

The Disappearance of Greta

Setting: In the living room of Franz and Helga Fischer's meagre home. 1943, Spandau, Berlin.

Stage: Simple and poor. There can be a few items of furniture, but crucially there must be an old wooden bench seat/storage box. Another simple scene nearby, or elsewhere in the auditorium if this allows.

Cast:

Franz Fischer - 50's

Helga Fischer – early 50's

Oberstleutnant (Lieutenant Colonel) Hans Heller – 30's

Gefrierter (Lance Corporal – Enlisted) Stefan Lange – early 20's

Markus - 14

Greta – 20

Scene 1

(Helga is sat on the bench seat, shaking. Franz is stood SL nursing a blooded nose, visibly shaken. Hans is pacing, clearly in charge of the situation. Stefan stands SR.)

Hans: *(shouting very loud.)* Do not test my patience Herr Fischer! I ask you once more, one very simple question. WHERE?

Franz: With respect Lieutenant, there is only my wife and myself here.

Hans: *(still shouting, correcting)* Lieutenant Colonel! You are a dirty liar Herr Fischer, in your dirty little wooden house, with your dirty little *schlampe* *(slut)* wife!

Franz: I apologise Lieutenant Colonel Heller.

Hans: *(Shouting)* What good is an apology? *(softer, menacing)* Tell me where he is or the stock of my gun will do far more damage to your old, pathetic head.

Franz: Lieutenant Colonel Heller, I cannot tell you any more, there is nothing left I can say. Only Frau Helga and myself live here.

Hans: Then why is there child's clothing in your other bedroom?

Franz: They belong to my daughter.

Hans: Ah! You said you live here alone with the Frau!

Franz: I do. We are alone. Our daughter has been missing for over five months now.

(Stefan laughs, Franz glares across the stage at him.)

Hans: Missing?

Franz: Yes.

Hans: How very, unfortunate.

Stefan: *(laughing, sniggering.)*

Hans: What is so funny Lange?

Stefan: Lieutenant Colonel, his daughter is a little *schlampe* too!

Franz: You know my daughter?

Stefan: Everyone knows your daughter Herr Fischer.

Franz: *(daring to walk towards Stefan.)* Have you seen her?

Stefan: I have seen lots of her! Most men have seen lots of her! But not for over a year now.

Franz: *Stefan* Lange? Of Faulkenseer Chausee?

Stefan: *(taken aback)* Yes.

Franz: Your father worked for me. He is a good man, trustworthy.

Stefan: Yes, yes he is.

Franz: I have seen you at the factory. You were a little boy, no more than twelve!

Stefan: I do not remember, Herr Fischer.

Franz: You know my daughter? You know my Greta?

Stefan: Yes.

Franz: Please tell me if you have seen her. Is she safe? Please?

Hans: I hate to break up this romantic little reunion, but there is no time! Come Lange. I will break Herr Fischer's pathetic fragile head another day. Heil Hitler!

Stefan: Yes, Lieutenant Colonel Heller.

(Hans Heller marches out.)

(Stefan Lange follows but stops at the side of Helga, who remains seated on the bench.)

Stefan: Frau Helga, your Greta was a pretty *schlampe*. Was, of course. *(he laughs.)*

Franz: Stefan! I know you, this is not how your father would want to see you! Please if you have any news of our daughter, please, I beg you to tell us!

Stefan: I have no news. I have not seen her for maybe two years. *(he stands over Helga, intimidating)* Good day Frau Helga. *(he goes to turn, stops.)* Stand up.

Helga: *(quietly)* No.

Stefan: STAND UP!

Franz: Stefan, my wife is very upset as you can see, please let me comfort her.

Stefan: Stand! What are you sitting on?

Franz: Please Stefan. It is nothing. Just an old bench.

Stefan: *(Shouting back.)* Lieutenant Colonel Heller!

Franz: Please Stefan, I beg you, don't do this, you can see my wife is very upset. Leave us now please. You have seen there is no-one else here. Be the good man like your father!

Stefan: Here!

Hans: *(enters swiftly SR)* What is it Lange?

Stefan: The seat. We did not check the seat that the Frau is sat on. It looks like a box.

Franz: It is just an old bench my grandfather made in the last century.

Hans: *(pulls out a pistol, aiming it at Helga.)* Move!

(Helga refuses, Hans flicks the catch of the pistol.)

Franz: *(beaten.)* Helga darling, come to me.

(Helga stands slowly, she can barely walk for shaking.) (Hans kicks the seat.)

Franz: Please, it has no worth, but it has sentimental value to us.

Hans: It is hinged. Lange! Open it! *(Stefan slowly opens the lid of the box, which is hinged upstage, so the audience can see it open. Hans points his pistol towards it. Stefan peers into the seat.)*

Stefan: It is empty.

Hans: Come Lange! I have had enough of this shit hole. We will be back Herr Fischer. We will tear this house of yours apart to find him and you will be treated like the dirty little traitor you are. Heil Hitler!

(Hans exits followed swiftly by Stefan.)

(Franz and Helga look to each other, clearly confused.)

Helga: Stefan did not say anything! He is a good man like his father.

Franz: Yes, maybe, I do not trust him though.

(they slowly walk to the bench seat and lift the lid.)

Both: Empty?!

Helga: Where is he Franz?

Franz: I've no idea!

Helga: He couldn't have gone anywhere, I've been sat there the whole time!

Franz: What have you done with him?

Helga: What do you mean what have I done with him? I haven't done anything with him. What have you done with him?

Franz: Nothing!

Helga: Me neither! He's vanished!

Franz: Impossible!

Helga: Then why isn't he in there?

Franz: I said I've no idea!

Helga: Did you build in a trap door or something?

Franz: Of course not woman!

Helga: You might have done!

Franz: I did not!

Helga: Or make the back open so he could roll out?

Franz: Ha!

Helga: You're always making things, or adjusting things.

Franz: No.

Helga: I wouldn't put it past you!

Franz: I know, but I have not touched that seat, you know it is precious to me!

Helga: Then how on earth did he get out.

Franz: I've really no idea.

Helga: He was in there when they knocked, I know he was.

Franz: Maybe he slipped out without even *us* noticing.

Helga: Impossible, I sat on it immediately after he got in.

Franz: Well he couldn't move *your* behind!

Helga: Franz really?

Franz: Sorry, but you know what I mean.

Helga: So where is he?

Franz: We should be able to smell him. The boy stinks!

Helga: That's hardly his fault. Anyway he must be hungry.

Franz: So am I, I know that for sure.

Helga: I will make a big stew, with beef, dumplings and carrots from the garden.

Franz: Washed down with some fine French wine of course.

Helga: And a deep filled apple strudel.

Franz: With fresh cream.

Helga: *(sits on the seat, suddenly deflated.)* I wish.

Franz: What do we have?

Helga: Dog food. One tin.

Franz: Then we shall dine together and try not to bark.

Helga: How is your nose? The bleeding has stopped.

Franz: It will be alright, it isn't broken. He did not strike me so clean, luckily.

Helga: Why did you argue Franz? You are lucky he didn't kill you right there and then!

Franz: *(raising his voice, becoming increasingly upset.)* I cannot stand still while they take everything that we have, they've taken my business, who knows they might have taken our only daughter. I cannot let them take you from me as well!

Helga: But you are no use to me dead!

Franz: Sorry darling.

Helga: So why did you take him in?

Franz: Oh come on now Helga! You saw the state of him, I couldn't leave him to die in the street like a rat!

Helga: But the risk is so very high, the consequences fatal. We've seen what these monsters are capable of!

Franz: I am all too well aware, thank you Helga.

Helga: *(softer.)* And still you take him in.

Franz: I had to. Imagine our Greta is out there too, lost, cold, hungry, wouldn't you want someone to care for her?

Helga: But she is not a

Franz: We don't know for sure the boy is.

Helga: He must be. Why else are they hunting him? And who told them he is here?

Franz: True. Although there is something very strange about him.

Helga: How do you mean?

Franz: Oh for God's sake Helga! He disappeared from a box sat upon by your huge, *(coughs, corrects himself)* sat on by your lovely, womanly, heavenly bottom!

Helga: We really should try to find him.

Franz: Yes, he can't have gone far.

Helga: He must still be in the house.

(a loud knocking comes from inside the bench seat of which they are sat, they both jump violently.)

Helga: Tell me that was you!

Franz: You know it wasn't. *(they stand in unison and take a corner each of the lid and lift it, slowly. Markus climbs out, dusting himself off.)*

Markus: What is for dinner? I am starving! Did I hear stew is on the menu tonight?

(Franz and Helga are speechless.)

Markus: Oh, didn't you save me any?

Helga: Markus.....but.....?

Markus: It doesn't matter. I found some tomato soup for us. Maybe it will wash the dog food down! Have you got something to open it? *(holds up the tin of soup.)*

Franz: Where did you get that?

Helga: More to the point, where did you go? How did you go?

Franz: The boy has soup!

Markus: Tomato soup! *(holds it up high like a trophy.)*

Franz: I will make a fire, we will have it hot!

Markus: Yes!

Franz: Did you find bread too?

Markus: I'm afraid not.

Franz: You are a clever boy Markus! You found soup! Did you steal it? Markus you must never steal.

Markus: I did not steal it.

Franz: Or did you barter it?

Markus: I traded it for a pair of Frau Helga's stockings.

Franz: Then there a two lucky ladies in Berlin!

Markus: Yes!

Franz: I expect they are taking part in a three legged race as we speak!

Markus: Haha! (*they stand side by side and start to race across the stage 'three legged style'*)

Helga: Boys! Behave, this serious!

Franz: Sorry Helga.

Markus: Sorry Frau Helga.

Helga: Are you not missing the point Franz?

Franz: Don't worry, I can find something to burn.

Helga: Not that! Markus, how did you do that, how did you hide in such a small space with nothing to cover you and still not be seen?

Markus: We will need bowls Frau Helga.

Helga: Markus! Where did you go? How did you.....vanish and reappear like that?

Markus: I didn't go anywhere, except to tomorrow.

Helga: Pardon me?

Franz: Your dressing table!

Helga: What?

Franz: We can burn your dressing table!

Helga: No Franz! There are still some old fruit boxes in the cellar, burn those.

Franz: Yes! Let's hope they are not too damp.

Helga: Franz! Didn't you hear what Markus said?

Franz: Yes! He has soup, tomato soup!

Helga: Franz he said he went to tomorrow! Didn't you Markus?

Markus: Can opener?

Helga: Boys! Markus say it again, make my deaf old husband hear what you said.

Markus: I said I didn't go anywhere, I just went to tomorrow and back.

Franz: Are you alright boy?

Markus: I will be better with some hot soup inside me!

Helga: Franz! Ask him what he meant!

Markus: Don't worry. All will become clear. I will explain once we've had our *(reads dog food tin.)* Turkey and Liver canine cuisine!

Franz: Washed down with fine tomato soup!

(fade to black out.)

Scene 2

(an unknown location, Greta is sat, gagged with a fabric cloth and tied to a wooden chair. This scene can be played out somewhere other than the main stage, if this allows.)

Greta: *(moans, but cannot be understood because of the gag.)*

Stefan: *(stood behind her, his hands on the back of the chair.)* It will be so much easier if you just tell us. Give us a clue even. I have told you this so many times before.

Greta: *(another indecipherable moan)*

Stefan: It will be much better for you to tell me. You know how difficult Heller and the others can be!

Greta: *(tries to shout something.)*

Stefan: What? Speak up!

Greta: *(gives a sarcastic groan, insinuating she cannot speak with the gag in place.)*

Stefan: *(steps forward and sharply pushes the gag down.)* Come on now, you can tell me. You don't want to upset Heller again, surely.

Greta: He can rot in Hell! Like his fucking name suggests!

Stefan: Ah now she speaks.

Greta: He is scum!

Stefan: He is your only way out of here.

Greta: Ha! He doesn't give a shit about me! He only cares for himself. And he doesn't give a fuck about you either!

Stefan: You lie, he is a good man. An excellent Lieutenant Colonel.

Greta: He is an evil fuck desperate to get into the SS but doesn't have the balls!

Stefan: (*slaps Greta's face hard.*) Silence!

Greta: (*reels from the shock and the sting, starts to shake.*)

Stefan: (*strangely calm.*) He is a good man, he is like a father to me.

Greta: Ha!

Stefan: Alright, he is like a big brother to me. Without him I would no doubt be on the front line somewhere. Or worse.

Greta: Stefan, he hates you, he uses you. Surely you can see that!

Stefan: No.

Greta: I feel sorry for you.

Stefan: Why would you feel sorry for me?

Greta: Because he treats you like a little bitch.

Stefan: No. I am not arguing this. Anyway you are wrong.

Greta: How then?

Stefan: You are wrong, he *is* in the SS.

Greta: I know.

Stefan: How can you know this? It is secret!

Greta: Ha-ha! It is obvious! I have seen him in his SS uniform.

Stefan: How? When?

Greta: Stefan, all I can say is you're not very good with blindfolds! Ha-ha!

Stefan: Well, this does not matter now.

Greta: You are terrible with secrets, you've now even *told* me Heller is in the SS! You are just his little lost bitch, poor little Gefrieter Lange, Heller's little puppet bitch ha-ha!

Stefan: Shut up!

Greta: Gefrieter? You're not even a proper Corporal, you're an enlisted little bitch soldier, dancing while Heller pulls your strings! Hahaha!

Stefan: I said shut up! Enough of this!

Greta: Ooooh, what are you going to do? (*beat*) I'm not scared of you Stefan, we go back remember, way back to before this fucking war, when we were both innocent children playing Cowboys and Indians. Haha, even then you couldn't stand losing when I was your little Hiawatha, always escaping from the fence post because you were hopeless at tying

knots! I used to keep my hands behind my back pretending I couldn't break free. All I was doing was trying to make it fair on you!

Stefan: *(quietly)* I said shut up.

Greta: Oh come on Stefan, you are better than this. This war and Heller have fucked you up. Where is the sweet boy from school, who always held the door open for me, who offered to carry my books? Where has he gone Stefan? You don't even know yourself do you? *(pauses)* Now you've been replaced by this wannabe monster, this power hungry useless little Heller bitch!

Stefan: *(suddenly shouting)* Shut up! Shut up, SHUT UP!!

Greta: What are you going to do little Heller bitch?

Stefan: *(suddenly grabs her by the throat.)* Shut. Up.

Greta: Ha-ha Stefan. What are you going to do? Rape me again?

(silence, a few seconds pass)

Stefan: What? *(lets go.)*

Greta: I know you did Stefan, you are useless with blindfolds remember? The third night after you abducted me if I recall correctly. Nice move by the way, sending you to lure me in worked a treat! A girl will be easily turned by chocolate nowadays! Gullible little Greta fell for your charms and your chocolate. I had no reason to fear anything, I've done nothing wrong. But there I was, tied up so tight I could hardly feel my hands and feet, just begging for it to all be over, not knowing if I would survive the night. First Heller, obviously, then that brut Kiefer. Then you, last on the list as usual. But at least you were more gentle than the others.

Stefan: You are lying, I never touched you. I would never do that!

Greta: I saw you Stefan! I saw you! I could just see your face, your soft bum fluff on your little boy's chin.

Stefan: You were mistaken, it was not me! There were many soldiers there that night.

Greta: And all because you thought you could break me. Still you can't! Why? Because I have no idea who this fucking boy you are looking for is! I've never met him, I have no idea what he looks like or anything. But you're all convinced he has something to do with me, or that I'm harbouring him!

Stefan: You were seen with him Greta! Several witnesses saw you with him. Running down Am Kiesteich with the boy Markus, hand in hand like children, laughing. That's how the witnesses described you. Laughing like children as you ran away. Then no sign of him. No sign at all, gone without a single trace. Care to explain that Greta?

Greta: Lies. The so called witnesses are liars. They will tell you anything because they are scared, scared out of their poor innocent minds, surely you realise that. *(Stefan is silent.)*

Why is this boy Markus of such interest to the Secret Service? Who is he Stefan, what has he done?

Stefan: I cannot tell you.

Greta: You can tell me Stefan.

Stefan: He, *(pauses, walks around.)* He is of interest to the SS, yes. I cannot tell you why. He is not one of them as you know.

Greta: I don't know. But I can guess.

Stefan: They believe he has powers. That he has some strange ability to vanish in clear daylight. They think he can be of use to the SS and the Third Reich.

Greta: Ridiculous.

Stefan: You were seen by him just before he did another of his vanishing acts and they need information on him, they want you to lead them to him.

Greta: They? Them? See Stefan, you are not one of them. You are much better than this. Let me go Stefan, at least give me a chance and I can make a run for it. You can say I offered myself to you, so you untied me, then I assaulted you and ran. It's that simple Stefan.

Stefan: You really think it's that easy? This place is surrounded, you wouldn't get much further than that door. And what will they do to me? Even if you bludgeoned me half to death, they will finish me off!

Greta: Then convince them that I know nothing of this boy, it's all been a case of mistaken identity. Tell them you know me of old, tell them that you believe me!

Stefan: No! Of course I can't! The sooner you speak the truth the sooner you have your freedom. As you said, it's that easy!

Greta: Oh fucking hell Stefan, I know NOTHING! Why won't you listen?

Stefan: Shut up! Shut up bitch!

Greta: Ha-ha! You are the bitch here! Heller's little puppet bitch!

Stefan: *(goes to swing the back of his hand towards her face but stops himself, he leaves.)*

Greta: *(singing after him.)* Heller's little puppet bitch! Hahaha....! *(she laughs sarcastically, but her laughter slowly turns to crying, as the lights fade to black out.)*

Scene 3

(Later that evening at Franz and Helga's House.)

(Franz, Helga and Markus are sat round the table, they have finished their meal, the fire is still going which sheds a soft light across the stage.)

Markus: Wunderbar!

Franz: I hand it to you Markus, that soup was indeed wunderbar!

Markus: Heinz.

Franz: Heinz who?

Markus: The makers of the soup, Heinz.

Franz: A German company? I haven't heard of them.

Markus: American I believe, but made here too.

Franz: Heinz, it means Ruler of the House.

Markus: Then you shall keep the tin, drink fine French wine from it while sitting on your throne. (Markus stands and gives Franz the tin, takes a bow.)

Franz: You are a funny boy, Greta will love you!

Markus: But I am not looking for a wife, Mr Heinz!

Franz: Ha-ha, not in that way! I mean she would love your sense of humour.

Helga: My poor Greta, where can she be? Is she even still alive?

Markus: You must not listen to them. They are power hungry brutes.

Helga: But those nasty things they said about her! What if she is in trouble, what if someone is holding her against her will?

Markus: I am sure she is alright, they are just trying to provoke you.

Franz: The boy is right, we must keep hope. Perhaps she cannot tell us where she is. There are many things in this war of which we have no idea.

Helga: Maybe he is right. Markus you are a clever boy. Beyond your years. But please tell us how you did your little vanishing act, are you a magician?

Franz: Ha-ha, Markus the Magic Man! The Conjuror of Soup!

Helga: Franz! Quiet, honestly one taste of food and your energy has gone up through the roof!

Franz: Sorry darling. Pray Markus, tell us how you did it. Then maybe you can disappear again to get more soup, and a baguette would be good this time!

Helga: Franz!

(Markus takes the empty soup tin from Franz and gives it to Helga. Helga throws it to one side.)

Franz: Be a good boy, tell Mrs Heinz how you vanished and then reappeared.

Markus: Alright, but I doubt you will believe me.

Franz: I'm sure we will, you've already proven it to us, with your little vanishing act.

Markus: I have no idea how it works, I just seem to be able to skip backwards and forwards. I close my eyes tight and imagine when I want to be. Believe me it was very useful at school.... the teachers have no idea how I passed my exams with such high results!

Franz: I told you Helga, he is such a clever boy!

Helga: Then let him talk Franz.

Franz: Go on boy.

Markus: So...

Helga: Wait. *(pauses)* You said you close your eyes and imagine *when* you want to be?

Franz: Helga darling, you want him to tell us, then you question him? My God boy you stink, if we can boil some water you really should have a bath.

Helga: Franz!

Markus: It's alright Frau Helga, I do stink, I even repel myself!

Franz: Then I will run a bath.

Markus: With bubbles?

Franz: Scented salts.

Markus: A loafer for my back?

Franz: Of course, a hot sausage on a stick.

Markus: A beer!

Franz: A dozen beers!

Markus: A bath of beers!

Helga: Boys, really?

Markus: Sorry Frau Helga. But Herr Franz is so funny, he makes me laugh. I do not know my father you see.

Helga: I'm sorry. Do you know anything about him?

Markus: No, mother says he left us before I was born, he didn't want to be a father.

Franz: *(places his hand on Markus' shoulder, does not speak.)*

Markus: My mother said he was a troubled man. That he was caught up in circumstances of which he had no control. But she also said that I didn't need him, we didn't need him.

Franz: Where is your mother now Markus. Perhaps we can find her for you, tell her that you are safe.

Markus: No, she is not here now.

Helga: What do you mean?

Markus: I mean she is not in Berlin, not really. I mean not now.

Helga: You're not making any sense.

Markus: Please do not worry Frau Helga. You have both been very kind to me, but I can't stay here, it's far too dangerous for us all. You should not stay here either.

Franz: But where will you go boy, it isn't safe to go anywhere? Unless you make an escape during an air raid, but who knows if you would survive.

Helga: No, we can't let him risk that Franz!

Markus: It's alright. I have an idea, but I'm not sure if it will work or not. Heller and the SS are after me, I know this much. That is why I cannot stay here any longer, they know someone has seen you with me.

Franz: Then what is your idea boy?

Markus: Come with me.

Helga: How can we? If we're seen out together it will be the end of us all!

Markus: No, I mean come with me, let me see if I can take you with me to another time.

Helga: Will it work?

Markus: I have no idea, but we can try.

Franz: But it's of no use to anyone by going to tomorrow.

Markus: No, if I concentrate hard enough I can go further in time.

Franz: Really?

Markus: Yes, but I have to want and believe it enough, with my eyes closed as tightly as possible.

Franz: Then we should try. We should try.

Helga: What about our Greta? We can't just leave her!

Franz: Of course not.

Helga: Well?

Franz: We must find her, bring her here and take her with us.

Markus: We haven't enough time, I'm sure the SS will be back, they said they will return.

Franz: The boy is right.

Helga: Then what do we do?

Franz: Why are you asking me?

Helga: Because you've never let me down before. Think of something Franz! I know you can, you are such a clever man, I know you will think of something!

Markus: *(picks up the soup can and gives it to Franz, registers Franz's confused look.)* Mr Heinz, ruler of the house! *Think* Mr Heinz!

Franz: *(looks into the bottom of the can, sits down.)* There is no way. I'm sorry Helga darling, we will have to wait, stay. Hope that Greta comes back to us, pray that she is able to come home one day, maybe when this dreadful war is over. We must carry on as normal, pretend nothing is wrong, Heller and his gang will give up eventually, they must have to. Markus, my dear boy, can you take yourself to a better time and stay there, protect yourself?

Helga: Markus?

Markus: Yes, Frau Helga?

Helga: *When* are you from?

(Markus is about to speak when a very loud knocking is heard followed by shouting from outside.)

Helga: No!

Franz: Hide boy, quick! *(as he says this Markus is already running for the bench seat, throws it open and dives in dramatically)*

Franz: *(to Helga)* Sit on it again, I will hold them off.

(Hans Heller storms in followed closely by Stefan Lange.)

Hans: Herr Fischer! We have fresh intelligence that you are harbouring an illegal. We have a warrant to turn this pigsty upside down until we weed out the little shit.

Franz: Be my guest Lieutenant Colonel Heller.

(Helga and Franz sit in unison on the bench seat.)

Hans: Lange!

Stefan: Yes, Lieutenant Colonel?

Hans: Go down to the basement, search every corner, open every cupboard, break any box, lift every floorboard, leave no inch of it not inspected. Do not return until you have done all I say.

Stefan: *(turns to go.)*

Hans: Lange, wait! Be careful. The boy is dangerous. He may well be armed. If you find him, bring him to me alive, drag him up the stairs by his hair if you need to. He cannot escape from us again! *(Stefan runs off.)*

Franz: Lieutenant Colonel Heller, with respect you are wasting your time.

Hans: With respect, *Herr Fischer*, shut up! You have nowhere to go, I have men on every floor of this matchbox house of yours, we will find the boy. He has no chance of escape. I will stay here until your whole house has been dismantled brick by brick, beam by beam. I will stay until every drop of blood has left your pathetic old body if I have to.

Franz: Yes, Lieutenant Colonel Heller.

Hans: Ha, nothing like a threat of death to calm them down! Now, I am going to search your kitchen, remember you have nowhere to go. I suggest you sit perfectly still with your *schlampe* wife and pray we find him quickly. *(he exits SL to the 'kitchen')*

Helga: Franz.....*(she is shaking.)*

Franz: Ssssh.....

*(they sit for a few seconds in silence, searching noises and commands can be heard off set.)
(A gentle knock comes from the box beneath them.)*

Franz: You ssssh too!

Markus: *(muffled,)* Let me out.

(They both stand up and lift the lid as quietly as possible, Markus carefully climbs out.)

Franz: What on earth are you doing boy?

Markus: Ssssh! *(he sits on the box and grabs the hands of both Franz and Helga, pulling them down onto the bench so they are sat either side of him. He does not let them go. He squeezes their hands tight and closes his eyes tight.)*

Franz: *(realising what he is trying to do, in a loud whisper)* No!

Helga: *(loud whisper)* Greta!

Markus: *(continues to hold them tight, his eyes are closed firmly and concentration visible across his face.)*

(Instant Black-out.)

(when lights up the stage is exactly the same, the 3 are in the same pose, Markus opens one eye, then Franz opens one eye.)

Franz: Well that didn't work. *(all open their eyes.)*

Helga and Markus: Sssssh!

Franz: Sorry. (he stands up, whispers.) Listen.

Helga: I can't hear anything.

Franz: Exactly.

Helga: What do you mean?

Franz: All is quiet, they are gone!

Helga: Really?

Markus: I will go to check.

Franz: No boy, it's too dangerous!

Markus: Don't worry, if they are here I will try to go to another time, I can do it quite quickly sometimes.

Franz: All right, but be careful.

Markus: I will Herr Franz.

Helga: Tiptoe. Be like a mouse.

Markus: I will. *(goes to leave.)*

Franz: Markus!

Markus: Yes, Herr Franz?

Franz: You stink more than ever.

Markus: Why thank you, sir! *(he goes off SL.)*

(Helga stays seated on the bench seat, Franz checks in the kitchen.)

Franz: *(soon returns.)* Heller is not in there.

Helga: *(Still whispering.)* He must have left through the back door, do you think he is in the back yard?

Franz: That is quite possible.

Helga: Where has Markus got to?

Franz: Give him a chance woman!

Helga: But I'm worried!

Franz: It is still silent. *(sound of heavy footsteps approaching, loud knocking on the door.)*

Helga: Franz! *(she cries, shakes.)*

Franz: Wait there, I will go. *(more knocking) Yes, one minute! (he goes to the door, opens it slowly.)*

Markus: (*appearing at the door.*) Only me! Haha!

Franz: My God boy you nearly gave me a heart attack! Not to mention Helga, are you trying to put her in her grave?

Markus: Sorry Frau Helga, but you should have seen the look on his face!

Helga: Well? (*whispering*)

Markus: They are all gone, it worked!

Franz: Really?

Helga: (*whispering.*) Really? Did it really work?

Markus: (*whispering, mimicking.*) Yes. There's no need to whisper anymore!

Franz: Then where are we?

Helga: He means *when* are we?

Markus: I've no idea, I don't always go to exactly to when I wish to. Especially when I want to go further.

Helga: Then how can we tell when it is now?

Franz: What are you on about woman?

Helga: (*with a slight laugh*) I'm not sure myself!

Franz: The wireless! (*he rushes to the radio, turns it on, sound effect of radio interference until he finds a station, it is in English.*)

Radio Voice: This is the BBC Overseas Service, welcome to the evening bulletin....

Helga: What are they saying Franz?

Franz: Ssssh woman, I'm trying to listen!

Radio Voice:with your host Charles Worthington. Early this morning, on this the 7th of May 1945, representatives from the OKW and the Allied Expeditionary Force together with the Supreme High Command of the Soviet Red Army, gathered at a ceremony in Reims, France to sign the German Instrument of Surrender, effectively bringing an end to Nazi Germany. This was attended by witnesses from.....(*interference breaks it off, Franz turns off the radio.*)

Helga: What did they say Franz?

Franz: I'm not sure, something about the Soviets in rhymes, and German music instruments I think.

Markus: Hahaha Herr Franz, you are so funny. Frau Helga, he does not understand English, but I do!

Helga: Tell us what he said!

Markus: They have signed the document of surrender! Germany has surrendered!

Helga: Oh no.....*(starts to cry)*

Franz: Why are you crying woman? It's over, the war is over!

Markus: It's over! I did it!

Helga: You ended the war? All by yourself?

Franz: No! Haha! Markus, when is it now? How far did we go?

Markus: The radio presenter said it is the 7th May, 1945. We jumped forwards over two years!

Franz: How?

Markus: As I said, I really don't know, I just thought hard about going to the end of the war, it worked!

Helga: Such a clever boy!

Franz: Stinky clever boy!

Helga: But what about Greta? We left our Greta behind! Markus you left our Greta behind, *(becomes distressed.)* Franz, how could you let us leave Greta behind, how could you?

Franz: I'm sorry darling, we will look for her, maybe Markus can help us. And of course we have to help Markus find his mother. But first we need to wash this boy!

Markus: *(Lifts his arm and smells his armpit.)* Yes, good idea. I will heat some water. Comfort your wife Herr Heinz, she is hysterical and emotional.

Franz: She always is!

(Markus leaves and goes into the kitchen.)

Franz: My darling Helga, we will find Greta, we will do our best. Tonight we are both tired, we must sleep then we will begin to search. We will have to see how it is out there, to see if it is safe, we still must be careful.

Helga: *(still upset.)* We left her behind Franz, we left her behind.

Franz: She is a strong girl, a strong woman with a fiery spirit, I pray she is alright. But tonight we really must sleep.

(there is a loud knock on the door, they both jump.)

Franz: *(Stands up, hesitates.)* What was that.

Helga: A knock on the door!

Franz: I know, but who is it?

Helga: Open it and find out!

Franz: *(goes to the door.)* If that's you boy, you're not funny! *(he swings open the door, Greta stands in the doorway, clearly mid-term pregnant.)*

Greta: Papa.

Franz: My daughter? My Greta? Is it really you?

Greta: Yes, Papa, it's really me!

Helga: *(shrieks with joy.)* My Greta, my darling daughter!

Greta: Mama! I'm home!

Helga: *(highly emotional, crying.)* But.... but.... but.... where have you been my baby?

Franz: Who have you brought with you? *(pointing at her belly.)*

Greta: Your grandchild Papa!

Helga: My baby is having a baby!

Greta: Well, not tonight I hope!

Franz: Markus! Come here boy! Bring the champagne!

Helga: Fool! As if we have champagne!

Franz: You're pregnant!

Greta: Yes, Papa!

Franz: How did that happen?

Greta: I think you know Papa, haha!

Franz: Yes, but who is the father, do we know him?

Greta: No Papa, don't worry about that now.

Helga: *(kissing her daughters face.)* My baby is home! My Greta, my beautiful daughter!

Greta: Haha, yes Mama, I am home now.

Helga: *(slumps down onto the bench seat.)* Oh....

Greta: Mama? Are you alright?

Franz: She will be fine, I think this is all too much for her, I think I should take her to bed. Your bedroom is how you left it Greta, just how you left it that day. But probably a little dusty.

Greta: Take Mama to bed Papa, we can catch up in the morning.

Franz: *(kisses his daughter on the cheek)* Goodnight Greta darling, sleep well. In the morning I will find the man and.....shoot him!

Greta: Haha, you've no need to worry about that, I will never see him again.

Franz: What happened to you Greta?

Greta: The SS Papa, they abducted me.

Franz: Then how did you escape?

Greta: I didn't really, I bought my freedom. *(she stokes her belly.)*

Franz: *(Looking down, sombre)* Oh.

Helga: *(moans, sobs happy tears.)*

Franz: I will take her to bed, tomorrow you will tell me all about how *that* got in *there*.

Greta: Yes, Papa. Sleep well Papa.

Franz: We love you Greta darling, we've missed you. *(helps Helga up and they both leave.)*

(Greta stands holding her arched back, Markus returns from the kitchen, they stand and stare at each other for a few seconds.)

Greta: Hello.

Markus: Hello.

Greta: How are you?

Markus: I'm fine thank you, a little hungry.

Greta: Me too, is there anything in the kitchen?

Markus: No. Apart from dog food.

Greta: Oh.....nice.

Markus: I don't mind it, especially washed down with tomato soup.

Greta: You look well.

Markus: Thank you, you look big.

Greta: Thanks! You smell.

Markus: I know, it's common knowledge.

Greta: You should go.

Markus: Why?

Greta: It will confuse them.

Markus: I suppose it will.

Greta: They don't need any more confusion, they've had enough already.

Markus: Alright Mama.

Greta: I'm very proud of you Markus, you are such a clever boy. *My clever boy! (kisses his forehead.)* But you must go now, *(caressing her belly)* I will see you soon enough.

Markus: Yes, Mama.

Greta: Markus.

Markus: Yes, Mama?

Greta: I love you.

Markus: I love you more.

Greta: Not possible!

(they sit side by side on the bench seat, Markus closes his eyes tight, clenches his fists, a slow blackout.)

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