J E F F S M E E R K A A S

A play in five acts by

Andre Orbeliani.

In this play the author depicts the changing mood of people in an enemy occupied country.

Belgium remained under German rule from June, 1940, to August, 1945. Belgians lived through the war and survived.

The first act shows the disarray after the defeat,then a year later the people had settled and made the best of the situation. Another year passed and the people had become fearless, becoming both bold, and daring. Scene four shows the ideological split inside a family. Human feelings clash with ideology. The last scene is a dramatic ending.

The flow of time should be displayed,noticeably enough, by means of a calendar.

The change in mood should be emphasized in the play of the artists.

J E F F S M E E R K A A S

by Andre Orbeliani.

THE CHARACTERS

JEFF:
A machinist in a steel factory, shop steward, 45 years old.

ELISE:
His wife, 40 years old, grumbling, but submissive.

MICHEL:
Their son, 18 years old. He was called into the army, taken prisoner by the Germans, and then released.

LEONIE:
Their daughter, 20 years old, a salesgirl in a department store, who was of unsophisticated mind.

FRANCOISE:
A girl, 20 years old, who was saved by Jeff, and dug out of a collapsed house during a bombardment. Her parents had perished in the same house. She is dark, attractive, and is attired in a pretty dress which is torn, and dirty. The Smeerkaas family adopted her and Jeff made her his mistress. She is frightened, and lost in the new environment.

LEON:
25 years old, an officer in the Belgian Army, who managed to escape from a war camp and is hiding in Brussels. He is organizing a guerilla group.

ANNE:
A 65 year old spinster, envious, and suspicious.

A young man, customer.

S C E N E O N E

Time:
July, 1940. Brussels, Belgium, which is being occupied by the Germans.

The kitchen - dining room in a low cost apartment building. The room is empty, the table set, but the meal which had been in progress, had obviously been abandoned in great disorder.

(Voices behind the stage.)

JEFF (angry):
Some bastard forced our lock, the key does not fit.

ELISE:
Let me try.

JEFF:
This is the key from the entrance door, where is the apartment key?

ELISE:
I have it. Let me do it.

JEFF:
Give, that's it!

(The door opens, Jeff enters first, then Elise, Francoise enters, and stops at the door looking fearfully around.)

JEFF (sits on a chair):
What a mess!

ELISE (walks around):
Finally at home.

JEFF:
Nice home! I have never seen such a mess.

ELISE:
That's your fault, you were rushing us all.

JEFF:
Henry was waiting for us with his truck. He could have gone.

ELISE:
Poor Henry, so generous, I can't think of him without sorrow.

JEFF:
He panicked and he did not want to be alone in his truck, it was still nice of him to think of us.

ELISE:
Everybody panicked at that time, didn't you?

JEFF:
I did not panic. I thought it would be wiser to leave.

ELISE:
You still think it was wiser? Leonie lost, Henry killed, and all our money spent.

S C E N E O N E

JEFF:
I put my faith in the English. I thought that they would stop the invasion as they had in the last war. Nobody expected the allies to collapse.

ELISE:
You, the wise man, what will you do now?

JEFF:
What I will do, is my business. Your business is to make some order of this mess, and prepare some food. (Looking at Francoise.) What about showing Francoise her room. Look at her, the girl is dead tired.

ELISE:
Come Francoise, you will have Leonie's room, it is the best, and Leonie kept it clean.

(Francoise follows Elise across the stage to an opposite door.)

JEFF (alone):
What a mess! We were dining when Henry arrived with his truck. He was frightened and the women panicked. I can not say that I had all my presence of mind either. I trusted our allies. The papers made us believe their lies. God Damn the press! Well what now? I will see the boss tomorrow if he is still there. I hate begging for a job. I will never work for the German Fascist. This I will not do, even if we all go hungry. We took this French girl, a lady, she is probably spoiled, and wasteful, but not until now, though. I'll bet she is a Jew - and she is not Francoise Dubois either. Well this is not my business. What a pleasant girl. I could not dig anything better out of that ruin. She is shy, and thankful, that's good. (Jeff looks around and sees a shopping bag on the chair.)

JEFF:
Elise (he calls) Elise.

ELISE:
What happened?

JEFF:
Your shopping bag is there on the chair. Did you not reproach us all for losing it?

ELISE:
Oh God! My shopping bag! And all our supplies. Somebody brought it back before we left.

JEFF:
There is no such fool as to carry back supplies. It's you that forgot it, and you, who were nagging us halfway to France.

ELISE:
Oh my goodness! Two loaves of bread, hard as rocks. Eggs, and ham, rotten. I had no time to make sandwiches. Four bottles of beer....

JEFF:
It may be still good. Give me one.

ELISE:
You will be sick.

JEFF:
Yes, better not. (He walks around, flips a switch, the light comes on, he strikes a match and tries the gas, the stove ignites.)

ELISE:
It works, I will buy something to eat. I saw the corner store open. (Elise walks out.)

(Jeff sits on a chair, then makes a movement to rise, but undecidedly sits back. After a time he rises and walks toward Leonie's room. He enters and then backs out followed by Francoise.)

FRANCOISE:
No Jeff, not in here, not in the home of your wife. If you want me with you, we will behave. Anything you want, but not in your home.

JEFF:
Alright, I will find a place.

FRANCOISE:
I'll make some order of this mess and Elise will be happy. Your wife is a sweet person, you know.

JEFF:
How did you find that out? She is not bad, but sweet? Who told you, she may be sweet?

FRANCOISE:
That is a personal opinion. (She starts collecting the dishes.)

JEFF:
Let us put the kettle on, there is no hot water tap in this apartment. (He fills the kettle.)

FRANCOISE (busy with the dishes):
Where do you put the garbage?

JEFF (sitting on a chair):
In this pail and then you carry it to the basement. The coal, and the potatoes, are also in the basement. I'll show you our locker.

FRANCOISE:
Five stories down?

JEFF:
It makes six to the basement, but we are used to it.

ELISE (rushing in):
Jeff, Jeff, Michel is alive. Somebody saw him as a prisoner

of war. He was unhurt!

JEFF:
Good! Good! Who told you?

ELISE:
There was a young man, in the store, he said that he was in the same camp as Michel. He saw him two weeks ago.

JEFF:
How did the soldier escape?

ELISE:
He did not escape, the Germans let him go. The Flemish are some kind of Germans and they have the right to go home if they sign a pledge. Michel might also come home one of these days.

JEFF:
Michel will not sign a Fascist pledge!

ELISE:
Don't you want to have Michel home?

JEFF:
I want him home, but not enslaved to Hitler.

ELISE:
You don't love your own child.

JEFF:
Women don't understand. It's useless to argue.

FRANCOISE (she finishes drying the dishes):
Where do I put the dishes?

ELISE:
Oh, thank you, I will show you.

JEFF:
Francoise, I want to show you our locker. Take the garbage pail.

(Francoise takes the garbage and follows Jeff. Elise looks behind and shakes her head.)

ELISE:
He is hard on that girl, and she is a lady. (She continues to put the dishes away.)

(A knock on the door - Anne de Wits - the neighbour enters the room.)

ANNE:
Hello, Mrs. Smeerkaas, how are you? I was keeping a watch on your apartment, all is in order I hope?

ELISE:
Thank you very much. We found everything as we had left it.

ANNE:
How was the trip? Are you all well? How is Miss. Leonie?

S C E N E O N E

ELISE:
We lost Leonie in a bombing. A terrible raid, we could not find her in the ruins, and we lost all hope.

ANNE:
Did you take a good look? She may be alive.

ELISE:
We do not know what has happened to her, she ran away during a raid. Henry was driving, when we saw the Stukas dive. We jumped off the truck, Jeff and me lay in a ditch. Leonie ran away and hid, probably in a house. Houses were hit, many people died there, of which Henry was one. We stayed for two days digging in the ruins. No traces of Leonie. Jeff dug out a girl who's family had perished. We brought this girl home with us, she says she has nowhere to go.

ANNE:
Is this girl a Belgian?

ELISE:
Francoise Dubois is French. She is a very nice person.

ANNE:
How did you meet her? Is she honest? You should be cautious.

ELISE:
She is frightened, and alone. Jeff dug her out of one of the collapsed houses. It was dangerous, a wall could have fallen on him, but you know how stubborn he is. People called him back, but he managed to pull her out. He does not want to part with her, also she is afraid to be left alone.

ANNE:
Of course Jeff is stubborn, everybody knows that.

ELISE:
How was it here? How did you live through the fighting?

ANNE:
Oh! Horrible, awful. No electricity, and no gas. The English blasted the bridges over the canal in town. All the windows were smashed. The noise! Terrible.

ELISE:
And the Germans? Did they make violence? Did they kill civilians?

ANNE:
I don't know, I did not see, I spent most of the time in the shelter, in the basement.

ELISE:
Are they rough with the civilians?

ANNE:
I don't know. They don't speak with civilians, they do not even speak in the streetcars.

ELISE:
They ride on our streetcars?

ANNE:
Yes, and they pay the fare.

ELISE:
Why do they do that?

ANNE:
That is the discipline taught them, if a soldier would not pay the fare, he would be shot. Hitler wants them to pay.

ELISE:
What an awful army! Do we, also have to obey Hitler?

ANNE:
Certainly. Now everyone has to obey him.

ELISE:
Jeff will not obey.

Jeff (enters):
Jeff will not obey what?

ANNE:
Will you obey Hitler?

JEFF:
If he tells me himself, I will obey.

ANNE:
You are a different man, Mr. Smeerkaas, you used to be a socialist!

JEFF:
What are you trying to get at Miss. de Wits?

ANNE:
What did you do with Leonie?

ELISE:
How can you dare to speak like that! Leonie, our great sorrow.

JEFF:
Miss. de Wits, will you please get out of here!

ANNE:
I will, but you will be sorry. (She walks to the door and opens it. Francoise is standing behind the door with the garbage pail) Who is this, listening behind the door?

FRANCOISE:
I was not listening! I did not want to enter, I did not want to disturb you.

ANNE:
Aha! This is your new spy, the French girl.

FRANCOISE:
I am not a spy, I assure you.

ANNE (looking her over, from top to bottom):
I see, you are certainly not a spy, you are a nice girl, and a victim of these ruffians. Jeff has already made you carry the garbage.

S C E N E O N E

JEFF:
Out of here! God Damn it!

ANNE:
Not before giving you the letter from Leonie. She is the mistress of a Hauptsturmfuhrer, a good business, and you can speak only about your great sorrow! (She throws the letter on the table and walks out.)

ELISE:
Leonie alive! Leonie alive! (She takes the letter.)

JEFF (sad):
Leonie is with the Germans.

ELISE (reads):
She says that she has been very unhappy, but not so now. She says that the Germans are nice, and that she will write, but she gives no address.

JEFF:
The Fascist, they took my country first, and then my daughter. Francoise, tell me, should I be happy?

FRANCOISE:
War is frightening, but as long as we are alive, also your son, and daughter, there will always be some hope.

JEFF:
Hope and action, is that what you mean?

FRANCOISE:
Action of course.

S C E N E T W O

Time:
Fall, 1941. The same room as in scene one, but now including better furniture, a refrigerator, and a telephone.

(Elise is alone, knitting, a knock comes on the door, Elise opens it and a young man enters.)

The man:
Good morning, Madame.

Elise:
Good morning, Sir.

The man:
I was told to come here.

Elise:
Come in, please.

The man:
I came for the groceries.

Elise:
I think you are mistaken.

The man:
I was told that you have some lard for sale.

Elise:
Are you sure that you have the right floor?

The man:
Yes, fifth floor, Mrs. Smeerkaas.

Elise:
We are not merchants here.

The man:
They told me at the grocery store that you might help us. My wife is sick. I have to find some food.

Elise:
I am sorry. Is your wife seriously ill?

The man:
I hope it's not too bad. The doctor came this morning.

Elise:
Are you living across the street?

The man:
Yes, on the third floor.

Elise:
You are a postie aren't you? Your wife is a slender woman, tall, with red hair.

The man:
Yes, of course.

Elise:
We are neighbours. I will help you. I have some lard that my husband purchased at a farm.

S C E N E T W O

The man:
How much does it cost?

Elise:
One hundred and twenty francs to the kilo.

The man:
My wife said seventy five francs.

Elise:
Then you will have to buy it from the farm.

The man:
I do not have that much money.

Elise:
Your wife is sick, so I will make it one hundred francs even then.

The man:
Give me half a kilo.

(Elise takes a jar out of the fridge and weighs the lard on a scale. When the scale is even, she adds a spoonful.)

Elise:
Here is a good weight.

The man:
Thank you very much.

Elise:
You are welcome to come anytime. Best regards to your wife.

(The man walks out.)

Elise (after a time):
Poor chap, his wife has T.B., I was told. I should not make him pay a hundred francs, the stuff is only worth seventy five francs. His wife will scold him. Well, when you have such a simpleton as this one, you cannot force yourself to be reasonable. Jeff should be home soon. (She looks at the clock.) His train is in by now. I always fear the controllers, they could be jailed, although Francoise is carrying the stuff. She is a clever girl.

(A knock comes at the door, Elise opens it. There is Michel in a worn Belgian military uniform and a civilian hat.)

Elise:
Oh dear! Michel, my son! (She hugs him.)

Michel:
Mammy, mother dear, I am free, I have come to stay.

Elise (looks him over):
What a drab uniform, but you look well. They fed you well in their camps?

Michel:
I did not come from a camp, I was working on a farm. I had

as much to eat as the farmer's family.

Elise:
So they let you come home. Did you have to pledge your faith?

Michel:
Not at the farm. I received a discharge when the crop was in.

Elise:
Your father will be glad, he did not like this pledge.

Michel:
Where is father?

Elise:
I am waiting for him now. He went to a farm for supplies. He always travels with Francoise.

Michel:
And Leonie? How is she?

Elise:
Somewhere in France with her fiancee.

Michel:
The German?

Elise:
Yes, the officer, we hear little from her.

Michel:
If he is a Sturmfuhrer, he is a Nazy. Those are frightening people.

Elise (remains silent, then in a low voice):
Do not speak like that, it may be dangerous.

Michel (surprised):
Are we not at home? Who can hear us?

Elise:
Jeff says, that what you say at home you may say in public, so make it a habit to keep quiet.

Michel:
The farmer in Germany was that way too.

(Some noises, the door opens, Jeff, and Francoise enter the room.)

Jeff:
Hello everybody! Who is there? Michel, my son! What a surprise.

Michel:
Hello father! I am home for good.

Jeff:
Let me look at you. You are a strong fellow, they did not starve you, but they did not dress you either.

Michel:
I have a regular discharge and I can take a job here.

S C E N E T W O

Jeff:
We are well off, we do not need your money, but if you want a job we will find you one. Maybe on a farm.

Michel:
I am a mechanic, I want a job in town.

Jeff:
We will talk about it later. Elise, did you feed your son? Did you fix his room? Francoise may help.

Elise:
She just came in, tired, and you want her to work. Francoise, come and meet Michel, our son.

Francoise:
Hello, Michel. I have heard much about you.

Michel:
Hello, Francoise. Father wrote me that you were here, and that's all I know. I am happy that you are with my parents.

Francoise:
Michel's room is full of stuff. Maybe we should move it into my room.

(Elise, and Francoise walk out.)

Jeff:
Well, Michel, do you find many changes here now?

Michel:
Yes, father, everything is different, mother is different, you are different, and the girl is submissive.

Jeff:
We are not in need now. I am making money.

Michel:
Are you also making money with the Germans?

Jeff:
Oh no! I quit my job, because the boss contracted for the Wehrmacht.

Michel:
Do you have your own business?

Jeff:
I purchase food at the farms and bring it into the town. I then resell it to the Belgians. The food that would otherwise be taken by the enemy. I work for my people.

Michel:
That is one way to see it.

(The phone rings, and Jeff lifts the receiver.)

Jeff:
Hello.... Yes, Madame la Baronne.... yes, I have your order...

You want a roast? I don't know if I can find you one for tomorrow.... For a party of ten.... I have thought of something, would a piglet do?.... A young piglet, about eight kilos.... I am not sure, I must ask a third party.... I think it may be about a thousand francs.... Yes, Madame la Baronne.... thank you, Madame la Baronne. I will phone as soon as I know.... Thank you. (He hangs up.)

Michel:
What is this piglet that you sold for a thousand francs, is that not a terrible price to pay?

Jeff:
She will not find another piglet in the whole town. I am sure of that.

Michel:
You think that it is fair?

Jeff:
What is the matter with you? I need the money. I need a lot of money.

Michel:
Too think that I have been working for two francs an hour, and there are others who work for similar salaries.

Jeff:
They get their rations from the stores.

Michel:
Four hundred grams of bread per day and how much for meat? Fifty grams?

Jeff:
Do you want me to risk arrest, and jail, to feed all the hungry in Brussels?

Michel:
You could not do that, but a thousand francs for a piglet?

Jeff:
If she is able to pay, why not?

(Elise, and Francoise enter.)

Elise:
Michel, your room is ready. There is a water heater installed now, and you can wash property.

Francoise:
Your civilian outfit is on the bed.

Michel:
Thank you, Francoise, thank you, mother. (He walks out.)

Jeff:
Francoise, will you please carry the order to the Baronne, she wants to see you.

S C E N E T W O

Elise:
Jeff, you are merciless. Francoise has only just arrived, she is tired, hungry, and you send her away.

Jeff:
You have to go now, you know why? I sold her Andre's piglet for a thousand francs, she just phoned saying that she will give you the money.

Francoise:
Andre did not want to part with his piglet, he wants to keep it and fatten it.

Jeff:
That's my business. (He collects some food from the fridge, wraps it and gives it to Francoise.) You have to go and see the Baronne now.

Francoise:
Yes, Jeff, I will go. (She takes the package.)

Elise:
Take this sandwich.

Jeff:
Do not rush home, you may find company there.

(Francoise walks out.)

Jeff:
She belongs to them, much more than to us here.

(Time passes, Elise sets the table, Jeff reads the newspaper, and Michel enters in civilian clothes.)

Michel:
How nice it is to be home!

Elise:
How nice to be together again.

Michel:
Where is Francoise?

Jeff:
I sent her on a walk, to take care of some business.

Elise:
Jeff sent her away hungry, he is really cruel.

Michel:
Is she always submissive like this?

Elise:
She is his slave.

Michel:
She never complains?

Jeff:
She is not submissive. She is clever, and understands reason.

S C E N E T W O

Michel:
What reason? Your orders, and whims?

Jeff:
Now listen to me, Michel, you too will listen to my orders, and whims, and you will not criticize your father. Do you understand?

Michel:
Yes, father.

Jeff:
Smuggling is a dangerous business, you will obey. Do you understand?

Michel:
Yes, father.

Jeff:
This is what Francoise understands and Elise does not.

Michel:
Yes, father.

Jeff:
Elise, what about supper?

(Elise is serving, they sit, and eat, in silence.)

S C E N E T H R E E

Time:
Fall, 1942. The same room as in scene one, and two.

(Francoise is alone doing the ironing. A knock comes on the door, the door opens, and Anne, the neighbour, peers in.)

Anne:
Are you alone, Francoise?

Francoise (cheerfully):
Hello, Miss. de Wits, how are you?

Anne:
Is Jeff not in? I would hate to disturb him.

Francoise:
Elise will be back soon.

Anne:
I like to chat with you, I like young people.

Francoise:
Come in and sit down, you don't mind if I continue? (She continues ironing.)

Anne:
I like to see courageous people, and you are a very courageous girl. I wonder how you can stand living here, you a well educated person with these ruffians.

Francoise:
I don't find the Smeerkaass rough, I love Elise, she is very kind, and thoughtful, like my mother.

Anne:
But you were brought up in a rich family, were you not? Who were your parents?

Francoise:
My father had a business in Lille, but it was not much.

Anne:
How come you are so dark, and pretty? Frenchmen from Lille are not so dark, but just like the Flemish.

Francoise:
My grandparents, from my mother's side, were Spaniards. I remember them speaking Spanish at home.

Anne:
Dutch Jews, also speak Spanish at home, don't they?

Francoise:
I am not a Jew.

Anne:
You look like one.

Francoise:
I look like a Spanish girl, mother always told me so.

Anne:
There is nothing wrong with being a Jew, my grandmother was

a Jew, she came from Poland.

Francoise:
From Poland to Flanders, when was that?

Anne:
It was in Napoleon's time, when they settled as tailors in Nivelle.

Francoise:
That's a longtime ago.

Anne:
Your family came before the Inquisition from Spain to Holland.

Francoise (frightened):
I have nothing to do with these people, I am French, and a Catholic, I go to church with Elise.

Anne:
Of course you go to church now, but where have you been baptized?

Francoise (cries):
What did I do to you? What did I do?

Anne:
Why do you cry? I am in some ways, also a Jew, my grandmother was Sarah Katz, from Nivelle.

Francoise:
What did I do? Why are you so menacing?

Anne:
Let us make peace, you give me a pound of lard, and a dozen eggs, and everything will be forgotten.

Francoise:
I will be scolded, and punished. (She opens the refrigerator.) Here, take what you need.

(Anne takes a handful of eggs.)

Anne:
Have you a bag?

(Francoise gives her a bag, and some paper.)

Anne (wraps everything up carefully):
This is good, you are a nice girl, and don't tell the Smeerkaass.

(Francoise says nothing, Anne walks out.)

Francoise (continues to iron, and after a time):
I think I must leave.

Jeff (comes in):
Hello, Francoise, what's the matter, what's happened?

S C E N E T H R E E

Francoise:
That awful woman was here!

Jeff:
The old bitch?

Francoise:
She knows all about my family, she knows that I am a Jew.

Jeff:
I doubt it, she was bluffing as usual.

Francoise:
She knows that my family comes from Holland.

Jeff:
She is a Jew herself, in some ways, the Katz from Nivelle.

Francoise:
She told me.

Jeff:
Then what is the matter?

Francoise:
She blackmailed me and took supplies from the fridge.

Jeff:
She will pay me, for that!

Francoise:
I think I had better move out.

Jeff:
I need you more than you can imagine.

Francoise:
I am a coward.

Jeff:
You a coward? Not in action, not under command. What happened to you tonight, I do not understand. Where was your presence of mind?

Francoise:
I need your protection Jeff, I feel secure in your presence. When you order something to be done, I know it is to fight our common enemies. I feel useful, and secure.

Jeff:
Okay, okay, I know you better than you do yourself. Now,did Michel phone?

Francoise:
I was nervous that he would phone when this woman was here. No, he did not phone.

Jeff:
Hm! He should have, at least an hour ago.

Francoise:
Do you want me to inquire? Phone to the warehouse?

S C E N E T H R E E

Jeff:
Wait a minute. What would you say?

Francoise:
I will ask them if they have seen him?

Jeff:
That's what you should not say. What if the phone were tapped? Why should Michel be in this warehouse?

Francoise:
I could ask if the shipment of wine has arrived.

Jeff:
No, just ask if you can come and pickup one, or two, bottles of champagne from Rheims.

Francoise (phones):
Six two four nine nine. Hello, yes, it's me. Could I come and pick up a bottle, or two, of wine? .... No .... Why? It belongs to the Wehrmacht? .... It's locked. Okay, thanks .. (She hangs up.)

Jeff:
What is it, what did they say?

Francoise:
The Germans delivered it, but locked it all up. I did not dare to ask about Michel.

Jeff:
That's bad enough.

Francoise:
What happened to Michel?

Jeff:
How do I know? This shipment was a most dangerous, and bold thing to do. Francoise, are you frightened?

Francoise:
Not now.

Jeff:
Well you see.

Elise (enters):
Miss. de Wits caught me on the steps and talked for ten minutes, sweet as honey. I could not get rid of her.

Jeff:
Francoise, and now?

Francoise:
No, not now.

Jeff:
Good point for you.

(A knock comes on the door, Elise opens it and a German soldier with a thick black mustache, and eyebrows comes in.)

S C E N E T H R E E

The soldier (stretches his arm):
Heil Hitler!

Jeff (stretches his arm):
Sieg Heil.

Francoise (jumps to her feet and stretches her arm):
Sieg Heil.

The soldier:
Are you the Smeerkaas family?

Jeff:
I am Jeff Smeerkaas.

The soldier:
I have a message from your son.

Jeff:
What has happened to him?

The soldier:
He is drunk on champagne.

Francoise (runs to the soldier and pulls his moustache off, it's Michel):
You joker!

Jeff:
What a joker, you could make your mother sick.

Elise (hugs him):
Michel, my son!

Jeff:
Where did you pick up that outfit? You might get into bad trouble wearing it.

Michel:
As per your orders, I had to rent this German truck in Rheims and take a load of champagne to Brussels. The German escort did not want to have a civilian on their vehicle, so they dressed me like this, and for fun they were drilling me all the way.

Francoise:
A recruit for the Wehremacht?

Michel:
God forbid!

Jeff:
And the load?

Michel:
Stored as you ordered and under lock. We drank six bottles, but this could not be avoided.

Jeff:
They did not look under the bottles?

Michel:
There was good padding beneath, I replaced the empties.

Jeff:
A good point for my subordinate.

Michel (salutes):
Yawohl, Herr Commander!

Jeff:
Now it's your job to warn the Baronne.

Francoise:
Yes, Jeff, I will go. (She walks out.)

Michel:
I would like to take this outfit off, in case somebody enters, especially our neighbor, the old spy.

Jeff:
One minute! I have thought of something. With your uniform you may scare the old witch out of the house!

Michel:
How can I do that?

Jeff:
She has a Jewish grandmother, Sarah Katz. Wearing your disguise, call on her and tell her that she is expected at the Komandatur, because of her grandmother. Don't forget the name Sarah Katz.

Michel (salutes):
Yawohl, Herr Commander! (He adjusts his moustache and walks out.)

Elise (after a time):
What was there under the bottles?

Jeff:
Weapons, of course, for Leon's commando.

Elise:
And the Baronne knows?

Jeff:
Francoise will explain to her.

Elise:
What would happen if the Germans could see?

Jeff:
Something unpleasant for all of us.

Elise:
Are you never scared?

Jeff:
We, and even Francoise, do not have the right to be scared. We are all soldiers.

Elise:
I will try to be brave too.

Michel (enters):
I scared the old bitch stiff. You know that she tried to involve Francoise, but she knows nothing about the girl except

her looks. (He walks across the room and leaves.)

Elise:
What will she do?

Jeff:
I hope she will not answer the call of the Komandatur, it maybe fatal.

Elise:
I will try to talk her out of it.

Jeff:
I will send her a menacing note. Betraying a Jew means death.

Elise:
You are not a murderer.

Jeff:
Not in civilian life. This will be just a warning.

Elise:
I am afraid.

Jeff:
Learn to be a soldier. What about supper, Elise, do you have enough for a commando?

(Elise serves at the table, they sit and eat in silence.)

S C E N E F O U R

Time:
Fall, 1943. The same room as before.

(Elise knitting, enter Leonie.)

Leonie:
Mother, you don't mind if I stay with you?

Elise:
Of course not, you are welcome. Come.

Leonie:
I am lonely, and frightened. Hans has gone for six months, to that dreadful Russia.

Elise:
Does he write to you?

Leonie:
He writes often, but what can he say, except that he loves me. He is in Stalingrad and I read in the newspaper that the fighting is terrible.

Elise:
The war will be over one day.

Leonie:
You will be rid of me before that, I do not think I will live long.

Elise:
Why do you say that? It is not nice.

Leonie:
I feel unwelcome. I was so lonely in Rouen, when Hans was sent away to Russia. I came home expecting some compassion.

Elise:
Did father not rent you this apartment, next door to us? Did he not furnish it? Did father not take care of you?

Leonie:
Yes, but I still feel unwelcome. I am a stranger at home.

Elise:
Don't you feel that we love you?

Leonie:
I know that you love me. I am lonely, so lonely. (She cries.)

Elise (after a time):
Leonie, you should start doing comething like knitting, or lace. Start making lace, your old frame is still here.

Leonie:
Yes, mother, I will make lace if I can do it here, beside you.

Elise:
You should get back your old job at the department store, you would see people, and you would not be lonely.

Leonie:
Could I move into Michel's room, as he lives at the farm now.

You could get rid of the second apartment, I don't need all this luxury.

Elise:
I will speak to Jeff, it was his idea, you know how stubborn he is.

Jeff (enters):
Hello Leonie, how are you?

Leonie:
Good morning, father, did I disturb you?

Jeff:
Just stay, I have seen little of you since you came back.

Leonie:
I did not want to disturb you.

Jeff:
I am a busy man now, do you realize that?

Leonie:
I am proud of you, father, very proud!

Jeff:
Leonie, how did you get lost? I had no time to question you.

Leonie:
Lost where?

Jeff:
When we separated, during that bombing.

Leonie:
I lost you. I thought all of you were killed.

Jeff:
We looked for you in the ruins. We remained for two days at that place.

Leonie:
I was so frightened of the diving bombers, I ran and ran across the fields, and finally I entered a farm house. The farmers were nice to me, they fed me and I slept in the barn. I lost my purse, never finding it, and I had no money.

Elise:
My dear child!

Leonie:
I went to that fatal crossing and found the truck smashed and the clothing covered with blood. I thought that you were dead, all of you. I went back to the farm.

Elise:
You did not go to see the ruins beside the road?

Leonie:
I wanted to go back home, but I had no money. The farmer drove me into town, and I got a job at a store there, with a room behind it.

S C E N E F O U R

Jeff:
Did they pay you well?

Leonie:
Not well, just enough to buy food.

Jeff:
Dirty bastards!

Leonie:
That's not all. I had no pass, no identity, no money,and the Frenchmen locked me up.

Jeff:
In jail?

Leonie:
Then when the Germans came, they set me free.

Jeff:
And they raped you?

Leonie:
No, but Monsieur de la Grange abused me.

Jeff:
Who is Monsieur de la Grange?

Leonie:
The store owner. He offered me the room behind the store and then he came at night.

Elise:
Leonie, my child!

Leonie:
Monsieur de la Grange is a rich man, and a local politician, when I wanted to complain,he said that I had stolen and they believed him.

Jeff:
And the Germans, what did they do?

Leonie:
A German policeman came to check the jail and questioned the inmates. When he heard that I was a Belgian unjustly jailed, he made a lot of fuss. I think that the Germans wanted to show how corrupt the French politicians were. They arrested Monsieur de la Grange.

Jeff:
Good for him, the bastard!

Leonie:
I was free, but the French were hostile, I was very frightened. Mrs. de la Grange, and his mother came begging for pardon. They thought that the Germans would shoot him. I went to the German police to beg for the pardon of my offender.

Jeff:
Begging for the release of such a bastard!

S C E N E F O U R

Leonie:
This time I met Hans and he helped me.

Jeff:
What did he do? Let the bastard go free?

Leonie:
No, he could not do that, but he did turn the affair over to the French Justice. He took me to Paris, to prevent revenge. I stayed with him from then on. He was very kind.

Jeff:
And he is in Russia now.

Leonie:
Soldier's bride, soldier's widow.

Jeff:
You are not married.

Leonie:
It does not matter now.

Jeff:
It does not matter.

Elise:
This terrible war! So much suffering, and for what?

Leonie:
We are not the only one's.

(A knock comes on the door, Francoise and Leon enter.)

Francoise:
Leon wants to see you on business.

Leonie:
I won't disturb you, I will go.

Elise:
I will come with you.

(Leonie and Elise walk out.)

Francoise:
Leon's aunt called me, he needs a safe home.

Jeff:
I told you about the farmer, what went wrong?

Leon:
He kicked me out, the stupid fellow.

Francoise:
He saw a weapon that Leon carries and he got scared.

Jeff:
I told you, no weapons, unless in action, the Germans check people in the street. Possession of a gun means death. You know that, so why do you carry a gun?

SCENE FOUR

Leon:
I do not fear death.

Jeff:
Your life belongs not to you, but to your country.

Leon:
I carry a gun - it is my duty.

Jeff:
Your duty is to give me the gun. That is an order!

Leon (puts the gun on the table):
I obey, but I protest.

Jeff:
You both stay here, I will try to find other accommodation for Lieutenant Collignon. Francoise you are responsible. If I am late, accommodate the Lieutenant in Michel's room. (Jeff walks out.)

(A time of silence.)

Leon:
Francoise, you are responsible, what does that mean?

Francoise:
I am responsible in seeing that his orders are carried out.

Leon:
What orders?

Francoise:
He said, "You both stay here."

Leon:
And if I walk away, what will you do?

Francoise:
I will have to stop you.

Leon:
How can you do that?

Francoise:
Leon, you are an officer, you should know. What would you do if a soldier did not obey your order.

Leon:
A soldier can not disobey.

Francoise:
You can not disobey either.

Leon:
I have to obey a woman, a young woman?

Francoise (stands up):
Lieutenant Collignon, stay at attention.

(Undecided he stands up.)

S C E N E F O U R

Francoise (firmly commands):
Two steps back.

(He moves.)

Turn around.

(He moves.)

Five steps forward.

(He moves.)

Turn around.

(He moves.)

(In her natural voice.)

Now you can sit down.

Leon:
What was that, a comedy?

Francoise:
Lieutenant Collignon, we are here on the battlefield! You may not realize it, but I do! I obey my commander and this is the only way I can fight. I am a helpless coward without my commander.

Leon:
You are the most courageous woman I have ever met. I admire you.

Francoise:
There is nothing to admire. I am a Jewess as you know. My folks were robbed, imprisoned, and killed by the enemy. My duty is to fight, but I'm a coward,I can not fight. Jeff Smeerkaas gives orders and I obey. What he orders contributes to the liberation of my people. I obey him, knowing that this is my duty. Your duty towards your country is to obey and Jeff was appointed to be your leader, because of his ability. Jeff, you, and me,are in the same camp.

Leon:
I am an officer and I am trained for action, who is Jeff Smeerkaas?

Francoise:
He is the one who provided your commando with weapons. He found a safe shelter for your men and you, he provides you with all information and now he has gone to find you a safe refuge after your blunder.

Leon:
What blunder?

Francoise:
Uselessly carrying a gun. He told you not to do it. You

might be checked in the street, or on the bus, I have seen it done. If you are arrested, all the group, all our work is in jeopardy. They know how to make you talk and betray everybody.

Leon:
I will betray no one.

Francoise:
Maybe not, but speaking of myself, I am not so sure.

Leon:
I am sure that you will never betray anyone.

Francoise:
Forget about it. I will make you some real coffee. We sell coffee for two francs a grain, but I will make you a cup of moca free of charge.

Leon:
Your Jeff, a smuggler, what is heroic about that?

Francoise:
Smuggling bacon allows him to smuggle weapons, British pilots, and information, and you know where most of his money goes?

Leon:
To the Swiss bank.

Francoise:
Oh no! It goes to your aunt, and through the Baroness to yourself. I know, I am carrying it around.

Leon:
Is that so?

Francoise:
I don't know if I am right in telling you.

Leon:
Everybody thinks that you are his mistress.

(Noise behind the door and Jeff enters.)

Jeff:
It is not easy to find you a shelter, I could not go far, because of the curfew, and it is becoming late.

Leon:
I can stay here.

Jeff:
You can not stay here, because of strangers coming for purchases. I agree with Andre, he will keep you in his attic for a few days.

Francoise:
The pig's attic?

Jeff:
He is cleaning it and he has a cot, and a chair.

Leon:
What pig? What attic?

Francoise:
Andre bought a piglet on a farm and brought it to his house in town. He fattened it into a big sow, feeding it with the scraps brought from the officer's mess where he works. But he did not realize that some light is visible at night and the German patrol had seen it. So they came at night and stormed the house. They thought that Andre was hiding a spy, or a British pilot. They found a pig!

Leon:
The pigs found a pig!

Francoise:
Andre got off lightly that time. The pilot was a pig, they laughed until they were in tears. They took the pig, but they did not fine Andre.

Leon:
You want to put me in a pig's sty?

Jeff (sitting):
Can you hide in your aunt's mansion? In the street you may be recognized, and betrayed, at the farm you are unwelcome. What can you do? I have to find you a hiding place from where you could operate your raids, but I can not do it now. Right?

Leon:
Yes, Mr. Smeerkaas, I understand your position.

Jeff:
You will walk to Andre's house, which is two block from here, with Francoise. You will hug, and kiss her,all the way, you will behave as lovers, at least your presence in the street will be obvious and if you fall on an ambush do not run, or you will be shot at. If they stop and arrest you, they will let you go in the morning. They will not be interested in your identity if they do not suspect you.

Leon:
I will follow your instructions.

Jeff:
Francoise will be in charge, she knows the way and she will stay with you until tomorrow.

Francoise:
Yes Jeff.

Jeff (to Franccise):
Come back about ten, not before.

Leon:
Thank you, Mr. Smeerkaas.

Jeff:
You can start on your way in about an hour, Francoise you know the best time to avoid the patrols.

S C E N E F O U R

Francoise:
Yes Jeff.

Jeff:
Now I will go next door, my wife and daughter are waiting for me. Francoise, have supper with Leon here and don't disturb Andre. You may not see him. Here is the key. (He walks out.)

S C E N E F I V E

Time:
Three months later. Same room as before.

(Elise cooking.)

Leonie (rushes in):
Mother! Mother! Is father not in?

Elise:
Not yet. His train has just arrived, so he should be in very soon.

Leonie:
They were talking in the store about a coup by the guerillas.

Elise:
What happened? Oh Lord, have mercy upon us!

Leonie:
The guerillas made a raid near the barracks. You saw the young German recruits at the drilling exercise? The guerillas came in a car and opened fire with machine guns. Many recruits were killed.

Elise:
Those young ones, fifteen years old. Just children!

Leonie (crying):
This awful war. This awful, horrible war ....

Elise:
Why? Why should people kill like that? Why?

(The two women are sobbing.)

(Jeff and Francoise enter.)

Jeff:
What is the matter? What has happened?

Francoise (hugs Leonie):
Bad news from Hans?

Leonie:
There could be no news from Hans. Never.

Elise:
There was a raid by the guerillas on the young German recruits while they were drilling. Many were killed.

Jeff:
Good news! What about the commando?

Leonie:
They did not know in the store.

Jeff:
I will phone Leon's aunt.

Elise:
Could it be Leon? And Michel? My boy!

S C E N E F I V E

Jeff:
Francoise, will you phone? I don't want my voice heard on this line.

Francoise (on the phone):
Hello, operator? 362 54, (she whispers to Jeff.) A man's voice. Hello, Madame la Baronne, we just arrived with supplies. Do you want butter, bacon or maybe eggs? (She listens, then she puts the receiver slowly down.)

Francoise:
She said that she needs nothing because she has been summoned by the Gestapo. Then the line went dead.

Jeff:
This is bad. Leon is under suspicion, either caught or dead. Hell, hell, hell, that stupid Leon! I was expecting something like this to happen. Killing the recruits will make us unpopular. What a stupid move! And Michel is in his gang, God damn it!

Francoise:
If Michel is caught, this place will also be unsafe.

Jeff:
That of course I know, and all our files, and connections will go to hell!

Francoise:
I will go and inquire at Andre's. He may know.

Jeff:
Go quickly and report back to me.

Leonie:
Father, if I can be of help, I will.

Jeff:
Thank you daughter. Just wait.

Elise:
Will you eat?

Jeff:
Yes, we will eat, but wait for Francoise.

Leonie (looks through the window):
Francoise walks quickly, she has already turned the corner. There is nobody in the street. Mom! Dad! look, is that Michel? The one in the long coat, he is limping.

(They crowd in front of the window.)

Jeff:
It's Michel. I will help him up the steps.

Elise:
I will come too.

(Jeff and Elise walk out.)

S C E N E F I V E

Leonie (at the window):
Michel is not limping too badly. Is it Michel? I can not see under his hat. He is coming here. It is Michel, mother is hugging him. (She sits working at her lace frame.)

(Enter Jeff and Elise helping Michel. Leonie also helps, they put Michel on the chesterfield.)

Leonie:
Michel, are you shot? Let me see!

Michel:
I am not shot. I jumped from the car and remained still while everybody was chasing after them. When the street was reasonably empty I walked away. A man gave me his coat.

Jeff:
Well done, my son!

Michel:
I came to warn you... if they get to Leon's files they will find my name, your phone number, and a lot of other information. This place is not safe.

Jeff:
Leon did not have a code?

Michel:
He had one, but he did not want to bother.

Jeff:
We phoned Leon's aunt. She said that she was summoned by the Gestapo, and then the line went dead.

Michel:
I know what that means.

Jeff:
We have to leave, and fast! Elise, can you light your old coal stove? Do it at once!

Elise:
Will you eat?

Michel:
I am hungry, but do we have time?

Jeff:
Elise, give us what you have.

(Elise serves the food, and then starts lighting the coal stove.)

Leonie:
Let me do it.

Francoise (comes in):
Michel, Michel! I was just told that you were dead.

Michel:
Hello, Francoise. Not this time.

S C E N E F I V E

Francoise:
Maybe my information is just as accurate. Four men dead, including Michel. Leon captured. Fourteen recruits dead and as many wounded. The Germans want to have a public funeral, or take them to Germany and have a funeral there. No other reprisal is foreseen.

Jeff:
This place is unsafe. We have to move and we have to destroy the files. Could Andre accommodate us temporarily?

Francoise:
I don't know, I did not ask. I will go at once.

Jeff:
Sit and eat. I will go and discuss it with Andre.

Leonie:
If I can help you, father, I will.

Jeff:
You do what Francoise tells you to do. (He walks out.)

(They eat in silence.)

(Francoise stands up, goes to a locker, opens the lock and pulls out papers and files. She starts to burn them in the coal stove. Leonie stands up and goes to help Francoise. Nobody speaks.)

Francoise:
Michel, will you take a look into the street?

Michel:
All is clear!

Francoise:
Leonie, if you crumple the paper it will burn faster. There is a great deal of paper.

(Both women tear and crumple the paper. Elise comes with a poker and helps.)

Michel:
Father is coming back.

Elise:
Michel, does your foot hurt badly?

Michel:
It's not too painful.

Francoise:
I have thought about our escape. There is a hole towards the next house basement, in Leonie's coal locker. It was made as a bombing escape.

Leonie:
I have seen it, but I don't know how it is in the other house.

S C E N E F I V E

Jeff (enters):
It is okay with Andre. I will help Michel and the girls will follow as soon as they have finished with the files.

Michel (at the window):
All clear!

(Jeff and Michel walk out.)

Francoise:
Elise, take as many supplies as you can. We may never come back here again.

(Elise is at the fridge filling two bags, Francoise and Leonie are at the stove destroying the files.)

Elise:
I don't think that I can carry more than this.

Francoise:
Elise, please go now. Leonie and I will take as much as we can.

Leonie (walks to the window):
All clear! Mother, you can go now.

(Elise leaves.)

Francoise:
I have never been as nervous as I am now.

Leonie:
You are used to danger.

Francoise:
I am afraid of being caught alive.

Leonie:
You are extraordinarily cold-blooded, Francoise.

Francoise:
I am a coward. I fear pain. I don't think I could stand the pain.

Leonie:
Nothing matters to me, now.

Francoise:
Do they torture their prisoners?

Leonie:
I think they do. Hans sometimes came home quite sick.

Francoise:
Let's hurry. Is there much more left?

Leonie:
Just this pile. Hurry!

(The two women work together quickly.)

S C E N E F I V E

Francoise (runs to the window):
Here they are. Two truckloads of soldiers and me alone.

Leonie:
I am finished. Let us try the basement escape.

(The two women run out, and in a minute are back locking the door.)

Francoise:
Too late. (She takes a handgun out of the locker.) Leonie, take this and kill me.

Leonie:
I could not.

Francoise:
I am a coward. I can not commit suicide and I know too much. If they torture me, I will tell. I will tell everything. Kill me, please!

Leonie:
It does not matter!

Francoise:
It matters very much. Leonie, kill me!

(Leonie takes the gun.)

Francoise:
Not that way, the safety is on. Now.

Leonie:
I can not.

Francoise:
Point it at my heart, it's useless to make me suffer.

(There is a noise behind the door and someone knocks.)

Francoise:
Leonie, for goodness sake! Please!

(Leonie shoots and Francoise falls on her knees, then sideways onto the ground. Leonie then walks towards the chesterfield, lays down and shoots herself.)

(Hard knock on the door.)