're not sure are you? Yet you still want me to publish it...

JUDGE

Experts, research, or in Helen's case..eyewitness accounts. Her family was there.

BAILEY

Have you heard of it before?

JUDGE

No. But that's what history is about! New interpretations, understandings, based on new evidence.

BAILEY

They're the only eyewitnesses.

JUDGE

Further investigation will support her claims. It's like a "dead sea scrolls". Of sorts.

BAILEY

If it's true.

JUDGE

This goes beyond the banality of evil. Hannah Arendt never even dared go this far.

BAILEY

Yes...but her uncle, her father for that matter actually did the killing...men women, children...without batting an eyelid.

JUDGE

It is what it is, just another day in the life of Konrad, a Ukrainian soldier in the SS.

BAILEY

(fingering through the pages of
HELEN'S book)

I must say it's a...cold blooded book at times. Yet to look at her you wouldn't think she could invent half this stuff...

JUDGE

She's not trying to evoke sympathy for what everyone knows was horrible. She's peering deeper than we'll ever get from the victim...

BAILEY

But still, at the end of the day...Jews persecuting Ukrainians in 1930's Europe?

JUDGE

This book is an exciting violation ...an extraordinary confession of her family's involvement in the Holocaust.

BAILEY

Hmmm. Do you really think it happened?

JUDGE

Why would anyone make this up?

LIGHTS on HELEN dressing into a traditional Ukrainian costume. LIGHTS on KONRAD SENIOR behind her. Without prompting he does the zip in the back.

KONRAD SENIOR

Your father know you dressed like that?

HELEN shakes her head.

KONRAD SENIOR

You lucky this time I no tell him.

HELEN

But you haven't before.

KONRAD SENIOR

Get your things. We go.

KONRAD SENIOR hands her an envelope.
LIGHTS. She opens the letter and begins to read.

HELEN

I went to Treblinka not long ago. I had to make a pilgrimage for my uncle. I knew he couldn't stand up to the trip and the strain of so many returned memories. The place...was as described to me. Suitably, it was drizzling the day I arrived. When I entered the gates, the first thing I noticed was memorial of rocks put together with the names of the towns and villages from where all the Jews were taken. Another visitor was standing there reading the names. He was a Quaker whose mother was sent there for helping Jews to escape. When I told him my uncle had worked there, he registered no shock. It was as if it was the most normal thing in the world! Ever so briefly we touched hands and...I allowed myself some level of forgiveness.

BAILEY

Rarely has a first novel, unpublished at that, by an Australian author, been so lavishly praised by a judging panel. Helen's book enters into the minds of those caught up in the business of mass murder and restores to them their humanity. Simply put, it is a book of extraordinary redemptive power and a worthy recipient of the Vogel.

APPLAUSE. YOUNG KONRAD presents HELEN with a magnificent bouquet of flowers. She humbly bows her head. LIGHTS on the JOURNALIST.

JOURNALIST

As Helen's publisher prepares the book for an unsuspecting but enthusiastic public, interest grows in her family's wartime background...

LIGHTS on BAILEY and the JOURNALIST. HELEN watches in darkness.

BAILEY

Frankly I think it's an amazing story.

JOURNALIST

Her relatives were forced to join the SS during the war...

BAILEY

That's right.

JOURNALIST

No one was forced to join the SS.

BAILEY

How do you know?

JOURNALIST

That was the nature of the SS. They were a killer elite.

BAILEY

Helen's family are...were peasants...Ukrainians.

JOURNALIST

So Ukrainians didn't know any better?

BAILEY

Something like that. Her father and uncle were at the coal face of the Final Solution, that's what matters here.

JOURNALIST

...shooting and gassing Jews like there was no tomorrow.

BAILEY

I wouldn't put it quite like that. Look, they're not Nazis if that's what you're getting at.

JOURNALIST

They just wanted revenge for what the "Jewish Bolsheviks" did to them.

BAILEY

That's right.

JOURNALIST

And now they're hiding somewhere in Australia.

BAILEY

I didn't say they were hiding and no one said it was supposed to be her uncle and father specifically.

JOURNALIST

If it's not supposed to be her family, specifically, why the fuss? If its not authentic it might as well be a romance novel set in a human abattoir.

BAILEY

There you go again. Anyway, they're not hiding.

JOURNALIST

So you know where they are.

BAILEY

You really don't expect me to answer to that...

Pause.

JOURNALIST

Helen's real or fictitious uncle sounds very much like Karlis Ozols. Different branch of the SS...Latvia, but the similarities are...compelling.

BAILEY

What did this Ozols supposedly do?

JOURNALIST

He belonged to an SS unit called the Arajs Commando. They were first with the mass shootings in Eastern Europe during the war. A survivor who hid under the bodies of his family recognised Ozols on the boat over here.

BAILEY

A touching reunion no doubt.

JOURNALIST

Yes. He couldn't believe it was same person.

BAILEY

What happened to him?

JOURNALIST

No one knows. I managed to track him down a some years back but then one day he just disappeared. Wasn't much fond of giving interviews and for a while there it looked like the government was serious about going after him.

BAILEY

Well...Helen's father and uncle were stationed at Treblinka. Case closed.

JOURNALIST

If her uncle has been investigated like Helen claims, then there must be an official record which her book gives absolutely no clue to. Yet there are passages in her book which are almost identical to what Ozols was accused of.

BAILEY

No doubt there is a record. Somewhere.

JOURNALIST

Then surely the Australian public has a right to know what he was charged with and if he is-

BAILEY

The Australian public is pretty switched on about this sort of stuff. This isn't 1939 Germany with the willing masses ready to accept anything served up to them. If Australians think there needs to be some sort of investigation-

JOURNALIST

Maybe it's a question of how it's served up.

BAILEY

Quite possibly Helen's just hit on some uncomfortable truths and the judges have recognised and rewarded it.

JOURNALIST

Do you really think they thought about what the book is actually saying?

Pause.

BAILEY

Look. She's just won an award for writing a no holds barred account of her family during the war. And as a firm we're obliged to publish all Vogel winners. It's not like...she's won the Franklin. Anyway, Helen's the most guileless creature you're ever likely to meet.

JOURNALIST

I just want to speak to the writer who's "redefined the nature of evil". (Holding a piece of paper in his hand). Or so it says in your press release.

LIGHTS on HELEN and KONRAD SENIOR.

HELEN

Do you have any photos from the war Uncle Konrad?

LIGHTS on YOUNG KONRAD in full dress uniform of the SS.

HELEN

Is that you?

KONRAD

Yes.

HELEN

What kind of uniform is that?

KONRAD

That SS uniform.

HELEN

So you were just like any other soldier during the war...

Pause.

KONRAD

Of course not Helen. We responsible for killing most of the Jews.

LIGHTS on BAILEY and HELEN. KONRAD remains in the shadows.

BAILEY

I must tell you I think this book is going to be a hard sell. I don't want you to get your sights set on anything.

HELEN

The only sights I've had them set on is telling the truth.

BAILEY

I love the characters Helen, they're very passionate and vital, but it's all set in some pretty grim circumstances...

HELEN

I have every right to air my voice.

BAILEY

No one's questioning that or we wouldn't be sitting here in this office now would we?

HELEN

I suppose not.

BAILEY

We're all very excited about your manuscript and have every faith in your future as a writer. I'm sure your best is yet to come. (Pause). There's just been some questions raised with the edit...

HELEN

I thought you found another editor...

BAILEY

We did...but let's just say similar questions have arisen for her as well...

HELEN

What kind of questions?

BAILEY

To do with the tone mainly. There's some concern your voice is virtually indistinguishable from the other characters, particularly your uncle.

HELEN

From their point of view what they were doing wasn't wrong. They had their families killed too. Then they came to Australia and are persecuted as war criminals all over again.

BAILEY

I understand that Helen but...I mean, a lot of Jews were killed...

HELEN

And so were a lot of Ukrainians. It was retribution. They acted out of a personal sense of injustice. It's history that has never been written about, that people are too scared to talk about..!

BAILEY

Your uncle's character is totally unapologetic. Don't you think it would be better there is an admission of responsibility in the book, one that allows you to distance-

HELEN

Responsibility? He knows exactly what he did and why. I mean this stuff didn't just pour out over a cup of coffee. My family deals with it on a day to day basis knowing full well most people view them as monsters.

BAILEY

Then why did he agree to tell you his story?

HELEN

Before he dies he wanted to know the truth is out there. Not just lies and propaganda.

BAILEY

Well you certainly accomplished that.

HELEN

Have I?

BAILEY

You said it in the book; you've taken off their helmet and revealed their true face to humanity. Helen, you've given you father and uncle their proper place in history. No one wants to change any of that.

HELEN

But that's exactly what the last editor was trying to do.

BAILEY

There were issues regarding her background. Look it's an absolutely compelling story and there's quite a natural curiosity about it. Imagine...writing about your family who were murderers in the Holocaust.

HELEN

(Forthright.)

I don't see them as murderers.

BAILEY

Of course you don't.

LIGHTS. KONRAD SENIOR opens the trunk and pulls out an SS uniform and holds it on front of him. LIGHTS. YOUNG KONRAD is holding a jerry can of gasoline and pouring it over the prostrate body of the JEW. KONRAD picks up a book opens it to a specific page and hands it to HELEN.

Without looking at the page, HELEN begins. She knows the real story...

HELEN

May 1943. The soil of Treblinka held 700,000 bodies, weighed about 35,000 tons with a volume of 90,000 cubic yards. The size of a battleship....At first the SS calculated that it would take two years to burn 1000 bodies a day. Different methods were used, gasoline burning which was totally.."inefficient," to burning with trees, an idea which the Germans realised would need as many trees as bodies. Finally an expert was summoned...

LIGHTS.

KONRAD

Lots of death around those days Helen...

YOUNG KONRAD

What's your name?

HELEN

Helen. And yours?

YOUNG KONRAD

Konrad.

HELEN

That's a nice name.

She touches his hair.

HELEN

Where did you get such blond hair?

YOUNG KONRAD

Born that way. C'mon, let's go outside.

HELEN

Where do you want to take me?

YOUNG KONRAD

(Smiling.) Just for a walk.

LIGHTS. Music gets louder. They kiss.

HELEN

Where do you work?

YOUNG KONRAD

With this uniform where else around here?

HELEN pulls closer to him.

YOUNG KONRAD

Does that scare you?

HELEN

Not at all. My father always said the Jews are bad people who steal.

YOUNG KONRAD

Doesn't matter now. Pretty soon, none of them left.

He grabs her tightly.

YOUNG KONRAD (CONT'D)

I want you...now.

HELEN

Not here, my father...

YOUNG KONRAD

I come back tomorrow.

HELEN

What kind of work do you do for the Germans?

KONRAD

Look on the horizon. You see....

LIGHTS. YOUNG KONRAD stands still watching the horizon. HELEN slowly circles him totally captivated by his presence.

HELEN

The expert arrived from Berlin. He made calculations and realised that bodies do not burn at the same rate. There were good bodies and bad bodies. The art was in using the good ones to burn the bad ones. So old women, who burned best, were sorted out from men and children who burned worst. Soon a great bonfire took place. The Germans and Ukrainians had a huge party with champagne and schnapps as the flames licked the sky well till the early morning. No one had seen anything like this and all sensed it was coming to an end...

YOUNG KONRAD grabs HELEN and kisses HELEN fiercely. HELEN breaks away.

YOUNG KONRAD

I'm going for a swim.

YOUNG KONRAD begins to undress.

HELEN

Take everything off! If you are leaving me I want to enjoy every bit of you. At least before the sky is completely black!

LIGHTS on the JOURNALIST.

JOURNALIST

(to HELEN)

Are we ready to begin?

HELEN is half caught in the glow of her reverie.

HELEN

Yes, of course.

JOURNALIST

So Helen. How do you feel about winning such a prestigious prize on your first outing.....

HELEN

Like one should I suppose...shocked, gratified, amazed. I really didn't expect any of it.

JOURNALIST

What about your uncle..what does he think of his life being turned into a successful book?

HELEN

He doesn't have to hide anymore. His story has been legitimised.

JOURNALIST

How so?

HELEN

He's found an audience. People want to know about his life.

JOURNALIST

That doesn't make it legitimate.

HELEN

They empathise with what happened to him.

JOURNALIST

I see. So do you think there was anything evil at all in what your family did during the war?

HELEN

I don't believe evil exists.

JOURNALIST

Even the banal kind?

HELEN

There was nothing banal about what they did. I know that.

JOURNALIST

As far as some Australian critics are concerned, your uncle is the perfect incarnation.

HELEN

There is cruelty, in all forms against all peoples. Why this happens is what I'm interested in. My family's past gave me a chance to explore it, that's all.

JOURNALIST

If he did all the things as you say in the book, why do you think he's never been brought to trial?

HELEN

Because he's not guilty.

JOURNALIST

He was in the SS. By all rights, he shouldn't have even been allowed in the country. And according to your book, he took part in the greatest mass murder in history.

HELEN

That's all propaganda. The Jew...

JOURNALIST

Yes...

HELEN

The Jewish lobby, naturally, might take offence to his membership in the SS but one has to remember that they shouldn't be able to control all the dialogue on this issue.

JOURNALIST

You do write about killing Jews in a very off handed manner. To the point where one isn't quite sure what your position is as the author.

HELEN

My position doesn't matter. It's their voices that count.

JOURNALIST

So you think war crimes against the European Jews are fundamentally a Jewish problem?

HELEN

My uncle was investigated in the fifties and again in the eighties. No charges were brought.

JOURNALIST

It might help if he came out...gave an interview. Your book has gotten historians at each others throats.

HELEN

Maybe that's where they belong, instead of agreeing with each other all the time.

JOURNALIST

They're not arguing over the details Helen. You've challenged the foundations of modern European history. Either way it's got to cause some serious debate.

HELEN

I've just tried to capture the attitude of the people at that time in mid century Ukraine. Nothing more. Look. He lives in constant fear. He thinks any day they're going to come and get him.

JOURNALIST

Yes, but judges have awarded your book a prize based on its authenticity as well as its narrative power. And given the subject matter, the two must go hand in hand.

HELEN

(Lashing out)

How in God's name can you speak for Jewish people when you're not even Jewish?!

LIGHTS on KONRAD.

KONRAD

Why you ask this question?

HELEN

I don't know...we were reading about this Jewish girl who was killed during the war-

KONRAD

You want to know.

HELEN

Yes.

KONRAD

I tell you. When we get here after the war Helen, everybody keep to themselves.....different language, strange customs or none at all. We find each other, Ukrainians, Poles, Latvians, all those who help get rid of Jews.

LIGHTS on the JEW standing in front of a deli counter as if on her way to her death. Across the other side, smiling knowingly is YOUNG KONRAD.

KONRAD

We ex Nazis find each other. I want cause no trouble for anybody Helen, even for Jews. One time your father and I in delicatessen, only few around in fifties so migrants from all over come to one run by Polish couple. We in back of line we see dirty Jew in store saying storekeeper cheat him of change, accuse him of being thief. His English no good so owner no understand his problem. But we know his problem. People waiting in line get angry, start saying things to Jewish man...how they stick him in oven if not hurry up with change-

HELEN

How did you know he was Jewish?

KONRAD'S gaze is fixed on HELEN with a messianic fervour YOUNG KONRAD pushes the counter aside, grabs the JEW'S face and thrusts it into HELEN'S.

KONRAD

Like you know somebody Aussie and not...wog! By his smell and face, the shape of the eyes and hooked nose...the way Jew look at Christian woman! All Jews the same Helen no matter how hard they try they always give themselves away!

LIGHTS on BAILEY.

BAILEY

168 times.

HELEN

What?

BAILEY

168 times. That's how often the word Jew appears in your book.

HELEN

I wasn't counting.

BAILEY

"You're not even Jewish..." What were you thinking Helen.

HELEN

He wouldn't let me speak. He kept fishing for more information about my family...unable to accept a narrative that contradict the typical bullshit he helps perpetuate...

BAILEY

I've had three editors work on this book. The last one could barely finish it.

HELEN

What do you expect with names like-

BAILEY

I DON'T WANT TO HEAR IT. The third one is as...Christian as you or I.

HELEN

I knew this would happen the Jewish lobby have called haven't they? They've got their tentacles around you I can tell. You're getting all this pressure from them and now you're ready to cave in just like I thought you would-

BAILEY

(picking up a newspaper)

Just stop for a second. Up until now they haven't said anything. But from their point of view this book...what you've been saying on the radio, television, print...looks like a justification for the Holocaust.

Pause.

HELEN

What does it matter whether he speaks or not. Won't make any difference.

BAILEY

How can you say that...

HELEN

They control the publishing game, they control the entertainment industry. They control just about everything you care to name. You should know that of all people.

BAILEY

Why?

HELEN

Jews and publishing. Anything to do with the media.

BAILEY

Is this your uncle speaking?

HELEN

(Vehement)

My uncle just lives in fear. The Jews control all discussions of their role in European history and the Holocaust. People like me can't say anything and if they do they're persecuted for what they know.

BAILEY

You're an award winning writer at twenty two!

HELEN

That won't stop them. They'll get me no matter what!

BAILEY

(Shaken)

This conversation stays in this room. Do you understand? You've got a platform-

HELEN

My story's been accepted by the mainstream media. That's all that should matter...

BAILEY

My point exactly. Helen...for a first time author..writing about this sort of stuff...you've been treated extraordinarily well. If this were any other country...

HELEN

What?

BAILEY

No publisher would have touched it. Instead, your uncle's story has become part of Australia's literary history...

HELEN

I'm just one lone voice that refutes all their propaganda. What chance do I have?

Pause.

BAILEY

As of the last 24 hours a pretty good one.

HELEN

What are you talking about.

Pause.

BAILEY

You've won the Miles Franklin.

HELEN

That's...not possible.

BAILEY

Yes it is. To date, two sets of judges have unanimously agreed your book is one of the most noteworthy literary pieces in Australia.

HELEN

I don't know what to say....

BAILEY

That's probably a good thing at this point.

HELEN

(jubilant)

But this changes everything.

BAILEY

It certainly does.

LIGHTS. The JEW is lying face down with a knapsack on his back. SOUND of a baby crying. All on stage look for the sound. YOUNG KONRAD and HELEN go over to the JEW and put their ears to the knapsack. YOUNG KONRAD slowly begins to open the knapsack. The JUDGES remain in shadow surrounding the action.

FIRST JUDGE

I knew at once after reading the manuscript that Helen would be accused of endorsing evil because she does what a novelist must; make evil live and breath...

SECOND JUDGE

...and give it a human face.

THIRD JUDGE

Such accusations are as old as time itself. Unfortunately my concerns were proven all too accurate. Here was a young girl dealing with the Holocaust as a narrative that had all the clarity of a folk tale...

FIRST JUDGE

No rage, just a cool head depicting rape, looting, humiliation and slaughter.

SECOND JUDGE

I became enraged because she made me feel the evil of those years...

LIGHTS on BAILEY.

BAILEY

Anyhow to be here and present Helen with Australia's most prestigious literary prize is a great honor. So without further ado, the winner of the Miles Franklin award...

YOUNG KONRAD pulls out what looks like a new born baby wrapped in a blanket. He unravels it. YOUNG KONRAD holds the statuette like a strange artifact. He hands the statuette to her. LIGHTS. HELEN stands to applause and flashlights.

HELEN

A lot has been said recently about my story...that it's trying to revive ancient hatreds and is anti-Semitic. There is nothing further from the truth. I am only interested in the promotion of reconciliation between the Ukrainian and Jewish communities here in Australia. I genuinely believe this can only occur when both communities can face up to the horrors of their past. Thank you.

JOURNALIST

To cap off her success, Helen receives the Literary Gold Medal of Australia, making her the most successful author in Australian history. She is reviled and lauded in equal measure. And through it all, no one actually questions what her family did in the Holocaust...

LIGHTS on HELEN and the JOURNALIST.

JOURNALIST

There are no specific crimes or evidence linking your uncle to Treblinka. The bayoneting of the child...various other killings that you describe in the book, well, there are no witnesses or forensic evidence.

HELEN

They happened I can assure you.

JOURNALIST

The Sulfur pits, the cremations, not to mention the massacre of the Warsaw Jews...none of these historical facts about Treblinka have made their way into your story. Did you think your readers might have a hard time digesting this information along with your uncle's motives?

HELEN

Everyone knows what happened. That's why they call it the Holocaust.

JOURNALIST

But they don't really do they Helen? Acceptance of your story hinges on a lack of any opinion on the Holocaust that is based on acceptable research and study conducted since the end of the war.

Those atrocities at Treblinka that have been documented, written about, have no connection to your version of what happened.

HELEN

Why would I want to make this sort of thing up?

JOURNALIST

So the book is based directly on his experiences...?

HELEN

Yes. And others...people my family knew.

JOURNALIST

But how do you know that what your family, your uncle in particular, told you was true?

HELEN

Why would he make any of this up? He's admitted to things I had a very hard time getting on the page.

JOURNALIST

But you succeeded.

HELEN

Let me tell you something and listen very carefully. My uncle told me everything that happened in Treblinka... He left nothing out. He trusted me with this knowledge and the reasons why he, all Ukrainians participated.

JOURNALIST

Then why shouldn't your uncle tell his story? It's already captured in your book. What difference would it make if he went public?

LIGHTS on KONRAD seated as if ready to be interviewed. HELEN prepares to interview him.

HELEN

The Holocaust...the Jews...you were all in the SS who did it...

KONRAD

Everyone kill Jews...or watch...or turn their backs..

HELEN

There were soldiers who didn't...

KONRAD

Australian soldiers?

HELEN

I'm not kidding. Yet according to this book, you fought for your country...for Ukrainian nationalism...?

KONRAD

We did. We join SS because they come to us...wanted us. We no care for black uniform, flashes on collar..only want to fight. You fight you kill.

HELEN

Women, children...civilians.

KONRAD bows his head in silence.

HELEN

Do you have photos of that. According to Helen's father, you kept them separate and wouldn't allow Helen to look at them.

KONRAD

Her father say too much!

HELEN

Why would you keep them in the first place...?

KONRAD

You want to see these kind of photos I show you...

LIGHTS on YOUNG KONRAD about to bayonet the JEW through his knapsack.

KONRAD

The Jews try to hide their children in knapsacks....avoid deportation, knock them out with chloroform to stop crying when they pass checkpoint. I do security...baby start crying. The German sergeant in charge start beating Jew...show no mercy. He going to kill him on the spot-

HELEN

So you stabbed him through his knapsack...?

KONRAD

No. I bayonet baby inside it.

HELEN

Could you repeat that for our viewing audience.

KONRAD stares out at the audience like an automaton.

KONRAD

I bayonet baby inside it.

YOUNG KONRAD prepares to plunge the bayonet down into the knapsack. KONRAD SENIOR grabs HELEN'S wrists and pulls her violently towards him.

KONRAD

You want to know about war. This is war.

YOUNG KONRAD plunges the bayonet down.
LIGHTS on BAILEY.

BAILEY

You're on the literary map. With your first book no less. Really quite amazing.

HELEN

Just lucky I suppose.

BAILEY

You wrote a great book.

HELEN

You're biased.

BAILEY

Why not. You're talented and you've got guts. I've seen some of the negative stuff that's been written, and frankly, I admire the way you've handled it.

HELEN

Given the subject matter I might as well have painted a bulls eye on my back.

Pause.

BAILEY

The journalist...he wants to debate you on national television.

HELEN

What do you mean debate? Attack more like it...

BAILEY

He's quite serious Helen.

HELEN

I'm not going to subject myself to some hostile wanker who wants to try and score a few cheap shots at my expense. Anyway, why does he want to do it now? Why not when the book first came out? He doesn't like the attention I'm getting-

BAILEY

After you won the Miles Franklin, I thought it would silence the critics, at least the ones who mattered, but if anything...it's had the reverse effect.

HELEN

I wrote a book about my family for Christ's sake!

BAILEY

Yes...but the debate has gone beyond whether it's of literary worth. The Ukrainian community has been rather silent as far as supporting you...your uncle's position. If anything, they seem uncomfortable about it all.

HELEN

That's because they've been browbeaten by history into thinking they were responsible-

BAILEY

Nevertheless, your book hasn't exactly been a clarion call. It's divided critics over your right to tell your family's story...no matter how disturbing. But no one's jumping on the Jewish Bolshevik bandwagon.

HELEN

It's not a bandwagon, but like all conspiracy of silences, the truth is not allowed to be heard.

BAILEY

To be frank Helen, I never thought the book would get this far. Your views are a little too extreme, but sales are just getting better and better...was it really necessary to justify everything your family did to the Jews?

HELEN

It's impossible to tone down. This is what happened.

BAILEY

Your uncle didn't order the killings. He was just a foot soldier..

HELEN

But he had a reason...they all did. That's the point!

BAILEY

That can't be proven Helen. The historical weight against your Jewish Bolshevik theory is becoming, well, overwhelming. If I'm quoted another book on Ukrainian war crimes...

HELEN

ALL PROPAGANDA AND LIES!

BAILEY

But they're coming from the left and the right. And frankly, your uncle would be the only person who's ever used Jewish atrocities as an excuse.

Pause.

BAILEY

You've got some of the most respected commentators and journalists in the country ready to slap down any one who even dares to call into question your story. You've also got equally respected historians and commentators calling you, anti Semitic, and this book a piece of Revisionist history...and they're not all Jewish.

HELEN

There's just no fucking way don't you understand...

BAILEY

You have to Helen. Look, a friend of yours, supposedly, has come forward. Apparently he has information of interest.

HELEN

To whom?

BAILEY

A story like this is going to attract a fair share of crackpots, extremists and the like, but if there's anything you need to tell me, that I should know, this is the time.

HELEN

I won't do it.

BAILEY

You have to. You can't run away from this one...

HELEN

I don't run away from anything!

BAILEY

Good. Just stick to your story. Don't debate history.

LIGHTS on the TEACHER.

HELEN

Then what's the point...?

TEACHER

You shouldn't compare the Holocaust to any other genocide you know.

HELEN

There were other holocausts. No one talks about what the Turks did to the Armenians or the Communists to the Ukrainians. They starved them...robbed them of their food, their culture, tried to turn them into Communists. It was like a Holocaust, even if it wasn't as...well publicised.

TEACHER

Each is unique, catastrophic, and burns in the memory of the survivors.

HELEN

My point exactly-

TEACHER

But the Nazi genocide was the first time a legitimate modern western government decreed the systematic death of a whole people...men, women, all their children. Death was the sole aim, through torture, starvation, shooting, and finally gassing. And then...

HELEN

Yes...?

TEACHER

Then...they tried to hide it.

LIGHTS. HELEN desperately scrambles to pick up a book off the ground. She rifles through the pages...

HELEN

"July 1943. Treblinka is one year old. 800,000 men women and children had been exterminated. Their bodies were almost all burned, the ashes being covered with sand and turned into a park..."

LIGHTS on KONRAD.

KONRAD

I no joke about this Helen. They did not come to slaughter us, unlike Communists. Before you know it, all the Jews are in camps, ghettos, waiting naked beside pits. We told by German officer, you want revenge, here is your revenge!

HELEN

So you shot them.

KONRAD

The Jews were taken into batches, men first, from the collecting point to the ditch. I work in camps.....

HELEN
What did you do there.

KONRAD pauses for a moment.

KONRAD
I work in gas chambers...

HELEN
My God, you lied to me! How could you?!

KONRAD
I NO LIE! NEVER! YOU UNDERSTAND?

HELEN
But how could you?!

KONRAD
DON'T ASK NO MORE. GET OUT OF HERE BEFORE I...

HELEN
(Defiant)
Before you what?! Treat me like you did them?!

LIGHTS on YOUNG KONRAD standing on the other side of a doorway. He beckons to her in Ukrainian.

HELEN
What's he saying Uncle Konrad?

KONRAD
He's saying...not to be worried. You're just going to have a shower.

HELEN
Did they believe you?

KONRAD
Sometimes.

HELEN
And if not...

YOUNG KONRAD unslings his rifle and points it at HELEN as he raises his voice a few decibels.

KONRAD
In the end...no choice.

HELEN

Where you able to forgive them Uncle Konrad...before they died?

LIGHTS on a chair. HELEN solemnly walks towards it and sits down. YOUNG KONRAD shoulders his rifle and disappears. LIGHTS on the JOURNALIST.

JOURNALIST

My overall problem with this book is...you justify the pathology behind one of the most violent episodes in recorded history.

HELEN

I never said it was justified. No hatred is justified. No matter what the root cause. I just wanted to tell their story.

JOURNALIST

But in doing so you've reworked history in the process...turning death camp guards into noble savages.

HELEN

(Defiantly)

No. Just human beings.

JOURNALIST

Is that what Ivan the Terrible was?

LIGHTS on KONRAD.

KONRAD

Ivan the Terrible does not exist.

HELEN

Absolutely. Ivan is a misunderstood figure.

JOURNALIST

What is there to misunderstand? Ivan the Terrible was a monster whose excesses were unimaginable even for the Nazis. According to you, Ivan is the victim. If it wasn't for what the Jews did to his family, murdering all eight-

HELEN

Six.

JOURNALIST

...six, of his children in the mini "holocaust" of his former home, he would be a perfectly decent fellow.

KONRAD

Phoosh! Just like that! All gone!

HELEN

What is your problem with this?

JOURNALIST

My problem is, none of it is known to have happened. No document has ever surfaced to corroborate what you are saying.

HELEN

It's an oral history. Members of my family knew him.

JOURNALIST

The real Ivan the Terrible is known to have been one of the most evil human beings who ever walked the earth. Even by the standards of Treblinka, Ivan was-

HELEN

I don't like to argue in terms of good and evil...

JOURNALIST

After what he did to the Warsaw Jews, what all the Ukrainian guards did that day...the SS themselves thought of killing him.

KONRAD

Even Germans afraid of Ivan...

HELEN

I'm well aware of what was done at Treblinka and more importantly what Ivan was turned into by his experiences. Yet that didn't stop them from helping the Jews in their hour of need...!

JOURNALIST

None of them helped the Jews. To even think for a second... no Ukrainian guard or member of the SS assisted the Jewish revolt in Treblinka.

HELEN

How do you know?

JOURNALIST

For fifty years historians of all persuasions have collected the evidence, written and oral from hundreds of survivors and witnesses to the extermination camps, including Treblinka. It was a death camp, pure and simple, and the Ukrainians were known for their incredible brutality.

HELEN

What do you think the Ukrainian guards did during this revolt?

JOURNALIST

Club to death any Jew they could get their hands on...men women, children. Even those who were too exhausted or scared to fight back.

KONRAD

You want revenge! Here, take your revenge!

HELEN

But that's my whole point. It was their treatment by the Jewish Bolsheviks during the famine that made them this way!

JOURNALIST

Do you have any idea what you're saying here? By equating Jews with Bolshevism you're adopting one of the oldest ideas of East European fascism...one that was used, and is still used by the most extreme white supremacists to legitimise the murder of six million.

HELEN

That's ridiculous. Why would I want to do something like that?!

JOURNALIST

Three years ago while still a university student, you set up a defence fund for a known war criminal, one Karlis Ozols.

HELEN

I have no idea who this Karlis Ozols is...

JOURNALIST

The Chancellor shut it down but you still wrote an article defending his right to "live peacefully without fear or retribution."

HELEN

This is a free country. He deserved to be treated like any other citizen not persecuted by the Zionist controlled government...

JOURNALIST

Better in fact. He was never prosecuted. No suspected war criminal in this country has. Yet you defend what he did during the Holocaust on the basis of stories told to you by your uncle...?!

HELEN

It's more than a few stories. I spent years listening to what he had to say. He poured his heart out to me do you understand..? It wasn't easy for him but he did it...

JOURNALIST

Then where is he? More to the point who is he? If he wants to rewrite history he needs to come clean and defend his story, his life.

Pause. The SOUND of a train. LIGHTS.

HELEN

“From my father’s shop which looked over the camp we could see them. I was always curious, watching as the trains rolled through the gates, their fingers visible through the boards of the cattle cars...moans and pleas for water could be heard. The smell was terrible.

LIGHTS on the JEW holding a copy of HELEN’S book. The JEW picks up the story. HELEN watches suspiciously.

JEW

“Sometimes we would see them through the electrified fence...weeks, months later...so much smaller...less human, and then one of them would rush the fence and fall to the ground. From where we sat, they looked like insects under a flame....”

HELEN

Would you like me to sign it for you?

JEW

I don’t think so.

HELEN

Suit yourself. Look. No matter what you think, I have nothing against Jews...in general.

JEW

So nice of you.

HELEN

I’m not afraid of you you know.

JEW

I’m not surprised. Who told you these stories?

HELEN

So you’ve read it!

JEW

Of course.

HELEN

My family. Particularly my uncle.

JEW

And you believe him?

HELEN

Why shouldn't I? He works here...

The JEW looks around.

JEW

Yes. Paragons of truth and virtue.

HELEN

Why should he lie?

JEW

You are not telling everything are you Helen-

HELEN

It's history so face up to it.

JEW

800,000 Jews were murdered in Treblinka alone, mostly by the Ukrainian SS, not out of vengeance, but pure hate. This is history.

HELEN

They gave guns to the Jews!

JEW

They sold guns to the Jews! I was there! Why don't you try to imagine what the Jews had to pay for a chance to die with dignity! The Ukrainians love of killing Jews was only surpassed by their love of gold.

HELEN

That's not what my uncle told me. He, other Ukrainians, tried to help your people.

JEW

Whoever this uncle is, he is lying.

HELEN

Can't you see I'm finding their humanity!

JEW

Yes, they breathed, ate, drank, laughed, made love like they do so often in your book, but when it came time to murder, they did it willingly, without regret. This is no sad tragic tale. At least not for your family.

HELEN

I can't expect you to understand. Ultimately, you're all the same.

JEW

I understand only too well my dear. You have tried, and for some Australians, found, an historical justification for genocide.

HELEN

And what's wrong with that?

Pause.

JEW

Did you ever consider that maybe your uncle, your entire family, enjoyed killing?

LIGHTS on KONRAD.

KONRAD

You can touch her...she won't bite.

HELEN hesitates.

KONRAD

Go on. She can't harm you.

He shouts out to the JEW in Ukrainian.

HELEN

It's time for you to go.

LIGHTS. SOUND of a Jewish prayer for the dead. It rises in ever increasing tempo.

HELEN

August 1943, the survivors of the Jewish Warsaw uprising are finally captured and taken away to Treblinka concentration camp...

LIGHTS. YOUNG KONRAD, wearing a helmet, enters scanning the stage with a torchlight. He is sweating profusely and red in the face, in the grip of a terrible rage and panic. He is almost out of breath. LIGHTS on HELEN.

HELEN

What are you doing here? If the Germans find you-

YOUNG KONRAD

Those son's of bitches!...Fuck them and all their mothers!

HELEN

What's the matter?

KONRAD

(With clear enjoyment of the story he is about to tell)

Some things I do keep from you. The Jews from the Warsaw uprising arrive today. We ready with the "special treatment." The Germans made sure all the Ukrainian SS were present for special duty. No take chances were taken with Zionists. The Germans scared, so they place extra guards on the train. SS officers play with their pistols like nervous gunfighters in Western.

SOUND of a train whistle blowing.

KONRAD

But we Ukrainians wait for them in silence Helen... we know how to deal with the Jews long before SS even exist. All morning we wait. Finally we hear the sound of a train. When it arrive the doors open, as if by magic. Nothing happen. Only the sound of the dead and the dying.

LIGHTS. The JEW is undressed looking very much like one of the doomed prisoners in the train carriage, head bowed, hands covering their groin. An effigy of pain and suffering. YOUNG KONRAD stares at her.

JEW

I'VE HAD ENOUGH! I CAN NO LONGER DO THIS!..I am a human being...

HELEN

Tell them you won't...

YOUNG KONRAD and the JEW are silent. HELEN, in frustration, opens her book to a specific page and reads from it.

HELEN

You don't understand...they kill Ukrainians just like the Jews.....one of the guards today, he refuse to kill Polish Jews, say they not Bolsheviks, they cut him down like a dog...

HELEN/KONRAD SENIOR/YOUNG
KONRAD

BASTARDS! I SHOW THEM KILLING! I KILL EVERYONE OF THEM AND THEIR MOTHERS! ANIMALS...

YOUNG KONRAD flashes his LIGHT onto the JEW. He raises his rifle, preparing to bring it down onto the JEW.

HELEN

No Konrad, don't!..please. If anything happen to you...

YOUNG KONRAD

Fucking animals, all of them...filthy disgusting pigs...

HELEN

(to the JEW)

What did you do to make them hate you so much?

YOUNG KONRAD takes his helmet off to "reveal his humanity."

YOUNG KONRAD

I tell you...when the Warsaw Jews arrive the SS send attack dogs into railway cars..tear the Jews to pieces. Then we take our turn. I jump into the railway car, take bodies by the throat and throw from train onto platform. German SS stand back as we go into a frenzy beating in skulls of the filthy Jews. We scared too Helen. We know these Jews fight back. Blood flow on the platform. We execute some on the spot. Those left I take to the sulphur pits. Woman and children, babies with their mothers, all naked breast feeding before they die, talking to their children like nothing strange about to happen, pretending they are somewhere else....so we send them there. When they see their fate, some beg for mercy, others jump in holding children. Those who refuse I give to Ivan. He wait with his sword, slicing open the bellies of women, then order male prisoners to make love to the corpses...Treblinka in shock today...prisoners begin to understand...even in hell, things can get worse...After that, you kill anything.

LIGHTS on KONRAD.

KONRAD

You fucking Ukrainians are a joke! Don't stare at'em. This is a bloody execution. You're going to kill them! Now aim.

YOUNG KONRAD unslings his rifle and takes careful aim. HELEN stands by his side. He fires into the JEW. He re chambers another round and fires, then repeats the same action once again. The JEW disappears. HELEN walks over to where the body is supposed to be and picks a up a pair of glasses. She picks them up and hands them to YOUNG KONRAD. He puts them on, briefly looking up. He smiles. They embrace. LIGHTS on the JOURNALIST.

JOURNALIST

Monday August 2nd 1943. As the Germans and Ukrainians prepares to dispose of the remaining prisoner in Treblinka, the revolt begins. Of the thousand prisoners who were in the camp at the time, about six hundred manage to reach the nearby forests without being recaptured.

A year later, when the Red Army arrives, only forty are left, the rest killed by Polish peasants, partisans of the Armie Krajowa, Ukrainian fascist bands, deserters from the German Wehrmacht, the Gestapo, and special hunter killer units of the German army...

KONRAD

Your father and I swore we not rest until kill every Jew Bolshevist we get hands on. When SS came, that time come.

LIGHTS. KONRAD/OZOLS is standing in the dock, facing the audience. HELEN looks on, captivated.

HELEN

"The Special Investigations Unit has carefully researched the identity of Mr. Karlis Ozols in Victoria. Without here going through the available evidence, it is my opinion that identity has been established beyond reasonable doubt."

KONRAD/OZOLS

I sense they are getting close...

HELEN

"Date and place of birth, names of wife and child, education, military training and service and many other particulars establish identity. Ozols movements after leaving Minsk are sufficiently documented to trace him to Australia."

KONRAD/OZOLS

I don't know what I do Helen. Name in papers again...Helen, they kick me out call me war criminal!

HELEN

"He came to Australia on the 25th of March 1949 and was naturalised on the 17th of October 1956. He has admitted his identity some years ago in other war crimes investigations."

KONRAD/OZOLS

How you stop them?

HELEN

I'm going to be a writer.

KONRAD/OZOLS

Helen, nobody, nothing stop them. They have too much power.

HELEN

"There is a *prima facie* case that the accused had committed a war crime, namely genocide, a crime against humanity."

Pause.

HELEN

I'm going to write about everything that happened to you, to all the Nazis that came here. I'll make them understand.

LIGHTS on the JOURNALIST and YOUNG KONRAD unbuttoning his jacket and webbing. He becomes SHANE.

SHANE

I had no idea where she was going with this. It was part of her nature. Almost everything she did was a dare...provoke for the sake of it.

JOURNALIST

Jewish Bolshevism responsible for killing millions..a dare?

SHANE

I didn't think she was serious.

JOURNALIST

According to this you supplied her with a list of all the leading Bolsheviks around the time of the Ukrainian famine.

SHANE

That's right.

JOURNALIST

With Jewish names. They had to be Jewish names...

LIGHTS on HELEN.

HELEN

Kagenovich was Stalin's second in command. He orchestrated the Ukrainian famine and he was Jewish!

SHANE

She said it would help "explain" why the Ukrainians turned to Hitler during the war and that would help her with her book.

HELEN

There's others..there has to be! Stalin loved the Jews! They were the core of the Communist Party!

JOURNALIST

And you had no idea what she was actually writing.

SHANE

When I saw where she was going with it, the family biography and so on....I did all that I could to get her to drop it I swear but it was as if she was looking forward to a confrontation. She's fearless with this sort of thing.

HELEN

I can't wait for the Jews to take me on!

JOURNALIST

What about her uncle...? Have you ever met him?

Pause.

SHANE

Helen hasn't got an uncle.

JOURNALIST

Her whole story is based on him.

SHANE

I can tell for a fact she doesn't have a Ukrainian uncle.

JOURNALIST

What are you talking about?

SHANE

Her family, all of them, are English.

JOURNALIST

That's impossible.

SHANE

Helen likes to pretend. She takes it as far as she can. Anyone who knows her couldn't believe it took this long for you guys to figure it out.

LIGHTS on BAILEY and the JOURNALIST. BAILEY holds some press clippings in his hand.

BAILEY

Look at these. The supreme judges of literary taste, (He starts reading from the clippings.) "...brings to light a hitherto unspeakable aspect of Australian migrant experience"..."the real story of a hitherto unspeakable aspect of Australian history..."..."she bravely represents the unspeakable aspect of the Australian migrant experience..."

JOURNALIST

The facts thus far seem to support that Helen is a complete fraud.

BAILEY

She's written a ground breaking first novel-

JOURNALIST

By linking the so-called Jewish persecution of Ukrainians, and their revenge, with joining the SS and taking part in the Holocaust.

BAILEY

Means nothing.

JOURNALIST

Only that in both her fiction and in her life she chose to become the loving daughter and niece of a couple of mass murderers.

BAILEY

We never claimed it was historically accurate. And like all novels...

JOURNALIST

Licences are taken?

BAILEY

Talk to the judges. They anointed the bloody thing.

LIGHTS on HELEN. BAILEY hands her an envelope. She opens it and begins to read. BAILEY stands in the shadows watching.

HELEN

"I apologize to anyone who feels deceived but my belief in the lives of the people I was writing about was so strong that I honestly felt I was writing about my own family. It was done with great compassion and love. I hope my experience does not deter other storytellers from sharing their experience..."

LIGHTS on HELEN, OZOLS and the JEW stand facing the audience. LIGHTS on the trunk. The JEW and OZOLS retrieve clothes from the trunk and get changed. HELEN takes off her Ukrainian folk costume and throws it in the trunk. She is wearing her swimming costume. OZOLS and the JEW stand there facing the audience, looking almost identical to each other. OZOLS lights a cigarette. SOUND of a ship docking in port.

OZOLS

Sure no cigarette?

JEW

No...no thank you.

OZOLS

Your English good?

JEW

Yes.

OZOLS

Where you from?

JEW

Maley...Maley Trostenets.

Pause. OZOLS takes a long drag before speaking.

OZOLS

Sorry...never heard of it.

SOUND of ship. The hustle and bustle of a busy immigration port. KONRAD/OZOLS is still in the dock.

KONRAD/OZOLS

Don't look straight at the camera.

LIGHTS on the JOURNALIST.

JOURNALIST

"The following are draft charges: One. That, between the 24th of July 1942 and the 27th of September 1943 and on more than one occasion, at or near to Maley Trostenets, Belorussia in the USSR, Karlis Ozols, whilst a Lieutenant of that organisation, murdered a number of men, women, and children whose names are unknown and whose numbers were more than thirty."

FLASH of the camera taking their photos.

KONRAD/OZOLS

Now to the left.

YOUNG OZOLS and the JEW turn to the left.

JOURNALIST

"Two. That at the same time and place he aided and abetted the said murders. Three. That at the same time and place he was knowingly concerned in the said murders."

FLASH of the camera.

KONRAD/OZOLS

And the right.

YOUNG OZOLS and the JEW turn to the right.

JOURNALIST

"Four. That at the same time he conspired with his Commanding Officers of the SD and with the Latvian men of the Company he commanded to commit the said murders..."

FLASH of the camera.

KONRAD/OZOLS

Welcome to Australia.

LIGHTS. The SOUND of the national anthem in the background. Both OZOLS SENIOR and YOUNG OZOLS stand to attention. YOUNG OZOLS notices the body lying on a towel. LIGHTS. HELEN sits up. She is wearing a bikini and hat. A book rests across her lap. They notice each other. HELEN goes back to her book. OZOLS undresses and lies next to her. LIGHTS. HELEN is at the local swimming pool on a hot summers day. SOUND of children playing in the background. Warnings from the lifeguards to those in the water.

JOURNALIST

Following Helen's exposure as someone other than a Ukrainian, the book is re-released under her real name. Sales drop significantly. Karlis Ozols, despite the weight of evidence, is never tried for his crimes.

LIGHTS. The dock behind which KONRAD/OZOLS is standing, disappears. He too, basks in the sun and his new found freedom. SHANE sits up.

SHANE

What are you reading?

HELEN

History...

SHANE

(kidding)

Yeah? Which part?

HELEN

The part that people don't know too much about.

LIGHTS. KONRAD/OZOLS and HELEN notice each other. SHANE is in his own world.

KONRAD/OZOLS

What are you doing here?

Pause.

HELEN

Speak in Ukrainian...

KONRAD/OZOLS

(in Ukrainian)

Your father know you dressed like that?

HELEN leans back with a smile on her face.

HELEN

If war criminals were living around here Shane...were your neighbours,
friends...what would you do?

LIGHTS fade.

The End

