

THE ANGEL ON THE BLACKBOARD

CHARACTERS

A young woman

A man of forty

A soldier

They neither speak nor understand each others' languages.

Their native countries adjoin each other.

War brings them together.

SETTING

The scene is a small barn or shed in

a far-off mountainous region.

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ACT ONE

The man of forty is sitting on a box examining or cleaning a camera. He puts it into a bag and takes out another camera. All of a sudden he raises his head and listens. Rapidly he puts the camera back and gets to his feet. He picks up the bag and a second bag and hides. After a pause the young woman's face is seen in the chink of the door. She takes a wary peep at the room and enters carrying a small travelling-bag or rucksack. She looks around. It is evident that she has never been in the barn before. It is also evident that she is tired and scared. She becomes aware of the man and is on the point of screaming, but he makes a soothing gesture: don't!

THE MAN

Valfivi dy prosteru?

She doesn't answer.

Ne conpradi?

She is terrified and doesn't answer.

Erks?

Obviously she doesn't understand.

You don't understand?

She is still scared and doesn't answer.

You do speak English, don't you?

She doesn't answer.

I think you do. Most people your age speak English.

She doesn't answer.

Where do you come from?

She doesn't answer.

You do understand what I'm saying, don't you?

THE WOMAN

Yes.

THE MAN

Where do you come from? ... Atamania?

She doesn't answer.

Are you alone?

THE WOMAN

I ... I ...

She turns to the door.

THE MAN

Don't go. You are safe here.

THE WOMAN

I think I ...

THE MAN

Don't be afraid.

THE WOMAN

Who are you?

THE MAN

I won't hurt you. I'm not a soldier.

She turns to the door.

You'd better stay.

THE WOMAN

Are you the owner?

THE MAN

Take it easy. Nobody's going to hurt you.

He opens his arms as if he wants to show her that he is harmless.

Won't you sit down?

He points at the box.

Please.

She remains standing.

You haven't been here before, have you? ... In this part of the country? This region?

She doesn't answer.

You've come to hide out, haven't you?

She doesn't answer.

You are safe here. It's true. You're safe. Why don't you sit down? You look tired.

She remains standing.

You're fleeing, aren't you? ... Fleeing?

She doesn't answer.

You know, running away from the war in Atamania? Your country.

She doesn't answer.

You're not going to tell me anything?

She doesn't answer.

Okay, there's a war on and you don't trust me. Why should you?

THE WOMAN

If I go ...

THE MAN

Yes?

THE WOMAN

Will you follow after me?

THE MAN

You shouldn't go. You are safe here.

There is a pause, he looks at her, she lowers her eyes.

You are fleeing, it's obvious. ... You can't fool me.

THE WOMAN

I'm not trying to.

THE MAN

Are you alone?

She doesn't answer.

You don't trust me, do you?

THE WOMAN

I don't know who you are.

THE MAN

Don't be afraid, I won't call the police. I asked because somebody might be waiting outside.

THE WOMAN

No.

THE MAN

Your husband?

She shakes her head.

Perhaps a friend?

THE WOMAN

No husband. No friend.

THE MAN

I can trust you?

THE WOMAN

If I had a husband ...

THE MAN

Yes?

THE WOMAN

He would have go in first.

THE MAN

Yes. ... Of course he would. ... No husband.

THE WOMAN

No friend either. Nobody.

THE MAN

Was your husband killed?

She doesn't answer.

Sorry. I shouldn't have asked.

THE WOMAN

You spoke Hebesian. This is your country, Hebesia?

THE MAN

Yes. ... You are in Hebesia.

THE WOMAN

So I'm safe? ... Safe from ... you know?

THE MAN

I told you. You've crossed the boundary. There's nothing to be afraid of. You are in Hebesia. Neutral ground. You know, neutral? We don't take part in your war.

He makes a gesture inviting her to sit down, but she remains standing.

THE WOMAN

Are you the owner?

THE MAN

It doesn't matter who I am.

THE WOMAN

If you are not the owner ...

THE MAN

Don't be afraid. I'm not your countryman, but I'm not your enemy either. I'm Hebesian.

THE WOMAN

Where are we?

THE MAN

In the mountains.

She looks at him, bewildered and suspicious.

In a shed. ... Which I do not own.

He shrugs his shoulders and gives her a wry smile.

I'm not kidding. This place hasn't got a name. We are far from everything. And very far from the battlefield.

THE WOMAN

The battlefield?

THE MAN

You know, the place where the soldiers fight. The front line.

THE WOMAN

There is no front line.

THE MAN

No front line? There has been a war on for two years. Of course there's a front line.

THE WOMAN

No.

THE MAN

No?

THE WOMAN

The war is all over.

He looks at her, thoughtfully.

May I go now?

THE MAN

You shouldn't go. We are too near the boundary, it might be dangerous to go outside. You were lucky. ... If you want to leave, wait for the darkness. ... Until then ...

Again he points at the box. Until now she has been standing on the same spot with the bag in her hand. Now she moves to the box and sits down.

I'm sorry I can't offer you anything. Neither food nor drink.

THE WOMAN

This is not your home?

THE MAN

No. It's just a shed. I don't live here.

THE WOMAN

Who live here?

THE MAN

Nobody lives here. It's just a shed.

THE WOMAN

Are you sure?

THE MAN

Yes.

THE WOMAN

Why are you staying here?

He doesn't answer.

I mean, do you work here?

THE MAN

I'm not working now.

THE WOMAN

Why don't you go, then?

THE MAN

When you came in I was on the point of leaving.

THE WOMAN

Going home?

THE MAN

I think so.

THE WOMAN

You have a home near by?

He doesn't answer.

Haven't you?

THE MAN

Yes.

THE WOMAN

Why don't you go home now?

THE MAN

Well ... I think there's a very simple reason. You can't walk away from someone who needs your help, can you?

THE WOMAN

You'll help me?

THE MAN

Of course I will. I was just wondering who you were.

THE WOMAN

I see. *After a lull:* My name is Mana.

THE MAN

Mana. Young, not married.

THE WOMAN

No.

THE MAN

Perhaps a boyfriend?

She doesn't answer.

Well, none of my business?

THE WOMAN

Who are you?

THE MAN *hesitates*

John.

THE WOMAN

John?

THE MAN

Yes. ... My dad and mum gave me an English name.

THE WOMAN

So?

He looks at her, not understanding.

What are you going to do?

He doesn't answer.

Take me to your home?

THE MAN

I think so.

THE WOMAN

When?

He doesn't answer.

Now?

THE MAN

Aren't you too tired?

THE WOMAN

No.

THE MAN

We won't go now. As I told you we'd better wait for the darkness.

THE WOMAN

Why?

THE MAN

We might be spotted.

THE WOMAN

Spotted?

He holds his hands as if he was looking through binoculars.

THE MAN

You see, they might cross the boundary and follow us. There is nobody there to prevent them.

She nods. After a moment she opens her bag. He follows her movements with his eyes. She takes out a crumpled paper with some biscuits. She opens the paper and offers him.

No thanks.

She doesn't lower her hand.

I'm not hungry.

THE WOMAN

Just one?

THE MAN

I can't.

THE WOMAN

Yes you can. ... I won't eat if you don't eat.

He takes one biscuit. They both eat. Suddenly he spots something on the floor at the place where she stood in the beginning.

THE WOMAN

What's the matter?

He kneels and touches it with his fingertips. He looks at her, embarrassed.

THE MAN

Are you hurt?

THE WOMAN

No.

THE MAN

It's blood?

She turns away.

Why didn't you tell me? You need ...

THE WOMAN *cuts him short*

I am not hurt.

THE MAN *not understanding*

But ... You can't ...

THE WOMAN *cuts him short*

Please! ... It's just ... you know ...

Short lull, then the man understands.

THE MAN *embarrassed*

Sorry. I didn't ... well ...

She doesn't look at him, she doesn't answer. There is a pause.

Haven't you got any ... what do you call it?

THE WOMAN

No.

THE MAN

I've got a handkerchief?

THE WOMAN

Don't talk about it. Please?

THE MAN

Okay.

She offers him a biscuit.

THE WOMAN
Have another?

He takes one.

THE WOMAN
Your home ... is it far from here?

THE MAN
You have walked a long way today, haven't you?

THE WOMAN
Yes.

THE MAN
Where do you come from?

THE WOMAN
I am born in Kapu.

THE MAN
Kapu?

THE WOMAN
It's a suburb north of the river.

THE MAN
I know. And you come from Kapu?

THE WOMAN
Yes.

THE MAN
You've gone for more than one day, then.

THE WOMAN
Yes.

THE MAN
A lot of houses were burnt down in Kapu.

THE WOMAN
Yes.

THE MAN
Set on fire by the ...

THE WOMAN *cuts him short*
I know.

A short lull. She doesn't look at him.

THE MAN
You'd rather not talk about it?

THE WOMAN
No.

THE MAN
Thanks for the cake.

THE WOMAN
Irko.

THE MAN
Irko? What does that mean?

THE WOMAN
That's what we say in my language. When somebody say thank you, we say irko. I don't know what they say in English.

THE MAN
They say nothing, as far as I know.

THE WOMAN
I've got water too.

She produces a plastic bottle.

From the river.

THE MAN
I haven't got a cup.

She shrugs her shoulders. Holds out the bottle.

You drink first.

She drinks, hands the bottle to him, he drinks.

Thank you.

THE WOMAN
Irko....

She drinks.

I think it is ...

She hesitates for words, then:

When somebody say thank you it is bad not to say irko. What do you say?

THE MAN

In my language? *He hesitates* God bless you, I think.

THE WOMAN

You are Christian?

THE MAN

Yes. Sort of. And you?

THE WOMAN *hesitates*

I am not.

THE MAN

Muslim?

THE WOMAN

Yes.

THE MAN

You're not dressed like a muslim?

THE WOMAN

In my country young people don't dress like their mothers.
After a lull. Why can't we live together?

THE MAN

Don't blame me.

THE WOMAN

I'm not blaming you.

THE MAN

We shouldn't blame religion either. Religion itself.

THE WOMAN

You're right.

THE MAN

Most people do. They say that all the misery is due to religion. They are wrong. Money is the problem. Money and power. This region is the victim of both. It's a curse. And religion ... well ... it's nothing but a veil to hide what it really is about. ... Poor us. We can't get rid of our silly history.

After a lull, as if he was speaking to himself:

Kapu.

THE WOMAN

Have you been to Kapu?

THE MAN

No. Never.

THE WOMAN

You have never visited Atamania?

THE MAN *hesitates*

Yes. ... Many years ago. ... I was young. ... Your country is very beautiful.

THE WOMAN

It was.

THE MAN

Well, yes. Of course. It was. I suppose the war has ruined a lot. ... But time will pass, it'll be beautiful again.

She looks at him, doubtfully.

I assure you, after some years the war will be forgotten. Christians and Muslims will live side by side as they have done before. That's another part of that silly history. Side by side for a hundred years, peacefully, and then ... suddenly ... all of it over again.

THE WOMAN *after a lull*

I will never forget.

THE MAN

You'll have to.

THE WOMAN

I know. Or rather ... my head knows I have to forget. The problem is, my heart will never be able to.

THE MAN

Don't say that. You've got a long life ahead. Don't spoil it with bad memories.

He waits for her answer. She says nothing. He goes up to the door, opens and looks out.

THE WOMAN

Are we leaving?

THE MAN

No.

THE WOMAN

What time is it?

THE MAN

I don't know. Late afternoon I guess.

THE WOMAN

And nothing to be seen?

THE MAN

No.

He closes the door.

You are good at English.

She doesn't answer.

How come?...You've gone to grammar school, haven't you?

THE WOMAN

Yes.

THE MAN

University?

THE WOMAN

Yes. I was on my first year. The end of it. Two more weeks and I ... You know. I had delivered my papers.

THE MAN

English your main subject?

Suddenly she bursts into tears. It is a violent fit of weeping which she can't get under control. He is in two minds what to do, then he kneels beside her and puts his arm round her shoulder. She reacts by pushing him violently away.

Sorry.

The uncontrolled weeping goes on. She hides her face in her hands.

Was it my fault? ... Something I said?

He puts his hand on her shoulder. She withdraws and

pushes his hand aside.

Sorry. I didn't mean to. ... Don't be afraid of me.

She looks at him, tears are in her eyes.

I won't touch you. Sorry.

She makes an effort and calms down.

It wasn't my intention to ...

THE WOMAN

I know.

*He produces a handkerchief from his pocket.
Hesitates.*

THE MAN

It is not quite clean.

THE WOMAN

It doesn't matter.

*She stretches out her hand. He hands it to her. She
wipes the tears off her face. Hands back the
handkerchief.*

THE WOMAN

Thank you.

THE MAN

Irko.

She smiles.

THE WOMAN

Sorry. It won't happen again.

THE MAN

Was it something I said?

THE WOMAN

No.

THE MAN

Was it ...

THE WOMAN

I won't talk about it. Forget it. Will you? Please?

THE MAN

You're okay?

THE WOMAN

Yes.

THE MAN

It might help....Talking about it.

She shakes her head.

Don't say that. ... You know ... well ... it's hard to explain ... my English isn't good enough ... I mean in such matters ... but if you don't talk about it ... if you keep it inside ... in your heart or wherever your pain is ...

THE WOMAN

There's nothing to talk about. I'm just tired. And too little sleep. That's it, I guess. Tired and too little sleep.

THE MAN

And ...

He refers tactfully to the blood on the floor.

On top of it.

THE WOMAN

Yes.

She closes her eyes and draws a deep breath as if she is thinking: compose yourself, be calm. There's a lull in the conversation. He looks at her for a moment. He picks up an empty sack and wipes off the blood.

THE MAN

I'm sorry I can't help you....I even do not know the words for those ... you know ...

THE WOMAN

You don't have to, have you?

They smile.

THE MAN

I never went to grammar school.

THE WOMAN

You don't learn those words at grammar school.

THE MAN

No, I can imagine. At a grammar school you don't learn about real life. You just sit at a desk reading books.

THE WOMAN

Are books not real life?

THE MAN

I don't think so.

THE WOMAN

I enjoyed reading.

THE MAN

Well, yes. I can imagine that too. Some people do. ... I'm sure, some day you'll be reading again.

THE WOMAN

It won't be the same. They burned down the university.

THE MAN

Yes, I've heard that. A shameful crime. Unnecessary.

THE WOMAN

I was there.

THE MAN

You were?

THE WOMAN

Yes. My professor, he was there too. ... He was shot.

THE MAN

Dead?

THE WOMAN

Yes. ... I saw it.

THE MAN

Some of the students ...

He stops, they look at each other.

THE WOMAN

Yes?

THE MAN

They shot some of the male ones. ... I heard that too.

THE WOMAN

You did?

THE MAN

Yes. You managed to get away?

THE WOMAN

I'll never forget it.

THE MAN

No.

THE WOMAN

Some of them were soldiers, some of them were not. It wasn't war. It was murder. ...*Wondering*: You heard it?

THE MAN

Yes.

She looks at him.

On CNN ... They said that those soldiers will be accused of being war criminals. If they ever find them.

THE WOMAN

I hope they will.

THE MAN

I'm afraid there isn't much chance.

THE WOMAN

You watch the CNN?

THE MAN

Sometimes. ... I think they'll never be found.

THE WOMAN

Don't say that. There was a photographer.

THE MAN

There was?

THE WOMAN

He took pictures.

THE MAN

Are you sure?

THE WOMAN

Yes.

THE MAN

How do you know? You didn't see him, did you?

THE WOMAN

No. Some of my fellow students saw him. They told me when we came back.

THE MAN

You went back to the university?

THE WOMAN

Yes. The fire was still on, but the soldiers had gone.

THE MAN

Why did you go back? It could be dangerous?

THE WOMAN

We had to.

THE MAN

But why?

She hesitates. She is on the point of crying again.

Sorry, I shouldn't ask. Let's talk about something else.

She pulls herself together.

THE WOMAN

We went back to find the bodies.

A pause.

They were not there. Anymore.

A pause.

One of them was ...

He waits for her to finish the sentence, but she doesn't. She trembles.

THE MAN

This photographer?

THE WOMAN

Yes. He took pictures of the soldiers. They were drunk and they boasted, I was told...you know ...

She poses like a drunken soldier, but her attitude also

expresses pain and hatred.

... so...there are pictures. Pictures of the crime. Pictures of the criminals.

THE MAN

And he? The photographer?

THE WOMAN

He disappeared.

THE MAN

Nobody knew him?

THE WOMAN

No. But when the war is over we'll find him.

THE MAN

You and your fellow students?

THE WOMAN

Yes.

THE MAN

And your boy-friend.

She doesn't answer.

You want revenge.

THE WOMAN

No.

THE MAN

Your heart says yes, revenge.

THE WOMAN

My head says no. We have to learn that revenge ... we must get rid of it. It's a silly part of our silly history. ... Vendettas. Stupid pride. Stupid hate. All that 'we are better than you'. It has to stop.

THE MAN

You are not the first to say that.

THE WOMAN

It is true anyway. ... I don't want revenge. I want justice. I want them punished. There must be some law some time ... some international law and somebody to ... what's the word ...

THE MAN

Somebody to execute it.

THE WOMAN

Yes.

THE MAN

You've got the UN.

THE WOMAN

I know. Let's hope. ... Execute. ... Odd word. Execute the law. It also means to put to death, doesn't it?

THE MAN

Yes.

THE WOMAN

Where's the love in that word?

THE MAN *after a lull*

You had a boy-friend you said?

THE WOMAN

Yes. ... He was one of them ...

THE MAN

One of the students ... who ...

THE WOMAN

Yes.

THE MAN

He was ... ?

THE WOMAN

Yes.

THE MAN

Sorry.

THE WOMAN

We never found him.

She trembles, on the point of crying.

THE WOMAN

You see ..

THE MAN

You'd better not talk about it.

THE WOMAN

I want to talk. You said it would help, didn't you? If I keep it in my heart or wherever the pain is ... You said that, remember?

THE MAN

Yes, but you shouldn't tell it to me. ... I'm a stranger. You don't know me.

THE WOMAN

That's ... what do you call it? ... not knowing you ...

THE MAN

An advantage?

THE WOMAN

Yes, an advantage. It's just good, talking to a stranger. I'm afraid I could never tell this to somebody who knows me. So I'll tell it to you. If you still want to listen?

THE MAN

I can't say no, can I?

THE WOMAN

Of course you can.

He opens his arms as if he would say go on.

Thank you.

THE MAN

Irko.

She gives him a faint smile which rapidly disappears from her face.

THE WOMAN

You see ... when we came back the bodies were not there. We asked some people in the houses near by. They said that there came a big ... not a car, but... what do you call it?

THE MAN

A lorry?

THE WOMAN

Yes, a lorry. It carried the bodies away together with the soldiers and the men who were not soldiers. Nobody could tell us where it went. We also tried to find the photographer. Some said he went with the soldiers, some said no, he just disappeared. So we went to the hospital. They had other

bodies there ... many in fact ... but not our fellow students.

THE MAN

And they hadn't seen the grey lorry either, I suppose?

THE WOMAN

Grey?

THE MAN

All their lorries are grey. You didn't find them, did you?

THE WOMAN

No.

THE MAN

You had to give up.

THE WOMAN

Yes.

There's a pause before she goes on.

Together with my parents I went to see his family.

He waits for the continuation, but she doesn't continue.

THE MAN

Words can't describe it?

THE WOMAN

Those words do not exist.

THE MAN

Of course not.

Again there's a pause. She stares into the distance, lost.

Do you feel better now?

THE WOMAN

Better?

THE MAN

Telling me about it? ... Sorry, silly question. I think you've been hit so hard that you can't feel anything at all. Just a big, black hole.

THE WOMAN

Yes, that's how I feel.

THE MAN

And now you're here?

THE WOMAN

Yes.

THE MAN

How come?

THE WOMAN

We just went off.

THE MAN

We?

THE WOMAN

Yes.

THE MAN

You were not alone?

THE WOMAN

No.

He looks at her, inquiringly.

THE MAN

You said you were alone?

THE WOMAN

I'm alone now. ... It's true. I am alone. I'm not lying.

THE MAN

Okay, okay. I believe you. ... I just wondered what happened to the other one?

THE WOMAN

There was more than one.

He waits, but she doesn't continue.

THE MAN

But you won't talk about it?

THE WOMAN

I can't.

THE MAN

Well, you don't have to. ... Main thing is that you managed to cross the boundary. Thank God.

THE WOMAN

God?

THE MAN

Sorry ... Allah.

THE WOMAN

Allah or God, who cares? ... None of them will stop the war.

THE MAN

Probably not. But never mind, as long as you are here nobody will touch you..

THE WOMAN

As long as I am here? You mean ... ? ... Of course. I have to face reality. We're not staying here.

THE MAN

Sorry I shouldn't have said that.

THE WOMAN

It doesn't matter. I have to be realistic ... We are leaving tonight and tomorrow morning you'll take me to the police.

THE MAN

I said I would not.

THE WOMAN

You'll have to.

THE MAN

No way, I'll not take you to the police. Trust me.

THE WOMAN

You've been very kind. I am grateful for that, but of course you can't take care of me for more than a very short time ... perhaps some few hours. Sooner or later you'll take me to some office. ... You'll have to, won't you?

THE MAN

No.

THE WOMAN

At least you'll have to inform somebody, won't you?

He shrugs his shoulders.

Please, don't lie to me. ... You'll have to.

THE MAN

The truth is that I haven't thought about what to do.

THE WOMAN

They can't send me back, can they?

THE MAN

Don't worry. They won't send you back. No refugees are sent back.

THE WOMAN

They will put me in a camp?

THE MAN *hesitates*

I suppose so. You'll be safe there. More safe than here.

He goes up to the door and looks out.

THE WOMAN

This camp...we saw it on the telly ...

THE MAN

You did?

THE WOMAN

Yes. CNN.

THE MAN

I thought it was forbidden to watch foreign telly.

THE WOMAN

Yes, strictly. We did it anyway. So I know the place where I am going.

THE MAN

You don't like to go there, do you?

THE WOMAN

I know I have to.

THE MAN

They'll take care of you. ... I'm sure they have these ... whatever you call them ... you know. ... It's only for a short time. A few months. The war will not last long. When the summer is over ... I don't think they can carry on much longer.

THE WOMAN

I hope you're right.

THE MAN

You'll be home before Christmas.

THE WOMAN

Christmas?

THE MAN

Sorry, December. You'll begin at the university again ... they'll improvise, get some temporary buildings ... you won't forget what you have seen, all the wickedness ... but life will go on ... you're bright and you'll study hard, in a few years you'll get your degree. ... You'll get a job ... you know, after the cloudy days sun will always shine.

THE WOMAN

You are very kind. I shouldn't ... you know ...

THE MAN

The sun is shining now. Look. ... It's a fine view. It's a pity you're not in the mood to enjoy it. You should come back some day...next spring perhaps ... When the flowers bloom and the grass is getting green.

THE WOMAN

I'm not sure I will.

He closes the door.

THE MAN

It helps to talk, doesn't it?

THE WOMAN

Yes, but it doesn't help me to understand.

THE MAN

Understand what? ... War?

THE WOMAN

No. Wickedness. ... I don't understand war either. But wickedness ... pure wickedness ... I can't understand it. Can you?

THE MAN

I don't believe in pure wickedness. I think there is always something behind it ... some sort of ... well ... reason ...it may be crazy, cruel, ridiculous ... maybe reason is not the word ...

THE WOMAN

But cause?

THE MAN

Cause, yes. It may come from hatred, revenge, envy ... fear perhaps ...

THE WOMAN *shakes her head*

No. I've seen it .. Pure wickedness. Without reason. Without cause.

THE MAN *after a lull*

The odd thing is that people like you and me can do something out of ... well ... what seems to be pure wickedness.

THE WOMAN

I couldn't.

THE MAN

That's what you think. I don't like to say it, but yes ... you could.

She looks at him, then looks away.

You know, the soldiers that tortured the prisoners in the German concentration camps they were people like you and me.

THE WOMAN

They were monsters.

THE MAN

No. That's what we like to think. The truth is that most of them were quite ordinary family men. When they came home they kissed their wives and played with their children. They put water on the flowers in their gardens. Have you never heard of that?

THE WOMAN

No.

THE MAN

But that's the truth. We don't understand it, but so it is.

THE WOMAN

They were monsters anyway.

THE MAN

No. They became monsters. Somebody made them.

THE WOMAN

Could you torture?

THE MAN

I? ... No. ... Who would ever answer yes to a question like that? Nobody would. Nobody.

THE WOMAN

Could you?

THE MAN

No, of course I couldn't. That's my answer. I say no to that. ... But at the same time I know it's not the truth ... I can't trust myself. ... I know too much about mankind. ... If I had no choice. You know, like the German soldiers.

THE WOMAN

So, if the situation ... ?

THE MAN *shakes his head*

No! I can't imagine myself torturing somebody. Of course not. The problem is: In what way am I better than the soldier in the concentration camp?

THE WOMAN

You are better.

THE MAN

I am?

THE WOMAN

Yes, I can tell.

THE MAN

You've known me less than an hour.

THE WOMAN

You help me.

THE MAN

Well. Who wouldn't?

THE WOMAN

Yes, who wouldn't?

She looks ahead.

Who wouldn't?

Suddenly...and there is both anger and despair in her

voice:

You want to know?

THE MAN

No. You've told enough.

THE WOMAN

Yes. I've told enough, but I haven't told it all.

THE MAN

Enough is enough.

THE WOMAN

I'll tell you anyway.

He makes a deprecating gesture.

I'll tell you about wickedness. The pain in my heart ... that's what you call it ... it will never get out ... but somebody has to see it ... They've done things to me ...

THE MAN

I know, they killed your boy-friend.

THE WOMAN

Yes, and of course I should have stayed with his dad and mum, but I couldn't. I went to one of my fellow students. Alaka. My best friend. It was late in the evening, anyway some of the others were there too. Girls all of us, except a male student from the council. He said it was too dangerous to stay in town. There were rumours that they were hunting students.

THE MAN

That was when you decided to leave Kapu?

THE WOMAN

We were talking about it. Alaka had already packed a bag. But suddenly we heard a lorry stopping at our house, the door was flung open and soldiers ... with guns in their hands ... they came rushing in ... the boy from the council tried to talk to them ... no use ... they knocked him down and dragged him outside ... you know, we heard the shots ... and later ... when they took us out to the lorries ...

THE MAN

You shouldn't go on.

THE WOMAN

We saw him.

THE MAN

Dead.

THE WOMAN

Dying. ... There were two lorries. Three of us were thrown into the first. The other three into the second. I was scared of course, ... scared to death ... but ... that's very odd ... I looked at Alaka, she had taken her bag with her. ... She had had the ... what do you call it, a cool mind? ... Coolness?

THE MAN

Yes, coolness.

THE WOMAN

I've always admired her, but at that moment ... looking at her face full of anger and hate ... I not only admired her, I loved her. ... They had taken Heno's earrings, pure gold they were, with little pearls. I wondered why they hadn't taken Alaka's ... you know ...

She makes a gesture indicating what she means.

THE MAN

Necklace?

THE WOMAN

Yes. ... They will, she said, just you wait. But they shall not get my ring. She tried to get it off, she would throw it away, but she couldn't. Her fingers were swollen. They had hit her hard with their rifles.

THE MAN *referring to the bag*

It's Alaka's?

THE WOMAN

Yes.

THE MAN

So ... we have eaten Alaka's cakes?

THE WOMAN

Not all of them.

She takes out the crumbled paper and offers him a biscuit. He shakes his head. She doesn't lower her hand.

THE MAN *takes a deep breath*

No.

THE WOMAN

Alaka wouldn't mind.

THE MAN

I know. ...

She doesn't lower her hand. He holds up his hands in a deprecating way.

No thanks.

She takes a biscuit and puts the paper back into the bag, but she doesn't eat.

You'd better stop now.

THE WOMAN

Are we leaving?

THE MAN

No. I meant stop talking. You'd better rest.

THE WOMAN

No. You said it would help and you are right. I can talk about Alaka now without ... you know ...

THE MAN

Without crying?

THE WOMAN

Without getting mad. I know how I'll remember her. Her face in the lorry. Her angry voice. They'll take my necklace, but they won't get my ring. ... Her beautiful necklace with the golden crescent ... I can talk about it now.

THE MAN

Without getting mad. ... I think you're too strong ever to go mad.

There is a pause. She closes her eyes. She moves the hand with the biscuit to her breast. She opens her eyes.

THE WOMAN

Two days ago ... I was afraid I would.

She squeezes the biscuit. She opens her hand and lets

the pulverized biscuit fall to the floor.

You're right. I know I won't get mad.

THE MAN

You'll survive.

THE WOMAN

Yes, I won't die either. ... You see, I thought I would. When the lorry stopped ...

THE MAN

Please.

She looks at him, surprised.

You'd better have a pause. You get upset.

THE WOMAN

No. I had no idea where we were. You see, I had lost my sense of time. We could be far from the city ... or near. I thought they would take us to some prison camp, but when they dragged us out from the lorry, we were in a village. I had never been there before. Nothing was familiar. Some of the houses were burned down and we saw no people. I tried to look and remember, but they hurried to get us into a red building. No doors, no windows.

THE MAN

Red?

THE WOMAN

Yes. Red is not the common colour in our country. I know, but this building was red. ... I'll never forget it. That red colour, I'll find it again some day. They dragged us into the building. It had no furniture, but I soon found out that it was the village school. Alaka, Didu and Heno were dragged into one room, me and Lalo and Cenca into another.

THE MAN

You need not tell me what happened. I can guess.

THE WOMAN

No you can't.

THE MAN

I won't hear about it.

THE WOMAN

Why not? ... All people should know about this. They think

that war...oh, that means soldiers in fine uniforms, fighting against each other, man against man in honourful, glorious combat, heads high and the heart full of noble patriotic sentiments. That's a lie. A big lie. War ... war is ...

After a lull:

They raped me.

She looks at him.

They did.

She waits.

THE MAN

What do you want me to say?

THE WOMAN

I don't know.

THE MAN

I can't say I feel sorry for you, can I?...What other words have I got? ... There are no words. ... You are right, war ... it's a dirty business. No honour. No glory.

THE WOMAN

No.

There's a pause.

They were drunk. ... They began with Lalo. They told her what they were going to do. ... In their bad English. ... I'll never forget their laughter. ... They ripped off her clothes. She couldn't scream, they had put tape on her mouth. ... I know she was a virgin. ... There were six of them ... three of them to hold her, two of them forced us to look ... and one ... no, not one, all six ... one after the other ...

There is a pause.

THE MAN

Yes.

THE WOMAN

When they had finished with Lalo, ... I don't know how long it took, it felt like hours ... they dragged her outside and when they came back they started drinking again. ... And then ... later ... Cenca. ... And later again ... me.

THE MAN

Please.

THE WOMAN

That was not the end of it. Suddenly there was a lot of discussion outside, they shouted and gave orders. It sounded as if something had happened. The soldiers went out. We were alone, but we couldn't talk ... the tape, you know ... Cenca's eyes ... I think she'd gone mad ... Then we heard a lorry. The soldiers came back ... together with some new soldiers ... and then ... they started all over again ... the new ones.

There's a pause.

They left in the morning. But first ...

Again there's a pause. She has to pull herself together to be able to continue.

There were two soldiers left in the room. One of them was big and fat ... his face ...

She shakes her head.

... he shot Cenca and Lalo. ... then he pointed to me and said something to the other. 'Shoot her' I think. Then he went out. ... and ...

There's a pause.

You can't imagine what happened.

He shakes his head.

He looked at me. I looked at him ... straight into his eyes. ... I wanted ... strongly ... that he should remember me ... remember what he was doing. ... He looked away, and then he fired his gun. ... Two times. ... Into the wall.

There's a pause.

When they had all gone, I went to the other room and found ... Alaka ... and ...

THE MAN

The other two ...

THE WOMAN

Yes.

THE MAN

Not alive?

THE WOMAN

No. ... I don't understand why he didn't shoot me.

THE MAN

Out of mercy I think?

THE WOMAN

No, it wasn't mercy.

THE MAN

Shame?

THE WOMAN

No. His eyes didn't say shame. Neither shame nor mercy. His eyes were cruel. He wanted me to live. He knew that I would never forget. He sort of smiled. A muslim girl raped. More cruel than a muslim girl killed. ... He also knew that the rest of my life I'll ask myself, why was I the only one to live? He knew that. ... Pure wickedness.

There's a pause.

I took Alaka's bag ... You know, I couldn't think ... there was only one thing in my head ... get away, Mana, get away ... and now I'm here.

THE MAN

Yes.

THE WOMAN

Safe.

With a wry smile:

Thank God.

THE MAN

Or Allah.

A noise is heard. The door is opened. The soldier appears in the doorway, dressed in uniform.

ACT TWO

The action goes on as if there has been no interval.

THE SOLDIER

Hrensiki va kolla?

He gets no answer.

Nadali?

He gets no answer. His hand moves to the holster.

Eij?

The man makes a deprecating gesture.

Quali quen tenda?

The man opens his arms and shakes his head showing that he doesn't understand.

THE MAN

Njar conprado.

THE SOLDIER

Eij?

THE MAN

Njar conprado. I don't understand.

The soldier looks at him, suspiciously.

You do speak English? ... Don't you? ... English?

THE SOLDIER

Where you from?

THE MAN

Hebesia.

THE SOLDIER

Hebesia?

THE MAN

Yes. I'm Hebesian.

He repeats in 'Hebesian':

'Khreveziano'.

THE SOLDIER *to the man:*
What you do here?

THE MAN
Well, I think we'd better ask you. What are you doing here?

The soldier doesn't answer.

You come from Atamania, don't you?

The soldier doesn't answer.

I'm afraid you've gone astray.

THE SOLDIER
Astray?

THE MAN
Yes. Lost your way. ... You've crossed the boundary, you know. Without noticing. ... Do you understand?

The soldier doesn't answer.

In this area you can't see the boundary, you know. There are no ...

To the woman:

What do you call them ... boundary ...

THE WOMAN
Posts.

THE MAN
Right, boundary posts ... there are no posts at this part of the region. It is wasteland. So ... you have lost your way. ... Do you understand? .. Lost your way. Gone astray. ... You are in Hebesia.

The soldier shakes his head.

Yes, you are. You are not in Atamania any more. This is Hebesia.

THE SOLDIER
No.

He points at the floor. (On the whole it's characteristic of him that he makes gestures when speaking.)

This my house.

THE MAN

Your house?

THE SOLDIER

Yer. ... My house. ...

He points at the landscape outside.

This my land, not Hebesia.

THE MAN

No.

THE SOLDIER

Yer. My house. My land.

He makes another gesture.

Hebesia ... over there. ... Long way.

THE MAN *beginning to doubt*

Over there?

THE SOLDIER

Yer. ... You gone astray.

THE MAN

No.

THE SOLDIER

Yer. ... *Dis trustfully*: ... You am Hebesian?

THE MAN

Yes. ... It's true. I am.

THE SOLDIER

You come here ... all way from Hebesia?

THE MAN

Yes.

THE SOLDIER *points at the open door*

No car?... No bike? ... No mule? ... How you come?

THE MAN

By foot. Walking.

THE SOLDIER

You walking? All way from Hebesia?

THE MAN

Yes.

The soldier shakes his head.

THE SOLDIER

Say something more.

THE MAN

What do you mean?

THE SOLDIER

Something Hebesian.

THE MAN

Hrenci val dor pratli ... fruquita brem vella. ... Do you understand?

The soldier shakes his head.

But it was Hebesian, eh? You could hear that?

THE SOLDIER

Yer.

THE MAN

Well?

THE SOLDIER *to him, pointing at her:*

Wife?

The man hesitates.

THE WOMAN

Yes.

The soldier looks inquiringly at her, then at the man.

THE MAN

Yes. My wife.

THE SOLDIER *to her:*

You walking from Hebesia?

THE MAN

Yes, it took a long time.

THE SOLDIER *to her:*

Walking all way?

THE MAN

Yes.

THE SOLDIER

I talk to her.

THE MAN

Okay.

THE WOMAN

Do you live here?

THE SOLDIER

I said so. This my land. Not Hebesia.

THE WOMAN

And this is your home?

THE SOLDIER

Home?

THE WOMAN

You eat here, you sleep here?

THE SOLDIER

No. Not my home. My house. ... My work house. ...

To him:

What *you* do here?

THE MAN

In your house? Nothing. We haven't done any harm. We were just seeking shelter, you know ... the door wasn't locked ... we thought ... no harm done.

THE SOLDIER

Shelter?

THE MAN

A place to rest, you know. Relax. Lie down. She was tired. We thought it was okay.

THE WOMAN *to the soldier:*
We can leave now. If you want.

THE SOLDIER
Leave?

THE WOMAN
Yes. Go away.

THE SOLDIER
Where to?

THE WOMAN
To Hebesia. We've done nothing.

THE SOLDIER *to the man:*
Back to Hebesia?

THE MAN
Yes.

THE SOLDIER
You come from Hebesia?

THE WOMAN
We want to go home again.

THE MAN
If we can't stay for the night? ... Could we?... It wouldn't do any harm, would it?... We could sleep on the floor? If you don't mind?

The soldier shakes his head. It doesn't mean no, he's just indicating that something is wrong.

We can pay. American dollars?

THE SOLDIER
You not tell truth.

THE MAN
We'll pay.

THE SOLDIER *to her:*
Say something.

THE WOMAN
What do you mean?

THE SOLDIER

Just something ... Hebesian.

THE MAN

She's too tired.

THE SOLDIER *to her:*

Come on.

THE MAN

Please ... let her alone.

THE SOLDIER *to the man:*

I talk to her ... so!

He makes a gesture: shut up! ... To her:

Say something!

She doesn't answer.

You are not Hebesian. Where you come from?

She doesn't answer, neither does the man. The soldier takes her arm.

THE MAN

Don't do that.

THE SOLDIER *to her:*

You come from Atamania?

THE MAN

Please.

The soldier repeats the gesture: shut up!

THE SOLDIER *to her:*

From Atamania?

He shakes her by the arm. She tries to disengage herself, but can't.

Tell me!

She looks at the man and shrugs her shoulders.

THE WOMAN

Yes. I come from Atamania.

THE SOLDIER
So you are Atamanian?

THE WOMAN
Yes.

THE SOLDIER
Run away from war?

THE WOMAN
Yes. I'm a refugee.

THE SOLDIER
A refugee.

THE WOMAN
Yes.

THE SOLDIER
You think you come to Hebesia?

THE WOMAN
Yes.

The soldier let's go of her arm, she sits down.

THE SOLDIER *to the man:*
You see? You gone astray. ... That's the truth. ... So. ... Two
refugees.

THE MAN
No. One.

THE SOLDIER
One?

THE MAN
I'm not a refugee.

THE SOLDIER
Wife is?

THE MAN
Yes.

THE SOLDIER
But you is not?

THE MAN
No.

THE SOLDIER

How come?

THE MAN

It's true. ... I'm Hebesian. Not Atamanian. And I'm not a refugee.

THE SOLDIER

You lie.

THE WOMAN

No. I'm lying. ... I am not his wife. I am Atamanian, he is Hebesian. And we are not together. ... It's true. He was here when I came.

THE SOLDIER

He was? ... *To the man:* You was here?

THE WOMAN

Yes.

THE SOLDIER *to him*

Why?

THE MAN

I just came by. ... I'm travelling. ... You know, people from Hebesia can travel free in your country. Without permission.

THE SOLDIER

I know.

THE MAN

So?

THE SOLDIER

Why is you here?

THE MAN

Why not?

THE SOLDIER

Wasteland. ... Atamania short way.

THE MAN

I'm not a spy. If that is what you think. I just happen to be here. I'm a writer. I'm writing a novel about your country. About the war. I had to visit your country to be able to write about it. Just look around, you know. Meet ordinary people. Do you understand what I'm saying? I've been here for many days. I've talked to a lot of people. I'm on research. That's

what we call it. That's what writers do before they write a book.

The soldier looks at him, doubtful.

Perhaps I'll go to Atamania too. ... When the war is over.

With a sideglance at her:

I think I will.

THE SOLDIER

No car. No bike.

THE MAN

I haven't got a car. Writers are not rich. ... Besides ... I like walking.

THE SOLDIER

You like walking?

THE MAN

I can walk for hours. You see more when you walk. You meet more people.

The soldier nods even if he doesn't believe him. He points at the bag.

THE SOLDIER

Small bag. Very small. For be here many days.

THE MAN

It isn't mine. It's hers.

He fetches his own bag, the one which didn't contain his cameras.

You do trust me now, don't you? ... I put it there when I heard her coming. ... I couldn't know who she was. ... You may open it if you want to.

The soldier looks at him, suspicious. The man opens his bag. The soldier has put his hand on the holster. The man takes out a notepad.

Look. These are my notes. I am a writer.

THE SOLDIER

What's your name?

THE MAN

Kativeri.

THE SOLDIER

First name?

THE MAN

Hecel.

THE SOLDIER

Never heard of you.

THE MAN

I write in Hebesian. ... Besides, I'm not famous.

THE SOLDIER

Famous?

THE MAN

Well known. I'm not well known. I hope to be.

THE SOLDIER

You lie.

He goes up to the door and looks out.

THE WOMAN *to the soldier:*

May we go now?

THE SOLDIER

No.

THE MAN

Why not?

THE SOLDIER *to her:*

To Hebesia?

THE WOMAN

Yes. He said he would take me to Hebesia.

THE SOLDIER

He did?

THE WOMAN

Yes.

THE SOLDIER

No. You can't go.

THE WOMAN

Why not?

The soldier doesn't answer.

You might go.

THE SOLDIER

Me?

THE WOMAN

Yes, go home and leave us alone?

He doesn't answer.

As if you had never seen us?

THE SOLDIER

No.

THE WOMAN

You have a home, haven't you?

THE SOLDIER

You talk too much.

There's a lull, he stands in the doorway looking out.

THE WOMAN

Waiting for somebody?

He doesn't answer.

Waiting for your platoon?

He doesn't answer.

Why haven't we heard them? ... No noise. No cars.

THE SOLDIER

Shut up!

THE WOMAN

You know what I think?

THE SOLDIER

I don't care what you think.

THE WOMAN

I think you've run away from your platoon.

The soldier sneers at her.

You've deserted.

THE SOLDIER *sneering*

Deserted? Nonsense. Why should I? Soldiers who run away, you know ...

He makes a gesture: his hand across his throat.

I'm here ... one days leave. See my family. I go back tomorrow morning.

THE WOMAN

When you've seen your wife and kids?

THE SOLDIER

You talk too much.

THE WOMAN

Haven't you got a wife?

THE SOLDIER

Shut up.

THE WOMAN

A girlfriend?

THE SOLDIER

What did I say?

He makes a gesture: 'shut up' followed by another gesture: hand across the throat. He closes the door.

I might shoot you.

THE WOMAN

I know.

THE SOLDIER

Nobody will miss you.

THE WOMAN

You're wrong. Some people in Kapu will. ... You don't know where Kapu is, do you?

THE SOLDIER

Yes. ... Rich people live in Kapu.

THE WOMAN

Ordinary people too.

THE SOLDIER

You rich?

THE WOMAN

What does it mean to be rich? ... Most of Kapu was set on fire. Rich one day, poor the next. What does money mean when your boyfriend is killed. Money can't buy him back.

THE SOLDIER

Boyfriend? Killed?

THE WOMAN

Yes.

THE SOLDIER

Muslim girls has not boyfriends. Daddy sell them.

THE WOMAN

He does?

THE SOLDIER

For most money.

THE WOMAN

Oh yes, and all Christians believe in Santa Claus.

THE SOLDIER

Don't tell me you run off because of him. Tell truth.

She doesn't answer.

Truth, my pussy, whole truth.

THE MAN

You shouldn't ask her.

THE SOLDIER

If I want ask her, I ask her, okay?

THE MAN

Okay.

THE SOLDIER *to her:*

Why you here?

THE WOMAN

Because my boyfriend was killed. He was shot down at the

university. During the fire.

THE SOLDIER

And so what? A little fire? A soldier killed? Why run off?

THE WOMAN

He wasn't a soldier. He was just a student.

THE SOLDIER

War is war. Why run off?

THE WOMAN

Soldiers shooting at ordinary people, that's not war, that's a crime. I want them punished.

THE SOLDIER

You what?

THE WOMAN

I want them punished. I want to see them in a court house ... before a judge. That's why I'm here.

The soldier gives a sneering laughter.

When the war is over, I'll go back and find out who they were.

THE SOLDIER *grinning*

You will?

THE WOMAN

Yes.

THE SOLDIER

How?

THE WOMAN

You see, there was a photographer. He took a lot of pictures.

THE SOLDIER

Pictures?

THE WOMAN

Yes. There are pictures of them.

THE SOLDIER

Did you saw them?

THE WOMAN

No.

THE SOLDIER

Did you see him?

THE WOMAN

The photographer?

THE SOLDIER

Yes.

THE WOMAN

No, I didn't see him. ... I was told about him. But after the war ... you don't believe what I'm telling you, do you? You think I'm making him up?

THE SOLDIER

No. He was there. I know. Took pictures.

THE WOMAN

You saw him?

THE SOLDIER

No. They told me. He was English they said.

THE WOMAN

There you are.

THE SOLDIER *grinning*

He is a dead man.

THE WOMAN

Dead?

THE SOLDIER

Stone-dead.

THE WOMAN

How do you know?

THE SOLDIER

My platoon got orders to find him.

THE WOMAN

Your platoon? You were at the university? You shot him?

THE SOLDIER

No. Some other platoon was. Idiots. They think, funny photoman ... he is on our side ... they did not ...

He doesn't know the word and stops talking to her.

Go to hell.

THE WOMAN

They didn't suspect him?

THE SOLDIER

No, no suspect.. Why should they? He was with them many days ... good soldiers, he said. Fine work you do. He go with them all over. From university they go to a small town ... far from city. ... Idiots. They should have shot him.

THE WOMAN

Why?

THE SOLDIER

He was not on our side. The headquarter found out. Next morning my platoon got orders: ... go get him.

THE WOMAN

And when you got there ... and found the other platoon?

He makes a gesture.

He was gone?

THE SOLDIER

Yes. They was in a silly old house. No doors, no windows. Nobody see him go. ... They were drunk. Brains out. Photoman, him on our side. Hah.

THE WOMAN

He is still alive then ... somewhere. ... Together with his pictures.

THE SOLDIER

Not for long. Your photoman is a dead man, my pussy.

THE WOMAN

If he is English, someone will ask what happened to him. And who did it.

THE SOLDIER *smiling*

They never will find him. ... Besides, we know something about him ... they will not like to hear it in England.

THE WOMAN

What do you know?

THE SOLDIER

I will not tell you.

THE MAN

I have an offer.

The man goes to his bag. The soldier looks at him, he is on his guard and unbuttons his holster. His hand is on the pistol. He follows the man's movements with his eyes. The man takes out some notes. The soldier relaxes.

Take these. Go to your home. Forget you've been here. Visit your family. Shut your eyes and give us a chance to get off to Hebesia.

The soldier doesn't take the notes.

Don't you understand?

THE SOLDIER

Yer.

THE MAN

No one will ever know.

The soldier sneers at him.

Please.

THE SOLDIER

You trying to buy me?

THE MAN

No. I'm asking for mercy. She is young. She is innocent. ... I'll take her to a refugee camp in Hebesia.

THE SOLDIER

You know what? I don't like you.

THE MAN

I know. But you're not doing it for my sake. You'll do it for her sake. You'll do it because it's the right thing to do. What else? There's no sense in ...

THE SOLDIER

In what? Killing her? I would like it. Atamanians you know -

He turns his heel to and fro as if he was chrushing some insect.

THE MAN

It's all I have. Two hundred and fifty American dollars?

The soldier answers with a scornful laugh.

THE SOLDIER *to her:*
How much have you got?

THE WOMAN
Nothing.

THE SOLDIER
Nothing? ... You lie, my pussy.

THE WOMAN
Why should I?

THE SOLDIER *to the man:*
Take her bag. ... Open.

The man opens Alaka's bag. He takes out the crumbled paper with the biscuits, the bottle, a train case, a towel, a change of clothes and underwear etc. He shows that the bag is empty.

Go on.

In an outside pocket the man finds a purse or wallet. He takes out some notes.

American dollar?

THE MAN
Yes.

THE SOLDIER
How much?

The man hesitates.

Come on.

THE MAN *counts*
One hundred.

The soldier stretches out his hand. The man hands the notes to him.

THE SOLDIER *to her:*
Rich one day, poor the next.

THE WOMAN
It's not my bag.

The soldier laughs scornfully.

THE WOMAN
It's Alaka's. It's her money.

THE SOLDIER
Alaka's?

THE WOMAN
My best friend.

THE SOLDIER
From Kabu?

THE WOMAN
Yes.

THE SOLDIER
Another rich pig. Where is she now?

THE WOMAN
She died.

The man offers the soldier the 250 dollars.

THE MAN
Please let us go.

The soldier doesn't take the money. He even doesn't look at the man. He looks at her with a sardonic smile.

THE SOLDIER *jeers at her:*
Best friend died.

THE WOMAN
Yes.

THE SOLDIER
But you got the bag?

THE MAN
Three hundred and fifty dollars?

The soldier still doesn't take notice of him.

THE WOMAN
You want to know how she died?

THE SOLDIER

No.

THE WOMAN

I'll tell you anyway. She was raped. And shot. Do you want to know when?

THE SOLDIER

No. I don't care.

THE WOMAN

Last night. Do you want to know where?

THE SOLDIER

No.

THE WOMAN

In the red village school. No doors, no windows.

THE MAN *to her:*

You shouldn't ..

THE WOMAN *cuts him short:*

Yes. I should. We can't go on playing cat and mouse.

To the soldier:

You were there ...

THE SOLDIER

Yer. ... And so were you?

THE WOMAN

Yes.

There's a pause, the soldier still smiles his sardonic smile.

THE SOLDIER

I know him.

THE WOMAN

Him?

THE SOLDIER

Yer.

THE WOMAN

Who do you know?

THE SOLDIER

Man who raped.

THE WOMAN

You raped.

THE SOLDIER

No. He raped.

THE WOMAN

There was more than one.

THE SOLDIER

Yer. But him he was the most ...

He moves his abdomen to and fro.

... you know. He liked it. ... You also know him.

THE WOMAN

Do I?

THE SOLDIER

Yer. ... Guess. ... Your photo-fellow. ... Yer. ... The guy who took pictures. He was there all night. He raped her.

THE WOMAN

No.

THE SOLDIER

Many times.

THE WOMAN

No.

THE SOLDIER

Yer, he did.

THE WOMAN

You're lying. You never saw him. When you came he was gone.

THE SOLDIER

They told me all about him.

THE WOMAN

It must be someone else. It can't be him, he was not on your side ... you said that yourself.

THE SOLDIER

He raped her, my pussy. He raped the other girls too.

THE WOMAN

You're lying.

THE SOLDIER

Why should I? He fixed them all three. ... Yer. ... And he liked it. He liked it. ... Who cares? ... *sneering*: Atamanian girls. Heh.

THE WOMAN

You're making it up.

THE SOLDIER

No.

THE WOMAN

You raped them. You shot them.

THE SOLDIER

I was not there.

THE WOMAN

Yes you were.

THE SOLDIER

No.

THE WOMAN

When you came ... in the morning ... you and your platoon ... some of you went into my room. But you ... you went into the other room where Alaka was, and Dido and Heno.

THE SOLDIER

No.

THE WOMAN

You must have been there.

THE SOLDIER

Must?

THE WOMAN

At that time all my friends were still alive. You raped them. Afterwards you shot them.

THE SOLDIER

No!

THE WOMAN

Where were you if you were not in the red school?

THE SOLDIER

Nonsense. ...

To the man:

She is ...

THE WOMAN

I saw the bodies. They were naked and there was blood all over.

He points at his head to indicate that she's gone mad.

THE SOLDIER *to the man:*

What do you call it?... Mad?

THE MAN

I don't know.

THE SOLDIER

Yer you know. ... Mad?

THE MAN

Yes, mad. Out of her mind.

THE WOMAN

No. I'm not.

THE SOLDIER

Out of your mind.

THE WOMAN

I'm not.

She rushes at the soldier and beats him. The man comes to assistance. The soldier is knocked over. The pistol falls to the floor. The woman picks it up. The men fight.

Stop it. ... Stop.

They look at her, she's pointing at them with the gun. They stop fighting. To the man:

Get up.

To the soldier:

Not you.

The man rises. The soldier remains sitting.

THE MAN

Shoot him.

THE WOMAN

No. ... *To the soldier:* ... Get away. Over there.

He moves to the wall, still sitting. After a moment he smiles. A wry, sardonic smile which stays on his face for the next minutes.

THE MAN

Why don't you shoot him?

She doesn't answer.

He raped Alaka.

THE WOMAN

Yes.

THE MAN

He shot her.

THE WOMAN

Yes.

THE MAN

He raped the other girls too. ... Your friends. ... He shot them.

THE WOMAN

I know.

THE MAN

If you can't ... I can. Give me the gun.

She doesn't react.

There's a war on.

THE WOMAN

You need not tell me.

THE MAN

This is war.

He stretches out his hand. She shakes her head.

Why not?

THE WOMAN

We're not soldiers.

He tries to take the gun from her. She points at him with the gun and makes a gesture: keep away.

THE MAN

Stupid ass. ... You want justice in stead of revenge. Is that it?

She doesn't answer.

Well then. Execute justice.

THE WOMAN

And execute? ... No. This is not a court room and I'm not the hangman either..

THE MAN

You're right. It's not a court room, it's a battlefield. He's your enemy. You have to do something.

She doesn't answer He shakes his head and goes up to the soldier's rucksack. He opens it and turns it upside down. He ransacks the contents and finds a golden necklace.

You want evidence, don't you? For your court room? A golden chain. With a half moon.

He holds it up.

You want a close look?

She shakes her head.

Isn't this proof enough? A real judge would say yes. ... Shoot him.

THE WOMAN *to the soldier:*

Say something.

THE SOLDIER *still smiling*

Why? You say I lie.

THE MAN

It's Alaka's.

THE SOLDIER

Is it? How do you know?

THE MAN

A golden chain with a half moon.

THE SOLDIER *still smiling*

How come you know?

THE MAN

Shoot him.

THE SOLDIER

You got two bags.

THE MAN

You raped Alaka. You stole her chain.

THE SOLDIER

What you got in other bag?

THE MAN

You shot her.

THE SOLDIER *to the woman:*

Ask him.

THE MAN

He's talking nonsense.

THE SOLDIER *to the woman:*

He got two bags. Look.

*He points at the place where the man's second bag
has been hidden since the beginning of the play.*

THE MAN *to the woman*

Caridi!

THE WOMAN

What?

THE MAN

Don't listen to him. It's a trick. ... You can't fool us.

THE SOLDIER *to the woman*

In there.

*She turns to look and catches sight of the man's bag.
She lifts it out from the hiding-place. She lifts up one*

*of the cameras by the strap and looks at the man.
There's a pause. She's waiting for him to speak, but
he doesn't.*

THE WOMAN *to the man:*

So the photographer wasn't English.

THE MAN

You don't believe what he told you ... do you? ... I'm a
writer.

The soldier laughs derisively.

It's true, I'm a writer. I come from Hebesia. You want
evidence?

*He puts the chain on the floor and takes out the
notepad from the first bag.*

Look. The notes for my novel.

She shakes her head.

You don't want to see them?

THE WOMAN

No.

THE MAN

That's not fair. You talked about justice, didn't you?

He holds out the notepad. She doesn't take it.

THE WOMAN

Put it there.

*She indicates that he shall put the notepad on the
floor.*

THE MAN

You don't trust me?

THE WOMAN

No. ... Put them there.

THE MAN

Okay.

*He puts the notepad on the floor. She picks it up and
turns over the leaves.*

THE WOMAN

Four pages.

THE MAN

I might translate.

THE WOMAN

What for?

THE MAN

You can't read them, can you?

THE WOMAN

Four pages. The rest are blank.

THE MAN

And so what? They are notes anyway.

THE WOMAN

Notes for a novel?

THE MAN

You have to believe me.

THE WOMAN

I wish I could. Books are not real life. Do you remember?
Would a writer say that?

THE MAN

I didn't mean it.

THE WOMAN

You were in the red village school.

THE MAN

No I was not.

THE WOMAN

Where else should you come from?

THE MAN

From Hebesia. I told you. Hebesia.

THE WOMAN

And you talked to a lot of people. In this wasteland?

THE MAN

I did.

THE WOMAN

So near the boundary? So near the village school? A writer with a bag full of cameras? ... I'm sorry, I can't believe you.

THE MAN

You have to, like it or not. We have to get out of here and get home to Hebesia. We have to collaborate.

THE WOMAN

Home to Hebesia.

THE MAN

You'll be safe there. What other choice have you got? ... We can be off in half an hour. ... If you don't want to shoot him we can tie him up. There's plenty of rope. ... He won't be able to follow us.

THE WOMAN

No.

THE MAN

I'll carry your bag.

THE WOMAN

Carry my bag?

THE MAN *to the soldier*

What the hell are you smiling at?

THE WOMAN

I'll go nowhere together with you. I'd rather die.

THE MAN *after a lull*

Okay. ... Okay. ... I was there ... at the red school ... and I ... but it was not as you think ...

To the soldier:

And not as you told her.

To her:

You see, I had been in Atamania for six months. Hired to cover the war for an English newspaper. I was at the university when somebody found out that my pictures ... they might be a ... what do you say? ... a menace? ... a menace to the army. Violation of the Human Rights, things like that, you know. I tried to get away, but no. I was tied up and cast on a lorry. ... Later in the evening your fellow students ... the three of them ...

THE WOMAN

You were in the same lorry?

THE MAN

Yes. ... And the same room at the village school. A classroom ... there was a drawing on the blackboard ... a child's drawing ... an angel ... You know what they did? ... They put a gun against my head and forced me ... you've got no choice they said ... I had to take part in that ... you know ... that ugly ... Yes, I did what I should never have done, but if I hadn't done it ... I'm no hero ... and I won't ask you to forgive me ... I can't forgive myself, you know ... and that angel ...

THE WOMAN

Angel?

THE MAN

Yes, with two eyes looking at me ... and great wings ...

THE WOMAN

Strange, isn't it? An angel in a muslim country?

THE SOLDIER *to her:*

He liked it, my pussy. He liked it.

THE MAN

You must believe me ... there was an angel, and she looked at me. I'll be haunted by that angel the rest of my life.

THE SOLDIER

You liked it. Sure you did.

THE MAN

No! No!

THE SOLDIER *to her*

You see, you can't force a man to rape, my pussy. It is impossible.

THE WOMAN *to the man*

You said you could never torture. Of course not. But at the same time you knew ... that you ... like the german soldiers in the concentration camps ...

THE MAN

Yes. ... I know. I ended up there.

THE WOMAN

Should I have mercy?

He shrugs his shoulders.

I'll tell you why you ended up like that.

THE MAN

There is no why. It just happened.

THE WOMAN

No. Remember what you said ... there is always some sort of cause behind. It may be cruel or ridiculous or something else, but there's always a cause. ... You ended up there because you never asked yourself: Whose side am I on? You never took sides. You took pictures. Hiding behind a camera. Watching. 'I don't want to be involved. Oh no. Not me. Pictures, that's what I want'.

THE MAN

Okay, okay, scorn me. I deserve it. I know. You have the full right to ... but don't forget ...

THE WOMAN

Forget what?

THE MAN

I'm involved now.

THE WOMAN

In what way?

THE SOLDIER

Yer, whose side are you on?

THE WOMAN

Tell us.

THE SOLDIER

Yer, tell us.

The soldier crawls up to the bag with the cameras.

THE WOMAN

Stay where you are.

He ignores her and takes out a film cartridge. He looks inquiringly at the man and pretends that he is pulling the film out of the cartridge.

THE SOLDIER

Should I? ... Yer? ... No?

He pulls out the film.

Okay?

He gets to his feet.

THE WOMAN

No! Stay!

The soldier smiles and goes towards her. She panics and tries to fire the gun, but it won't go off. He takes the gun and releases the safety catch.

THE SOLDIER *smiling*

You see? Now it is ready.

To the man:

Ready for use.

A pause. To her:

Pussy, what you want now?

THE WOMAN

Me?

THE SOLDIER

Kill him?

THE WOMAN

I want this nightmare to stop.

THE SOLDIER *smiling*

Good idea. How?

THE WOMAN

It's up to you, isn't it?

THE MAN

You are not going to kill us, are you?

THE SOLDIER

I would like to kill you. But ... I am not sure I will.

THE WOMAN

And me?

THE SOLDIER

I don't know.

To the man:

I think you can go.

The man looks at him, bewildered.

Yes. You can go.

THE MAN *to the woman:*

We may go.

THE SOLDIER *to the man:*

No. You may go.

To the woman:

You want follow him?

THE MAN

Yes. She wants to get out of here. I'll take her to Hebesia.

THE WOMAN

No.

THE MAN

Can't you forgive me? ... They forced me.

THE WOMAN

What's the good of my forgiving you? Your angel will never forgive you, will she?

THE MAN

I want to save you. Forgive me or not. It doesn't matter.

THE WOMAN

I was in that classroom too.

THE MAN

?? ... No.

THE WOMAN

Yes I was. When everybody else had gone. I told you. Don't you remember?... There was no angel on the blackboard.

THE SOLDIER

No angel.

THE WOMAN

Go to Hebesia, John ... or whatever your name is.

The man looks at the soldier. The soldier shrugs his shoulders and points at the door. The man picks up his two bags.

THE SOLDIER

No. Not the bags.

THE MAN

I can't take them with me?

THE SOLDIER

No.

The man puts the bags on the floor.

You want stay?

For a moment the man can't make up his mind.

THE MAN

No.

The soldier opens the door. The man heads at it.

THE WOMAN

I wish for you ...

The man stops and looks at her.

I wish for you that your angel will never haunt you.

The man goes out. The soldier follows after him and closes the door. A shot is heard. The soldier comes back. He puts the pistol in the holster.

THE SOLDIER

No angel. No haunt.

There's a pause. They look at each other.

No questions?

THE WOMAN

No. ... I know the answers.

He picks up the necklace and goes up to her. He puts it round her neck. He stands back to look at her. She doesn't lower her eyes. He scrapes together a heap of hay on the floor.

You are going to rape me, aren't you?

THE SOLDIER

Is that a question?

THE WOMAN

No. ... I need not ask.

The soldier picks up the sack. It is his intention to spread it out upon the hay, but he becomes aware of the blood. He looks at it with disgust, then at the floor and then at her.

THE SOLDIER

You ... ???

THE WOMAN

Yes.

THE SOLDIER

From ... ?

THE WOMAN

Yes.

There's a pause. Then he puts back the sack. He goes up to the door and opens it. He points.

THE SOLDIER

Hebesia.

She picks up Alaka's bag. She stands for a moment. Then she points at the bag with the cameras.

No.

She goes towards the door. Without looking at her he hands her the notes. She goes out. He closes the door and takes out another film cartridge and pulls out the film. The lights dim. He takes out one more cartridge and pulls out the film. Blackout.

THE END

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