

MIXED BLOOD¹

A play in 3 Acts
by Joe A. Oppenheimer

Saturday, February 9, 2019

LOGLINE: Two grandfathers who have bonded over grandchildren in post war Germany find their family torn asunder when their granddaughter uncovers the work one of them did with Mengele.

DRAMATIC DESCRIPTION: In Mixed Blood, the daughter in a German family uncovers her grandfathers' activities in WWII. The drama takes place in 1968. The family consists of a Jewish father, a Christian mother, their two children, and the children's grandfathers, who though from very different backgrounds, have bonded as close friends. The Jewish grandfather spent the war hidden in the German army. The mother is reluctantly pushed to verify that the other grandfather, her father, had worked with Mengele in Auschwitz. The family grapples with the unfolding facts to save their family and identify a moral way forward. The play is loosely based on fact.

1. Some acknowledgments are due. Although the inspiration for this story comes from my understanding of the history of some parts of my family, the facts and personalities portrayed here are purely fictional. The writing of this play would never have happened if the Bethesda Literary Festival had not given me an award to take Richard Washer's course at The Writer's Center. Richard's careful criticism and encouragement was instrumental in the shaping of this drama. Amin Ahmad, a masterly writing instructor at the same institution, must except partial blame, for he originally encouraged me to do something with this story. Great help with the opening scene came from my friend Bernard Moore. My wife, Bonnie gave me critical feedback over, and over again. My son, Joshua, his husband Shu, sister Cathy, and Bonnie gave it an important first read-through and then encouraged numerous changes for the better. Two other friends gave me important feedback: Barry Passett and Robert Bein. A big debt to the very talented members of Washington Creative Writers Club, a Meetup Writer's Group. They gave me detailed feedback on each scene: some twice. And I am sure I have inadvertently left out some who have substantially contributed to this project. Thanks to all!

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Characters (in order of appearance):

FRITZ: father of Hildegarde. (age about 70) (Dad, Poppsi, Papa) b1898

HEINRICH: Son (age 11) (Heine) b57

SARAH: Daughter (age 15) b53

HILDEGARDE: Mother of Heinrich and Sarah. Married to Benjamin (age about 37) (Hilda) b31

BENJAMIN: Father (age about 43) (Ben, Poppa) b25

JÜRGEN: father of Benjamin. (age about 70) (Grandpa) b1898

Setting:

A middle class family in Germany, 1968.

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– Act I –

Scene 1 - (1,717 words)

Setting: The interior of a middle class home in 1968, Frankfurt, a/m, Germany, showing living / dining room and adjoining kitchen and Heinrich's bedroom. Living room should have couch, couple of chairs with small table between for chess/drinks. Chess game is advanced.

Fritz, who was sitting in a chair, reading the newspaper, gets up, walks around, takes a glass of water, scans the chess game on the table, sits back down, reads. . . .

A bustling at the door and Heine comes in. Heine runs, drops his school bag, coat, etc., on the floor and flings himself into Fritz's waiting arms.

- Heinrich:** Hi Poppsi! I hoped you'd be here!
- Fritz:** Well, here I am, buddy! (*Hugging while seated*) Mom didn't warn you?
- Heinrich:** Nope.
- Fritz:** You're looking fine. But you should pick up your coat. Any thing new?
- Heinrich:** Yup. I made a model. Finished putting it together yesterday. Want to see it?
- Fritz:** Of course. What's the model of?
- Heinrich:** You won't tell Mom?
- Fritz:** Why not?
- Heinrich:** I'm not supposed to do war stuff. She gets angry about war.
- Fritz:** That's true.
- Heinrich:** Why?
- Fritz:** Why what?
- Heinrich:** Why does she get angry about war stuff?
- Fritz:** I think it just brings up bad memories. Did you build it from a kit?
- Heinrich:** Course. Come - I'll show you –
- Fritz:** What's the model of?
- Heinrich:** Promise you won't tell her?
- Fritz:** OK. Promise.
- Heinrich:** It's a U-boat. Come see it.
- Fritz:** Oh, that's exciting. Where is it?

Heinrich: In my room, of course. *(He grabs Fritz's hand and attempts to pull him out of the chair. Fritz resists playfully)* Come on Poppsi! *(Fritz gets up.)*

Fritz: OK. Onward! To the U-boat! . . . *(they exit together . . . then only heard from Heine's room)* Oh, look at that! Nice! Very nice.

Heinrich: What are all these decals for?

Fritz: Those are symbols that were on the ships during the war. You know, national symbols. And fleet numbers to identify the boats and their groupings. See, like on the cover of the box. *(Door closes, the rest of their conversation is lost, but heard as having a conversation.)*

Sarah enters. She hangs up her coat, hat. Puts her school bag on the dining table. Examines the chess game. Leaves the stage for her room. Turns on her radio playing German pop music. off stage. Fritz reenters.

Fritz: *(Door of Heine's room opens)* Sarah? That you?

No answer. Fritz walks into the room. Sees her backpack.

Sarah, did you come in?

Sarah: *(turns music down. Shouts)* Yup, it's me. Just a sec, Poppsi.

Sarah re-enters, enthusiastically greets her grandfather.

Sarah: Hey-hey! Poppsi! And it isn't a weekend or even dinner time!

Fritz: Just a minute, lady! Wait on the teasing. Don't I get a hug?

Sarah: *(Laughing)* Oh, Poppsi. *(Gives him a hug and then goes to look through her school bag, taking out papers and books. In a habitual way, bites her nails. He goes back to the newspaper.)*

Fritz: Your Mom's not planning dinner for me. I'm just giving a hand so she can finish up her application for that research grant. *(He turns and retakes the newspaper.)*

Heine re-enters

Heinrich: So you liked my model?

Fritz: I told you, it's great.

Heinrich: Let's go back to my room, Poppsi. We can put on the decals.

Fritz: One minute, let me finish this article.

Sarah drifts back to examine the chess set. In a habitual way, bites her nails.

Sarah: Who's white?

Fritz: I am, what of it?

Sarah: You're going to lose.

Fritz: Think so?

Sarah: Yup.

Fritz: OK, Heine, to the decals!

Heine and Fritz amble off together back to Heine's room. Sarah sits at the table and studies. Occasionally bites her nails. Hildegard enters, puts down bags of groceries.

Hildegard: Hi Sarah. *(Seeing her bite her nails.)* Everything going well here? . . . And honey, I wish you wouldn't bite your nails.

Sarah: Yup.

Hildegard: Can you give me a hand with these?

Sarah: Sure. *(Starts helping by putting away some groceries)*

Hildegard: *(Takes off her coat, scarf, etc. grabs a towel to dry her hair.)* Is Popsi here?

Sarah: Yup, he's in with Heine.

Fritz: *(Reenters and goes over to Hilda)* All's fine. . . . So how's meine kleine Mädchen?

Hildegard: *(Laughing)* Poppa, I'm hardly your little girl anymore. Thank God. I'm a married moth-

Fritz: Oh, come on -

Hildegard: Once upon a time, Poppa. But look at me - all grown up, two kids, getting an advanced degree Your work's done.

They laugh, hug.

Fritz: Well, maybe. I prefer to think a father's work is never done.

Hildegard: You think? I'll always be your little girl?

Fritz: Well, I dream *(goes back to the newspaper).*

Heine comes in.

Hildegard: Thanks, sweetie. And how was your day, Heine?

Heinrich: OK.

Hildegard: School was good?

Heinrich: I just said, 'OK.'

Sarah: Oh Mom, you got chutney . . . thanks!

Hildegard: OK's not much of an answer. Maybe I shouldn't ask.

Heinrich: Maybe.

Hildegard: Didn't you learn anything new?

Heinrich: Nope.

Hildegard: Nothing you didn't know this morning?

Heinrich: Never happens.

Hildegard: Was Frau Weller back?

Heinrich: I already told you, yesterday. She came back. If you don't care enough to remember, why are you asking?

Hildegarde: She did? . . . Oh, yes . . . sorry. *(Heine walks out.)*

Sarah: *(Repeats)* Thanks for getting chutney.

Hildegarde: I think it's the kind you like.

Sarah: It is. Thanks. I gotta do my homework. *(She sits at the table and takes out some books, starts to study.)*

Hildegarde: And I better prepare dinner.

Fritz: By the way, last Sunday's trout was delicious.

Hildegarde: Glad you liked it!

Fritz: Of course it doesn't make up for the loss of tonight's dinner.

Hildegarde: Sorry, my poor Poppa – not tonight. I've just got food made for 4.

Fritz: *(To Sarah)* So I'll lose a few more kilos. Does my daughter care about starvation?

Hildegarde: Not that there aren't restaurants if you aren't willing to cook for yourself.

Fritz: *(To Sarah)* Children. No Respect. Years ago, they would cook all our meals. . . . and polish our shoes!

The 3 of them laugh.

Actually, Jürgen and I are meeting for dinner.

Hildegarde: Great.

Fritz goes to look at the chess game.

Fritz: Sarah, I'm afraid you're right . . . your Dad's father plays a murderous game of chess. Sneaky bastard. Probably comes in his chromosomes.

A clock strikes five o'clock.

Fritz: *(Looks at his watch)* It's five already! Well, I've got to go, if I'm meeting Jürgen.

He goes to put on his coats, etc.

Fritz: Heine! I'm leaving.

Hilda returns. Wipes her hands on her apron. Sarah comes too.

Hildegarde: Thanks for being here so I could do the grant proposal. Are you sure you don't want to wait for Ben to come home to give him a hug? I know he'd like that. I could get you a beer.

Fritz: No, I think I'll be on my way. Unless you wish to take this last chance to invite your starving father for dinner.

Hildegarde: Sorry to disappoint.

Fritz: Refused a room at the inn?

Hildegarde: A seat at the table.

Fritz: Then I'm off, back into the frigid evening rain.

Fritz shouts goodbye to Heinrich; he shouts back; they let themselves out. Mother goes to Heinrich's room.

Hildegarde: So what's happening in the room of our youngest family member that was so important he couldn't say good-bye to his grandfather?

Heinrich: Nothing.

Hildegarde: (*Spying the boat model*) What's this?

Heinrich: A boat.

Hildegarde: It looks like a submarine.

Heinrich: Duh. You're quick, Ma.

Hildegarde: Don't be fresh! And you know the rules: no war stuff in this house. None. . . . (*Then suddenly, seeing swastikas on the U-boat*) And how did these insignia get on it? . . . Where did . . . where did you get them?

Heinrich: They came with the kit.

Hildegarde: What? How's that possible? Weren't there other decals?

Heinrich: Yeah. There were some insignia and flags. Some German, some American. Oh yeah, and some British.

Hildegarde: Do you have any idea what this is? What it means? Do you even know its name?

Heinrich: Maybe.

Hildegarde: What do you mean, 'maybe'? You either do, or you don't. Do you?

Heinrich: Sort of. Maybe.

Hildegarde: Well then, why did you choose these symbols and not the flags?

Heinrich: I didn't choose them. Poppsi did.

Hildegarde: Poppsi? . . . What are you talking about?

Heinrich: I just told you. He picked them.

Hildegarde: How could that be? Where did they come from?

Heinrich: I told you. They were in the box.

Hildegarde: These symbols weren't in the box. They were never even on ships. So why would they be in the box?

Heinrich: I don't know. Poppsi found them in the box.

Hildegarde: Don't you lie to me, Heinrich.

Heinrich: They were just there. I promise.

Hildegarde: Why would Poppsi have selected these symbols if there were flags?

Heinrich: He said those were our country's symbols during the war.

Hildegarde: Let me see the box. *(Heine hesitates.) . . . Now! (Heine reaches to a good hiding place, perhaps under the bed, and retrieves the box, gives it to her. She studies it for a moment. Then suddenly inexplicably angry)*

Hildegarde: This is a Revell kit.

Heinrich: So what?

Hildegarde: Revell is an American company. They certainly didn't put Nazi symbols in that box.

Heinrich: Popsi didn't say Nazi. He said German.

Hildegarde: Damn it, Heinrich. I told you before, I don't like war models. And I especially don't want symbols like these on them. Ever!

Heinrich: But Popsi told me!

Mother furiously hits the model and it falls to the floor, breaking.

Heinrich: *(Now screaming.)* Mamma! You broke it! I told you Popsi said! Why are you so mad?

Heinrich starts to cry. Sarah enters.

Sarah: What's happening? Oh Mom, you broke his model.

Hildegarde: *(Furiously)* This is none of your business, young lady.

Sarah: Mom, what's wrong with you? What's the matter? Mom, leave Heine alone! Look at his face. Stop it.

Hildegarde: Get back to your room, Sarah.

Sarah: What's wrong with you? Why are you mad at Heine? He's not doing anything.

Sarah goes over to Heine protectively.

Hildegarde: Don't you tell me what to do. You don't know anything about this!

Sarah: Mom, you're out of control. Stop it!

Hildegarde: You're telling me what to do? Who do you think you are? *(In a fit of fury slaps Sarah)* Don't you ever talk to me that way. You have no idea. *(Mother walks off).*

END OF SCENE 1

Act I, Scene 2 - (2,422 words)

Setting: Same place, same day, end of dinner. The whole family seated around the table. Mother gets up to remove a few dishes to the kitchen.

Hildegarde: Heine, give me a hand clearing the table.

Heine gets up to remove dishes to the kitchen. Hilda turns on the radio, isolating her from hearing normal speech in the dining room.

Sarah: I'm going to study for my exam.

Benjamin: Ok, lady. Try to finish before too late.

Sarah: No problem. I don't have much left, I did some before dinner.

Benjamin: Great.

Sarah, gets up and goes to her room. Heine reenters, sits.

Hildegarde: Any more dishes out there?

Heinrich: No.

Hildegarde: OK.

Hilda finishes a couple of things, steps off stage.

Benjamin: So how's school?

Heinrich: Fine. . . . Can I tell you something?

Benjamin: Sure.

Heinrich: Don't tell Mom about it.

Benjamin: Whoa! I don't keep secrets from your mom.

Heinrich: This is important. I promise.

Benjamin: OK. Conditionally. If it's important, I won't tell. This once.

Heinrich: Mom smashed a model of mine today. She got really angry at me . . . and probably at Popsi too.

Benjamin: Why would she do that? What happened?

Heinrich: I don't know. Popsi had already left and she came in my room and just got angry.

Benjamin: She must have had a reason.

Heinrich: She didn't. She just started yelling and then threw my model on the floor. Sarah even came in and asked why she was so angry. Mom slapped her.

Benjamin: Are you sure you didn't do anything wrong? That doesn't sound like your Mom to me. And what's Popsi got to do with this?

Heinrich: I didn't do anything. She just got into her thing about war stuff.

Benjamin: Oh. . . . What war stuff?

Heinrich: My model.

Benjamin: Was the model a war model?

Heinrich: Sort of.

Benjamin: Well, what does that mean? Was it or wasn't it?

Heinrich: I guess.

Benjamin: What was the model of?

Heinrich: A U-boat.

Benjamin: A U-boat? And you say 'sort of' about war? U-boats are only built for war. That's why she got into 'her thing about war stuff?' You said Mom didn't have a reason, when you knew exactly why she got mad. You know you aren't supposed to build something like that. Don't you? What house do you live in? Where have you been for the last 11 years? You shouldn't have made that model.

Heinrich: I guess.

Benjamin: You guess? Are you a coward? Get some backbone. If you want me to respect what you say, you've got to be honest. When you're wrong, admit it. Next time, be mature, take responsibility for your mistakes. Now get out of my face. Go to your room and get ready for bed.

Heinrich: But . . .

Benjamin: Don't 'but' me. You knew what Mom expected from you, and just now you tried to get me on your side by distorting what happened. You're lucky I'm not more angry. Go get ready for bed.

Heine leaves. Hilda comes in to sit with Benjamin.

Hildegarde: I lost it today with Heine. Actually, with both kids.

Benjamin: Tell me about it. I just almost lost it when he told me about the model.

Hildegarde: Well, sounds like you exhibited SOME self control. I didn't. But there is more to it than just the model. It was a model of a U-boat . . .

Benjamin: That's what he said.

Hildegarde: Wait . . . there's more. He put swastikas on the U-boat.

Benjamin: What?

Hildegarde: Right. Swastika decals. He claimed they were in the box, along with flags and stuff. He then blamed my Dad! He said Poppsi called them symbols of our country in the war and convinced him to put them on his model. It's bad enough he put the swastikas on, but then he lied and dragged my Dad into it.

Benjamin: No. Two lies?

Hildegarde: At least two. First, I'm sure there were no swastikas in the unopened box. It was a Revell model - you know, the same American company that makes all those plastic car model kits that Heine loves. They wouldn't put swastikas in their boxes.

Benjamin: Right, an American company isn't putting swastikas in their boxes.

Hildegarde: And the box top had an ad for other models: 3 pictures of submarine models on the box top with 3 different flags: American, British and German.

Benjamin: Right.

Hildegarde: And my Dad? My father wouldn't be pushing swastikas. He wouldn't call swastikas 'our national symbol.' So Heine lied: double time. I don't know why. I'd thought he's a pretty truthful kid.

Benjamin: Well maybe not. He just lied to me. Sort of. Didn't want to admit to why you got mad at him so he didn't say it was a U-boat. And he left out the swastikas completely.

Hildegarde: Damn. I really did explode in his room, maybe he thinks you would get furious too... But that doesn't excuse lying.

Benjamin: So we know the stickers weren't originally in the box. Someone put them there. Who? And why'd he use them if someone didn't encourage it? And your father was with him. But you're probably right, your father isn't involved. Poppsi might have said something that just got misinterpreted, right? Cause it's weird that Heine is blaming Poppsi if it isn't true.

Hildegarde: Come on! My father wouldn't do anything like that. You know that.

Ben hesitates but says nothing.

Hildegarde: What's with you? You're not being supportive. My father wouldn't do such a thing! He's not a Nazi! You know that! Heine's just covering up for some friend who slipped him decals. I mean it's still a lie. But why the hell did he pull my Dad into this?

Heinrich: *(From his room)* I'm ready, Dad.

Benjamin: *(Calling out)* Be there in a minute . . . You're probably right. But he really loves Poppsi so I find it weird for him to lie implicating Poppsi. Maybe he misunderstood what was said.

Hildegarde: And maybe something really different. Like he got the box from a friend. You know, already opened. From someone who had put swastikas in it.

Benjamin: Or, like I said, it was all a misunderstanding. Your father said something that was misunderstood. In any case, we should clear it up – have a chat with our boy.

Hildegarde: Right. Let's get to the bottom of this. Call him down.

Benjamin: *(Shouts)* Heine.

Heinrich: Yes?

Benjamin: Come down here!

Heinrich: OK.

Heine comes down. Joins them in the dining area.

Benjamin: Sit down.

Heine sits.

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Benjamin: You didn't tell me about the swastikas you put on the boat.

Heinrich: Sorry.

Benjamin: Do you know anything about what they represent?

Heinrich: Popsi told me it was our symbol during the war.

Hildegarde: Are you sure that's what he said?

Heinrich: Sure.

Hildegarde: Maybe you misunderstood.

Heinrich: No way.

Benjamin: Have you seen those symbols before?

Heinrich: (*Hesitates*) I think so. . . .

Benjamin: Where?

Heinrich: Around. . . I don't know. It's not such a big deal, is it? You're making me feel all confused.

Hildegarde: Heine, this is important. That symbol is a serious symbol – a sign of hate.

Heinrich: OK.

Benjamin: Not OK. That's not an answer. Where've you seen it?

Heinrich: I don't know. Around. You know, with kids.

Benjamin: Kids?

Heinrich: You know.

Benjamin: No, I don't. Which kids, where?

Heinrich: I don't know. Around. Like people draw it on sidewalks, you know, with chalk, or on paper in school. Doodling.

Benjamin: Do you know what it is called? What it represented?

Heinrich: Yeah. A swastika. Nazis used it.

Benjamin: And you know Nazis killed Jürgen's grandmother. My great grandmother. And his father – my grandfather. And many millions of other people just because they were Jewish?

Heinrich: (*Shifts nervously on his chair*) . . . Yeah. You've told me.

Hildegarde: What made you say the swastika came out of the box?

Heinrich: It was in the box.

Benjamin: When you opened the box, did you see the decals?

Heinrich: I'm not sure. There was a little cellophane envelope with decals. It's still in there.

Benjamin: Still there? Did you open the envelope?

Heinrich: No.

Benjamin: Do you remember seeing the swastikas in it then?

Heinrich: Not in the envelope. Just flags and banners, and stuff.

Benjamin: What sort of flags?

Heinrich: An American flag. And a British flag. And a German flag. Hull numbers, and markers – stuff. I can bring the envelope. I haven't opened it.

Benjamin: When did you first see the swastikas you used?

Heinrich: Poppsi found them in the box and showed them to me.

Benjamin: What exactly happened?

Heinrich: I don't know.

Hildegarde: Hadn't you seen them in the box before Poppsi was there?

Heinrich: No.

Benjamin: Well what did Poppsi say?

Heinrich: He said, "Oh look, here are some flags and banners." And then, when I looked, and they were in the box.

Hildegarde: I want the truth, and I want it complete. Now.

Heinrich: I'm telling you the truth.

Hildegarde: How did you get the kit? Did someone give it to you?

Heinrich: No. I bought it.

Hildegarde: In a store? New?

Heinrich: Of course.

Hildegarde: Was the box sealed?

Heinrich: I think so.

Benjamin: We're trying to understand how the swastika got in the box. Do you know?

Heinrich: No.

Hildegarde: How many friends did you show the model to?

Heinrich: None. Do you need to keep asking me all these questions? I've got school tomorrow.

Benjamin: Don't be fresh. There's a lot going on here.

Heinrich: I'm not being fresh. I have school.

Benjamin: OK. If we have more questions we'll ask them tomorrow. *(To Hilda)* Is that OK?

Hildegarde: OK.

Heinrich: Are you still angry with me, Mom?

Hildegarde: Not very. But no more war stuff in this house. And certainly, absolutely no swastikas in this house. Ever. You have to respect that. And no lying.

Heinrich: I will. I promise.

Hildegarde: *(Gets up and gives him a hug)* I love you a lot. *(Kisses him.)* Now go to bed.

Heinrich: Good night.

Benjamin: Good night. Sleep well. Think about what we have said tonight.

Heinrich: I guess.

Benjamin: You guess?

Heinrich: I will, I promise

Benjamin: OK. Love you.

Heine is off to his room.

Benjamin: So what do we know now?

Hildegarde: Not much more than before.

Benjamin: But maybe your father put that swastika in the box.

Hildegarde: Why are you picking on my Father? Perhaps the shop keeper who sold it to Heine slipped it in, right? Someone like that. One of his friends. Or maybe he got them from a friend.

Benjamin: But Heine said the box was probably sealed. So the shopkeeper is unlikely. And also that Popsi encouraged its use.

Hildegarde: No matter how it got in the box, Popsi wouldn't encourage its use. Even if he said something, I'm sure Heine misunderstood. You can't believe my Dad was close to the Nazis. It's not believable.

Benjamin: Did he ever say something positive about the Nazis?

Hildegarde: Sure. All Germans did. Hitler restored order. Restarted the economy. Nothing more. Everyone says that. I can't imagine he was more than . . .

Benjamin: A doctor tending to injured troops? I don't know . . . Have you ever asked him?

Hildegarde: Of course.

Benjamin: And what does he say?

Hildegarde: That he was a doctor. You know his history.

Benjamin: Right . . . History . . . Do you think there's something more?

Hildegarde: No. Of course not. Anyhow, how would I know? I think a friend of Heine is much more likely.

Benjamin: We could ask your Dad, directly.

Hildegarde: That would be so insulting. Like asking you if you stopped beating your kids.

Benjamin: Yeah, but still. Look, everyone who did anything with the Nazis hides it.

Hildegarde: My father? Are you kidding? You think he's a liar? On what basis do you say that? Even if there were anything, someone who hid it from everyone - even me - for all these years - that kind of person wouldn't change his story just because you ask him something. Even if there was a different story. Even if. But I'm telling you there isn't.

Benjamin: Maybe my Dad knows something - you know, if Fritz is hiding something. After all, the two of them have become very close since our Moms died.

Hildegarde: I don't like your focus on my father. It's a hell of a lot more likely that our son is covering up for a friend. Your assuming -

Benjamin: I'm only assuming we want to find out -

Hildegarde: Look, our fathers are best friends. Your father's Jewish, and worked at the Nuremberg trials. So your Dad would have smelled a rat a long time ago. My Dad isn't hiding anything. The two of them have running banter about the war almost all the time . . . They know each other's stories inside out.

Benjamin: But then let's find out what my father thinks of it?

Hildegarde: You're infuriating.

Benjamin: Sorry, but I want to find out what the hell is happening. Don't you? Our son just put swastikas on a model boat.

Hildegarde: Well, if you feel so God-damn accusing of my father, go ask your father. But I know there's nothing there. Our fathers have their differences over the war. Yours was a low ranking Jew - hidden in the tank corps at Leningrad. And my Dad, he was a doctor on the home front. But he's no Nazi.

Benjamin: Does that seem to be all there is?

Hildegarde: Yes. From what I understand.

Benjamin: Well, perhaps my father can clear some of this up for us. After all, given his old jobs, he probably still has access to the archives.

Hildegarde: Would you ask him to do that? The war was traumatic enough. He's even more testy ABOUT the war than me. You can't ask him to go back to the archives. And I don't like what you're implying.

Benjamin: Well, Dad might not be happy but he could be willing to probe a bit. After all, Heine is his grandson too. And we certainly aren't alone.

Hildegarde: What do you mean, 'we are not alone'?

Benjamin: Lots of people are trying to find out what their parents did during the war.

Hildegarde: But we already know. And Popsi had nothing to do with that swastika. I'm sure of it. It was one of Heine's friends, or maybe the shop keeper.

Benjamin: Well, Heine says, he bought it new, in a sealed box, and no friends have seen it. I'll ask my father if he knows something or if he can find out anything.

Hildegarde: But . . . he's not going to like 'finding things out.' I'm not happy with this. I'm gonna say good night to Heine.

Ben tries to smile affectionately but Hilda is clearly agitated. They get up from the table, Ben picks up a couple of dishes that never got cleared and goes to the kitchen.

END OF SCENE 2

Act I, Scene 3 - (1146 words)

Setting: A few days later, a small table in a coffee shop or café with Ben and Jürgen. They've already been served, indicating they've been there a while.

- Benjamin:** That quiche wasn't bad. Good choice.
- Jürgen:** And the beer. It's always good here. Fritz and I come here quite often. But, now, lunch is over. So tell me, what the hell is eating you? Obviously you are plenty agitated, even said we *had* to meet today. So out with it.
- Benjamin:** Yeah, I'm nervous. I'm not sure where to begin.
- Jürgen:** Just start.
- Benjamin:** OK. Something strange happened at home yesterday.
- Jürgen:** What?
- Benjamin:** Heine went with Fritz to show him a model he put together.
- Jürgen:** That's not strange.
- Benjamin:** Wait. It was a U-boat from an American company called Revell.
- Jürgen:** Oh, a war model. Violated Hilda's rule – no war toys – he was rebelling. Standard son behavior. But she must have been upset. Is that the problem?
- Benjamin:** Well, no. That's only the start – not the real problem. He put swastikas on it.
- Jürgen:** What? Wait! Heine? Unbelievable. Does he even know what it means? Jesus, Ben.
- Benjamin:** Probably . . . superficially. But he can't fully understand. Anyhow, we're not really sure of how it happened. We can't figure out where he got them or why he used them.
- Jürgen:** My god.
- Benjamin:** Heine said they were in the box, and that Fritz encouraged him to use it. Obviously, Hilda doesn't believe that her father would do that. And I must admit, I don't think he would either.
- Jürgen:** That's just some kid trying to shift blame.
- Benjamin:** Heine says he saw them in the box when Fritz was in the room, but not before. He insists Fritz pushed him to use it. Claims Fritz said the swastika was our national symbol in the war.
- Jürgen:** Wow. . . . That's just not possible . . . Well, anything is possible, of course, that's what we learned from Hitler . . . But . . . Not what I believe. What does Hilda think? She knows her father.
- Benjamin:** Hilda? She trusts her Dad. And Heine. She seems to think it could have been put in the box by a storekeeper or a friend of Heine.
- Jürgen:** Storekeeper is ridiculous. But friend . . . sounds right . . . And you?
- Benjamin:** Me? I can't figure out what happened. I'm not even sure what's likely. Seems to me trusting both Heine and saying Fritz had nothing to do with it is self-contradictory.

Jürgen: Unless, as Hilda says, a friend did it and wasn't seen.

Benjamin: Both of those are denied by Heine. Anyhow, swastikas don't appear from a misunderstanding, do they? Even if someone else put it in the box, what did Fritz say? Anyhow, I have no clue. I don't even know where one gets swastikas in Germany now. Maybe Fritz knows . . .

Jürgen: Come on. Get real. Fritz wouldn't encourage Heine to use it. Bizarre. Most likely Heine has gotten them from someone at school, some other kid. He's covering that up. To protect a friend. Isn't that most likely?

Benjamin: That's Hilda's thought. But Heine swears he wasn't given the swastikas. Says he hasn't shown the model to anyone else, found the decals in the box.

Jürgen: I'll bet Heine's shaving the truth saying he wasn't given it and covering for a friend by pointing at Fritz.

Benjamin: Maybe. But why would he construct a story to blame Fritz? He loves you two more than life itself.

Jürgen: He certainly is very close to Fritz. Do you trust Heine on this?

Benjamin: Hilda does, sort of. And he did insist Fritz told him to use it.

Jürgen: Maybe he wouldn't implicate Fritz to cover for a friend. Still, this whole thing, is screwed up. Too bizarre. Fritz is no Nazi lover. I'd say two different events are being conflated. Someone (like a friend) dropped those decals, and then he misunderstood Fritz. It's not Fritz.

Benjamin: That's what Hilda feels. Fritz wouldn't encourage Heine to put it on the boat. But perhaps he said something as a joke? Some weird sarcastic comment? He is capable of sarcasm.

Jürgen: That's a bit far-fetched. Fritz isn't going to play with his grandson by introducing him to Nazi memorabilia.

Benjamin: Unless . . .

Jürgen: Don't even think that.

Benjamin: Right, unless . . .

Jürgen: Yeah, unless.

Benjamin: Do you think that's possible?

Jürgen: That he views the Nazis favorably? No way. How could he?

Benjamin: But is it possible? From what you know?

Jürgen: No.

Benjamin: Hilda says no too. But if the 30's taught us anything, it's that nothing is impossible.

Jürgen: Maybe.

Benjamin: Could you help us discover if there is anything behind Heine's claim?

Jürgen: Help? . . . In what way?

Benjamin: Find if something's going on with Fritz to explain this.

Jürgen: You mean dig into his background – spy on him?

Benjamin: Well, not spy, just gather information. Perhaps have some conversation, or check old records like . . . at Nuremberg?

Jürgen: *(increasingly angry, taut, and agitated)* Me? Nuremberg? Old records? Again? Return to that hell again? Are you crazy? I was suicidal at the front. I had to relive everything in detail at Nuremberg going over all those records. I can't do that again. Never.

Benjamin: Well, OK. Perhaps you could just probe a bit – you know, have a chat with him, and then let us know what you find.

Jürgen: He's a friend, a family member. And I don't have many of either left. Anyhow, friends don't spy on friends.

Benjamin: Not spy. Just a conversation? Just to see what comes out?

Jürgen: My God, Ben.

Benjamin: Please, Dad. It's important for us to find out who did this.

Jürgen: I don't know.

Benjamin: Please.

Jürgen: Well, maybe I could have a talk. Nothing more. But don't expect more because I won't pressure him. I can't.

Benjamin: Anything you can do for us to clear this up. That's all we ask. Are the two of you getting together for anything soon?

Jürgen: Nothing arranged. We ate out after he left your place.

Benjamin: Well, perhaps we could ask you both for some baby sitting. The two of us would take a long evening out or something.

Jürgen: Well, that's an idea. You might try that. Ask Hilda what she thinks. Pick a day and let me know. Remember, I can't do Fridays, because of my chess club. And now, I've got to run – or I'll be late at the doctor's.

Benjamin: And I have to get back to the office. *(They get up, bug.)* Thanks, Dad.

Jürgen: Not to worry about this. You'll figure it out. Heine's got a friend who's an ignoramus, that's all. And you'll have to teach him a bit about lying. Fritz and the family will come out fine.

Benjamin: Let's hope so. That'd be a nice ending.

They say good bye. Jürgen leaves. Ben puts some money on the table and then leaves.

END OF SCENE 3

Act I, Scene 4 - (3,396 words)

Setting: Living room, a few nights later. Around 11 p.m.. Fritz and Jürgen walk in together.

Fritz: Well that was easy.

Jürgen: Another night of successful grand-parenting . . . and fun.

They laugh comradely. Shake hands as if they just consummated a deal, and then sit heavily on the chairs.

Fritz: We're a good team. Old farts, but a good team. Just enough discipline and imagination. And these two kids are always lively. But tiring.

Jürgen: Yup, I'm a bit bushed. Getting old for the job. Think we deserve a drink?

Fritz: Certainly.

Jürgen: Could you believe Heine?

Fritz: When?

Jürgen: At supper. I asked, 'how's school?' and he answered, 'fine, but not every day.'

Fritz: Right. *(Recollects, smiles)* . . . He's really a comedian. Think he knows it?

Jürgen gets up and goes to the 'bar,' gets 2 glasses, looks at the bottles.

Jürgen: Just because I laughed? No way. Just one of those things kids say. I say let's have some schnapps. Want some?

Fritz: Maybe. What are the options? . . . Sarah said something funny too. When she beat me at checkers.

Jürgen: Or Scotch? Here's a good one!

Fritz: Sure. . . If it's good, let's try it.

Jürgen: Black Label.

Fritz: Fine.

Jürgen: Anyhow, what'd Sarah say?

He pours a rather hefty drink for Fritz and a smaller one for himself.

Fritz: First she beat me, then she says, 'Aren't you surprised by how smart I am?'

Jürgen: Well, she's half Jewish. *(Laughing at his own joke. Fritz laughs disingenuously.)* Here. Prost!

Fritz: One quarter. But no one is counting anymore. Prost! Anyhow my Christian genes aren't shabby.

Jürgen: I was joking. It's great having our grand children so close, isn't it?

Fritz: Yup. Since Trilby died, they're my family.

Jürgen: Plus their parents and me.

Fritz: Of course.

Jürgen: True for me too. (*turns his back on Ben, looking at something, perhaps the chess board.*) Ben told me that Hilda had a real blow up about the U-boat.

Fritz: I told Heine she wouldn't like it. He knew it before he built it.

Jürgen: The thing that caused her to blow her top was that Heine put Swastikas on the model instead of flags or any of the other symbols in the box.

Fritz: Oh, wow! That's insane. (*Jurgen turns back around, now.*)

Jürgen: Swastikas. Did you see them?

Fritz: (*Goes to the bar, picks up the scotch bottle, offers some silently to Jurgen, but Jurgen shakes it off, 'no.' Pours some more for himself.*) When I came in, all the insignia were in the box.

Jürgen: Did you see any swastikas?

Fritz: Well, Heine asked me about the insignias - they were decals. There were some Swastikas scattered among them and I didn't single them out, of course. He asked about them all, and I told them they were flags and other national symbols as well as hull insignia. You know, just what anyone would say. He didn't chose any of them in front of me. So he did that and put them on after I left his room.

Jürgen: (*Embarrassed but doggedly asking this next question*) So you couldn't have seen him put them on?

Fritz: What is this? An interrogation, Jürgen? No. I just told you. I didn't know he'd put on any of them. But I encouraged that he put some on, to finish the model. I mean, they were part of the kit. I figured he'd put on the hull number . . . the flag, you know. But amazing . . . he put on the Swastikas. I was referring to all the decals in the box, not the swastikas, of course.

Jürgen: Sorry, it's just that Hilda got so furious and I was sure you had nothing to do with it. But . . . I don't know.

Fritz: That's OK. It's understandable, given Hilda's touchiness. But, you know, her anger about war seems to hovers over my whole relation with her. It's never easy for me with Hilda about the war. Never has been.

Fritz pours another glass for himself.

This scotch is very good.

Jürgen: A sign of Ben's success. The kids have enough money in the bank. We aren't needed anymore.

Fritz: You mean our wallets aren't needed anymore. Thank God. But tonight just shows there is more to parenting than money.

Fritz takes his seat, spreads himself out.

Wow, this is good scotch!

Jürgen: What were we just talking about?

Fritz: Um . . . Hilda's problem with war.

Jürgen: Oh yes. Did that hang over your relationship before she got married?

Fritz: Sure, way before. It started when she was in gymnasium.

Jürgen: Really? What do you think triggered the difficulties?

Fritz: I don't know. She had a refugee exchange teacher from America. A New Yorker. Could have been a Jew. And sure enough that was when it came – her radical anti-war attitude. It gets me angry just to think about it.

Jürgen: What year was that?

Fritz: Sometime in the late 40's - when she was starting gymnasium.

Jürgen: But even then why would she take it out on you?

Fritz: Perhaps because I served in the war. I don't know.

Jürgen: But you were a doctor. Surely that's not the same as –

Fritz: Of course, but a doctor in the Wehrmacht. A doctor at a military hospital. Sometimes she seems to feel I should have done more to protest. Maybe gone to jail as a war resister.

Jürgen: Right. A war resister! At that time a life ending experience - a bit overly heroic. Left her fatherless. Of course, now a days, kids can't understand that. Still, it's one thing to be a soldier shooting people and quite another to be working in a surgery to save peoples' lives like you, right here at home?

Fritz: Understood. But as you know I wasn't always stationed in Germany.

Jürgen: Oh? No, I didn't realize that. I thought you were always on the home front.

Fritz: Well, what's the home front? Depends on the borders, doesn't it? We defined Germany differently at that time. But for a time I was actually stationed in Poland, near Krakow.

Jürgen: Krakow? Poland? Well, compared to Leningrad, that is a lot closer to home than I was. But that isn't a detail that could have changed your relationship with Hilda.

Fritz: It's so hard to know these things. But if you pushed me to the wall, I'd say, 'Yes, it probably did.' She insisted that since we were stationed so close, we must have known about what was going on in Auschwitz. It makes me upset even now. Very upset. what could I say to my daughter? How could I know? What could I have done even if I had known? But . . . we didn't know. How could we? That information was secret, not public. Even if we knew, what could I have done? What could I have done?

Jürgen: You think she still believes you knew, or should have known?

Fritz: I don't know what she thinks. We haven't talked about this in years . . . since she was in Gymnasium.

Jürgen: Was your hospital right in Krakow?

Fritz: No. And I didn't get to Krakow often. The hospital was in a small development. We were living in a very small town, Gorzów, near the hospital. It was a short commute.

Jürgen: Where was the development?

Fritz: They were just building it up, it was called Monowitz.

Jürgen: Monowitz? . . . Monowitz? . . . I've heard of that. Wait, Monowitz isn't a town, it's in, I mean . . . it was a part of Auschwitz, Fritz! It was the second or third expansion of Auschwitz! . . . You were stationed there?

Fritz: Well, technically. That's where the hospital was. In the expansion - a factory complex, a sort of sub-camp. We treated wounded soldiers. Of course, we had absolutely no connection with the goings on elsewhere at the camp. Of course, we knew nothing of that.

Jürgen: That's crazy! How could you not have known?

Jürgen starts pacing nervously.

Fritz: Maybe it does sound crazy. That's why I said I can't be sure what Hilda believes. I mean that . . . we only found out later – after the war. We knew nothing of those activities in the other parts of the camp. How could we? But then, Hilda never understood.

Jürgen: But there must have been clues. So many clues. It's hard to believe, Fritz. You must have, I mean you must have even smelled the death? Heard the trains . . . the screaming, the noise. Seen the desperate people . . . I just can't –

Jürgen, now at the bar, pours himself another large drink, takes a serious swallow.

Fritz: No. Jürgen. You have to believe me. We were really isolated. Really. Driven to the hospital every day. Hospitals have their own smells, of course. And there was a lot of construction and industrial stuff in the camp, so the noises of the trains didn't seem out of place. I never heard screaming.

Jürgen: That's hard to believe. My God! And when you did find out? . . . The truth? The reality? It must have hit you like a bomb.

Fritz: Of course. I was devastated. When I found out . . . I mean, me, a doctor, I had been working around the edges of a death camp. There I was desperate to save people, and on the other side of the wall (so to speak) they were equally desperate to kill them. Think of that. I have nightmares.

Jürgen: The whole tale is unimaginable.

Fritz: And when it all came out, how could I believe it? And then, when I did, how could I wash the stain from my hands? I, myself, I wondered how I didn't know. But that's where we were.

Jürgen: Were you there long?

Fritz: No. Doctors were transferred all over the place as needed. After the war bogged down, I mean. I really can't recall the dates but it couldn't have been there for more than a few weeks. Maybe a month or two at most. We doctors just followed casualties, especially late in the war. It got ever more intense. You can imagine.

Jürgen: God. Those years . . . You still have nightmares? It still haunts me too.

Fritz: Of course. Often. I try to not think about it, but . . . you know. Here's a toast to thank God it's over!

Jürgen: To peace! *(They clink glasses, take a hearty swig, and Jürgen sits back down.)*

Jürgen: The kids don't really have any idea, do they? I mean, even though they were alive. And Ben, he was in a youth brigade for a short bit.

Fritz: They didn't live it the same way. That's for sure. But you know, our time in service was so varied. It's not like there's just one picture.

Jürgen: Surely. It wasn't easy for the kids either. I wasn't trying to say that. The war was such a loss for everyone. For our country. Unbelievable.

Fritz: Of course. Trying to capture it with a sweep of the hand, one ideological snapshot. It doesn't work. Look at your time compared to mine! Or you compared to any other soldier? Did you even ever shoot anyone? Or even *at* anyone?

Jürgen: How could I? Germany's enemies were the only hope my family and people had.

Fritz: And then working at Nuremberg? Didn't you want to hang everyone?

Jürgen: You might think so . . . But no. I really am too much of a lawyer. I believe in the law. I stuck to the letter of the law . . . well . . . almost always.

Fritz: Almost?

Jürgen: *(Hesitatingly)* Well . . . there was an exception.

Fritz: Tell me about it.

Jürgen: You know, these things are hurtful. Very. To talk about.

Fritz: If you prefer not to share.

Jürgen: No. Of course, I'll tell you. You just shared this horror story you lived through. Just, it's hard, you know. . . . It happened when I was visiting my grandmother. 1936. Two brown shirts broke into her apartment. Maybe, they just wanted to steal her stuff. Maybe just beat her up. I don't know. In their minds, maybe she was just some old Jew. But I was there. So they beat me up first, badly. Knocked me down. Then beat her, badly. She screamed so they beat her more, probably first to silence her. . . .

Gets up paces. Going back in his mind is painful.

(Quietly) But then, to death. In front of me. I was terrified. It was horrible. Well, . . .

A bustle at the door, and the parents come in. Happy for the evening out.

Hildegarde: Hi, you two angels. We had a grand time.

Fritz: Where'd you go?

Benjamin: To the American Jazz Club on Beethoven Strasse. It was fabulous.

Hildegarde: Dancing, drinking, and American Negro music! Three of God's creations – each made for the splendor of sinning, for German Christians here outside of the Garden of Eden.

Jürgen: I suppose we aren't the sort of baby sitters who get paid?

Benjamin: Nope. Sorry about that. Not in your contracts, I believe. But if you behave, you could get a fine dinner at our home sometime next week.

Hildegarde: Especially if afterward Ben promises me another night at the Jazz Club!

Benjamin: No promises, dear. Let's see how things go at the office.

Jürgen: Dinner sounds good to me.

Fritz: Count me in too.

Benjamin: Fine.

Hildegarde: How were the kids?

Fritz: Easy.

Benjamin: When did lights go out?

Jürgen: Late.

Fritz: 10:30? Or what?

Jürgen: Give or take 15 minutes.

Hildegarde: Great! We'll be able to sleep late tomorrow, darling!

Fritz: Well, I'm actually quite tired. But I loved it. Any time. Really. Just call. Jürgen, can I give you a ride?

Jürgen: No, thanks, I'll order a cab. It's easy tonight, and it'd be way out of your way. I'm going to solicit another shot of that Black Label we sampled.

Fritz: OK, then.

Fritz, puts on his coat, hat.

Fritz: Sure?

Jürgen: Yup. Thanks. See you soon. . . .

Fritz: Jürgen, don't forget, I want to hear the end of that story sometime.

Jürgen: Right.

Fritz gives a hug and kiss to Hilda. Slaps Jürgen on the shoulder, shakes Ben's hand and leaves.

Hildegarde: Did you find out anything?

Jürgen: First, I need another drink.

Benjamin: That bad?

Jürgen: Well, sort of, in a different way.

Ben pours him a glass. Jürgen drinks some.

Hildegarde: Well, what did you find?

Jürgen: Well, he related a totally reasonable version of what happened with the Swastikas and then told me something I didn't know about his war activities.

Hildegarde: Enlighten us.

Jürgen: On the Swastikas, he sort of backs up Heine's story. He saw all the flags and symbols, including the Swastikas, in the box. He told Heine the set of symbols were national symbols during the war, and that he should put them on. But by the time he left, Heine hadn't put any on. Heine picked the swastikas and put them on only after Fritz left.

Hildegarde: He takes no responsibility for their presence in the box or their being on the ship?

Jürgen: None. And I believe him.

Benjamin: But that doesn't quite square with Heine's story, since Heine says the Swastikas were definitely not in the cellophane.

Hildegarde: Stop picking details to cast doubt on my father, Ben. Your attitude is crushing me. I can't get my mind off it. . . . I mean your suggestions, the suspicions.

Benjamin: I'm sorry Hilda, here come get a hug.
(They hug.)

Jürgen: Fritz didn't say they were in cellophane. He didn't mention cellophane at all.

Hildegarde: And what was the other thing?

Jürgen: He told me that for a short time during the war, he worked at Monowitz.

Hildegarde: Monowitz?

Benjamin: Where's Monowitz, Dad?

Jürgen: Auschwitz. *(Jürgen sits down nervously. Gets up, increasingly upset as he goes through this summary.)* Auschwitz had a number of expansions to the original camp. Monowitz was one of them - the second one I think. But it was used mainly as an 'industrial park' of sorts. For I.G. Farben, I believe. They built it. Using prisoners. Anyhow, the factories there used prisoners as slaves.

Benjamin: But I thought he was a doctor in the war.

Hildegarde: *(With an edge.)* Of course he was, Ben.

Jürgen: That's right. Seems there was a military hospital in Monowitz. That's where he was stationed. Treated wounded soldiers. Shifting battle fronts meant doctors – including him – were moved around a lot. So he was at Monowitz only a few weeks or months at most. *(Turning nervously to Hilda)* Perhaps you can recall –

Hildegarde: *(Very agitated now.)* That's not how I remember it. We were stationed in Berlin first. Then we moved near Krakow. We lived there for quite some time. I skied one winter, we had picnics during the summers. I remember it as more than a year, probably more than that.

Benjamin: But maybe your Dad wasn't there. Perhaps you and your Mom didn't move around with him – after all it was a war. He recalled that the town you all lived in was Gorzów. So you could have been in Gorzów, but he may have been sent around.

Hildegarde: My memory was that we were together most all the time during the war. Maybe not every night, but never, say, 3 or more nights at a time without my father.

Benjamin: Could your memory of those years be faulty?

Hildegarde: Sure. Probably. Maybe we were there from the end of one summer till the start of the winter. But it sure feels much longer.

Benjamin: So what's your Dad trying to prove, saying it was only a few months?

Hildegarde: My Dad? He knows. I was just a kid. What do I know? It just seems longer.

Jürgen: In any case, he said people at the Monowitz hospital had no idea what was going on in the rest of Auschwitz.

Hilda gets up, still upset.

Benjamin: How could they be so ignorant?

Jürgen: Well, he says they were transported in and out for work. And when he was not working, I guess he'd be home, not wandering around the camp. But I don't know the details. He says finding out the reality was extraordinarily painful. I would think that must have been so.

Benjamin: Do you have any way of checking these details, Jürgen?

Jürgen: Me? What? Details? I'm pretty comfortable believing that he told me the truth. But the whole story was extraordinarily intense.

Benjamin: But the time he served there? Perhaps through some archives. You have access still at Nuremberg, don't you?

Hildegarde: *(to Ben)* For Christ sake, stop your poking at my Dad. You heard your father. He believes him.

Jürgen: *(to Ben)* Why should I do that? I believe him and Hilda said her memory is probably faulty. Those archives? I'm not doing that. I won't.

Benjamin: But those swastikas . . . and he is your grandson . . . And then Auschwitz. I don't know. It's creepy.

Hildegarde: *(to Ben)* I can't believe what you are saying.

Jürgen: Look, the swastika seems to have been in the box, and then there followed a misunderstanding. Fritz and I discussed it. And I told you what I heard. It's good enough for me. Ask Heine if you want more details.

Benjamin: *(to Hilda)* I'm sorry, I just want to be sure we have gotten to the bottom of this. I mean Auschwitz. I had always heard 'the home front.' So, Dad, can't you do more?

Jürgen: I agreed to get his 'war story,' tonight. I did that. He is family and friend. He explained his ignorance. He said that when he was in Poland the Germans were calling it the home front. There's nothing more to it. Even if I snooped what do

you think would be gained by some more details of his past now? You must Let this go now. it's very painful for me. He's part of our family, my good friend.

Hildegarde: I agree with you.

Jürgen: And if there is something to find – what would that mean? For us? For me? We are two old men. That war is over. Enough deaths and hatred already. Too many. Too much. It's not right. It's not wise. I won't do it.

Benjamin: But Dad –

Hildegarde: Stop. Ben.

Jürgen: Come on, son. She doesn't want it either. The whole investigation of the war years was a terrible nightmare. It forced me to relive my existence in hell. I won't do it.

Benjamin: I just think . . .

Hildegarde: Stop. You heard. Your Dad's through with this. So am I. And we're exhausted. It's late. Leave it.

Benjamin: OK, I can see I am the only one. (*Turning to his father . . .*) This was a lot to ask from you. You did a lot. Can I drive you home?

Jürgen: I'm totally exhausted. Totally. This was a terrible night. Of course, drive me home.

Benjamin: I'll get back pretty quick.

Hildegarde: Good night, Jürgen. And thanks! I'll be in bed, Ben.

Ben and Jürgen get ready to go, Hilda goes up stairs. Curtain comes down.

END OF SCENE 4

– Act II –

Scene 1 - (836 words)

Setting: Same home, same furniture. Next Sunday. Family, with grandfathers, all around the table, dessert being eaten. A lot of discussion.

- Benjamin:** This will be exciting, Sarah. What exactly did your history teacher say?
- Sarah:** He said this was a great opportunity. Interviewing my grandfathers about the war would make for an extraordinary research project. And he couldn't believe you were hiding out most of the war in the tank corps in Russia.
- Jürgen:** True, there weren't many other Jewish Germans hiding with the German army.
- Sarah:** Well, the teacher said your contrasting experiences would make the study unique. He thought, if I write it up well, I could win the city's history prize.
- Fritz:** Well, I'll be very interested to read your report. Jürgen and I have had lots of conversations about our experiences precisely because they were so very different.
- Hildegarde:** Are you going to also include Jürgen's experiences with the Americans' denazification and Nuremberg trials?
- Heinrich:** I'm starting Latin next semester.
- Hildegarde:** We all want to hear about that, but don't interrupt. Let them finish their conversation first.
- Sarah:** That's all 'post war:' next term. Maybe I'll do a report on that too.
- Heinrich:** But I . . .
- Benjamin:** Just wait a minute, Heine, please.
- Jürgen:** So maybe you'll use your grandpas for two terms. I think the post war years will be equally interesting.
- Fritz:** I can tell you one thing. Unlike Jürgen and Lily, Trilby and I had virtually no income after the war. We had no job. I couldn't even restart my medical practice after the war. The Americans were investigating everyone. It took years for me to get restarted as a doctor.
- Jürgen:** How's that? Doctors? Doctors were expedited.
- Fritz:** Not if you had been an army doctor.
- Jürgen:** Really? We had a whole office going through those files. I thought they were all expedited.
- Heinrich:** Next semester –
- Benjamin:** (*Sotto voce*) Wait.
- Fritz:** Not my office.
- Jürgen:** Really . . . Could be bureaucratic mistakes . . . Probably. Must have been very tough.

Fritz: It impoverished us. For a longer time than I like to recall. But that's next semester's topic, right?

Sarah: *(biting her nails)* Yup.

Hildegarde: I remember those days. Often we didn't even have money for food. Mom and I would get food at the Red Cross. And Sair, don't bite your nails, please.

Fritz: Right.

Benjamin: Well, now what about your Latin?

Heinrich: Never mind.

Hildegarde: Go ahead, it's your turn.

Heinrich: It's not interesting.

Benjamin: But –

Heinrich: I don't want to any more.

Gets up suddenly and leaves the table. Parents look at each other knowingly.

Sarah: I've got to do some homework. *(But she doesn't get up.)*

Jürgen: And I've got to go.

Fritz: Want to share a cab?

Jürgen: *(Hesitates for an instant, then)* Sure.

Benjamin: I'll call a cab. *(Goes to the phone, makes the call.)*

Fritz: Hilda, your Nusskuchen is out of this world. You should have gone back to school for a degree in baking, not for one in international health policy.

Hildegarde: I prefer health policy, Dad. But I'm glad everyone loves the cake.

Jürgen: Have you settled on a thesis topic?

Hildegarde: Well, if I get the travel grant I'm sort of locked in. I met with Professor Eckelberg Friday. He likes my idea questioning American health policy. And he is pretty sure I'll get the grant.

Jürgen: How long would you be there?

Hildegarde: A month. Maybe two. Not more. Most of the research will be done here.

Fritz: Doctors make so much more money in America.

Hildegarde: True. But they have to pay for their own medical school. That's part of the trouble, as I see it. The central idea of my thesis is those sorts of built-in financial barriers prevent reform of the system. That makes it almost impossible for their country to get to a rational system like ours.

Fritz: Still, it would have been nice to make the sort of money American doctors make.

Hildegarde: To pay back those tough years when I was growing up?

Fritz: Right. Americans owe us for taking so long. Just to check our records.

Benjamin: A month or two will be a long time for you to be gone.

Hildegarde: We'll talk about that some other time. I'll make arrangements. *(Turning to Sarah)* Next semester, if you do that report for after the war, you can include me in your interviews. I remember the troubles of those years very clearly.

Fritz: I'm sure you do! . . . *(Slides his chair back, reaches for his cane.)* Getting up seems harder ever since I reached 70.

Benjamin: *(Turns to Hilda)* We'll have to get help for me at home while you're gone.

Hildegarde: Of course. We'll use an agency to get help. It'll be easy. And I'm flexible. I'll be able to schedule the trip at a time that works. We'll talk about it.

Sarah, excuses herself, goes up to do her homework. They all collect dishes, start to clean up. A cab honks, goodbyes are said, and the 2 grandfathers leave.

END OF SCENE 1

Act II, Scene 2 – (1495 words)

Setting: Setting: A few days later: Sarah and Fritz are sitting at the family dining table, afternoon. Sarah has a tape recorder on the table.

- Sarah:** What was it like, living at Monowitz?
- Fritz:** Well, I worked at Monowitz but we were living in a small town, Gorzów, about 7 miles away. You might ask your Mom about it, she'll have some memories of our life there. And she might have a different perspective.
- Sarah:** Oh, I thought . . . wait, is the tape working? (*checks*) . . . yes. OK.
- Fritz:** Maybe I shouldn't be counting, but that's the third time you checked the recorder. We can always work out the kinks of system breakdowns if needed. I'm your Grandfather, not the Chancellor of the country! There's no reason to be nervous.
- Sarah:** I know, it's just –
- Fritz:** Your first interview? Hey look you might become a famous journalist, interviewing thousands of us old, forgetful grandfathers.
- Sarah:** (*Laughing.*) OK. Enough. I'll try to not worry. Anyhow, what was living like then? (*Again, biting her nails occasionally*)
- Fritz:** Well being a doctor, and a surgeon at that, I was an officer in the army. So the family and I always had good lodging.
- Sarah:** Oh. What sort of place did you have? And what was life like then in the town? Was it very uncomfortable and difficult?
- Fritz:** Well, we didn't take officer's quarters at Monowitz. We got a small private house. Certainly I wouldn't say it was uncomfortable. Our little house had two bedrooms, a bath. A nice big kitchen. A parlor for entertaining. Actually, it was wonderful. But remember, TV wasn't invented yet. So it was different. You might not have liked it.
- Sarah:** I don't watch that much TV.
- Fritz:** I know. I know. Only teasing.
- Sarah:** So, let's see (*steals a glance at the recorder.*) –
- Fritz:** That's your fourth worried look at the recorder. I'm counting!
- Sarah:** Come on Poppsi. I'm supposed to check. Anyhow, let's see . . . how was the food?
- Fritz:** The food was good, both in the officers' clubs and in the local market. And we were near the center of town. It was in the old Jewish quarter. It had a fine little garden, and quite a view of woodland out the back.
- Sarah:** Where did you buy food?
- Fritz:** One could buy at the base, but we usually didn't. We bought in Gorzów.
- Sarah:** Was there a big difference between living in Gorzów and on the base?
- Fritz:** Monowitz was part of a larger base. You can imagine, with the officers' and soldiers' wives at home the base quickly developed its gossip. But we were off base – on the

local economy, one might say. So we were ‘out of the loop’ and on our own so to say. We liked that.

Sarah: And in other ways, I mean like just food, and living.

Fritz: Well, there was a very nice vegetable shop. And a good butcher. Trilby often bought bones to make excellent broth. You probably don’t remember your grandmother. You were too young, but Trilby was a superb cook.

Sarah: I hardly remember Omma Trilby. She used to play the flute, didn’t she?

Fritz: Yes, beautifully. She loved music. Especially Mozart. But also Vivaldi.

Sarah: I do remember some of that. But getting back to my research, wasn’t it difficult to get groceries when the war was being fought?

Fritz: No, not in that town, not in those years, you hardly could imagine that a war was being fought. The only evidence was at the hospital where I saw the poor soldiers coming for care. That was enough evidence for me, however. It could have been much worse. I was thankful that I could get our family the comforts we had.

Sarah: You say that where you worked, Monowitz, was it?, was part of another base. What sort of place was that?

Fritz: It was a large army base.

Sarah: Did it have any special purpose?

Fritz: Actually, mainly a camp for detainees. Everyone says it was an awful place. But we doctors were totally isolated from the goings on over there. We at the hospital had nothing to do with the bigger camp. And not living there, I only learned about it after the war ended. I can’t tell you about anything beyond what the books say.

Sarah: Was the big camp also called Monowitz?

Fritz: (*Hesitates*) . . . No, it had a separate name.

Sarah: Oh? What was it.

Fritz: . . . It was . . . it was . . . Auschwitz.

Sarah: (*Innocently, but showing excitement.*) Oh. We’re studying Auschwitz, next week. I think there’s a whole chapter in our history book about it.

Fritz: Well, I only know about Monowitz. And even about that, very little outside the hospital.

Sarah: Was there more than the hospital at Monowitz?

Fritz: Not much. A couple of factories I think, that was about it.

Sarah: Oh . . . what did they make there?

Fritz: In the factories?

Sarah: Yeah.

Fritz: I don’t really know. The hospital was really very separate.

Sarah: Didn't you ever have a patient who was a worker in one of the factories?

Fritz: No. Our hospital only was for our soldiers.

Sarah: OK . . . cool. Let's see, where were we? The town. What was it called again?

Fritz: Gorzów.

Sarah: Yes, Gorzów. Was there anything for fun. You know, to do?

Fritz: A night life? For a small town, it was surprising. We had an officers' club there that some nights even had live theater. And some nights concerts. Trilby and I had many nights on the town.

Sarah: And –

Fritz: Wait, I'm not finished. There was a great sports club – for the officers. I was a member. Still today, I'd say it was one of the best equipped sports clubs I was ever in. And, of course, there were parties and dances. Many lovely ones – even one at our house.

Sarah: So at least while you were at Monowitz, life was . . . *(checks the recorder again)*

Fritz: Can I assume the recorder is continuing to record? Hope so. Otherwise my historic words might get misreported!

Sarah: Come on, Poppsi. I'm just a bit concerned –

Fritz: Nervous.

Sarah: OK, nervous –

Fritz: No need though.

Sarah: Right. Back to night life and the sports club.

Fritz: Check! I'd say after work, life was fun. Trilby and I made many friends. Not only other doctors. Engineers, other personnel. Unfortunately after the war it was hard to maintain those connections.

Sarah: And what of your work?

Fritz: At Monowitz?

Sarah: Yes.

Fritz: You know, healing soldiers - that was very fulfilling. But also, the work itself was harrowing. The worst were amputations. War wounds are awful. As a surgeon I often saw the most heavily wounded.

Sarah: Were you stationed there for long?

Fritz: I am not exactly sure. Certainly it wasn't my first station. That was Berlin. Nor my last. That was near the front, back east of Berlin. But we were at Monowitz quite a long time. Probably . . . my longest assignment.

Sarah: What did Omma think of life at that time?

Fritz: Trilby? She came to hate the war. But you know, early on, it was a good thing. Germany went to work. We had better food, more money.

Sarah: No, I meant what did she think of life at Monowitz?

Fritz: Well she didn't know Monowitz. Gorzów? Trilby had opportunities to go to Krakow. It wasn't too far, maybe 50 miles, and when Hilda was in school, and I'd be at work, we had help at home and she'd go to the city. She loved Krakow, and even liked the little town of Gorzów. So did your Mom. You know, our life after the war was so tough, we look back on those years as some of the best years of our life.

Sarah: Wow! Poppsi, I learned so much! This was so cool! Thanks! I'll write this up. Who knows, maybe I can win that prize.

Fritz: Are you set to interview Jürgen?

Sarah: Yup. And I'm sure that'll be interesting too.

Fritz: Then Jürgen and I will treat our prize winner to a celebratory dinner in town. Who knows, maybe we'll do it even if you don't win!

Sarah: Do you think I left out anything important, Poppsi?

Fritz: No. You did a splendid job. You're better than 90% of the journalists interviewing people on TV. Chin up! I'm proud of you! Anyhow, show me the report when you're done.

Sarah: Well, I still have Jürgen and my library research. That could mean I may have a few more questions. Can we sit down again later if that's needed?

Fritz: Why not?

Sarah and Fritz stand up; Sarah stretches.

Sarah: That was hard.

Fritz: But fun?

Sarah: Of course. Thanks.

Fritz: I have to be going. I have theater tickets tonight with Jürgen.

Sarah: What are you going to see?

Fritz: They're doing Faust.

Sarah: Wow! That's special. Have fun.

Fritz puts on his coat, hat, they embrace, and he leaves.

END OF SCENE 2

Act II, Scene 3 – (1822 words)

Setting: Some days later. After school. Sarah enters home, angry and depressed. Throws down her school bag, and starts to go up to her room. Hilda reading work related materials on one of the living room chairs, looks up.

Hildegarde: Not even a hello? No, ‘Hi, Mom!’? What is this? ‘How Impolite Can I Be Day’?

Sarah: Leave off, Mom.

Hildegarde: Sarah, is something wrong?

Sarah turns around reluctantly, and reenters the room. Bites her nails

Sarah: I don’t want to talk about it.

Hildegarde: Did you have a good interview of Jürgen?

Sarah: Yes.

Hildegarde: So why the sour face? (*Sarah shrugs.*) School?

Sarah: Terrible.

Hildegarde: Terrible’s not good.

Sarah: That’s not funny.

Hildegarde: I wasn’t trying to crack a joke.

Sarah: Seemed like it. Maybe I’m just upset. (*Bites her nails*)

Hildegarde: That’s why I’m asking what’s wrong. You aren’t yourself. . . . But stop biting the nails!

Sarah: Forget it, Mom.

Hildegarde: Sorry. I’m just trying to find out what’s bugging you.

Sarah: I just don’t know who I can trust anymore.

Hildegarde: What’s that supposed to mean?

Sarah: Just what I said.

Hildegarde: How about me? I’m your Mom.

Sarah: Can I?

Hildegarde: Of course.

Sarah: Promise you’d tell me the truth?

Hildegarde: Uh oh. This sounds like you should sit down first.

(Sarah sits on a chair a bit removed from her mother.)

Sarah: Will you?

Hildegarde: The truth? . . . Of course.

Sarah: This is not going to be easy.

Hildegarde: I didn’t sign up for easy. Fire away.

mixed blood 7.wpd

Sarah: Well, you know, I'm doing this project about the war.

Hildegarde: I know. . . . So this is about school work?

Sarah: No Mom. . . . Well, sort of. . . . Not really. Just . . . Just listen, OK?

Hildegarde: OK, but get to what went wrong, lady.

Sarah: Well . . . I don't know. . . . I'm not sure about . . . what I've been finding out.

Hildegarde: About the history project?

Sarah: Yeah.

Hildegarde: Isn't that the nature of history? Of research?

Sarah: No, Mom. This isn't like that.

Hildegarde: OK. So tell me. How's the project going?

Sarah: Pretty good. I don't know. . . . There's just so much material.

Hildegarde: About the war? In the library? Of course there is. You can narrow your research to where your grandfathers were stationed.

Sarah: Mom! I'm doing that. I'm not stupid.

Hildegarde: I didn't say you were stupid. Is there too much material about Leningrad? Too much to read and research?

Sarah: No. Well, not exactly.

Hildegarde: Then what?

Sarah: I don't know . . . Well, I do, actually. It's too much about Auschwitz. I need some information from you.

Hildegarde: (*Clearly surprised*) . . . From me?

Sarah: We're reading about Auschwitz and I've followed that up in the library.

Hildegarde: But why information from me?

Sarah: Well, you lived with Poppsi when –

Hildegarde: When Poppsi was at Monowitz?

Sarah: Sort of.

Hildegarde: But Monowitz was totally separate. How could I have knowledge of Auschwitz?

Sarah: That's what Poppsi says too. But that's the problem. It wasn't.

Hildegarde: Wasn't what?

Sarah: Separate.

Hildegarde: No. That's not right. Poppsi was there. He knows. My Mom said so too.

Sarah: (*Again biting her nails.*) Right. That's what he says. He said there were some factories there. There were. Monowitz is where they made products for the war. Like you know, gas for killing all the people and other stuff.

Hildegarde: But his hospital had nothing to do with that. He was treating wounded soldiers.

Sarah: That's not what the books say. There was no regular 'hospital' in Monowitz.

Hildegarde: But he wasn't working in a regular hospital. It was a military one.

Sarah: There were clinics. Clinics didn't have medical personnel. Only prisoners worked there – it was run by prisoners for sick prisoners. Prisoners. And those prisoners didn't get German doctors.

Hildegarde: Right. Poppsi had nothing to do with that. My Father tended our wounded soldiers.

Sarah: How do you know that? (*Again biting her nails.*) You only know what your parents told you. Do you believe everything? There's no trace of a hospital in Monowitz.

Hildegarde: Right. His hospital wasn't regular. It was for our soldiers – a military hospital.

Sarah: There was no hospital for healing soldiers. The only place called a hospital was specialized to do awful things.

Hildegarde: God Damn it, stop with the nails! And don't you –

Sarah: (*Stops biting her nails*) It wasn't a regular hospital at all.

Hildegarde: Of course not regular! It was only for wounded soldiers.

Sarah: No, and it wasn't for sick workers either. And –

Hildegarde: Not soldiers? Not workers? Then who? What do you think you know? You don't know what you're

Hildegarde: talking about. **Sarah:** I know what I read in the history books. That's what I know. The ones where German doctors worked did experiments on workers. The head was Dr. Mengele.

Hildegarde: What are you saying?

Sarah: Mengele. Have you heard of him?

Hildegarde: Well, I know they had a hospital. Poppsi worked there.

Sarah: If he worked there he worked doing experiments on workers.

Hildegarde: That's complete nonsense.

Sarah: Why can't you trust me?

Hildegarde: I can't believe that, and neither should you.

Sarah: I looked up the details. The experiments. They were done under the supervision of Dr. Mengele. Haven't you heard of him?

Hildegarde: Of course. I'm not ignorant! Are you accusing my father of working with . . . No! . . . That's just wrong. You can't mean that. That's absurd! . . . My father!

Sarah: Or Poppsi's been lying to you. And Grandma Trilby too. Or maybe you too? Maybe you know more than you say?

Hildegarde: How can you dare to even suggest that? You weren't there. It was a war. My father helped our soldiers. You don't know anything!

Sarah: Do *you?* What do you know about what was going on? Do you know what kind of doctoring he was doing?

Hildegarde: Damn it, he told you! Can't you trust your own grandfather?

Sarah: Well, to me, it looks like something doesn't fit.

Hildegarde: Sarah! (*Gets up, approaches Sarah's chair. Backs off, paces.*)

Sarah: Mother?

Hildegarde: How dare you! I'm not lying! And neither is my father! He is *not* a liar! He took care of our wounded soldiers. That's that, understand? You be careful now, young lady.

Sarah: You asked me what was wrong.. (*Get's up, facing her mother.*) I asked if I could trust you. You said yes. Something's wrong with his story, Mom. Face it!

Hildegarde: (*Sarah bites her nails*) No. And God damn it . . . (*Slaps at her hand that is partially in her mouth*) Grow up! You are not a baby any more. Stop this damn nail crap.

Sarah: I am grown up, Mother. (*Starts out of the room. Stops. Turns back*) No one 'hides a hospital,' if it wasn't something weird. Would they? Trust me, something doesn't work in his story. There were no hospitals!

Hildegarde: You're making a terrible error here.

Sarah: Not me. . . .

Hildegarde: . . . Oh, Sarah.

Silence for a bit

Sarah: Was Mengele really as bad as people say?

Hildegarde: Well, I haven't studied him in any special way. But he seems to have been a pretty awful man. I mean he did all those horrible experiments on human beings. I'd call a man like that a monster.

Sarah: There's so much about that in the library. And about Auschwitz. Do you believe all those accounts?

Hildegarde: There's evidence as to what happened there. But Poppsi wasn't involved. He didn't do those things. You can't believe that. You shouldn't worry about Auschwitz. He was in Monowitz.

Sarah: But Mom, Monowitz was part of it. Mom. And what Poppsi says doesn't work.

Hildegarde: My father is an honest man.

Sarah: Mengele did his work at Auschwitz, Mom. Was there more than one place called Monowitz? I mean another such army camp in the war. With a hospital?

Hildegarde: No. Of course not. We lived nearby there.

Sarah: Then think about it: my grandfather, Poppsi. A surgeon at Monowitz. Your father.

Hildegarde: But

Sarah: Our wounded soldiers – but they weren't even there.

Hildegarde: How dare you believe that?

Sarah: Did you ever see his hospital?

Hildegarde: Of course not, but –

Sarah: So how do you know –

Hildegarde: I trust my parents. Not just a library book.

Sarah: It wasn't one book. There lots. Monowitz was Auschwitz. The books aren't lying.

Hildegarde: Are you sure?

Sarah: Well, . . . Almost. . . . I don't know.

Hildegarde: The books – they didn't talk about hospitals, I guess.

Sarah: No, they did. They said who the patients were. They described the clinics.

Hildegarde: But your grandfather . . .

Sarah: I don't know what to believe. I think he lied to me . . . to you. I'm afraid.

Hildegarde: You don't mean that. You're worried.

Sarah: No, I'm afraid.

Hildegarde: What's to be afraid of?

Sarah: Just suppose, just suppose your father *did* work with Mengele. He's a big part of me, isn't he? That means a big part of me is a monster. You even said so.

Hildegarde: Oh, Sarah, you aren't . . . just because you think your Grandfather may have . . . he didn't, sweetie . . . I'm so sorry . . . So sorry.

Sarah: How am I supposed to write this report now?

Hildegarde: We'll work something out. First, we need to figure out what's going on, don't we? I'll help. I'll ask my father. That'll clear it up. We'll all have a laugh over it. Don't be scared. You are going to grow up to be a lovely, strong and morally good woman. No chance of a monster in you.

Sarah: Oh right! You really help. Just go ask Poppsi. No, you can't just up and ask Poppsi about this. If he was lying before, why would he change his story now?

Hildegarde: (*stares at Sarah, finally 'getting' it*) That maybe . . . perhaps . . . you could be right. I don't know what to do right now. Oh, dear. Dear, dear. Let me have time to think this through. Your Dad and I need to discuss it. Honestly, I . . . I believe my father wouldn't do anything like what you are reading about. So let me think about all this. And we'll get to the truth. All of us. Together.

Ben and Heine enter, loudly.

Benjamin: Heads up, everyone! New soccer star here! New one!

Hildegarde: What?

Benjamin: Heine just scored two goals. We beat Gundelsheim 3-1. And our son scored the winning goal! Is that a great thing? Or what!

Silence

Heinrich: The returning athletic hero is met by silence from his loyal fans?

Hildegarde: Sorry. We've just been discussing a rather serious problem.

Heinrich: You still could say something. I mean, Dad told you I scored the winning goals! Maybe, 'hello'?

Hildegarde: Sorry but . . .

Heinrich: Forget it.

Heinrich storms off to his room

Sarah: Mom, you've got to find out for me.

Hildegarde: I will. I promise. I'll get to the bottom of this and when I do I'll tell you the truth. I promise.

Benjamin: What is so serious?

Hildegarde: I'll tell you. Sit.

END OF SCENE 3

Act II, Scene 4 – (1038 words)

Setting: Late that same night. Sarah is sitting with both her parents at the table.

Sarah: So just how am I supposed to find out what he really did?

Hildegarde: We don't know yet, honey. Ben, why not ask your Dad for help?

Benjamin: We just did that. With the swastikas. He was adamant when he said no more.

Sarah: What? . . . You mean this already happened once before?

Hildegarde: Well, not something really like this.

Benjamin: It was different.

Sarah: It happened before and you two let me choose that interview project?

Hildegarde: But we didn't / **Benjamin:** I didn't –

Sarah: I can't believe it.

Hildegarde: But I didn't –

Sarah: You let a mass murderer baby-sit us, eat at our table? You –

Benjamin: Sarah, stop! Don't exaggerate! We wouldn't –

Sarah: Exaggerate? Exaggerate? How can you say that? What if he did all these things? Poppsi! My grandfather!

Benjamin: We don't know that. In any case he was only at Monowitz for a short time, maybe –

Sarah: What are you talking about? He told me it was his longest assignment. He was there for a long time –

Hildegarde: No, he couldn't . . . you must have misheard him, dear.

Sarah: Don't you try to tell me . . . I heard him very clearly. I even have it on tape. You just keep protecting your father. Please, Mom! There's something's rotten there.

Benjamin: Sarah. Calm down. No one 'protecting' anyone. We are trying to understand what's going on. He told Jürgen it was weeks.

Sarah: So Grandpa knows?

Benjamin: No, not exactly but –

Hildegarde: That's what he told Jürgen. Don't you think we should ask for his help?

Benjamin: No. He doesn't want to be involved. He was *very* reluctant last time.

Sarah: What do you mean 'last time?' What won't he help about? To find if Poppsi is a Nazi? Grandpa's Jewish! He would want to know.

Benjamin: Calm down. We're all on your side. My Dad just couldn't relive those war years.

Sarah: I mean . . . I'm his family.

Hildegarde: Right, sweetie. But since Trilby and Lily died, your grandfathers have gotten very close. You know that. The idea of investigating one's best friend –

Sarah: Well, what about me? I'm his granddaughter. And now –

Hildegarde: But he doesn't want to –

Sarah: You did this to me. You told me I should do this project.

Hildegarde: We couldn't know what you were getting into.

Sarah: But you never even told me your suspicions. What's going to happen now? No one wants to find the truth because they're friends? We shouldn't ask about it because you love your father? Because we like him? Cause although he might be a lying mass murderer we can't check him because he's real jovial and comes for dinner?

Hildegarde: Whoa there!

Benjamin: We haven't said that!

Hildegarde: I don't like the way you, young lady, are talking about my father. We don't know anything, and you are insinuating he's a mass-murderer. He's an old man, and may mix up some things in his memory, but that doesn't mean he's done something wrong. And mass –

Benjamin: Come on, Hilda, there's obviously something wrong here.

Sarah: What was that thing that caused you and Grandpa to check about Poppsi?

Hildegarde: That's none of your business!

Benjamin: Well, it is related. (*Turns to Sarah.*) That submarine model of Heine's. Heine put swastikas on it and said he'd been encouraged to do that. We got concerned and wondered if Poppsi had a role.

Sarah: Wow! And you didn't warn me?

Hildegarde: I don't know why you told that now. We never did find out where the swastikas came from, and Poppsi didn't seem to play a role.

Benjamin: I came away with a different impression.

Sarah: Well, look who's going to help me. It certainly doesn't seem to be any of you.

Hildegarde: I promised. I will.

Sarah: How?

Hildegarde: I could ask Professor Eckelberg at the University for help.

Sarah: What would he know?

Hildegarde: He'd know where to get records.

Sarah: When would you ask him?

Benjamin: When can you go to the University to see him?

Hildegarde: I could call tomorrow. He'd help identifying the appropriate archives.

Benjamin: But how do you know it would be open to the public? Or even exist?

Hildegarde: There must be records somewhere. I'll find them. I'm going to America. They'll have records. I'll find them. I promise. Even if I have to change my thesis topic.

Benjamin: Going to the US could do it.

Hildegarde: But not in time for the school project. Would your teacher understand?

Sarah: Mr. Linkswart? Sure. He knows about it.

Hildegarde: You told him?

Sarah: Of course. I had to.

Hildegarde: I wish you would have told me first. It's my family.

Sarah: I'm your family too. And no one told me of the problems you were having about the swastikas.

Hildegarde: I'm sorry Sarah but you can't be privy to the conversations between your dad and me. So, OK, get off your high horse. We're all on the same side. Drop your anger. Can you? Please. I mean are you OK waiting for me to do the research?

Sarah: Angry? Me? No. Upset. Don't you see you keep trying to protect your Dad?

Benjamin: That's unfair. We all want to get to the truth. Your Mom is volunteering something very serious.

Sarah: I guess so. . . . Sorry. My teacher will be fine with the delay. It's me I'm worried about. I don't even know who I am now.

Benjamin: Here's something to remember. You aren't just someone 'born in a family.' You choose the person you become. Maybe chance plays a part. But you do have a choice. And you're a strong, wonderful, upstanding young woman. Be proud of yourself, regardless of what we find about Poppsi.

Hildegarde: Stop trying to be profound with your God-damn philosophy. (*Turns to Sarah.*) We love you, Sarah. And we *will* get past this. Right now, it's very late, and I think we all need a hug.

The three of them get up. Sarah rather reluctantly. They collectively embrace, but quite assymmetrically. A clock strikes 1.

Benjamin: Wow, 1 o'clock. Definitely, time to quit.

Hildegarde: Good night, dear.

Sarah: (*Reluctantly.*) Night, Mom. Night, Dad.

Hilda turns down the light and they leave for bed.

END OF SCENE 4

– Act III –

Scene 1 – (2,481 words)

Setting: Hilda and Ben's home a few months later. About midnight. Lots of excitement, decorations, balloons, a big 'Welcome Home!' sign. The kids, and the grandfathers gathered to raise a glass. Hilda and Ben walking in with as many suitcases, backpacks as they can carry. Sarah starts out approximately maximum distance feasible from Fritz, occasionally biting her nails. Obviously nervous.

Heinrich & Sarah: (together) Welcome home, Mom!

Fritz: Prost! To my itinerant daughter!

Jürgen: (standing near Sarah) Welcome back, Madame scholar!

Benjamin: (Putting down his suitcases) Wait, give her a glass and give her a chance to take off her coat.

Groan from all the others

Hildegarde: (Dropping the suitcases) Oh my children! (Rushes to them, drawing them into a big embrace.)

Heinrich: Are you done with the research, Mommy?

Sarah: Is it going to be a book?

Heinrich: Did you bring us a present?

Hildegarde: Yes, yes, yes.

Heinrich: What did you get us?

Hildegarde: You'll see when my trunk is delivered from the airport tomorrow.

Benjamin: Now, now, kids. Give Mom a chance to have some champagne.

Fritz pours some champagne in a glass. Gives it to her. They all toast her again.

Benjamin: So, my love. As you can see, we missed you. But we survived. The kids and I pulled together. With the help of our two elder statesmen here, of course!

Jürgen: We weren't a bad team.

Fritz: Here's to the 3 men who held the fort, against all odds!

Another round of laughter, clicking of glasses, and general joy. But Sarah holds back a bit, separates herself from the others and bites her nails.

Jürgen: And I think I've got to be on my way home. It's way past my bed time. After all I'm no spring chicken.

Fritz: Not me! Not tonight! I'll stay a bit. You know, I'll take a moment more with my daughter!

Jürgen: Certainly.

Fritz: (To Jürgen) Beers tomorrow afternoon . . .

Jürgen calls a cab. Gets his coat and hat. Puts them on.

Benjamin: It's late for us too. OK, kids. Tomorrow's school and neither of you are ready for bed. So, it's time. Mom will be around when school's done tomorrow and we have a glorious weekend planned. So off to bed.

Heinrich: But Dad, you promised you'd help me . . .

Benjamin: Oh that's right. *(Turns to Hilda. Winks.)* I'll be back in a bit.

Gives Hilda a peck on the cheek, a more intimate look, and goes off with Heine to his room.

Sarah: Mom, are we going to have a conversation about what you found?

Hildegarde: Of course, dear. *(Looks at Sarah's hands.)* We'll have a lot of time for that tomorrow after school and on the weekend.

Jürgen: How was the flight?

Hildegarde: Not too bad. The plane wasn't full. The meal was good. I even got a couple of hours sleep, so I can't complain.

Sarah goes off to join Heine and Benjamin.

Jürgen: Did you enjoy your freedom?

Hildegarde: Well, the research was actually pretty intense. So I wouldn't say the trip was as enjoyable as we might suppose, but living with an American family was nice. The mother did all the cooking and so I had a nice holiday in that way.

Fritz: I liked the photos you sent of the family. Seemed like a nice home.

Impatient car horn indicating the arrival of the cab.

Jürgen: I've got to go. We have a lot to catch up – all at a more reasonable hour. *(Then to Fritz)* Beers tomorrow afternoon?

Fritz: Why not?

Jürgen gives Hilda a bug, and a friendly slap on the shoulder to Fritz. Leaves.

Fritz: It's nice having you home

Hildegarde: It's good being home. But I am glad we are alone for a bit. I have something to discuss.

Fritz: What's that?

Hildegarde: You won't be comfortable with this.

Fritz: That's OK.

Hildegarde: Have you noticed that picture on the wall behind you?

Fritz turns, stares at the wall. Hilda behind him, watching, intently. Intermittently, one hears laughter from the kids upstairs.

Fritz: Which one? This photo of you?

Hildegarde: No. The other one. *(Takes it down from the wall and hands it to him.)*

Fritz: Is this a photo of Sarah and her class?

Hildegarde: Yes.

Fritz: It's new. I don't think I've seen it before.

Hildegarde: We hung it just before I left.

Fritz: Well I haven't noticed it. What about it?

Hildegarde: Look at it.

Fritz: What? *(He turns away from the picture, toward Hilda)* What?

Hildegarde: The wall, what's hanging on the wall behind the class?

Fritz: In the photo?

Hildegarde: See the poster in the picture. Sarah made it.

Fritz looks at the photo, doesn't react.

Hildegarde: . . . Did you read it?

Fritz: Of course.

Hildegarde: It says "If Mengele was One of Us, Are We All Monsters?" Doesn't that mean anything to you? Does that raise any questions?

Fritz slowly replaces the picture to the wall. Then turns back, moves closer to Hilda.

Fritz: Questions? What do you mean? Is Sarah in trouble? I mean psychologically? Is there a problem?

Hildegarde: No, Sarah doesn't have a problem. But I, no, actually Sarah and I, *we* have questions.

Fritz: Questions? About what? . . . Why?

Hildegarde: Dad, don't you see, that poster raises questions. And I'm wanting answers.

Fritz: What are you talking about?

Hildegarde: Come on, Dad. You know. You know exactly what I'm talking about. It's time to tell me what happened in the war.

Fritz: What are you saying?

Hildegarde: What you did during the war.

Fritz: What? . . . You know what I did.

Hildegarde: During the war!

Fritz: Don't talk to me that way. Don't interrogate me, Hilda. I don't have to answer you.

Hildegarde: No? Maybe not in a court of law, but I can ask you questions here, in my house. Now. I have a right to know who my own family is, my own father. What you did. Who you are.

Fritz: Do you have any idea? . . . How could you . . . want?

Hildegarde: Information. You. Your life. What did you do?

Fritz: In the war? War is awful. I saw the worst. But I don't have to share all those painful details, those memories. They are none of your business. And why now? You just came home. Certainly, not now. Not like this.

Hildegarde: You mean it's not a good time? For what? For your daughter to know her father? Her blood? Herself? I'm 37, just in case you forgot. I was alive when you were in the war.

Fritz: I don't know what you expect / me to say, to talk about. **Hildegarde:** The truth, Dad. All I want is that you talk about the truth.

Fritz: I can't share those horrors, not now, not ever.

Hildegarde: (*Goes over again to the photo, looks at it. Turns back to Fritz.*) I don't need details, I'm asking about the big picture. What you did. It's much too late for you to hide behind all this . . . this . . . bullshit.

Fritz: Why are you so angry? What are you driving at? You just came home. Let's enjoy each other.

Hildegarde: (*Begins quietly, to her self*) Enjoy each other? . . . Look at that photo again. On the wall behind you. (*He turns, looks.*) That's right, stare at it. Think. . . Sarah came home with that photo. *She* put it up on the wall. She made that poster after her interview of you and her research about Monowitz. She came home, very upset. She asked me what I knew about the hospital you worked in. You told her Monowitz was near Auschwitz but apart from it. I told her you helped terribly sick and wounded German soldiers. But she did research and found there was no such hospital for soldiers in Monowitz. Just run-down clinics that never treated soldiers. And the only 'real' hospital in Auschwitz wasn't for soldiers either. It had a special unit run by Mengele.

Fritz: What are you trying to say? I was a doctor. I sewed up battle wounds. I brought back all those we could save. The work was awful. Many died. But Mengele? Are you suggesting that I worked with him . . . how could you?

Hildegarde: But Sarah –

Fritz: You're accusing me on the basis of some 10th grader's social study paper? Who do you think you are? One of Stalin's judges? You can't be serious.

Hildegarde: Don't force me to lose my father! I am *very* serious. I also did research. And I know a lot more.

Fritz: How could you know more? There is nothing more. / I've always – **Hildegarde:** I've been reading about it too.

Fritz: Reading?

Hildegarde: Research. For my thesis.

Fritz: Your thesis? What are you talking about? It's on American health policy. You just came back from doing the research.

Hildegarde: Dad! You were a doctor in that place, during the war.

Fritz: So what? I never had anything to do with his work, his clinic. I never even knew Mengele.

Hildegarde: Dad, please! Can't you tell me what happened? Be honest. Let us stay together as a family. I know about your work there. It wasn't normal.

Fritz: What could you possibly know about my work?

Hildegarde: A lot. And it's in my thesis. My professor says Ullstein would be happy to publish it.

Fritz: What does that mean? There nothing to publish. There's nothing for you to write about. I –

Hildegarde: I know what . . . what sort of doctoring you did.

Fritz: I was a surgeon, a surgeon. I had to remove damaged legs, arms. I took out shrapnel. That's what I did. Often I had to work without anesthetic. Patients screamed. It was awful. There. Now I told you.

Hildegarde: I've talked to you my whole damn life, Dad. You never told me a thing. For years it was this lie. And you still insist that's all there was? You expect me to believe you?

Fritz: What? You accuse me of lying? You don't believe me?

Hildegarde: I had to find the truth from my daughter, doing a school project, for Christ's sake.

Fritz: What's to find? There's nothing to find. You have found nothing but lies. You don't know anything.

Hildegarde: Actually, I do. I read, I saw.

Fritz: What's to read, to see?

Hildegarde: After Sarah told me about your hospital, I went to the American archives.

Fritz: Where?

Hildegarde: Near Washington.

Fritz: You said you were doing health care. You lied to me?

Hildegarde: I changed my topic. Now it's about that lab and your work.

Fritz: How . . . How could you?

Hildegarde: How could I? Are you kidding? How could I not? I needed to know about my family.

Fritz: How can you . . . Are you threatening me? . . . Why? . . . You can't. . . . But you. Don't. Don't do that. You're my daughter! And Sarah's my little granddaughter. My blood. Talk to me.

(Hildegarde sits down, heavily on a chair, bends forward, with grief. Doesn't say anything.)

Fritz: Say something . . . Say something, damn it! What, do you want? . . . To banish me? . . . Because you don't believe me – me, your own family? Your father!

Hildegarde: Banishment would be right.

Fritz: How can you say that? What about Sarah and Heine? How will they ever know the truth rather than these lies?

Hildegarde: The truth? Christ, Dad. Hopefully Sarah will grow up to know the truth, and be a far better person for it.

Fritz: You can't banish blood. You can't divorce your father. Tell me. What happened when Sarah came home from school?

Hildegarde: I told you she was very upset. She had found out about your hospital. She asked what I knew. I told her that her research couldn't be correct. She said I was ignorant. She got me suspicious. From things you said over time. They didn't add up. Like how long we were near Krakow. And those swastikas on Heine's model.

Fritz: I told you, I had nothing –

Hildegarde: Sarah asked how could I allow you to come here? I told her you were her Grandpa. Then she said she never wants to see you again. I told her not to judge before we know. I promised I'd get to the bottom of it. I'd find out the truth and tell her.

(Fritz goes to hug Hilda. She stands and retreats, knocking over the chair.)

Fritz: Meine Schatz, don't let this get between us. *(Goes to hug her again, she withdraws again.)*

Hildegarde: How can you not understand.

Fritz: Think of how many years . . . My love and care. Do they mean nothing to you?

Hildegarde: How many lies? Even now, your pretending you were a doctor?

Fritz: I was! How can you trust books over me? You believe others who you don't even know?

Hildegarde: Photos. If you must know. Photos complete with your fucking smile. Your smile in that lab, with your surgical gown on. The prisoners on the table.

Fritz: Photos?

Hildegarde: They are all there, in the archives.

Fritz: What archives?

Hildegarde: In the United States. I told you.

Fritz: When you went for your thesis?

Hildegarde: Hundreds of photos.

Fritz: In America? Why?

Hildegarde: Why? How would I know? Nuremberg?

Fritz: That's not possible. I wasn't accused at Nuremberg. I have had nothing to do with those criminals.

Hildegarde: *(Bitingly)* No. Of course not. Nothing. But there you are, Dad. Right in the photos of the lab. Even labeled at one point as 'Second Assistant Deputy Medical Director.' And Mengele there too congratulating you and handing over some sort of certificate of merit.

Fritz: No. They can't. They can't have that.

Hildegarde: It's in my thesis. Already handed in. Photos. Evidence. At the committee. I asked them to wait . . . to let you explain, but instead, you just continue your lies.

Fritz: Wait, I'll explain . . . But what of Sarah?

Hildegarde: Sarah's father is a Jew.

Fritz: Did I object to that? Did I say one word?

Hildegarde: No, you surely didn't. But what were you were thinking? That maybe you experimented on his mother? Or his uncle? Or how did those two get away?

Fritz: Hilda, how could you say that? . . . Jürgen he's my . . . my best friend . . . All I have left . . . What will you tell the kids? Sarah? Heine?

Hildegarde: Sarah? She's the first who got to know. And she's declared it over. Her choice.

Fritz: Is that fair?

Hildegarde: Were those experiments fair?

Fritz: But you . . . you're my daughter. Whatever I did you are still . . . my daughter!

Hildegarde: *(Increasingly furious, non verbal. Then, points to the door)* Get out! . . . Get out! Get out! Filth! Lousy filth!

Fritz hesitates, then leaves, as Hilda, shocked at her own strength backs away from the door, covers her mouth. Ben calls down to her.

Benjamin: Hilda, the kids have a surprise for you. Come on up.

Hildegarde: *(Collecting herself a bit, standing taller, then to herself . . .)* Yes, I am your daughter, and you, you were my father.

Hilda exits.

END OF SCENE 1

Act III, Scene 2 – (2,801 words)

Setting: Dinner time, Sunday. Ben, Hilda, Sarah, Jürgen, Heinrich all at the dining table, without Fritz.

- Jürgen:** Do you have more wine, Ben? (*Hands Ben his glass. Ben gives him some wine.*)
- Benjamin:** (*Toasts*) Here's to having you home, Hilda. It's wonderful.
- Sarah:** Yup!
- Benjamin:** And to the family!
- All:** Bravo!
- Heinrich:** Not to criticize your cooking Dad, but Mom has you beat.
- Jürgen:** Here, here!
- Benjamin:** Traitors, both of you!
- Jürgen:** Or truth tellers?
- Benjamin:** Come on, guys. What about my meatballs?
- Sarah:** They're good, Dad. But this soup . . .
- Benjamin:** True, I don't do soup . . . but you . . . Lady Brutus? Do I have no one to sing my praises?
- Heinrich:** You open cans.
- Benjamin:** Thank you, son! And, with an artisanal flourish!
- Jürgen:** The acorn doesn't fall far from the tree.
- Heinrich:** Mom, did we tell you about the night Dad made quiche but forgot the eggs?
- Benjamin:** Is there no end to telling all the chef's secrets? That was my secret recipe for cheese pie.
- Jürgen:** Perhaps we should change the subject.
- Benjamin:** A voice of reason! And how about now switching sides to support the angels?
- Jürgen:** I hope to raise a serious topic for a minute.
- Hildegard:** Why not?
- Benjamin:** I don't know, Dad. This is a seriously celebratory moment.
- Jürgen:** No, really.
- Hildegard:** OK.
- Benjamin:** Go for it.
- Jürgen:** This is the first Sunday dinner I can remember at this house without Fritz.

Everyone stops eating, drinking.

Heinrich: That's right.

Benjamin: Dad –

mixed blood 7.wpd

Hildegarde: That's alright, Ben. My father's not here because I promised Sarah we wouldn't allow him back in the family.

Jürgen: I sensed that. Ben told me roughly what you found. But shouldn't we talk about it? Together. I mean, discuss it. Before a final decision?

Benjamin: Actually, we had a conversation and –

Heinrich: Not me.

(Sarah bites her nails.)

Jürgen: I should have been included. Aren't I part of this family? Fritz is the person I'm closest to.

Benjamin: Dad we didn't –

Jürgen: Couldn't you have respected that? It's important. Something we should talk about. His being gone is a big deal. Like a death in the family. A death you created with a decision. Almost like an execution you decided on.

Hildegarde: *(gently slapping at Sarah's hand that she was biting.)* That's a terrible exaggeration! No one died!

Benjamin: That's way off base, Dad.

Jürgen: Maybe, but banishing him . . .

Benjamin: Look, Hilda and I discussed it. It's our decision. Final. We agreed. Perhaps we should have talked to you, but we didn't. Sorry. We didn't think of that. Still, let's not discuss it any further.

Jürgen: Since when are we, in is this family, afraid of talking through a problem? A conversation doesn't hurt. Kicking out a member of the family – one's own father even – that's a big deal. And I'm sure –

Heinrich: Before we get into this, could someone pass the gravy . . . please.

No one passes the gravy. Sarah bites her nails occasionally from here to the end.

Jürgen: . . . I am sure everyone has some feelings about it. Why didn't you include Heine in your conversation?

Hildegarde: Ben and I agreed. End of discussion. My father's actions . . . his behavior in the war, and then the lies, his deceit –

Sarah: Mom and I talked about it. She knows how I feel. I got really upset when I uncovered problems with Poppsi's stories about the war. Mom and I had long conversations. She promised she'd help me find out what really happened, and she did. In America. Her Dad's a murderer.

Jürgen: I wouldn't / put it that way. **Heinrich:** Folks, second request for someone to pass gravy . . . please.

All stare at Heine, then gravy is passed to him.

Hildegarde: Damn it, Heine, this involves you too, so get your head out of your stomach.

Heinrich: I'm listening. But hey it's no sin to be hungry. Anyhow, it is dinner time, isn't it? And if you wanted my opinion, you might have asked me too. Funny how I'm always the one left out.

Benjamin: That wasn't intentional.

Heinrich: Well, it sure feels that way. I mean, damn, he's my grandfather, and you were just going to take him from me?

Hildegarde: It was an oversight.

Heinrich: So am I . . . I guess.

(Hilda shakes her head in disbelief.)

Benjamin: Let's get back to what my Dad said.

Jürgen: Don't misunderstand me. I was targeted by the Nazis. Many of my years were spent responding to that. I'm not questioning what you found, Hilda. But did you hear what your daughter said: 'Murderer'? I ask you, honestly, is that what you found? Your father, Fritz, a murderer? Or something vaguer . . . a role in some experiments? Sterilization, perhaps? That isn't vastly better. I know that. But, for me, those distinctions have to be made.

Hildegarde: This isn't Nuremberg.

Jürgen: Should we be less careful because we are not a court?

Hildegarde: I won't have him in our home.

Jürgen: Shouldn't we be careful with words? Truth is vital to judgment. Words like 'murderer.' Look, I'm a lawyer –

Hildegarde: Maybe not exactly murder, no. But **Benjamin:** Dad, do you have to – I uncovered / a lot of evidence.

Jürgen: Yes, I do. We're talking about Hilda's father, my closest friend.

Sarah: We're not talking about law, we're talking about us –

Jürgen: That's true, Sarah.

Sarah: And how we relate to a criminal. A criminal sitting at our table.

Jürgen: I know. But this criminal is your grandfather. Yours too, Heine. He bounced you both on his knee. He loves you bothdeeply. We are not a court, we don't declare verdicts: guilty or innocent. Even if we all have – me too – we all arrived at a verdict of guilty.

Sarah: I have.

Hildegarde: Me too. I uncovered the evidence.

Jürgen: But guilty of what? We don't know what he did. And we don't know his motives. Certainly, he has to face what he has done. But he can't do that without introspection. That requires some safety, some quiet. Banishment leaves him only to wallow in his own lies.

Sarah: But he did torture, murder, something, someone . . . didn't he Mom?

Hildegarde: Grandfather's right, we don't know exactly what he did. He worked in a lab where they did gruesome experiments on people. Some died. We don't know what his role was.

Sarah: It's just so creepy even to think about.

Heinrich: Maybe to you. In a way. But –

Jürgen: Sarah, he is your grandfather! You laugh at him and tease him when you beat him in checkers.

Sarah: . . . forget that!

Heinrich: Not me.

Sarah: You should.

Heinrich: Talk for yourself. That's not the way I feel.

Sarah: You're just a sick-o.

Jürgen: Whoa, Sarah! What are you talking about? You can't erase memories. Life's not a piece of paper. Those things happened. And Heine has his own feelings. His own memories. Don't call him names.

Benjamin: Enough!

Jürgen: Enough? Of what? Heine and I, were completely left out of your decision. Isn't it important how we feel? Of course, it's not as important as what Fritz did in the war.

Hildegarde: Jürgen, enough! I hear your argument, but it doesn't –

Jürgen: What? What doesn't it mean? He's your family. Where you came from. It maybe ugly, but it means something. Denying him a seat at your table can't change your past, or who you are.

Sarah: That's not right. I can choose. I can choose to whom I relate. Whom I sit with. I *can* choose. That changes who I am. And I choose never to become the monster *he* was.

Heinrich: (*Stands up in fury.*) Shit, Sarah! Don't call Poppsi a monster!

Sarah: When did *you* start listening?

Heinrich: You can't call him a monster. You're not always right, Miss Know It All.

Sarah: He is.

Heinrich: Not. Liar!

Benjamin: Easy, easy, Heine!

Heinrich: Well she isn't! She isn't right! Tell her!

Hildegarde: Sarah, stop your snide comments.

Heinrich: Don't call Poppsi a monster!

Jürgen: Heine's point is hating others doesn't help you. Calling people monsters certainly doesn't let you live a good life. We can choose things to live a good life. Certainly, Fritz did, not in the war, but since I've known him, he's done well. Who knows how we would choose were we in his shoes in those war years? It's important to realize. We were not in his shoes!

Benjamin: Come on, Dad! You were in the war too. You made choices. Very different ones.

Jürgen: Did I? Or did I have an easy way out – a hidden Jew who had no choices?

Benjamin: Fritz chose to torture Jews, cut up people for 'experiments,' maybe even our relatives.

Jürgen: You don't know that. We need to know what he chose to do, what he did and why. And as part of his family, aren't I somewhat responsible for him? Don't I have an obligation, with the evidence Sarah and then Hilda brought to light, to confront him? To have him answer our questions, confront his past?

Benjamin: I don't get it, Dad. What are you saying? Are you defending a Nazi torturer, because you couldn't make choices in the war?

Jürgen: Of course not. How could you even talk that way? To me? My grandmother was beaten to death by brown shirts in front of me! I don't even know how my father died. All I know is he disappeared. And you dare ask me if I'm defending a Nazi?

(Heine sits back down)

Benjamin: Well, it does seem like you're defending him.

Jürgen: I'm *not* defending him. I'm not saying he did right. But I am saying that *we* are his family. And I do not believe in 'honor killings.' Or even an 'honor banishment.' No matter why he made those choices – and I, I don't know what they were – it won't justify his actions – whatever he did. But he needs to admit to his wrongs. And we need to help him do that. Who else can challenge him, force him to rethink his mess? His admission will take time. And patience. And care. We ought to help him open up, admit his actions, free himself from the prison he's living in not banish him.

Hildegarde: What do you mean? He continually lies. He won't admit what he did. He insists he wasn't even involved in that clinic.

Jürgen: But what did you give him? Twenty minutes? Is that any real chance to shed a coat of lies? He's woven and worn his lies for more than twenty years. And you gave him 20 minutes? . . . 20 minutes? And when he doesn't perform to your expectation, you banish him?

Benjamin: He did awful things.

Jürgen: Does it make you a better person to say you won't sit with him? Haven't we lost enough family? Enough people? Should we choose to lose more?

Hildegarde: As Sarah said, I can choose with whom I sit.

Jürgen: Does that improve the world? We should make him reconsider what he did. To think about the life he led. About the lies. Your choice just makes you comfortable.

Hildegarde: I made the whole family comfortable. Is that so bad? What more am I supposed to do?

Jürgen: If we don't help our closest kin admit to what he did, face its horror, even to repent, how can we claim to be doing right?

Heinrich: I miss him. I love Poppsi. I don't know what he did. I understand it was bad. I don't know why he did that. That was in the war, before I was born. When you were a kid, mamma. He's always nice to me. He always has time to listen. He loves us. All of us.

Hildegarde: It's not my job to bring reason to my father, nor to get him to see what's right or wrong.

Heinrich: But you're kicking out my grandfather!

Jürgen: So for you, Hilda, moral education is a one way street? A one way obligation? The parent must teach the child, but the child has no responsibility?

Benjamin: I can't understand you, Dad. This man is guilty: a horror. He did terrible things. A few months ago maybe he was even hawking swastikas in my house. In our home!

Jürgen: But we really don't know that, do we?

Hildegarde: Come on Jürgen! Remember? You asked him about the swastika. He denied anything beyond telling Heine that it was a national symbol. Just like when I confronted him with the information I found in America, always denial, always lies.

All now look at Jürgen, wait for a response.

Jürgen: I don't know . . . And, of course, I'm not comfortable having befriended a Nazi.

Benjamin: Then what the hell is this whole conversation about? Stop pushing it then.

Jürgen: Of course it's difficult. Fritz has lived this lie for 20 years. Very few Germans have said what they did in the war – to anyone. The lie becomes the liar's home, his bed, safety zone, cocoon, and here in Germany, even a place of societal rebirth.

Hildegarde: But I gave him his chance to tell the truth. He even realized, before I finished, that I knew what happened.

Jürgen: Or part of it.

Benjamin: Come on, Dad –

Jürgen: Still. For 20 years Fritz used lies to deflect attention from his past. He forced himself to erase memories of the past. And he probably expected that of your mother, Trilby . . . and maybe you too, Hilda.

Sarah: Oh come on, Grandpa!

Jürgen: Well, you knew you were in Poland those years, Hilda. You could have asked the same questions years ago that Sarah raised now. Why didn't you? What happened to those memories?

Sudden moment of silence. All look at Hilda.

Sarah: You did . . . Didn't you? . . . Did you? Ask him? . . . (*Silence.*) Didn't you ask . . . your Mother? . . . (*Silence.*) Mom? . . . Didn't you?

Heinrich: Were you there too, Mom?

Hildegarde: What are you doing, Jürgen? You've inviting an inquisition.

Sarah: Mom?

Hildegarde: Of course I was there. But I was just a kid. It wasn't my job . . . I wasn't . . . responsible.

Sarah: Jesus, Mom!

Jürgen: You were just a bit younger than Heine, no?

Heinrich: I'm not so young! –

Jürgen: Your father needed that lie to raise his family, to live. It's going to take time to get to the truth. And only then can we judge.

Heinrich: And you guys got furious about my U-boat. I still don't know what was so wrong. And Mom didn't even ask Poppsi one question? Not one?

Benjamin: Calm down.

Heinrich: Me calm down? What about you all?

Hildegarde: Mind your tongue, young man!

Jürgen: Most people in Fritz' situation did lie to make the best possible situation for himself, his loved ones. He did that pretty well, didn't he? . . . He got you a degree of security – many couldn't. How can he just shed that story after telling it for a generation? A lie one tells oneself, a coat for the post war winter, for one's kids, one's family.

Benjamin: The lies about the past are one thing. But that swastika . . .

Jürgen: Of course. There is guilt. Even recently. But wouldn't it be better to have the family help him see –

Hildegarde: No! The answer's obvious. Keep him away from here.

Jürgen: Not my answer. He is an addict to his lie. Like most all of Germany. That's what happened. He has to let the lie go, to live with the truth of what he did. He needs strength to admit things. And to see them as sinful. Isn't that what we want?

Benjamin: I don't know . . .

Hildegarde: Maybe Jürgen is right. But I do not accept that responsibility. My Father forfeited that right with his lies.

Benjamin: I don't even know if we *could* give him that help. It certainly, wouldn't be easy. We can't go back. Back to normal. All hugs and kisses. No.

Heinrich: How could Poppsi admit to lying, to tell us what he did. I mean, he'd be scared to tell the truth after so much lying.

Benjamin: You're right Heine. It may be important but it wouldn't be easy – perhaps impossible. Grandpa is saying we have to give him time to find that courage, to leave the lie.

Jürgen: Yes. To admit what he's done. After all, as Sarah said we all could be monsters. We should show him a path to his better self – even if he doesn't take it.

Benjamin: Maybe. I don't know. We need to think this through. What do you think, Hilda?

Hildegarde: How the hell can you sit here and agree with your father? Are there no limits as to the horrors we admit in our house? *(Hilda jumps up. Her chair crashes backward to the floor.)* I'll not have his kind of immorality in my house, at my table, with my family, my children. Never. How could you agree with him? *(She storms out, knocking over the chess board.)*

Heinrich: My God, Mom.

Sarah: Mom! *(Sarah speeds after her.)*

A small pause to let their exits sink in to Ben. Then he rushes to follow her.

Heine and Jürgen are left on the stage, quietly looking at each other. After a pause, they jointly get down to pick up the chess pieces and replace them on the board as the curtain comes down.

FINAL CURTAIN

(19,518 words)