

# **The Kapo**

**by Phillip W. Weiss**

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## **The Characters**

**Ivan Stelsky – the Kapo**

**Wilhelm Heisler – Commandant, Pilsburg Concentration Camp**

**Harald Von Esler – SS captain, Heisler’s adjutant**

**Pavel – a concentration camp inmate**

**Boris Nachtman – a concentration camp inmate**

**Nadia Lubovski – a concentration camp inmate**

**Sigmund Rubinski – a concentration camp inmate**

**Louise Stelsky – Ivan Stelsky’s wife**

**Eugene Howard Dolan – FBI agent**

**Bernal – FBI agent**

**Donald Barrow – Prosecuting Attorney**

**Irving Hausman – Defense Attorney**

**The Judge**

**Court Clerk**

**Hans – concentration camp guard**

**Janitor**

**This is a play in two acts**

**(Act 1, Scenes 1 – 9 take place in the Pilsburg Concentration Camp)**

### **Act 1**

**Scene 1 – Heisler’s office, 1943 (page 1)**

**Scene 2 – Heisler’s office, one hour later (page 3)**

**Scene 3 – Stelsky’s room, evening (page 10)**

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**Scene 11 – Stelsky’s apartment in Palm Beach, Florida, 1994 (page 44)**

**Scene 12 – Stelsky’s bedroom, later that night (age 53)**

### **Act 2**

**Scene 1 – a court room in Miami, Florida, 1995 (page 57)**

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**This play is a work of fiction. The characters in this play are fictitious and their resemblance to any person living or dead is entirely unintentional and purely coincidental.**

**Act 1, Scene 1**

***Time: 1943***

***Place: Pilsburg Concentration camp located somewhere in central Europe.***

***Place: An office. Sitting behind a desk, sipping on a drink, is a man, about 40 years of age, dressed in the uniform of a high-ranking officer of the SS. His name is WILHELM HEISLER and he is the commandant of the camp. He evokes an air of complacency coupled with authority. Standing next to him is another man, about 30 years of age, who is a captain in the SS. His name is HARALD VON ESLER and he is Heisler's adjutant.***

**HEISLER**

I am sick and tired of all that Jewish propaganda accusing us of being the brutes, the bad guys, the lowlifes. We're doing the world a favor by getting rid of the Jewish Bolshevik riffraff. Yet how are we repaid? With war! Outrageous!

**VON ESLER**

Yes, Commandant, the world is really in a sorry state, thanks to the Jews. Damn parasites, all of them. They tried to suck us dry but we're on to them now.

**HEISLER**

But what galls me the most is how the Jews have the temerity to claim that they are better than us, that THEY are the victims, as if we were never stabbed in the back by evil forces who wished our destruction. Well, guess what, von Esler. I'm going to conduct a little demonstration that will prove once and for all that what we say about the Jews is not mere propaganda. I will randomly select one Jew from among the prisoners, make him a kapo and then you watch what happens. Now go find me a Jew and bring him here.

**VON ESLER**

That won't be too difficult to do. Do you have any particular type in mind?

**HEISLER**

**Any Jew will do, and remember, he has to be a Jew.**

**VON ESLER**

**Jawohl, Commandant. Heil Hitler.**

*Von Esler clicks his heels, gives the Nazi salute and leaves the office.*

*Lights dim.*

**End of Act 1, Scene 1**

## Act 1, Scene 2

*Time: One hour later.*

*Place: The Commandant's office.*

*Heisler is sitting at his desk; Von Esler is standing to Heisler's right. In front of the desk, standing at attention, is a third man, about 30 years of age, wearing the striped shirt and pants of a concentration camp inmate. He is thin, but still handsome and not yet emaciated.*

HEISLER

*(pointing to the inmate)*

So, von Esler, who do we have here?

VON ESLER

Herr Commandant, let me introduce you to inmate number (*Von Esler reads from a file*) two four five eight three.

HEISLER

*(to the man)*

So, what is your name?

MAN

Ivan Stelsky, Herr Commandant.

HEISLER

What kind of name is Stelsky? That doesn't sound like a Jewish name. Are you really a Jew?

STELSKY

I am.

HEISLER

*(to Von Esler)*

He doesn't look like a Jew but then again they are a sneaky race. (*to Stelsky*) Where are you from?

**STELSKY**

Warsaw, Herr Commandant.

**HEISLER**

Schooling?

**STELSKY**

I attended trade school.

**HEISLER**

And what kind of trade did you learn?

**STELSKY**

Electrician.

**HEISLER**

(laughs)

An electrician? A Jewish electrician? You didn't go to a Yeshiva and study Torah? (to Von Esler) Can you believe this Von Esler? A Jew who actually learned a manual trade. Perfect!

**VON ESLER**

(skeptical)

It is unbelievable. He's gotta be lying. (pause) Wait a minute. He's a Jew! So of course he's lying!

**HEISLER**

(to Stelsky)

You're not lying to us because if you are I'll personally kick your ass so hard that my boot will become a permanent part of your butt.

**STELSKY**

I am telling the truth, Herr Commandant.

**HEISLER**

(sarcastic)

Like we can believe a Jew.

(Both laugh)

VON ESLER

*(still laughing)*

Not likely, sir. *(to Stelsky)* Listen, you dirty, stinking piece of pastrami, if you're lying the Commandant, I will personally see to it that you regret the day you were born. *(Stelsky does not respond.)*

HEISLER

Anyway, enough of the small talk. *(facing Stelsky)* What I want to talk about is a job we have for you. We want you to be the kapo for barrack 24.

STELSKY

Why me, Herr Commandant?

HEISLER

*(jumps up from his chair, enraged, and screams)*

WHY ME, YOU ASK? WHO THE HELL ARE YOU TO ASK ME ANYTHING? I'M TELLING YOU SOMETHING, YOU STINKING BOLSHIEVIK! I'M TELLING YOU! THIS ISN'T 1918! YOU'RE NOT IN CHARGE! ALL YOU SAY IS YES HERR COMMANDANT AND THANK YOU HERR COMMANDANT! THIS IS NOT THE JEWISH BUND! I'M IN NO MOOD TO PUT UP WITH YOUR JEW CRAP! *(to Von Esler)* Are you sure you selected the right man?

VON ESLER

He better be or he and I will have a long talk. *(to Stelsky)* You got that, Jew?

STELSKY

Yes, Herr Captain.

VON ESLER

That's more like it.

HEISLER

*(regaining his composure)*

So, Stelsky, the Jewish electrician, tell me a little more about yourself.

**STELSKY**

Herr Commandant, after graduating from trade school I worked for a construction company in Warsaw installing electrical wiring in buildings. Then in 1939 I was drafted into the Polish army.

**HEISLER**

Ah, so you were a soldier too. What was your rank?

**STELSKY**

I was a corporal and was in charge of a platoon.

**HEISLER**

*(incredulous)*

The Poles put a Jew in charge of Polish soldiers? *(laughs)* No wonder we beat the Poles so easily. The Jewish soldiers were too busy deveining!

*(Heisler and Von Esler laugh)*

**HEISLER**

Come to think of it now, in the last war we had too many Jews in the German army. They were insisting that they were Germans, but they were just imposters, infiltrators who took all the desk jobs while the real Germans bled and died. The Kaiser should have gotten rid of them, should have dumped them on the Americans. They love Jews. I remember that after the war I spent some time in New York City. The place was swarming with Jews. Ugh! Well, like you said Von Esler, we're on to them now. They won't fool us again. *(To Stelsky)* You hear that, Stelsky? You will not fool us again. *(pause)* How old are you?

**STELSKY**

Twenty nine, Herr Commandant.

**HEISLER**

Married?

**STELSKY**

Single, Herr Commandant.

**HEISLER**

You're a good looking man. You're tall, blond, handsome, in fact you could almost pass for an Aryan. *(pause)* How come you don't have a wife?

**STELSKY**

I was working to support my mother.

**HEISLER**

Ah, so you are a nice Jewish boy. Well, Mister nice Jewish boy, Mister Jew Soldier, Mister Electrician, you're going to be our first Jewish kapo of this camp and if you mess it up I will personally escort you to the gas chamber myself. Do I make myself clear?

**STELSKY**

Yes, Herr Commandant ... and thank you.

**HEISLER**

Don't thank me so fast. Your job will be hard. You will be in charge of all the prisoners in the barrack. You will make sure that they obey all rules, keep the barrack clean and conduct themselves properly. You will have total authority to use whatever measures you deem necessary to enforce the rules and regulations of the camp. Do you understand?

**STELSKY**

Yes, Herr Commandant. May I ask a question?

**VON ELSER**  
*(annoyed)*

Now what?

**HEISLER**

Just a moment, Von Esler. *(to Stelsky)* What is it?

**STELSKY**

My mother. I want to know if my mother is still alive.

HEISLER

I'll look into that for you. Anything else? *(Pause)* No? Good! Now before I dismiss you, I want you to sign this paper. *(Heisler reaches into a draw in his desk and pulls out a paper.)* Let me read it to you. "I, Ivan Stelsky, voluntarily agree to become Kapo of barrack 24 and accept this position of my own free will and accord and under no duress. Further, as Kapo of barrack 24 I will enforce all the rules and regulations of this camp and will report any infractions of said rules and regulations to the Commandant or his representatives." *(Heisler places the paper on the desk.)* Sign right there *(points to where Stelsky should sign.)*

*(Stelsky approaches the desk, looks at the form for a moment and then signs it. He then steps away from the desk.)*

HEISLER

Good. Good.

*(Heisler reaches into his file cabinet and pulls out a coat and a loaf of bread and throws them hard at Stelsky who catches them, almost falling backward.)*

HEISLER

That is your official Kapo jacket and a little extra food to give you more strength to do your job. After all, we don't want you to set a poor example for your pals in the barrack. You will also occupy the Kapo's quarters. *(pause)* Oh, and before I forget, here's something else I think you will need. *(Heisler again reaches into the file cabinet and pulls out a three-foot long truncheon, one end encased in leather.)* This is your enforcer. You will carry this with you at all times and use it unsparingly to encourage compliance with the rules. Is that clear?

STELSKY

Yes, Commandant.

*(Heisler gets up from the desk and tosses the truncheon to Stelsky.)*

HEISLER

*(to Von Esler)*

Get the camera.

*(Von Esler leaves the room and soon returns with a camera.)*

**HEISLER**

**Good! Now take a picture of us.**

*(Heisler grabs Stelsky's hand in a firm handshake.)*

**HEISLER**

*(posing with Stelsky)*

**Take the picture.**

*(Von Esler snaps the picture. Heisler releases Stelsky's hand.)*

**VON ESLER**

**Anything else, Commandant?**

**HEISLER**

**Now we're going to go to Barrack 24 and introduce the new Kapo to his charges. I'm sure they will be very happy.**

*As the three men leave the office, the lights dim.*

**End of Act 1, Scene 2**

## Act 1, Scene 3

*Time: Evening*

*Place: Stelksy's room in Barrack 24. Outside of the room the sound of moaning and grunts can be heard. Stelksy is sitting in a chair, starring blankly at the wall. Then there is a knock on the door.*

STELSKY

Come in.

*A man enters the room. He is starving.*

STELSKY

What do you want?

PAVEL

To talk.

STELSKY

Get back to your bunk.

PAVEL

I can't sleep.

STELSKY

I'm not a nurse. Now get out of here.

PAVEL

Is that how you talk to an old friend?

STELSKY

You are not my friend. Not now, not ever. Back home you used to snub me all the time, like you were so much better than me.

PAVEL

How can you say that? Didn't we grow up in the same neighborhood? Play together?

**STELSKY**

Yes, we did. That didn't mean we were friends.

**PAVEL**

Okay, then, as an old acquaintance, can you tell me how you became the Kapo?

**STELSKY**

How the hell do I know? They chose me, that's it. Nothing more and if you know what's good for you, you'll stop asking questions and get back to your bunk.

**PAVEL**

And if I don't, what are you going to do? Smack me?

**STELSKY**

*(annoyed)*

Listen "friend," are you trying to test me? ARE YOU?

*(Stelsky gets up from the chair, and starts pushing Pavel toward the door. Pavel resists.)*

**PAVEL**

*(laughs)*

Some Kapo you are. You can't even deal with a starving man.

*(Stelsky lets go of Pavel; he glances at the truncheon that is in the corner of the room.)*

**PAVEL**

You don't have the guts to do it. You're a wimp, a punk, just like you were when we were kids.

**STELSKY**

**GET OUT OF HERE NOW!**

**PAVEL**

You stupid, little faggot. Always the momma's boy. Don't you know what those Nazi pigs are up to? They want to show us that we're just as depraved as they are. Don't you get it ... or maybe you got it already. Which one is doing you, the commandant or his queer Captain?

**STELSKY**  
*(enraged)*

Listen, Pavel, you have no idea what you're talking about. They ordered me to be the new Kapo, that's it.

**PAVEL**

And you didn't refuse?

**STELSKY**

Refuse the Commandant? How could I?

**PAVEL**

Maybe by saying ... no?

**STELSKY**

And if I had said no, then what?

**PAVEL**

Then they would have kicked your ass, maybe thrown you in solitary, but at least you'd have your self-respect.

**STELSKY**

**SHUT UP! WHY DO I HAVE TO EXPLAIN ANYTHING TO YOU?**

**PAVEL**

Because I'm the closest thing you have to a friend in this dung heap, and also I knew your mother.

**STELSKY**

That's all finished now.

**PAVEL**

Yes, and you're the one that finished it, the moment you said yes to those Nazi pigs. Now you're their toy, their tool, their plaything. And you're a Jew too! Traitor! *(Stelsky is silent. Then he leaps from his chair, grabs the truncheon and in one swoop hits Pavel hard on the head. Pavel collapses onto the floor, motionless. Stelsky is standing over him. Then he opens the door and shouts)*

**STELSKY**

Get this stinking carcass out of my room now! And make it fast! AND DON'T MAKE ME REPEAT MYSELF! YOU GOT IT!?

*Several men rush into the room and are dragging Pavel's motionless body as the lights go out.*

End of Act 1, Scene 3

Act 1, Scene 4

*Time: Morning*

*Place: Roll-call square. Von Esler is standing behind a podium. Stelsky is standing at attention.*

VON ESLER  
Barrack 24. All accounted and present?

STELSKY  
Yes, Captain

VON ESLER  
Anyone in the infirmary?

STELSKY  
One, Captain.

VON ESLER  
What's his problem?

STELSKY  
Severe head injury.

VON ESLER  
How did that happen?

STELSKY  
The prisoner was in an altercation.

VON ESLER  
Anyone else hurt?

STELSKY  
No one.

VON ESLER

*(addressing all the prisoners)*

Fighting will not be tolerated. If any of you are caught fighting you will be severely punished. Now form a line. It's chow time.

*(The prisoners start forming a line.)*

VON ESLER

Stelsky, come over here. I want to talk to you.

STELSKY

Yes, Captain?

*(Von Esler takes Stelsky aside)*

VON ESLER

You stupid dolt! What kind of Kapo are you? That guy shouldn't be alive. You're making me look bad. Now, how am I going to explain this to the Commandant? *(Stelsky is silent.)* Do I have to do your work for you? *(pause)* You slimy, filthy Jews are all the same, trying to cover for each other. You disgust me. You ALL disgust me. The faster we rid the world of all of you the better off we will be.

STELSKY

Herr Captain, I hit him as hard as I could.

VON ESLER

You're lying. We give you food, your own bed, your own coat and what do you do? You mess up, just like all you Jews do, always looking for an edge, a chance to grab that extra inch. What's the matter? You want more bread? Or maybe we should get find another Kapo.

STELSKY

*(alarmed)*

Please, Herr Captain, I will do better.

VON ESLER

You're damn right you will, Jew, or we'll throw you back with your Bolshevik comrades and let's see how long you last with them. Now get lost.

**STELSKY**

Yes, Herr Captain. (*pause*) What will happen with Pavel?

**VON ESLER**

Don't you worry about that. He'll be taken good care of. But next time, when you impose discipline, make sure you do it right. This is not a kindergarten.

**STELSKY**

Yes, Captain

(*Stelsky turns to leave.*)

**VON ESLER**

Oh, Stelsky, one other thing. The Commandant's wife is away and he doesn't like to be alone at night. Send one of the prisoners over to keep the commandant company.

**STELSKY**

I'm sorry, Herr Captain, I don't understand.

**VON ESLER**

(*annoyed*)

Do I have to draw a picture for you?

**STELSKY**

No, Herr Captain.

**VON ESLER**

Then don't play games with me.

**STELSKY**

It's just that I've never been involved with anything like that before.

**VON ESLER**

**Well, now you will get some on the job training, courtesy of the Reich. The Commandant will be expecting someone to report to his house at nine o'clock tonight. Do not disappoint him.**

*Von Esler exits, leaving Stelsky standing alone, as the lights fade.*

**End of Act 1, Scene 4**

## Act 1, Scene 5

*Time: Evening*

*Place: Stelsky's room*

*Stelsky is in bed, laying on his back, starrng at the ceiling.  
There is a knock on the door.*

STELSKY

Come in.

*A handsome young man enters. Stelsky gets up from the bed and sits on a chair. He is starrng at the young man.*

STELSKY

What's your name?

YOUNG MAN

Boris Nachtman

STELSKY

How old are you?

BORIS

Nineteen.

STELSKY

When did you arrive in camp?

BORIS

A week ago.

STELSKY

No wonder you still look good. *(pause)* Where you from?

**BORIS**

Russia.

**STELSKY**

You're a Russian? What are you doing here?

**BORIS**

I was transported to here from a POW camp.

**STELSKY**

You were in the Red Army?

**BORIS**

Yes.

**STELSKY**

Have a girl friend?

**BORIS**

I do, but I don't know where she is now.

**STELSKY**

Well, it doesn't matter. You're here now and there is something I want you to do.

**BORIS**

What is it?

**STELSKY**

I want you to go to the commandant's house tonight.

**BORIS**

Me? Why me?

**STELSKY**

Because I am ordering you. The Commandant needs some company and if you don't show up I will look bad and if I look bad then you will definitely look bad. Do I make myself clear?

**BORIS**

Yes, I understand perfectly well what you want me to do and to you I say no! I'm no pansy!

**STELSKY**

Listen, Boris, don't be a hero. *(pause)* Just do what I tell you because if you don't, you will die.

**BORIS**

Then I'll die.

*(Stelsky gets up, grabs hold of the truncheon, and looks Boris straight in the face):*

**STELSKY**

I'm going to give you to the count of three to change your mind. One ... two ... three!

*(Stelsky swings the truncheon but misses Boris who flees from the room.)*

**VOICE**

*(Offstage)*

Halt, halt!

*(Then the sound of machine gun fire.)*

Hans, I just killed a prisoner who was trying to escape. He was running from barrack 24, I ordered him to halt, he didn't obey and as soon as he reached no-man's land I let him have it.

**HANS**

*(offstage)*

Good job.

*(Several men start lining up at the door as the lights go out.)*

**STELSKY**

*(Standing at the door, speaking to the rest of the barrack)*

Listen up, you disgusting vermin! That's what happens if anyone tries to escape. Now, I need a volunteer for a special assignment. Whoever I select for this important job will get two extra pieces of bread. Now line up at the door. And hurry up! I don't have all night.

**End of Act 1, Scene 5**

## Act 1, Scene 6

*Time: One week later*

*Place: Stelsky's room*

*Stelsky is nervously pacing around the floor. Then there is a knocking on the door. Stelsky opens the door. Standing at the door is a young attractive woman, about 20 years of age, dressed in sackcloth with a sash tied around her waist. .*

STELSKY

Ah! Come right in!

*(The young woman slowly enters the room. Stelsky shuts the door behind her, then turns and faces her.)*

STELSKY

*(leering)*

Very nice, very pretty. Did anyone ever tell you that you are pretty?

WOMAN

Herr Block Leader, my matron sent me to you; she did not explain why.

STELSKY

*(laughs)*

Oh, I see. You want to get right down to business. Then let's not play games. *(pause)* Oh, excuse me, please sit down.

*(The woman sits on one of the chairs. Stelsky sits on the edge of the bed, facing her.)*

What is your name?

THE WOMAN

Nadia.

**STELSKY**

That's a pretty name. Would you like a little something to eat?

*(Nadia is silent)*

Oh, I see that you're proud. Anyway, I'm sure you would like to have a little something to bite on.

*(Stelsky grabs a loaf of bread and cuts off two slices which he offers to Nadia)*

Go on, eat it! I know you want food. There's no need to pretend with me.

*(At first Nadia does not move. Then she takes the slices and slowly starts eating.)*

**STELSKY**

That's right. Don't you feel better already?

**NADIA**

Thank you, Herr Block Leader. Very kind of you.

**STELSKY**

Would you like a little something to drink? Perhaps some wine?

**NADIA**

No thank you. *(pause)* With your permission, I would like to return to my barrack.

**STELSKY**

What's the rush, Nadya? We're just getting acquainted. Where are you from?

**NADIA**

Poland ... Cracow.

*(Nadya is now eating the second slice of bread)*

**STELSKY**

I see you're hungry. If you want, I'll give you some more.

**NADIA**

That would be kind of you, sir.

**STELSKY**

Yes, it would. Of course, you will have to do something for me.

*(Nadya stops eating, puts down the bread)*

**NADIA**

I'm sorry, Herr Block Leader, I don't know what you're talking about.

**STELSKY**

*(suddenly enraged)*

**LISTEN YOU STUPID TRAMP, STOP PLAYING GAMES WITH ME! YOU KNOW EXACTLY WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT!**

*(Stelsky slaps Nadya hard on the face and she and chair fall backward onto the floor. Nadya starts screaming.)*

**NADIA**

*(on the floor, in shock and pain)*

**YOU BEAST! I AM NOT THAT KIND OF GIRL!**

*(Stelsky yanks Nadia from the floor and throws her on the bed.)*

**STELSKY**

*(still enraged)*

**I'M GONNA TEACH YOU HOW TO TREAT A MAN.**

**NADIA**

*(hysterical)*

Please don't! I've never been with a man before. *(starts crying, pleading)* I'm a good girl, a nice girl. Please, don't hurt me, please!

*(Stelsky pauses for a moment)*

STELSKY

There's no such thing as a nice girl and besides, what do you have to lose?

NADIA

My virginity.

STELSKY

*(excited)*

So you're matron didn't lie to me!

NADIA

*(pleading)*

Please, sir, let me leave. I'll give you my food, I'll make your bed, but please sir, leave me be.

STELSKY

Stand up.

*(Nadia slowly stands up.)*

Now let me kiss you.

*(Stelsky starts to embrace Nadya who recoils away.)*

NADIA

NO! NO!

*(Stelsky punches Nadya in the face. She staggers backward, bleeding from her nose and mouth. Stelsky then throws Nadya onto the floor and kicks her. Nadya is screaming.) AAAAAHHHHHHH!!!!!!!!!!*

STELSKY

Scream all you want, bitch.

NADIA

*(now moaning)*

I'll do whatever you want. Just don't hit me anymore.

**STELSKY**

That's much better. Now clean yourself up.

*(Stelsky tosses a towel to Nadia who starts wiping the blood from her face. Nadia then slowly stands up and begins removing her sackcloth while Stelsky stares at her. Suddenly Stelsky throws Nadia onto the bed and jumps on top of her. The lights go out. From the darkness the audience can hear sounds of furious, violent copulating mingled with screams, moans and sobs. Then there is silence; then a spot light shines on Nadia, her face and sackcloth covered with blood. Nadia faces the audience and sings:)*

Why have we been forsaken?  
What crimes did we commit?  
What harm have we inflicted  
To make us suffer like this?

The innocent are the victims,  
The predators get their way,  
But someday there will be justice  
And there will be much to pay.

Today I'm bruised and battered,  
A victim of cruel lust,  
An object to be pitied,  
a girl who's lost her trust.

Why have we been forsaken?  
What crimes did we commit?  
What harm have we inflicted  
To make us suffer like this?

End of Act 1, Scene 6

## Act 1, Scene 7

*Time: One week later*

*Place: The punishment room. Heisler and Von Elser are standing in front of a stockade that is used for flogging prisoners. Standing opposite them at attention are Stelsky and other inmates from Barrack 24.*

**HEISLER**

*(addressing the inmates)*

I have assembled you here today to show you what will happen to you if you violate the rules. Yesterday one of you tried to escape. Escape is prohibited and is punishable by death. However, as a gesture of mercy on my part, I have decided to reduce the punishment to fifty lashes. *(pause)* Stelsky! Bring in the prisoner!

*(Stelsky goes offstage and then returns, dragging a man who is heavily shackled, with a sign hanging from his neck saying "Ich bin zuruck.")*

**STELSKY**

Herr Commandant! The prisoner is reporting for punishment.

**HEISLER**

Good. *(to the prisoner)* Inmate number two one seven eight three, you have been convicted of violating section 4, paragraph 3, subsection 2 of the rules and regulations of this camp which strictly forbid unauthorized absences. Because you violated camp regulations, the Reich had to expend considerable resources to recover and return you to your rightful place. The penalty for this infraction is twenty five lashes with a belt, and since the escapee was from Barracks 24, Kapo Stelsky will be assigned the duty of administering the punishment.

**STELSKY**

Herr Commandant, I respectfully request that another inmate be given that honor.

**HEISLER**

You may select someone else to do the honors.

**STELSKY**

Yes, Herr Commandant! *(to the assembled prisoners)* Any volunteers! *(no response)* I repeat, any volunteers? *(again, no response)*. *(to Heisler)* Herr Commandant, no one has volunteered.

**HEISLER**

*(angry)*

What? No volunteers? *(to the prisoners)* Who the hell are you to refuse your Kapo's request? What kind of scum do I have here that you so blatantly ignore this opportunity to demonstrate your devotion to the Reich? Your arrogance is duly noted. *(to Von Esler)* I want a complete roll call and everyone is to remain standing at attention until the count is completed. And as for our friend over here *(motions to the shackled prisoner)* since no one came forward to administer the punishment, I hereby order Kapo Stelsky to do the honors.

**STELSKY**

*(to Heisler)*

Yes, Herr Commandant

*(to the assembled prisoners)*

This was your chance to show the Reich what kind of men you have become but you have all failed, miserably, and so now I will do this work. You all let me down, embarrassed me in front of the Commandant and I will not forget this, do you hear? *(to Heisler)* Herr Commandant, I am ready.

*(Heisler nods at Stelsky who picks up a large leather belt that has been soaking in water. Stelsky takes a few practice swings in the air and then roughly grabs the shackled man, pulls down his pants, exposing his buttocks and straps him down over the stockade. The man is babbling incoherently.)*

**STELSKY**

Ready to proceed, Herr Commandant.

**HEISLER**

You may proceed.

*(As the lights go out, the sound of the belt striking naked flesh and loud shrieks can be heard.)*

End of Act 1, Scene 7

Act 1, Scene 8

*Time: later in the day*

*Place: Stelsky's room*

*Stelsky is laying on his bed. There's a knock on the door.*

**STELSKY**

Come in.

*(A man enters the room.)*

**MAN**

You wanted to see me, Herr Kapo?

**STELSKY**

That's right, Rubinski. *(pause)* Who the hell do you think you are to make me look bad?

**RUBINSKI**

I don't know what you're talking about, Herr Kapo.

**STELSKY**

Listen, you ugly baboon, you know exactly what I'm talking about. How come you didn't volunteer to whip that guy? I thought you wanted to play ball with me. Don't tell me I was wrong.

**RUBINSKI**

I didn't know you expected that of me.

**STELSKY**

Don't play with me. I've seen you shaking down other prisoners, so stop acting so smart. I can use a tough guy like you.

**RUBINSKI**

Herr Kapo, I just want to obey your orders.

**STELSKY**

Stop it! First chance you have you'll try to get my job; probably denounce me.

**RUBINSKI**

I would never do such a thing, Herr Kapo.

*(Stelsky gets up from the bed and grabs Rubinski by the collar.)*

**STELSKY**

Well, you better not. I ought to bash you head in right now, just to show you who's boss, but I won't because I need an assistant to police this barrack. You're in?

**RUBINSKI**

Whatever you want, Herr Kapo.

**STELSKY**

Well, that's what I want. And don't patronize me. In return, I'll give you extra rations and release you from your work detail.

**RUBINSKI**

Thank you for your generosity.

**STELSKY**

Screw off! Don't even try kissing up to me. Now get back out there and if there's any trouble you take care of it. Here, take this belt.

*(Stelksy give Rubinski the belt that was used to beat the escapee.)*

Don't forget! Out there you are in charge. Anybody gives you back talk, just use the belt. That will quiet them down. And if they resist, let me know and I'll set them straight.

**KUBINSKI**

Thank you, Herr Kapo.

**STELSKY**

And the next time I ask for a volunteer, you volunteer. Get it?

**RUBINSKI**

Yes sir, Herr Kapo.

*(Rubinski leaves. Offstage Rubinski can be heard screaming at the other prisoners and using the belt.)*

**RUBINSKI (o.s.)**

These barracks are filthy! Clean it NOW!

*(o. s., screams mixed with the sound of the belt striking a body)*

*(Stelsky lays down on the bed, stares at the ceiling, hands folded behind his head, listening to the screaming. Lights out.)*

**End of Act 1, Scene 8**

Act 1, Scene 9

*Time: April 1945*

*Place: Heisler's office*

*Heisler and Von Esler are frantically gathering and burning papers. There is knocking on the door.*

HEISLER

*(stuffing papers into a garbage can)*

Who can that be?

VON ESLER

*(emptying a file cabinet)*

I don't know, Herr Commandant.

HEISLER

See who it is.

*(Von Esler puts down a wad of papers and opens the door. Stelsky is standing at the entrance.)*

VON ESLER

What do YOU want, Jew?

STELSKY

The barrack is refusing to report to work. I am requesting orders.

VON ESLER

Don't you see that we're busy? Get lost!

HEISLER

*(Stuffing some papers in a garbage can, looks up)*

Stelsky! Why are you here?

VON ESLER

He's saying that the inmates won't report to work.

HEISLER

They won't? Then shoot them!

STELSKY

With what, Herr Commandant?

HEISLER

*(changing the subject)*

Can't you see we're busy?

*(Stelsky does not respond.)*

HEISLER

Use a machine pistol.

VON ESLER

*(alarmed)*

Sir, giving a Kapo a fire arm is strictly forbidden. And besides, this Jew cannot be trusted. Give me an order, and I'll finish him off right now!

*(Von Esler reaches for his side arm.)*

HEISLER

Put it away!

*(to Stelsky)*

How do we know you're telling us the truth?

STELSKY

Because most of the guards deserted last night and if I don't act now, we may all be in danger.

HEISLER  
(surprised)

The guards are gone?

STELSKY

That's right, Herr Commandant.

VON ESLER

Don't trust this Jew! He's a liar, just like they all are. Better that I shoot him now and then deal with those bastards in the barracks myself.

HEISLER  
(to Von Esler)

Go out and check on the situation and report back to me.

*(Von Esler grabs a machine pistol and as he is leaving roughly pushes Stelsky aside.)*

HEISLER

Come in.

*(Stelsky comes into the office and remains standing.)*

HEISLER

We have gotten reports that the Russians are just outside of town and will soon be here. I bet you can't wait for that.

STELSKY

I have no use for the Russians, Herr Commandant. I'm no commie. I'm more concerned with the whereabouts of my mother. Did you ever find out what happened to her?

HEISLER

Your mother? How should I know what happened to her?

STELSKY  
*(irritated)*

You promised you would find out.

HEISLER

I promised no such thing.

STELSKY

You mean I did your bidding all this time for nothing?

HEISLER

You did what I ordered you to do and you did so voluntarily.

STELSKY

I want that paper that I signed and that photograph.

HEISLER

I have no idea what happened to them.

STELSKY

You're a damn liar!

*Heisler reaches for his gun but Stelsky punches him on the face. Soon both men are grappling with each other, with both of them trying to grab Heisler's gun. Finally, Stelsky punches Heisler in the stomach, then hits him on the face; Heisler crashes to the floor. Stelsky then kicks Heisler on the ribs and grabs his gun.*

STELSKY

*(pointing the gun at Heisler)*

Okay, you stupid kraut, you're going to tell me what happened to my mother.

HEISLER

*(still on the floor, moaning)*

I told you I don't know. She's probably dead!

**STELSKY**

Probably? You don't know?

**HEISLER**

I never checked. I had other matters to deal with.

**STELSKY**

Never checked? So I'll never know if she's alive or dead.

*(Stelsky kicks Heisler in the stomach causing Heisler to double up in pain.)*

**STELSKY**

That's for lying to me.

*(Stelsky grabs Heisler by the arms and starts dragging him to the door.)*

I think it's about time you spoke with the prisoners.

*(Stelsky is preparing to kick Heisler again.)*

**HEISLER**

Wait!

**STELSKY**

What?

*(Stelsky lets go of Heisler's arms. Heisler slowly gets up from the floor. Stelsky is pointing the gun at Heisler.)*

**HEISLER**

I may be able to help you.

**STELSKY**

I don't want your help.

**HEISLER**

Yes you do because without me you will be held fully responsible for everything you did. You're implicated too.

**STELSKY**

You'll say anything to save your skin, you lying snake. *(pause)*  
Now, *(screams)* WHAT HAPPENED TO MY MOTHER?

**HEISLER**

I'll ask Von Esler when he returns.

**STELSKY**

How would he know?

**HEISLER**

Because I ordered him to check it out.

**STELSKY**

What did he find out?

**HEISLER**

I don't know but I will ask him when he returns.

*Von Esler returns.*

**VON ESLER**  
*(alarmed)*

What's going on here?

*(Stelsky swings around and shoots Von Esler in the chest. Von Esler staggers backward and falls onto the floor, bleeding to death.)*

**HEISLER**

You fool! Now you'll never find out what happened to your mother.

**STELSKY**

I don't believe that you don't know! You're just another lying Nazi.

**HEISLER**

If I knew I'd tell you.

**STELSKY**

You better tell me or else you a dead man.

**HEISLER**

Kill me then. My life is over anyway, just like yours, Herr Kapo.

**STELSKY**

You pig. You lying Nazi pig!

*(Stelsky hits Heisler hard with the butt of the gun knocking Heisler unconscious then goes through Heisler's clothing, removing money from Heisler's wallet, tosses the gun away, then spits on Heisler's motionless body before exiting.)*

**End of Act 1, Scene 9**

Act 1, Scene 10

*Time: 1953*

*Place: Syracuse, New York*

*Setting: a living room in a house. Stelsky is sitting in a chair watch television; a woman enters the room.*

WOMAN

How was work today?

STELSKY

Pretty busy, Louise. Lots of customers. I'm really beat.

LOUISE

I'll get you a beer.

STELSKY

Thanks.

*Louise leaves and soon returns with a bottle of beer which she gives to Stelsky.*

STELSKY

Nothing better than a refreshing bottle of beer after a hard day's work.

*Stelsky takes a long gulp from the bottle and then puts it down.*

STELSKY

Aaah! That was good. How was your day today?

LOUISE

Fine. I took the kids to the park and then we went to the zoo.

STELSKY

I'm a lucky guy to have such a wonderful family.

*(Stelsky gets up and hugs Louise who kisses Stelsky on the cheek and then on the lips.)*

LOUISE

I love you.

*(They kiss again. Suddenly the phone rings. Louise answers the phone.)*

LOUISE

Hello. ... Who is this? ... it's for you.

STELSKY

Who is it?

LOUISE

They wouldn't say.

*Louise give Stelsky the phone.*

STELSKY

Hello. .... This is he .... Who are you? .... What did you say? .... You were a prisoner at the Pilsburg Concentration Camp? .... Werner Heisler? ... I never heard of him. ... Are you threatening me? .... Listen, whoever you are, I have no idea what you're talking about, so goodbye!

*(Stelsky hangs up the phone.)*

LOUISE

Who was that?

STELSKY

Some clown who mistook me for somebody else.

LOUISE

Well, it must have been some mistake because it got you really mad.

STELSKY

Well, sometimes the only way to get rid of a pest is to be nasty, especially if they're saying garbage.

LOUISE

What did they say?

STELSKY

Nothing. Really. Nothing. *(pause)* Just forget it.

LOUISE

Did this have anything to do with the war?

STELSKY

*(annoyed, defensive)*

I told you that I never want to talk about the war. It was a bad time, period. I told you that when we first met.

LOUISE

I know, sweetheart, but still if something is bothering you we should talk about it.

STELSKY

*(angry)*

I told you that I don't want to talk about it. Period! Now please drop the subject. *(pause)* Now look what you've done. I don't even want to drink my beer.

LOUISE

Then have some coffee.

STELSKY

To tell you the truth, I've lost my appetite.

LOUISE

*(insistent)*

What is going on? You get this phone call and now you're all upset.

**STELSKY**

I'm upset because you won't drop the subject.

**LOUISE**

No. You're upset over what you heard over the phone and now you're not telling me and I don't like it.

**STELSKY**

*(livid)*

If you keep on pestering me, I'm gonna hafta do something to shut you up! Get it!

**LOUISE**

*(shocked)*

Ivan, you've never acted like this before. What's going on with you?

**STELSKY**

STOP IT! Just stop it. Drop the subject.

**LOUISE**

I can't.

**STELSKY**

You must.

**LOUISE**

Please calm down.

**STELSKY**

Just leave me alone for a while.

**LOUISE**

Okay, I'll leave you alone, if that what you wants, but I still don't like it.

**STELSKY**  
*(imploring)*

Yes, leave me alone for awhile (*pause*) Louise, I'm sorry for what I said before. I really do love you. Please believe me.

**LOUISE**

Okay. I'll be in the kitchen. If you want to join me there I'll have a sandwich waiting for you.

**STELSKY**

Thank you.

**LOUISE**

I really don't understand what got into you.

**STELSKY**

Please, drop the subject.

*Louise exits.*

*Lights out.*

End of Act 1, Scene 10

## Act 1, Scene 11

*Time: 1994*

*Place: An apartment in a retirement community in Palm Beach, Florida. The door is located at stage right.*

*Stelsky and Louise, now elderly, are sitting in a room watching television. There is the sound of knocking on the door.*

STELSKY

Who can that be?

LOUISE

It's probably Harold.

STELSKY

That old goat's beginning to become a real pest.

LOUISE

Don't be so cruel. You know that he just lost his wife and needs some company.

STELSKY

Yeah, I know. *(pause)* Well, go see who it is.

*Louise gets up and opens the door. There are two men, both dressed in business suits.*

MAN NO. 1

Hello. We're from the FBI. My name is special agent Dolan and my partner here is special agent Bernal. *(They show their badges.)* We want to speak with Mister Ivan Stelsky. Is he here?

LOUISE

One moment, please. *(Louise turns around and speaks to Stelsky.)* Ivan, there are two men here who want to speak with you.

*(Stelsky gets up, goes to the door).*

STELSKY

Yes?

DOLAN

Are you Ivan Stelsky?

STELSKY

I'm Ivan Stelsky. What is it you want?

DOLAN

We want to ask you some questions about your entry into the United States. May we come in?

STELSKY

Sure. Come in.

*Dolan and Bernal enter the room.*

LOUISE

Would you like to sit down?

DOLAN

Yes, thank you.

STELSKY

*(pointing to two chairs)*

You can sit there.

*(Dolan, Bernal and Stelsky sit down. Louise is still standing.)*

*(to Louise)*

Please close the door and come join us. *(Louise closes the door and sits down too.)*

*(to Dolan and Bernal)*

Now what is it that you want to know?

**DOLAN**

Well, sir, we want to know about your activities in Europe during World War Two.

**STELSKY**

I was an inmate in a concentration camp.

**BERNAL**

Frankly sir, our office has received information alleging that while in the concentration camp you committed war crimes.

**LOUISE**

*(shocked)*

WHAT!? WAR CRIMES!!! IVAN, WHAT ARE THEY TALKING ABOUT?

**STELSKY**

Look what you've done to my wife. *(pause)* Gentlemen, I am a Holocaust survivor. This is outrageous.

**BERNAL**

Sir, that is why we are here, to try to clear this up.

**DOLAN**

So once again, tell us about your activities during World War Two.

**STELSKY**

Like I said before, I was an inmate in a concentration camp. What more needs to be said?

**DOLAN**

How did you manage to survive?

**STELSKY**

Pure luck. We were assigned to work details. As long as you were able to work, you could survive. It was as simple as that.

**BERNAL**

What kind of work were you assigned?

**STELSKY**

It is so long ago. I really can't recall. But it was bad, very bad.

**DOLAN**

What was bad?

**STELSKY**

Everything. The brutal way we were treated. It was awful, horrible.

**BERNAL**

We have received reports from several reliable sources identifying you as a collaborator with the SS at the Pilsburg Concentration camp. Is that true?

**STELSKY**

Me? A collaborator with the SS? That is almost laughable. I was an inmate, a victim. I lost my entire family.

**DOLAN**

Our sources are quite reliable. We have several sworn affidavits attesting to your activities in the camp.

**STELSKY**

Look, I don't care how many affidavits you have. This is all one big grotesque mistake. I'm a law abiding American citizen. I've been in this country for over forty five years, worked my way up to be a district manager for a large department store, I'm married, I've raised two fine children and have seven grandchildren. The idea of me being some kind of war criminal is ridiculous, laughable.

**BERNAL**

Still, sir, we have received reports specifically identifying you as a Nazi collaborator at the Pilsburg concentration camp. Now, when you entered the United States you were required to complete a standard form five sixty three, which specifically asks whether you were a member of or performed duties for any outlawed Nazi organizations. Did you fill out this form?

*(Bernal takes out a form from his briefcase and hands it to Stelsky who looks at it.)*

**STELSKY**

If you say I did, then I did. I can't recall filling out this form. It was a long time ago.

**DOLAN**

We understand that, sir. But that is your signature on the form, is it not?

**STELSKY**

If you say it is, then it is.

**DOLAN**

Well, we want you to take a look at that signature and tell us if it is yours.

**STELSKY**

*(looks at the form again)*

It could be mine. Like I said, it was a long time ago.

**BERNAL**

Please don't play games with us. Is it or is it not your signature on that form?

**STELSKY**

All I can say is that it looks like it's my signature.

**DOLAN**

Okay. Now on this form you declared that you were requesting entry into the United States as a stateless person and victim of religious persecution.

**STELSKY**

That is all true. I am a Jew. I had lost my home, my family, everything, in the Holocaust. After the war I spent three years in DP camps, mostly in Germany of all places. I had nowhere else to go.

**BERNAL**

Did you know someone by the name of Wilhelm Heisler?

**STELSKY**

He was the commandant of the Pilsburg camp.

**BERNAL**

We understand that you worked for him. Is that true?

**STELSKY**

Worked for him? Untrue! Entirely false! I was a prisoner.

**BERNAL**

We understand that when the camp was liberated you were already gone. Where did you go?

**LOUISE**

Why is Ivan being investigated now?

**DOLAN**

This investigation has been ongoing for years. During that time we have accumulated a mountain of evidence showing that your husband committed war crimes.

**LOUISE**

Ivan was a victim, not a criminal. He is a good man, a good father and a good husband.

**DOLAN**

All of that may be true, but the fact remains that several informants have come forward identifying your husband as a collaborator and war criminal.

**STELSKY**

Me, a Jew, a Holocaust victim, committed war crimes? What a bunch of garbage.

**BERNAL**

So, Mister Stelsky, how come you were already gone when the camp was liberated?

**STELSKY**

I had no reason or desire to remain there.

**BERNAL**

Okay, but how were you able to leave before the camp was actually liberated?

**STELSKY**

Gentlemen, it was a long time ago and frankly I can't remember anymore. Conditions were chaotic.

**DOLAN**

We know that. But still, we have statements from several eye witnesses attesting that you systematically beat and even killed other prisoners, all with the approval of and collaboration with the camp authorities.

**STELSKY**

I never hurt anybody. I only wanted to survive.

**LOUISE**

My husband wouldn't hurt a fly. He's a retiree. What do you want from him?

**BERNAL**

The truth.

**STELSKY**

I'm telling you the truth. Obviously somebody is out to get me.

**BERNAL**

Why would anyone be out to get you?

**STELSKY**

I don't know. Maybe they are mistaking me for someone else.

**DOLAN**

Okay, but these reports provide some very specific information about your activities at Pilsburg.

**STELSKY**

The Pilsburg Concentration camp was a brutal place where many people died. All this happened a long time ago and it's something that I would rather not discuss.

**BERNAL**

Mr. Stelsky, we have the duty to inform you that this investigation into your activities will be continuing and that we may be contacting you again.

**STELSKY**

Do what you have to, but I can assure you that I was a victim, just like the six million Jews who lost their lives, except that I happened to be one of the lucky few to have survived.

*(Dolan and Bernal get up and are putting away their papers, preparing to leave.)*

**DOLAN**

You will be hearing from us again. Have a good day.

*(Dolan and Bernal exit.)*

**LOUISE**

You're under investigation? Ivan, what is this all about?

**STELSKY**

Don't worry, they have nothing on me.

**LOUISE**

*(shocked)*

Why should they have ANYTHING on you?

**STELSKY**

Please, Louise, don't upset yourself.

**LOUISE**

I can't help being upset. Two government agents just left our home accusing you of being a war criminal! Good lord! Did anything happen during the war that I need to know?

**STELSKY**

I tell you, nothing happened except my having committed the crime of surviving. Maybe I would have been better off if they had gassed me.

**LOUISE**

Please don't say that.

**STELSKY**

Well, it's true. Look at what I have to put with now! Being called a criminal. I didn't ask to be put in a concentration camp and whatever happened in there wasn't my fault. None of it was my fault, do you hear?

**LOUISE**

Of course, none of it was your fault. I know that.

**STELSKY**

Please, let's not dwell on this any longer. I'm feeling tired, very tired and I think I'll take a nap.

*(Stelsky exits the stage; Louise is silent as the lights go out.)*

End of Act 1, Scene 11

## Act 1, Scene 12

*Time: Night*

*Place: The bedroom. Stelsky and Louise are asleep. Suddenly Stelsky wakes up, screaming.*

NO!!!  
STELSKY

LOUISE  
*(suddenly awakened, alarmed)*  
What is it, Ivan?

STELSKY  
I had a dream, a bad dream.

LOUISE  
About what?

STELSKY  
Awful stuff, terrible things, things that are too horrible to describe.

LOUISE  
Is there anything I can do?

STELSKY  
I don't know, I just don't know.

LOUISE  
Ivan, what DID happen at Pilsburg?

STELSKY  
Things were bad, period.

**LOUISE**

Ivan, something terrible **MUST** have happened for you to be so upset after all these years.

**STELSKY**

It was a question of survival, do you understand? I was worried about my mother. It was all, all so awful.

**LOUISE**

Yet you came through it. You survived and you made a new life for yourself.

**STELSKY**

Yes, I know that. Louise, is it wrong to want to survive?

**LOUISE**

That's a pretty deep question. Why do you ask?

**STELSKY**

Because sometimes I think that I would have been better off dead.

**LOUISE**

Better off dead? Why are you now so preoccupied with death?

**STELSKY**

Because it's an escape.

**LOUISE**

From what?

**STELSKY**

The agony of living, especially when you're not sure whether you deserve to be alive.

**LOUISE**

*(alarmed)*

What are you talking about? I never heard you talk this way before.

**STELSKY**

I'm sorry for saying such things; I guess I'm just a little rattled by some of the questions those agents asked, it brought back some bad memories.

**LOUISE**

But you were handling things so well for so many years. What changed?

**STELSKY**

I don't know. All I know is that my life now seems so worthless.

**LOUISE**

*(alarmed)*

How can you say that? You've had a wonderful, full life. How can all that be worthless?

**STELSKY**

In the camp many bad things happened, things that I am ashamed of, things that I have never talked about, not to you, not to anybody.

**LOUISE**

What things?

**STELSKY**

I was forced to do some awful things that hurt people.

**LOUISE**

But you were FORCED to do those things. The Nazis would have killed you otherwise.

**STELSKY**

Maybe I was just a coward, couldn't face death.

**LOUISE**

I've never known you to back away from anything and if you did things in the camp that you are ashamed of, it's not your fault. **NONE** of it is your fault. The Nazis made people do lots of bad things. That's why they had to be defeated.

**STELSKY**

*(takes hold of Louise's hands)*

What would I have ever done without you? I love you.

**LOUISE**

And I love you too.

*(Stelsky and Louise look deeply into each other's eyes and start crying as the lights go out.)*

End of Act 1, Scene 12

Act 2, Scene 1

*Time: 1995*

*Place: a court room in Miami, Florida. In the court room are Stelsky, his attorney, Irving Hausman, the judge, the court clerk and the prosecuting attorney, Donald Barrow. Louise is sitting in the gallery.*

**COURT CLERK**

The next case on the docket is case number two one five six three eight, the People versus Ivan Stelsky. The defendant is charged with crimes against humanity, conspiracy to commit crimes against humanity, lying to government investigators and obstructing an official investigation,

**THE JUDGE**

How does the defendant plead?

**HAUSMAN**

Not guilty, your honor.

**THE JUDGE**

Mister Barrow, Is the state ready to proceed?

**BARROW**

We are your honor.

**THE JUDGE**

Then call your first witness.

**BARROW**

I call Nadia Lubovski.

*(A frail, elderly woman enters the room and sits in the witness box)*

**BARROW**

What is your name?

**NADIA**

Nadia Lubovksi

**BARROW**

Do you know the defendant?

**NADIA**

Yes, I do.

**BARROW**

From where do you know the defendant?

**NADIA**

From the Pilsburg Concentration camp, where I was an inmate.

**BARROW**

And the defendant was an inmate too?

**NADIA**

Yes. At least I think he was.

**BARROW**

You're not certain if the defendant was an inmate?

**NADIA**

Actually, I really don't know. I mean he wore prison clothing and lived in the barracks but he behaved like a Nazi.

**HAUSMAN**

Objection, your honor. The witness is expressing an opinion.

**THE JUDGE**

Objection overruled.

**BARROW**

What do you mean by "he behaved like a Nazi"?

**NADIA**

He was brutal, vicious, constantly lording over the other prisoners. He was especially sadistic with me.

**HAUSMAN**

Objection, your honor. The witness is again expressing an opinion.

**THE JUDGE**

Overruled. The people may continue.

**BARROW**

How was the defendant sadistic with you?

**NADIA**

He raped me numerous times.

**BARROW**

How many times exactly?

**NADIA**

I wasn't counting, but it had to have been at least seven or eight times.

**BARROW**

How did you happen to come in contact with the defendant?

**NADIA**

My matron would order me to visit him and each time he would rape me.

**BARROW**

Where did these rapes occur?

**NADIA**

In his room in the barrack.

**BARROW**

Did he hurt you?

**NADIA**

Yes, badly.

**BARROW**

How did the defendant hurt you?

**NADIA**

Every time I would beg him to stop he would hit me with his fists or with the butt of the truncheon he kept in his room.

**BARROW**

Did you ever report this to anyone?

**NADIA**

There was no one I could report this to.

**BARROW**

Did you suffer any injuries?

**NADIA**

Yes. I was bruised all over my body and I contracted a venereal disease which made me sterile.

**BARROW**

No other questions, your honor. Your witness, Mister Hausman.

**HAUSMAN**

Ms. Lubovski, when did these alleged rapes occur?

**NADIA**

In 1944 and 1945.

**HAUSMAN**

That's over fifty years ago, isn't it?

**NADIA**

Yes.

**HAUSMAN**

Yet fifty years later, you're certain that it was my client, and not someone else, who raped you?

**NADIA**

I'm absolutely certain. I'll never forget him or what he did to me.

**HAUSMAN**

Don't you mean what you **THINK** my client did to you?

**NADIA**

No, he's the same man, the same vicious brute that violated me again and again, ruining me for life.

**HAUSMAN**

*(to the judge)*

Move to strike as nonresponsive.

**THE JUDGE**

Motion denied. Go on.

**HAUSMAN**

How can you be certain after so many years that my client is the same man who allegedly raped you in the concentration camp?

**BARROW**

Objection, your honor. The witness has already testified that it was the defendant who raped her.

**THE JUDGE**

Objection sustained. Move on to something else, Mister Hausman.

**HAUSMAN**

Wasn't it true that in the concentration camp women would sell sexual favors for food and other items?

**NADIA**

I did no such a thing.

**HAUSMAN**

But others did, did they not?

**NADIA**

I wouldn't know anything about that.

**HAUSMAN**

Oh, I see. You were one of those decent girls?

**BARROW**

Objection, your honor. Counsel is mocking the witness.

**HAUSMAN**

Question withdrawn. (*pause*) What was your job assignment in the camp?

**NADIA**

I was assigned to a construction detail.

**HAUSMAN**

Was it hard, heavy work?

**NADIA**

Yes, it was.

**HAUSMAN**

I bet you would have done anything to get off that detail.

**BARROW**

Objection, your honor.

**THE JUDGE**

Sustained.

**HAUSMAN**

How long were you assigned to that detail?

**NADIA**

About two weeks.

**HAUSMAN**

Then were you reassigned somewhere else?

**NADIA**

Yes

**HAUSMAN**

To what?

**NADIA**

To a housecleaning detail.

**HAUSMAN**

Was that easier work?

**NADIA**

It was hard work.

**HAUSMAN**

I asked if it was easier work. Was it?

**NADIA**

Yes, it was.

**HAUSMAN**

How did you manage to get transferred?

**NADIA**

I don't know, it just happened.

**HAUSMAN**

It just happened. You didn't trade anything in return for that easier assignment?

**NADIA**

I had nothing to trade.

**HAUSMAN**

Nothing? What about your body?

**NADIA**

HOW DARE YOU ASK ME THAT?

**HAUSMAN**

Your honor, please instruct the witness to answer the question.

**THE JUDGE**

The witness is instructed to answer the question. *(to Nadia)* Please answer the question.

**NADIA**

I never sold my body for favors. Never.

**HAUSMAN**

No further questions.

*(Nadia slowly gets up from the witness chair and leaves the court room.)*

**THE JUDGE**  
*(to Barrow)*

Call you next witness

**BARROW**

The prosecution calls to the stand Sigmund Rubinski

*(Rubinski enters the court room and slowly takes a seat in the witness stand.)*

**BARROW**

What is your name?

**RUBINSKI**

Sigmund Rubinski

**BARROW**

Do you know the defendant?

**RUBINSKI**

I do.

**BARROW**

From where do you know the defendant?

**RUBINSKI**

From the Pilsburg Concentration camp where we were both inmates.

**BARROW**

During your incarceration at Pilsburg, did you ever interact with the defendant?

**RUBINSKI**

I did.

**BARROW**

How did you come to interact with the defendant?

**RUBINSKI**

He made me his assistant.

**BARROW**

Assistant to do what?

**RUBINSKI**

To keep order in the barracks. He was the Kapo and he made me his assistant Kapo.

**BARROW**

As a so-called assistant Kapo, what were your responsibilities?

**RUBINSKI**

Basically to use whatever means necessary to keep order in the barracks.

**BARROW**

By what ever means necessary, what did that entail?

**RUBINSKI**

Beating up on the inmates, assigning punishment work like emptying the latrines and other unpleasant tasks.

**BARROW**

Did you ever personally beat any inmates?

**RUBINSKI**

I did.

**BARROW**

Was the defendant aware of what you were doing?

**RUBINSKI**

Not only was he aware, he used to berate me severely for not being even rougher on the men.

**BARROW**

So everything you did was done under the defendant's supervision?

**RUBINSKI**

Everything.

**BARROW**

Why did you do it?

**RUBINSKI**

Because if I hadn't, the defendant would have killed me and I wanted to live.

**BARROW**

How do you know he would have killed you?

**RUBINSKI**

Because he told me so, straight to my face and I believed him.

**BARROW**

Why did you believe him?

**RUBINSKI**

Because I personally witnessed him severely beat other inmates to death.

**HAUSMAN**

Objection. Unsubstantiated allegation.

**THE JUDGE**

Objection overruled. (to *BARROW*) Go on.

**BARROW**

I have no more questions for this witness. Your witness, Mister Hausman.

**HAUSMAN**

Isn't it true that you made a deal with the prosecutor to testify in return for immunity?

**RUBINSKI**

That's true.

**HAUSMAN**

So you will say anything the prosecution wants to hear, true?

**RUBINSKI**

No, that is not correct.

**HAUSMAN**

Isn't it true that you beat other inmates?

**RUBINSKI**

Yes.

**HAUSMAN**

And you say that everything you did was with my client's approval.  
Was he an SS guard?

**RUBINSKI**

He wasn't a guard.

**HAUSMAN**

So he was an inmate, just like you. Is that correct?

**RUBINSKI**

Yes.

**HAUSMAN**

So how could my client, who was an inmate just like you, force you  
to do anything?

**RUBINSKI**

He was the Kapo of the barracks.

**HAUSMAN**

So what? How do we know that you did not go around beating up people all on your own?

**BARROW**

Objection. Calls for speculation.

**HAUSMAN**

Your honor, I am trying to show that my client had no authority over anyone.

**THE JUDGE**

Objection overruled. The witness may answer the question.

**RUBINSKI**

Because I never did anything in that place on my own.

**HAUSMAN**

But isn't it true that after the war you were brought up on charges of having run an extortion racket in the camp?

**BARROW**

Objection. Irrelevant.

**THE JUDGE**

Objection overruled. The witness may answer the question.

**RUBINSKI**

Yes, but those charges were later dropped.

**HAUSMAN**

I have no other questions for this witness.

**THE JUDGE**

The witness is excused. (*pause*) The state will now call their next witness.

**BARROW**

The state calls Eugene Dolan.

*(Dolan enters the court and takes the witness stand.)*

**BARROW**

What is your name?

**DOLAN**

Eugene Howard Dolan

**BARROW**

Are you employed?

**DOLAN**

Yes, by the FBI.

**BARROW**

In what capacity?

**DOLAN**

Senior Special Agent.

**BARROW**

What is your current assignment?

**DOLAN**

Currently I am in charge of the FBI investigation into the activities of Ivan Stelsky.

**BARROW**

What has your investigation entailed?

**DOLAN**

It has required the compilation and analysis of documentary evidence and interrogations of witnesses.

**BARROW**

Now I want to show you a document marked State Exhibit number one.

*Barrow hands the document to Dolan who examines it and hands it back to Barrow.*

Are you familiar with that document?

**DOLAN**

I am.

**BARROW**

Please tell the court the nature of this document.

**DOLAN**

It's a statement dated sometime in 1944 which says that the defendant agrees to voluntarily accept the duties of Kapo for Barracks 24 at the Pilsburg Concentration Camp.

**BARROW**

Whose signatures appear on the document?

**DOLAN**

The defendant's, Heisler's and Von Esler's.

**BARROW**

Who were Heisler and Von Esler?

**DOLAN**

Heisler was the commandant and Von Esler was his adjutant.

**BARROW**

During your investigations, did you ever discuss this document with the defendant?

**DOLAN**

I did not.

**BARROW**

Why was that?

**DOLAN**

We discovered this document three days before the start of the trial and so had insufficient time to schedule an interview with the defendant.

**BARROW**

But the defendant is aware of the existence of this document, correct?

**DOLAN**

That is correct.

**BARROW**

And his counsel has had opportunity to read and study the document?

**DOLAN**

That is correct.

**BARROW**

Did you ever interview the defendant?

**DOLAN**

Yes I did, on two occasions.

**BARROW**

And afterwards, your office felt that there was sufficient evidence to request an arrest warrant?

**DOLAN**

Yes.

**BARROW**

And a warrant was granted?

**DOLAN**

It was, and the defendant was placed in custody and subsequently arraigned before a federal magistrate.

**BARROW**

During your interviews with the defendant, did he ever admit to having been an inmate at the Pilsburg Concentration camp?

**DOLAN**

He did.

**BARROW**

And did he admit to having known of a Commandant Heisler?

**DOLAN**

He did.

**BARROW**

And that he was a Kapo at the camp?

**DOLAN**

No, he did not admit to that but did say that it terrible things happened there.

**BARROW**

Now I want to show you a standard form five sixty three, marked as state's evidence number two.

*(Barrow hands the document to Dolan who examines it and hands it back to Barrow)*

**BARROW**

Did the defendant admit to having signed the five sixty three form?

**DOLAN**

He claimed he could not remember what he signed so many years ago.

**BARROW**

What was the defendant's demeanor during the interviews?

**HAUSMAN**

Objection. Speculation.

**THE JUDGE**

Objection overruled. The witness may answer.

**DOLAN**

Generally, the defendant was evasive.

**HAUSMAN**

Objection. Again speculation.

**THE JUDGE**

I'll overrule but I must advise the witness to provide specific examples of the defendant's evasiveness.

**BARROW**

In what way was the defendant evasive?

**DOLAN**

He was unwilling to acknowledge his own signature on an official government document that was signed by him and witnessed.

**BARROW**

Thank you. I have no other questions. (*to the defense attorney*)  
Your witness.

**HAUSMAN**

Special Agent Dolan, regarding State's exhibit number one, where was this document found?

**DOLAN**

In a pile of papers dating back to the Nuremburg War Crimes trial.

**HAUSMAN**

Where was this pile of papers located?

**DOLAN**

In the federal archives in Washington DC.

**HAUSMAN**

How did you happen to locate this document?

**DOLAN**

By sheer luck. A team of investigators were sifting through papers when we found that document.

**HAUSMAN**

Now you have testified that the document bears my client's signature, yes?

**DOLAN**

That is correct.

**HAUSMAN**

How do you know that it's my client's signature?

**DOLAN**

Because it was identical to the defendant's signature on his passport and driver's license.

**HAUSMAN**

Are you a handwriting expert?

**DOLAN**

No, I'm not.

**HAUSMAN**

So on what scientific basis can you conclude that the signatures are the same?

**DOLAN**

Because they LOOK the same.

**HAUSMAN**

That's it? They look the same?

**DOLAN**

Yes.

**HAUSMAN**

That's just your personal opinion, correct?

**DOLAN**

No, it's my professional opinion.

**HAUSMAN**

Have you ever been certified as an expert witness in the field of handwriting analysis?

**DOLAN**

No.

**HAUSMAN**

You are aware that my client was an inmate in a concentration camp where he was incarcerated against his will solely because he is Jewish?

**DOLAN**

Yes, I'm aware of that.

**HAUSMAN**

And that as a prisoner he was at the total mercy of his captors who held total power of life and death over him?

**DOLAN**

I'm aware of that.

**HAUSMAN**

So, isn't it possible that anything my client may have signed may have been signed under duress?

**DOLAN**

Yes, it is possible.

**HAUSMAN**

I am finished with this witness.

**THE JUDGE**

The witness may step down.

*DOLAN leaves the witness chair and exits the court room.*

**THE JUDGE**

Does the state wish to call any more witnesses?

**BARROW**

The state rests, your honor.

**THE JUDGE**

Does the defense wish to call any witnesses?

**HAUSMAN**

We do, your honor. The defendant.

**THE JUDGE**

*(to Stelsky)*

You understand that legally you do not have to testify but that if you do testify you could be subject to cross-examination? Do you understand that?

**STELSKY**

I do, you honor.

**THE JUDGE**

Do you still wish to testify?

**STELSKY**

I do, your honor.

**THE JUDGE**

The witness may take the stand.

*Stelsky takes the witness stand.*

**HAUSMAN**

Mister Stelsky, were you ever an inmate in the Pilsburg Concentration camp?

**STELSKY**

I was.

**HAUSMAN**

For how long?

**STELSKY**

Two years, 1943 until 1945.

**HAUSMAN**

During that period what were your duties?

**STELSKY**

Duties? I was a prisoner.

**HAUSMAN**

Were you ever assigned to be a Kapo?

**STELSKY**

I was ordered by the Camp Commandant to supervise a barrack.

**HAUSMAN**

But you were still a prisoner. Is that correct?

**STELSKY**

Yes, that is correct.

**HAUSMAN**

Now, the state has produced a form allegedly signed by you agreeing to be a Kapo. Did you ever sign such a form.

**STELSKY**

I may have. It was a long time ago.

**HAUSMAN**

Presuming that you did the sign that form, could you have refused to sign?

**STELSKY**

Out of the question. It would have meant instant execution.

**HAUSMAN**

Now, what were the duties of a Kapo?

**STELSKY**

Supervise a barrack, meaning keep order.

**HAUSMAN**

Did Kapos ever abuse their authority?

**STELSKY**

Yes.

**HAUSMAN**

The camp guards would look the other way?

**STELSKY**

All the time. Prisoners were at the mercy of the Kapos.

**HAUSMAN**

But Kapos were prisoners too, were they not?

**STELSKY**

They were.

**HAUSMAN**

And they did the bidding of the commandant?

**STELSKY**

Yes, they did.

**HAUSMAN**

And if they refused?

**STELSKY**

They were executed, usually by hanging. I witnessed several Kapos who were hanged after refusing to carry out orders.

**HAUSMAN**

No more questions. Your witness, Mister Barrow.

**BARROW**

You were a Kapo at the Pilsburg Concentration Camp, were you not?

**STELSKY**

That's what I was called.

**BARROW**

Yet, you attempted to conceal that information from government investigators?

**STELSKY**

No, I did no such thing. At the time I was baffled and confused and could not clearly remember such events from so many years ago.

**BARROW**

But you now admit that you were a Kapo?

**STELSKY**

Yes.

**BARROW**

Now, as a Kapo, you were given total control of the barracks, correct?

**STELSKY**

Incorrect. The Germans had total control of the barracks.

**BARROW**

Yet you had authority to discipline your fellow inmates, correct?

**STELSKY**

I had no authority whatsoever. I was a prisoner and did what I was told.

**BARROW**

Did that include beating prisoners, denying them food, and assigning them dangerous work?

**STELSKY**

As Kapo I was responsible for keeping order in the barracks. If I had failed to do that, I and the rest of the barracks would have been liquidated.

**BARROW**

Yet other Kapos did refuse to obey and suffered the consequences, is that correct?

**STELSKY**

Yes.

**BARROW**

Now you heard Ms. Lovinski testify, yes?

**STELSKY**

I heard her testimony.

**BARROW**

She said you raped her.

**STELSKY**

I never raped anybody.

**BARROW**

She positively identified you as her rapist. Why would she identify you?

**STELSKY**

I can't explain why.

**BARROW**

Now, regarding State's evidence number one, the form you signed agreeing to be a Kapo, you signed that form voluntarily, did you not?

**STELSKY**

I never did anything in that place voluntarily.

**BARROW**

Yet the form says that you voluntarily agreed to become a Kapo. Is that not true?

**STELSKY**

I don't remember.

**BARROW**

Maybe this will help you remember.

*(Barrow goes to his desk, grabs the document and hands it to Stelsky.)*

**BARROW**

Now maybe you'll be better able to remember.

**THE JUDGE**

Does the witness need time to read the document?

**STELSKY**

No, your honor.

**BARROW**

Please note where it says, and I quote, "I. Ivan Stelsky, do hereby voluntarily agree to become Kapo of Barracks 24." Have you read that?

**STELSKY**

Yes I have.

**BARROW**

So, you did volunteer to become a Kapo, correct?

**STELSKY**

That is only partially correct. I did become a Kapo but I never volunteered. I was ordered to.

**BARROW**

But it says that you voluntarily agreed.

**STELSKY**

Look, sir, I did not write that statement, the commandant did and I would have signed anything that he put in front of me. I was his prisoner.

**BARROW**

Now, as Kapo, what privileges were you granted?

**STELSKY**

I was assigned my own bunk and was excused from having to perform heavy work assignments.

**BARROW**

Did you ever beat anyone?

**STELSKY**

Yes, but only when they were disobedient.

**BARROW**

Your assistant Rubinski testified that he witnessed you beat other inmates. Is that true?

**STELSKY**

No.

**BARROW**

Then he was lying?

**STELSKY**

Yes.

**BARROW**

How do we know that you're not lying?

**STELSKY**

Because if I was as brutal as you say, I wouldn't have lasted five minutes.

**BARROW**

But weren't you backed up by the guards?

**STELSKY**

As far as the guards were concerned all the prisoners were scum.

**BARROW**  
*(to the judge)*

The answer is nonresponsive, your honor.

**THE JUDGE**  
*(to Stelsky)*

The witness will answer the question with a yes or no.

**STELSKY**

Then the answer is no.

**BARROW**

So if the guards did not back you up, then how could you keep order in the barracks?

**STELSKY**

The barrack knew that the commandant had appointed me Kapo. That was enough for them not to try to make trouble.

**BARROW**

And what did you do when someone in the barrack made trouble?

**STELSKY**

I would summon them to my office and advise them to stop.

**BARROW**

And if they didn't stop?

**STELSKY**

I would report the matter to the guards who would then tell me what further action to take.

**BARROW**

Which would be?

**STELSKY**

Sending the inmate to the camp jail house or sometimes applying corporal punishment.

**BARROW**

And who would execute these orders?

**STELSKY**

Sometimes I would or sometimes other inmates would be assigned.

**BARROW**

Now, Mister Stelsky, did you personally ever strike anyone with your fists, feet or object?

**STELSKY**

Yes.

**BARROW**

Under what circumstances?

**STELSKY**

When it was found that an inmate had violated a regulation.

**BARROW**

Are you proud of your service at the camp?

**STELSKY**

I wouldn't call it service.

**BARROW**

Then what would you call it?

**STELSKY**

Extortion. I was forced to perform those duties.

**BARROW**

Such as rape?

**HAUSMAN**

Objection, your honor.

**BARROW**

Withdrawn. (*pause*) Nothing more, you honor.

**THE JUDGE**

The witness may step down.

*Stelsky leaves the witness stand and returns to the defense table.*

**THE JUDGE**

Mr. Hausman, do have any other witnesses to call?

**HAUSMAN**

The defense rests, you honor.

**THE JUDGE**

I will now deliberate on this matter and announce my decision in one week. Court adjourned.

*The Judge bangs his gavel.*

*Lights fade.*

End of Act 2, Scene 1

## Act 2, Scene 2

*Time: At night*

*Place: The bedroom in Stelsky's house. Stelsky and Louise are in bed sleeping. Stelsky is having a dream. Nadia, Rubinski, Boris, Pavel, Heisler and Von Esler enter the dream and form a circle around Stelsky.*

**NADIA**

You know that what you did was wrong. You are an evil, wicked man.

**RUBINSKI**

I did your bidding, you murderer.

**BORIS**

You drove me to commit suicide.

**PAVEL**

I thought we were friends. How could you turn against me?

**HEISLER**

You thought you were better than me? Ha! You're worse, you're a hypocrite.

**VON ESLER**

You tried to out Nazi us just to save your skin. You're just another filthy Jew who's was willing to sell out his own people to save himself.

**STELSKY**

No! It isn't true! **NONE OF THIS IS TRUE!**

**PAVEL**

But it IS true, Ivan. Your actions proved it. You are a murderer. You don't deserve to live.

*All start chanting in unison:*

**Nazi! Murderer! Pimp!**

**Nazi! Murderer! Pimp!**

**Nazi! Murderer! Pimp!**

**STELSKY**

**NO! I was just following orders!**

**HEISLER**

**Ha! You see! You were just like us, just following orders. That was my defense at the war crimes trial and look what happened to me? I was hanged!**

**NADIA**

**Who ordered you to rape me?**

**PAVEL**

**Who ordered you to kill me?**

**BORIS**

**Who ordered you to torment me?**

*All scream in unison:*

**NOBODY ORDERED YOU!**

**STELSKY**

**I am not a murderer! I was a victim, just like you!**

**HEISLER**

*(laughing)*

**I'm a victim too? Well, thank you. I am honored.**

**STELSKY**

**No, I don't mean you.**

**VON ESLER**

**Just like a Jew, trying to talk his way out of trouble.**

**NADIA**

**Blood is on your hands, Jewish blood, your own people's blood.  
And you never did find out about your mother, did you?**

**STELSKY**

**Don't mention my mother! You have no right to mention my mother.**

**NADIA**

**Your mother died while you became a pimp.**

**PAVEL**

**Your mother died while you became a murderer.**

**BORIS**

**Your mother died while you became a Nazi.**

**STELSKY**  
*(screaming)*

**NO! NO! NO!**

*All scream in unison:*

**YES ! YES! YES!!  
NOW DIE! DIE! DIE!**

*(Suddenly a hole opens up where Stelsky is standing. He is sinking into the hole. Then Stelsky wakes up screaming; sweat his running down face. Louise wakes up.)*

**LOUISE**  
*(alarmed)*

**What is it?**

**STELSKY**

**A dream, a bad dream.**

**LOUISE**

**About what?**

**STELSKY**

It's too terrible to talk about it. All I know is that I didn't do anything wrong.

**LOUISE**

Of course you didn't, Ivan.

*Louise starts stroking Stelsky's head and then cradles him in her arms.*

**LOUISE**

There, there. There, there.

*From offstage comes a chant:*

Evil doers sometime cry,  
They make a fuss,  
They live a lie,  
They act so nice  
When it suits their needs,  
But justice comes  
And tugs their sleeve.  
You can run away  
and try to hide  
But memories are not so kind  
They have a way to reappear  
And change your mood from  
Cheer to fear.  
It's nature's way  
To reign us in,  
To pull us down  
To make us grim  
As we act so nice  
And live so fine  
Until we reach  
That reckoning time.

End of Act 2, Scene 2

**Act 2, Scene 3**

*Time: The present*

*Place: Inside a large government warehouse containing thousands of files.*

*Hanging from the ceiling is a large sign which says "Closed Files." A janitor is mopping the floor. Suddenly he notices something sticking out from under the bottom of a file cabinet. He bends down and carefully pulls out a faded, crumpled photograph from under the file cabinet. He looks at the photograph, is about to throw it in the garbage bin but hesitates and takes out a cell phone and makes a call.*

**JANITOR**

Mister Schactman, I found a photograph ... on the floor. ... I don't know where it came from. ... it's a pretty old photograph ... it looks like a guy in a black uniform shaking hands with another guy wearing a striped suit. ... Yeah, I agree. It's a weird photo. ... I was just about to toss it, but I thought I should call you first. ... So, what should I do with it? ... Okay, I'll do that.

*(The Janitor then makes another call.)*

Hello ... FBI? ...

**The End**