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Zagłada

By

RICHARD VETERE

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RICHARD VETERE

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For Jan P. Wampuszyc

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CHARACTERS

DANIELLE HOOPER: Late 30s. An African-American journalist working on the most important book of her life. Driven, well-informed and highly educated, she is not easily deterred and not afraid of any cause if it is righteous.

OFFICER FRANK NAPOLI: Late 50s. A senior officer in the New York City Police Department Intelligence Bureau focusing on terrorist activities. Sarcastic but professional, jaded but not completely, and determined to protect his country.

SONIA SOKOLOW: Late 40s. Highly trained Homeland Security officer. She lives with the burden of being the only child of Holocaust survivors. She has one mission, and that is to bring one of the last SS collaborators who lives in the U.S. to justice. She speaks Polish and German fluently.

JERZY KOZLOWSKI: Though 90 years old, he is still a bull of a man, guarded, world-weary and unrepentant. He has survived hell, and though dying of stage 4 lung cancer, he is still stubborn and self-sufficient.

SETTING

The play takes place today in both the detective squad room office and the prisoner interrogation room on the second floor of the 112th Police Precinct in Queens.

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SCENE 1

(Lights up on OFFICER FRANK NAPOLI at a computer in the 112th police precinct detective squad room. He is a well put-together, near retirement, no-nonsense officer. DANIELLE HOOPER enters. She is an attractive African-American woman in her late 30s, educated, intelligent and determined.)

There is a partition, a one-way mirror to another room, a place to hold prisoners that is nearly out of sight unless someone stands at the corner of the room and peers in.)

HOOPER. I'm Danielle Hooper.

NAPOLI. Right. Sit down. Thanks for coming back. *(Then.)*

Unlike the other officers who spoke to you, I'm with the NYPD Intelligence Bureau. Field Intelligence Officer Frank Napoli.

HOOPER. Is *he* still here?

NAPOLI. Yes. He is. He's in the next room. Like I said to you on the phone, I know the arresting officers took your statement but I just wanted to make sure I have it all correct. *(Reads a document.)* You were at the perpetrator's front door at approximately nine a.m. this morning and you rang the bell. He opened the door with a pistol in his hand and fired at you.

HOOPER. Yes.

NAPOLI. Without saying a word?

HOOPER. Yes.

NAPOLI (*reads*). You ran to the driveway and hid behind his car. He then closed the door. A neighbor called 911. And you stayed there until the arresting officers arrived.

HOOPER. Yes. That's what happened.

NAPOLI. Do you have any idea *why* he was shooting at you?

HOOPER. I do.

NAPOLI. And that is?

HOOPER. I had been at his house Tuesday morning. I told him then that I was a journalist and I wanted to talk to him. He closed the door in my face.

NAPOLI. A journalist? Do you work for any agency or network?

HOOPER. No, I freelance.

NAPOLI. And the second time you show up, he takes a shot at you?

HOOPER. Yes.

NAPOLI. It figures.

HOOPER. What does?

NAPOLI. He's an old white guy. You're black.

HOOPER. A black *woman*.

NAPOLI. Hey, I was born and raised here. I know how it goes. You could have a big, black boyfriend just waiting in the driveway ready to jump him when he opens the door.

HOOPER. That is pretty racist of him and pretty racist of you for even thinking it.

NAPOLI (*amused*). There're no other black people in that neighborhood, not really. And then *you* show up at his door? Come on. He doesn't believe what you say so he gets scared and takes a shot at you.

HOOPER. I could have had a big white guy with tattoos waiting in the driveway to jump him.

NAPOLI. You know what I don't understand? I don't know *why* you went back a second time.

HOOPER. Why don't you understand *that*?

NAPOLI. He shut the door in your face the first time you rang his bell.

HOOPER. I'm persistent.

NAPOLI. You said you wanted to talk to him. You wanted to talk to him about *what*?

HOOPER. I'm writing a book, and I had some important questions for him.

NAPOLI. You're writing a book, and he was *important* to your book?

HOOPER. Yes.

NAPOLI. What questions did you want to ask him?

HOOPER. That's my business, isn't it?

NAPOLI. Are you pressing charges?

HOOPER. No.

NAPOLI. That's another thing that doesn't make sense.

HOOPER. Excuse me?

NAPOLI. He could have killed you, but yet you tell the arresting officers that you don't want to press charges.

HOOPER. I have my reasons.

NAPOLI. And they are?

HOOPER. Again, that's my business.

NAPOLI. For now, it is. (*Then.*) You don't have an arrest record. But there's more here than you're telling me.

HOOPER. Are you serious?

NAPOLI. It's my job to be serious. (*Then.*) OK, we're done. You can go.

HOOPER (*smirking*). I'm not under arrest then?

NAPOLI (*seriously*). Of course not. He shot at *you*. We just don't know why he did. Not *yet* anyway.

HOOPER. Can I have five minutes to talk to him now?

NAPOLI. There you go again. You really *do* want to talk to him.

HOOPER. Yes. That is why I was at his door. You haven't heard one thing I said. I'm a journalist and I have some questions. Just five minutes. That's all I'm asking.

NAPOLI. You can't talk to him. He's in police custody.

HOOPER. You can't bend the rules a little?

NAPOLI. I can't bend the rules *at all*.

HOOPER (*disappointed*). What's going to happen to him?

NAPOLI. The local precinct here is holding him on a "discharging an illegal firearm" charge. A Class C Felony. But Homeland Security is interested in him and somebody from their office is on the way here now.

HOOPER. Can I talk to *them* when they get here?

NAPOLI. Now you want to talk to Homeland Security?

HOOPER. This might surprise you, but they might want to talk to me.

NAPOLI. That's up to them. Just don't get in my way.

HOOPER. I won't. I'm going to go across the street to get myself a cup of coffee at Dunkin' Donuts. Would you like one?

NAPOLI. No. But thanks.

(NAPOLI goes back to the computer.

HOOPER exits.

NAPOLI turns towards the interrogation room, thinking. He then checks his phone, his watch and then unsatisfied, sits at the computer. He works on it a few moments.

SONIA SOKOLOW enters.)

SOKOLOW. This is the detective squad's office for the 112?

NAPOLI. Yes, it is.

SOKOLOW. I'm Agent Sonia Sokolow with ICE's Homeland Security Investigations, and you're with the NYPD Intelligence Bureau?

(He stands, and they shake hands.)

NAPOLI. Correct. Frank Napoli. Chief Liaison officer for Queens County. I got a call from your people that you needed someone here, but my main squad is on a stakeout so I came.

SOKOLOW. And how did we get up here?

NAPOLI. When he heard you were coming to interrogate the fugitive, the precinct commander gave us this office so we would be away from the rest of the detective squad. And they gave us complete use of their interrogation room.

SOKOLOW. Good. Where is he?

NAPOLI. Inside.

SOKOLOW. Is he alone?

NAPOLI. The last time I looked.

SOKOLOW. How long has he been in there?

NAPOLI. Since I got here at ten hundred hours.

SOKOLOW *(checks her watch)*. Are there security cameras in the room?

NAPOLI. Yes. Just installed last year. The screen is at the front desk. The desk sergeant oversees them.

SOKOLOW. Did he ask for an attorney?

NAPOLI. I have no idea. He talks to me in Russian.

SOKOLOW. Polish.

NAPOLI. What about it?

SOKOLOW. He was probably speaking Polish. Can I see the arresting officer's report?

(He hands it to her, and she reads it quickly.)

SOKOLOW. He shot at Danielle Hooper, the journalist?

NAPOLI. That's who she says she is.

SOKOLOW. Did you question her? I'd like to talk to her.

NAPOLI. Funny.

SOKOLOW. What?

NAPOLI. Nothing. Yes. I questioned her. It's in my report. She went out for coffee across the street.

SOKOLOW. Who?

NAPOLI. Danielle Hooper. She said she'd be back and she said she wanted to talk to *you*. *(Then.)* I'd like to ask you something if I can.

SOKOLOW. Of course.

NAPOLI. I read this guy's folder. There's isn't much there. I'm busy working on four other cases right now—all homicides. Your case called me away from a fugitive we are closing in on.

SOKOLOW. What's your question, Officer Napoli?

NAPOLI. This guy has no arrest record that I could find, and I've been searching his profile since I got here. He's not involved with any terrorist conspiracy that I could find. He tried to shoot Hooper with a gun so old I'm surprised it didn't blow up in his face. And *he's* so old the only thing he *could* hit with his cataract-filled eyeballs was the driver's door of his own car. My question is, why did *my* office get called in on this one?

SOKOLOW. Because *I* need to talk to him. Knock on the door when Hooper gets back.

(She exits into the interrogation room. NAPOLI dials his cell.)

NAPOLI *(into cell)*. Napoli, here. Give me the chief. Thanks.

(Lights out.)

SCENE 2

(Lights up on the interrogation room.)

JERZY KOZLOWSKI, defiant and rough-looking, despite the fact that he is 90 years of age and seriously ill. He sits in the chair, hardly acknowledging SOKOLOW when she enters.)

SOKOLOW. Jerzy Kozlowski?

(He ignores her.)

SOKOLOW *(cont'd)*. I'm Sonia Sokolow from the United States Department of Homeland Security.

(He doesn't look at her but reacts when he hears her name and then continues to listen.)

SOKOLOW *(cont'd)*. You're currently being held for the discharge of an illegal firearm. However, that is not why I'm here.

(She opens her briefcase and places a file on the table in front of him. She opens it to a page.)

SOKOLOW *(cont'd)*. That is a copy of your immigration application. You entered this country in New York City on March 28, 1946. Is this correct?

(She flashes the photo in front of him.)

SOKOLOW. Is that you in the photograph? I see the resemblance.

(No response.)

SOKOLOW *(cont'd)*. You worked thirty years for Canada Dry on Maurice Avenue, not far from your home in Jackson Heights. You were a supervisor it says. You married an American woman, Veronica Polis, in 1961. You became a U.S. Citizen and you purchased a home in Maspeth in 1977. Your wife died in 1992. You retired twenty-eight years ago and have lived off a union pension and social security ever since. You have no children or any other living members of your family here or abroad.

(No reaction.)

SOKOLOW *(cont'd)*. Would you like to know why the United States government is interested in you? Would you like to know why I'm here? We frown on people coming into this country and lying on their immigration application.

(No reaction.)

SOKOLOW *(cont'd)*. Did you hear me? I said you *lied* on your original application to immigrate to the United States.

(No reaction.)

SOKOLOW *(cont'd)*. You said to the arresting officers, "Why are you arresting me? I am not a Jew." What did you mean by that?

(No reaction.)

SOKOLOW (*cont'd*). Do you want an attorney?

KOZLOWSKI. I want to go home.

SOKOLOW. As long as I'm working your case, that will never happen.

KOZLOWSKI. *Spierdalaj.*

SOKOLOW (*in English*). No, Mister Kozlowski, you go fuck yourself.

(Knock on the door.

She picks up her briefcase and exits.

Lights out.

Lights up on the detective room.)

SCENE 3

(SOKOLOW opens and closes the door finding HOOPER and NAPOLI.)

NAPOLI. This is Danielle Hooper.

(SOKOLOW extends her hand, and HOOPER takes it.)

SOKOLOW. I've read your articles. The one in *The Atlantic* on the NFL protests, I shared among my colleagues. I'm Sonia Sokolow.

HOOPER. Yes and thank you. You probably don't remember, but we met before.

SOKOLOW. But I do remember. I gave a talk at Columbia University about five years ago on human rights in the 20th century. When I was done, you introduced yourself. You were Doctor Kramer's student.

HOOPER. Yes. I studied with Elliot at Columbia. It was at his suggestion that I am writing the book I'm working on now. He was my mentor when I was at Columbia and after that as well.

SOKOLOW. I heard his lecture, "Crimes Against Humanity," that he gave at the UN. I've read just about everything he's written. He was a brilliant and dedicated man. I was sorry to read about his passing and I was very sorry that I had to miss his memorial. (*Then.*) Why did you go see Kozlowski this morning? (*Off her look.*) You have nothing to worry about. I have no interest in your sources if they have no relation to this case. (*To OFFICER NAPOLI.*) Is that OK with you?

NAPOLI. You're running this investigation.

HOOPER. I wanted to do an interview with him for my book.

SOKOLOW. What is your book about?

HOOPER. I am trying to draw a comparison between prisoners of Nazi concentration camps who became *kapos* and the incarceration of African Americans.

SOKOLOW. Oh? How so?

HOOPER. When people become victims of horrendous circumstances, if they survive, they, and their descendants, *can* become perpetrators.

(SOKOLOW does NOT respond.)

HOOPER. I just found out that Kozlowski is dying, and I wanted to get an in-person interview with him before that happened. He may very well be the last one alive.

SOKOLOW. He's dying?

NAPOLI. He's got to be ninety. No big surprise there.

HOOPER. He was recently diagnosed with stage four lung cancer.