

LADY OF ARROWS
A New Odyssey

A play in two acts for three actors

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Cast of Characters

Olga Stambolis:

A woman in her mid-fifties at the time the play is set (1960). She is content to be living in a little room at the back of her daughter's house in Sydney, Australia. Fifteen years before the setting of the play she was a resistance fighter and spy for the British in Greece. She feels guilt at having left her children to go to Greece. She had returned to Australia in 1952, eight years before the setting of the play. She once was stylish, dressing the mode of 1950s Europe, but her years in Sydney have led to her to dress more like the local women. Her dresses are floral and plain. Nevertheless, she is always well groomed, even in the seclusion of her own room. Her one concession to style is her hair which is blonded and is worn short and permed, again in the European style. She always wears shoes and stockings. She grieves for the loss of her baby son, Christopher, who died in Greece in 1929. This death shattered her marriage and caused her great guilt even thirty years later. As well as a woman in her mid-fifties, at various times in the play she is played as a child (in the palace scene), a teen (as an actor), a young mother, and as a woman in her thirties (during the war years).

Actor 2 (female) plays:

Nellie:

Olga's eldest daughter, born 1922. Has not forgiven Olga for leaving her father and moving to Greece. A shy woman who observes. She expresses herself in letters, in contrast to Freda, who says what she thinks openly.

Freda Bayss: Olga's second daughter, born 1924. Played as an adult of 36 at the start of the play. Considers herself the sensible and responsible adult of the family. Takes Olga in after Olga's return to Australia in 1952. Olga still lives there as the play opens.

Young Freda: Freda as a ten-year-old. Always fighting with her sister Nellie. She loves her sister but is jealous of her father's affection for Nellie. Is much more forthright than Nellie, and a little overconfident.

Anna: Olga's sister. May have betrayed Olga to the Greek authorities. Can be charming, but is a victim of her mother, who wants to use Olga to gain wealth.

Lela Carayannis: Resistance hero. Founder of the Bouboulina cell which rescued stranded Allied fighters. Captured and killed by the Germans just before the war ended. Olga works in her cell.

Princess Irene: The Queen of Greece's granddaughter. Ten years old in 1914 (the same age as Olga). She teases the young Olga about her parentage.

Mother Hadjidaki: Olga's foster mother. Alexandria seamstress. Kind and liberal thinking woman who makes clothes for the Greek royal family. Introduces the young Olga to the wider world and encourages her to act, go to university and see the world.

Greek Soldier: A male soldier of the Metaxas government. A Greek version of the German brownshirts. Fascist and bullying.

Jean: Local Pyrmont girl only six years older than Nellie. Acts as mother to Olga's children. Is caring and thoughtful. Becomes Michael's second

wife and has two sons to him. She thinks Olga is dead, and is horrified when she discovers Olga is alive (but doesn't try to hide the fact). Has sympathy for Olga, and ironically, is Olga's greatest comforter in the play.

2nd British Officer: British Lieutenant. Is junior to 1st British Officer. Recruits civilians for special operations in Greece. Supports Olga as a potential recruit. More worldly than 1st British Officer.

2nd Jailer: Is Greek. Is kinder than the first jailer.

2nd German Officer: Interrogator. Plans method to trap Olga in the interrogation.

Maria: An inmate in Averoff prison.

2nd Australian soldier: Soldier rescued by Olga. In Cairo.

4th Australian soldier: Soldier rescued by Olga. In Cairo.

Peasant woman: Her husband was shot after being betrayed by a Greek man.

Mrs Mavromati: Olga's cynical and opportunistic birth mother.

Various offstage voices

Actor 3 (male) plays:

Male Actor: Plays a herald in an Alexandria play. May overact.

Stavros: A fellow Greek resistance operative who works with Olga on her first assignment. He may have loved Olga during the war, and keeps a shrine to her in his Greek boatshed after the war. He also keeps her diary, and his death in 1960 leads to the events of the play.

Young Nellie:	Nellie as an eleven-year old. Always fighting with her sister Freda. She loves her sister and bears Freda's jealousy over her father's affection. She is a quiet girl in contrast to Freda's forthrightness.
Michael (Stambolis):	Olga's husband. Born 1890. Left Greece in 1906 to work in San Francisco after the earthquake. Married Olga in Alexandria in 1921. Came with her to Australia in 1922 and stayed. He married Jean after having Olga declared dead during the war. Gentle with gambling issues. Died 1952.
Demetrius:	Stavros' brother. Executed by Metaxas brownshirts before the war.
1st British Officer:	Is a British Major. Is the senior recruiter for special operations in Greece. Is senior to 2nd British Officer. Cynical and disparaging attitude towards Greeks & Australians.
Greek Radio Announcer:	Greek presenter. Is terse and pro-German.
1st German Officer:	Interrogator who tries to trick Olga. Uses a mixture of calmness and subterfuge in the interrogation.
1 st Jailer:	Is Greek. Less sympathetic than 2 nd jailer.
Stephanie:	An inmate in Averoff prison.
German Man:	German civilian working with the Nazis in Athens. Administrator. Tries to woo Olga. Olga tries to use him. Is smarter than he looks. Knows Olga is a spy and protects her.
Ragged Greek man:	A starving man in the famine. His daughter has died, but maintains a dignity.
1st Australian soldier:	Soldier rescued by Olga. In Cairo.

3rd Australian soldier:	Soldier rescued by Olga. In Cairo.
Gestapo Officer:	Black market trader. Believes in German superiority over the Greeks, but values the profit in the black market ahead of his national pride.
Peasant:	Collaborator.
Mrs Mavromati's son:	Olga's brother. As much of a cynical user as his mother. A cowardly bully.
Bill Luckett	Australian pilot rescued by Olga and Stavros.
Various offstage voices	

ACT 1

Scene 1

SETTING:

Action opens in a small add-on bedroom circa 1950s with a single bed and a small table. A package, the size of a large manuscript is on the table with a letter perched on it. Text on Screen may be projected on a wall behind or to the side.

(Light comes up to show)

TEXT TO BE PROJECTED

"And if some god batters me far out on the wine-blue water, I will endure it. For already I have suffered much and done much hard work on the waves and in the fighting."

AT RISE:

Light comes up several times. At first light OLGA STAMBOLIS is shown sitting in the chair, facing the table with the package and letter on it. The second time, the letter is in her hands, still looking at the package. The third time, she is knitting, her eye on the package as she speaks. She obviously has trepidation about the package and letter.

OLGA

(To audience.)

It's a shame people don't knit as much as they used to. You can avoid doing a lot of things by knitting. My foster mother used to say that when things get too hard, then take a little

time, knit something. It gives you time to think, and you might even make something nice. And if you make something that's awful, give it to someone you don't like. I'm not really knitting to think though. I'm knitting because of that.

(Indicates package on the table.)

That. It's taken twenty years to get here. I wish it hadn't come at all. Everything was fine. I haven't had to remember. I've been too busy with my girls. I've had grandchildren to mind. What's done is done. I've been machine gunned in the leg.. it took off my varicose vein. I've still got shrapnel in my arm.. see.. I've been interrogated by the Gestapo. I've had a gun in my face. And this scares me.

Do you like my room? I know it's small. But believe me, I've had smaller. My Freda set this up for me. She and Leo live in the front. The Greek club is just down the road. The beach is just down that way. Bondi beach. Not that I go there. Too much sun and sand getting in everything. Funny. I loved the beach as a girl. In those days we wore stockings and shoes on the sand. We were a scene, the girls and me in Alexandria. The Alexandria in Egypt, not the one down the road where the rich Greeks and their rich wives live so they can be near the university, so their rich kids can study medicine. I mean the real Alexandria. We made such a scene on the beach. We'd take over, flirting with the good Muslim boys. Never more than flirting. They were good Muslim boys. Leo built this room for me when I came back from Greece. That would've been.. I suppose.. 8 years ago. March 1952. 1952. I was away for sixteen years. I never thought about that before. Sixteen years. You go from being a young woman to a grandmother. And your daughters.. they go from being little girls to being mothers themselves.

VOICE OF FREDA

Mum! Dinner's nearly ready.

OLGA

Coming dear.

(To audience.)

I told you she looks after me. She's always asking me questions though.. and always at the wrong time. 'Is it true you blew a man's head off with a shotgun', 'Did you really stab a German and he bled to death all over you?' Where do you

think she asks me? At the dinner table. We're eating our meatballs. So what do I do? I tell them. Then everyone turns green. Little George even vomited into his soup once. Endaxi, maybe I go into too much detail. They asked. But there is one question that I can't answer. Won't answer. The one they don't really want to know the answer to: 'Why did you leave us? Why did you go to Greece when we needed you the most?' Everyone asks. Even if they don't ask, they ask with their eyes. They even ask in the way they turn their eyes away.

VOICE OF ADULT FREDA

Mum!

OLGA

I know. Dinner's ready. I'm coming.

(Freda enters, panicked.)

FREDA

No. There's a spider on the wall.

OLGA

Fredalakimou are you still scared of spiders? They are so much smaller than you. They are..

OLGA and FREDA (together)

..more scared than you are.

OLGA

(To audience.)

I too was scared as a child. Maybe it was because I was ripped from the breast too early. Maybe. I was shy as well. I was so shy that my foster mother, Mother Hadjidaki, nearly fell down the stairs when I told her I wanted to be a theaterina.. an actress. You see, to live in Alexandria was to be, how do you say, like a rung on a ladder. The married men were at the top. Then came the old men, then the mothers. Then the boys. We girls were somewhere down there with chickens. Unless of course you were a widow. If you were an ugly widow you were at the very bottom. If you were beautiful, you had all these men

fawning and crying over you, desperately in love with your breasts. I was nowhere. My mother had no money, no family name and I had no bosom. Then, that is. I thought that if I could get on stage maybe I could jump a few places. Mother Hadjidaki arranged it somehow. She was very proud that first time I stepped up.

(Light spot comes on. Stage becomes the scene of a play. Sounds of murmuring audience. Young Olga walks to the front, scared and shy. To her left is actor two, playing a slave girl attendant. To her right actor three is a guard.)

The K-king... the K-king..

(Head snaps to the slave girl who gives a prompt, but doesn't hear it properly.)

The King is c-cooking..

(Slave girl and guard both try to prompt.)

Oh. I mean that the King is coming. Coming. Coming, not cooking. The king would have other people doing his cooking for him. I'm sorry.

(Laugh track of audience. Olga stays and bows. Looks at prompt.)

Oh.

(Scurries off. Light fades. Lights come on again and Male Actor comes on stage. It is another play, obviously some time later..)

MALE ACTOR

(To audience, as a herald.)

The Queen is here.

OLGA

(Olga enters, as an ancient Greek queen. A Queen Penelope perhaps.)

Who damns their Queen? Who dares to bring damnation onto this body? Who dares to say, to do, to be such an article? For I am

you and I will do the damning, if there is any to be done. So damn me not, for the damnation shall be your own.

(SFX applause.)

(Back to herself. To audience.)

It's one of the only times in life when a group of people will pay money to be abused, then go away feeling better about life. Theatre!

(Goes to the package on the table. This time she runs her fingers over the string around it.)

YOUNG FREDA

The spider mummy.

OLGA

Ask your father.

YOUNG FREDA

He told me to get you to do it.

OLGA

(While Olga speaks Young Nellie and Freda set homework on table. To audience.)

Michael. Scared of spiders. And him who had lived in San Francisco after the earthquake.. with the rats and the roaches. When he came to Alexandria to ask for me.. first thing he said to me. First words. 'Hello. I run a seafood restaurant in Australia. Will you marry me.' I had to respect that. He put up the restaurant like it was a dowry. It sounded like a very good dowry.. a new life in a new country. A clean country. Clean from the smells and the fears and the habits that come with corruption. I believe he even said you can pick up lumps of gold on the streets. The words of an enchanter.. a charming enchanter. If only he wasn't so old. Thirty-one. Now I see he was not so old.. but he was old to me then.. the child me who saw things like.. hair in the ears, man's breath, three chins. But what charm. He made me feel... When we got to Sydney, his seafood restaurant, ha, it was a fish and chip

shop. But I was seventeen, and he was kind. He was always kind. But I was the one who had to chase the spiders away.

(Young Freda and Nellie (aged 10 and 11) are sitting at a table.)

YOUNG FREDA

So mummy, if twelve times 5 is the same as six by ten, then I don't need to learn the twelve times table. I can just learn the 6 times table and double it..

YOUNG NELLIE

That's cheating, Freda. I had to learn the twelve times table. You're always trying to take short cuts.

YOUNG FREDA

Okay smarty-pants. What's twelve by seven then?

YOUNG NELLIE

Seventy-three.

YOUNG FREDA

That's a lucky guess.

(They exit)

OLGA

(To audience.)

Is it any wonder the shop never made any money. The customers walked away with more than they came in with. Michael didn't do any books. For eleven years. When the tax people came by.. it was 1929 I think.. he managed to get them on side by giving them free food. And by blaming the depression. He was still blaming the depression in 1936. I don't know how, but it always worked. The tax men always apologised for bothering him and left, eating our saveloys. Freda bought a ledger after that and started listing things. But her arithmetic was so bad that she made us look like millionaires. We had to burn the ledger before anybody saw it.

(Stavros picks it up. This is the past.. 1942.)

STAVROS

If the Gestapo found this.. what is it.. a diary.. you will be dead. You've got to burn it.

OLGA

(Taking the diary.)

This is for my daughter. My oldest. Nellie. She needs to know why I'm here. She doesn't know if I'm dead or alive.

STAVROS

How could you be so stupid?

OLGA

Stavros, please. I'm not stupid. There's nothing in it about our operations.

STAVROS

I'd hope not. If there was, we'd kill you ourselves. Destroy it.

OLGA

(Nods. To audience.)

I didn't destroy it. I had to have it. It was my life. All the war. All the killing. I needed to have something so Nellie would know I wasn't wasting my life. That I might've been away from her, but it was for a good reason.. that I was doing something. The resistance wouldn't let me send letters to Australia. No telegram. They said I was too deep in the group, and the Germans were too smart. They even tried to flatter me that I was too important to be caught. This diary was my chat every night with Nellie. Even if she didn't know it existed.

STAVROS

If they catch you, what will become of your children?

OLGA

They are just fine in Australia.

STAVROS

They will blame themselves if you die.

OLGA

(To audience.)

They said that again and again. And it worked. It kept me smart. I'd see a Nazi touching a girl, and the only thing that stopped me picking up a rock and cracking his head open were my children. To crack his head would lose them their mother. Christopher. My little Christopher.

What is it that makes a favourite? Chubby little legs? Michael squeezed Christopher's legs.. kissed them.. loved them. He said they were the legs of his little Odysseus. My baby.

(Fade to black)

ACT 1

Scene 2

TEXT ON SCREEN:

*"Was it a long sickness, or did
Artemis of the arrows come upon you
with her painless shafts.." (The
Odyssey VI, 172)*

*(Light comes up to show Olga, her fingers are on the package
on the table, just touching it. The letter is in her hand. She
reads.)*

OLGA

August 17th, 1959. Dear Mrs Stam. I am sorry to tell you that
my father Stavros is dead. He suffered from melancholy for
these many years since the war. Three months ago he succumbed
to the voices and the memories and..

(Olga screws up the letter and tosses it.)

Stavros.

(Stavros enters beyond the grave.)

STAVROS

Fifteen years, and now you summon me twice in one day.

OLGA

I didn't want to think about it.

STAVROS

So much to think about. Once you start..

OLGA

..you won't be able to stop. Was it all so bad that you had to
do this to yourself?

STAVROS

We did kill a lot of people.

OLGA

We saved a lot of people too.

STAVROS

A lot of friends died.

OLGA

People we loved.

STAVROS

They talk about the glory of battle.

OLGA

Yes. It's not quite like how Homer wrote it.

STAVROS

No. It was exactly how Homer wrote it.

OLGA

He was obsessed with spearing and stabbing.

STAVROS

Odysseus. He was a warrior with a man's failings.

OLGA

The Sirens you mean?

STAVROS

They were very good Sirens.

OLGA

Traitors.

STAVROS

People just trying to live.

OLGA

Death would be better. Is death better?

(Waits.)

Stavros?

(Lights go down. Light comes up suddenly in 1914. Greek Princess Irene (pronounced eye-REE-nee) comes on carrying an expensive doll and a cheap doll. She gives the cheap doll to Olga. They sit on the floor with their dolls.)

OLGA

Stella, this is Princess Irene. She lives in this palace with the king and queen. Princess Irene, this is Stella. She's a boat girl. She's been all over the world. She saw three sunrises in one day once. She was given to me by a real pirate who came to Alexandria. My mother knew him.

PRINCESS IRENE

You're a liar Olga Hadjidaki. There are no such things as pirates.

OLGA

There are. I saw him. I am NOT a liar. Look. She was patched up by the ship's cook when her arm fell off. See that? My mother said that's a pirate's work. And she should know. She's

been a seamstress all her life. Not like you. Living in the palace. My mother..

PRINCESS IRENE

She is not your mother. You were given away.

OLGA

Why are you saying that? She is my mother. She is my mother.

PRINCESS IRENE

My mother says..

OLGA

Well your mother is wrong. I don't care who she is. She is wrong.

MOTHER HADJIDAKI'S VOICE

Okay Olga. Get your doll. I've finished fitting the queen. Say goodbye to the princess, we have to hurry or we'll miss the boat.

OLGA

(To the princess.)

She is my mother.

(Now as an adult. To audience.)

But she wasn't. The princess was right. My mother let me go at birth. I wasn't the only one. Girls were being given away like yesterday's fish. I'm not complaining. Mother Hadjidaki was a wonderful foster mother. She would let me sit in her window and see everything of Alexandria. And there was a lot to see. The priest going into the fancy woman's house. Every Tuesday night. The policeman stealing the beggar's coins. And I saw the governor, the ugliest man in the world.. holes on his face.. he had come to look at the Greek quarter. Except I could see his hand, right up the behind of his secretary. She

was carrying his briefcases and couldn't swat him off. I doubt she would've anyway. He was the governor. His wife was walking in front and didn't see. The governor died soon after. Maybe she did see. I remember one man offered me a sweet to get me to come out, but Mother Hadjidaki ran out and cut him on the face with a bread knife. He was a big man too. She stood in front of him, this far from his bloody face, daring him to fight back. That's a mother. I loved her as my mother. I adored her and felt warm with her. But she wasn't my mother.

(Michael enters. It is 1929 Sydney)

OLGA

Michael read this.

(Hands him a letter)

MICHAEL

(Reads.)

September 15th, 1929. Olga we have been trying to find you for..

(To Olga)

My darling. You should let this be. It doesn't matter who your mother was.

OLGA

But Michael who am I?

MICHAEL

They let you go.

OLGA

I need to know my family.

MICHAEL

We are your family. Nellie and Freda and Tina and Nicky. And baby Christopher. Those people who gave you away, they will never be your family. You were a baby. An hour old.

OLGA

Understand. I look at my girls' hands and I see my hands. Yet I don't know where my hands come from. If this family in Athens is my family, if this old woman bore me, if this Anna (*waves a letter*) is my sister, then I can..

MICHAEL

You were abandoned because they couldn't afford you or didn't want you. That's all you need to know.

OLGA

Maybe I don't need answers to questions. Maybe I just need to breathe the same air they breathe. That sounds stupid, doesn't it?

MICHAEL

Like breathing in the air of your child.

OLGA

Yes. Exactly like that.

MICHAEL

Go find your family. Go breathe with them.

OLGA

(As she talks, Olga puts on a long cloth coat, hat and a handbag.)

So it was decided. I was still feeding Christopher, so he would come with me. And Nellie.. to help with the baby. At the dock at Circular Quay there were tears. Mainly from Freda, who was jealous that it wasn't her coming. She probably wouldn't have cried if she knew what a boat trip was like in 1929.

Weeks of vomit and theft. Weeks of the smell of bilge and oil. Weeks of the tiny cabin with a floor that was always wet. Nellie loved every second. She spent all day exploring the boat, and all the evening making something, turned away from me so I couldn't see. Seven years old and she had her first secret. It wasn't till we were packing to get off that she showed me. She had made a little cloth dog.. a present for her new cousins. One eye too low.. straw stuffing coming through the arm.. only one ear because she didn't have enough cloth to make two.. the little stitch for the mouth upside down so it looked angry. It was the most beautiful thing I had ever seen.

(She has a piece of paper in one hand. In her other she is cradling a bundle that is obviously a baby. Nellie walking behind her. She looks back over her shoulder talking brightly, excitedly to Nellie.)

This is the oldest part of Athens, Nellilaki. The Ancients lived here, then the Romans, and the Turks. I think the Italians had this place for a while too. See that? That's a column that held up a temple thousands of years ago. You don't see things like that in Australia. Is that bag too heavy for you? I told you to leave it with the man at the boat. He said he'd bring it for you.

NELLIE

It's got all my precious things in there.

OLGA

What things? There can't be anything important that I couldn't have put in my handbag. No damage done. Come now Nellie. We're nearly there. You're going to meet your grandmother. You've never had a grandmother before.

NELLIE

I'm scared mummy.

OLGA

Of course. I am too. The last time I saw these people was when I was a baby. Like Christopher. Even younger.

(Checks paper in her hand.)

It should be around here. Thirty-five. Thirty-eight. Thirty-two? For a people who invented arithmetic.. Thirty-nine. I think this is it.

(Kneels and starts preening Nellie.)

There. Oraio. Beautiful. You ready?

(Goes up to door and knocks. Light fades.)

(Light comes up and Olga is sitting on the end of the bed. To audience.)

OLGA

Well what could I expect? A great reunion? A homecoming feasting? A village turnout? Well, actually yes. I wanted all that. We go in and there's an old woman on a sofa, all smiles too. We barely said hello when the questions started:

MRS MAVROMATI

How big is your husband's restaurant?

MRS MAVROMATI'S SON

How many homes do you own?

MRS MAVROMATI

Did you bring us any money?

MRS MAVROMATI'S SON

Where are the gifts?

MRS MAVROMATI

When can you bring us to Australia?

OLGA

(To audience.)

Michael and all his bragging about his seafood restaurant. Not a baby coo for Christopher. And Nellie. Her precious little cloth dog. She gave it to her cousin, a little girl. The cousin held it up to the old woman, who asked, no more smiles now, mind you..

MRS MAVROMATI

Is that all you've got for us?

OLGA

(To audience.)

Is that all you're got for us. If they had looked at Nellie's face, they would've seen a little girl hurt like no little girl should be hurt. You know what I did? Nothing. I did nothing. I ached and did nothing. Later I held Nellie and told her that these were poor people, and poor people, when they are disappointed, say silly things, but at that moment when it mattered, I did nothing, and that is a shame I will always have.

(Michael speaks beyond the grave. In the shadows)

MICHAEL

Don't forget Christopher.

OLGA

How could I forget Christopher?

MICHAEL

Christopher my darling boy.

OLGA

Christopher my darling boy.
(Light fades.)

ACT 1

Scene 3

(At lights up, Olga is in the 1960 bedroom. She crosses stage right to the table. Puts the diary in the original position and sits in the chair. She has the scrunched-up letter in her hand and is flattening it out. She reads..)

OLGA

Mrs Stam. I know you and my father Stavros were close in the war and fought many battles together. You must know that my mother resented this, and would not have your name spoken in the house. After he died, me and my mother went to his boat shed. He never let us go in it when he was alive. Inside was like a memorial to the war, the resistance. And you. There was a photograph of you pinned on the wall. In the cabinet were the letters you wrote him over the years. Don't worry. I hid them from my mother, and I didn't read them. I also found this package with your name on it. I didn't open it either. My mother is selling the shed and burning everything. I am sending the package to the address on your last letter to my father. Please don't reply in case my mother reads it. Steven Dementopoulos.

(To audience.)

So Stavros remembered me. Dementopoulos. I always thought it was a grand name for a quiet man, a kind man who was pushed into the resistance. His brother Demetrius was the loud one. Too loud.

GREEK SOLDIER

Demetrius Dementopoulos?

DEMETRIUS

Yes, my well feathered.. and well-armed.. fascist friend, I am Demetrius Dementopoulos.

GREEK SOLDIER

Demetrius Dementopoulos the communist writer?

DEMETRIUS

I see. I write for my fellow man. My fellow Greek like you. My politics makes no matter. And what right..

(Soldier shoots Demetrius. Sound of gunshot).

OLGA

One bullet. A Greek bullet. Kills one and ruins another. Stavros never smiled again. Or that was the legend. I never saw him smile. We fought and killed Nazis. We buried friends. We saved and we killed, and did it alone. We slept in the snow. It felt like we were the only people in the world. We might have loved each other.

(Stavros enters. It is 1942)

STAVROS

We can never be lovers, you know that.

OLGA

I know it. But why do you say it?

STAVROS

Because we have seen too much of the bad things. We would just remind each other of them. And I have a wife.

OLGA

And I have a husband.

STAVROS

Yes.

OLGA

I have a husband but not a marriage.

STAVROS

Was it the baby?

OLGA

My Christopher.

STAVROS

Christopher brought us together.

OLGA

Never say his name again.

STAVROS

Your baby then brought us together.

OLGA

Maybe, yes. Christopher's death brought us together.

(Stavros exits.)

Stavros? You have a way of disappearing.

(To audience.)

Christopher died. Children died all the time in those days before the war. I was lucky. My babies were all healthy. And he was the healthiest, strongest little boy. The boy who should not have died. It was no accident. It was no disease.

(Michael appears beyond the grave.)

MICHAEL

If you hadn't gone to Greece. If you hadn't had this mania about finding your family..

OLGA

You are not going to blame me, husband. It could've happened anywhere. It could've happened in Ultimo.

MICHAEL

You call yourself a mother.

OLGA

(To audience.)

He was just grieving. Why is it that we don't see that when it's happening. All we see is the anger and the accusation. I was grieving too.

I buried my baby and came back to Australia. It was 1932. I thought if we got on with our lives we would start to get better. We sleep in the same bed. We get up at the same time, we eat in the same chairs, work side by side at the cookers, help the children with their homework. And we still made a great team. But it was broken. We had always touched, brushed a hand, covered in flour or fish grease. I loved the touching. But after I came back he never touched me once. You know how impossible it was in a small shop full of children not to touch. He managed it. I cried myself to sleep and he would stay as far away in that little bed as he could. One night he cried too, for what we once had maybe. I touched his face. He gave me one look that said never touch me again.

That look. Thirty years on and I still feel it to my bones. Can a life break with one look?

MICHAEL

Where are the children?

OLGA

(To audience.)

I had no intention to do anything. I just did it. I led the children to the truck, all in the seat next to me. They all

looked so beautiful. Michael ran alongside the truck down Harris Street shouting at me to stop. He said it would get better, that we were a family. I drove on. There was this cliff that dropped a long way down onto the rail line. I am not evil. When you are at this place, evil doesn't come into it. Michael kept chasing us. I don't think he ever ran in his life. But he ran that day. I had to slow the truck to turn into that last road and he caught us up again. He reached through the window and tried to grab my arm, the first time he had touched me since I got back. He let go. There he was on the kickboard, his eyes on mine. A lifetime passes in five seconds. I stopped the truck. He opened the door and I moved over. He drove us back. Jean was in the shop, the woman who wanted to be me. She was the only one who touched me.

JEAN

Are you all right love?

OLGA

(To audience.)

Never have words been spoken that were so kind.

JEAN

Go up and have a rest. I'll bring you some tea.

OLGA

(To audience.)

And she did. She lingered. Sat on the bed.

JEAN

You wouldn't of done it. When it comes down to it, you wouldn't of done it.

OLGA

(To audience.)

She stayed with me all night, a hand's reach away in the chair, just like a nurse over a dying patient. She was like that with the children too. I think she even looked after Michael while I was away with Nellie and Christopher. Looked after him very well. I didn't care about that. I think I didn't. She wanted to be awake for me, but it was a long day. Her head dropped and she snored like a man. I looked at her truly for the first time. Just a slip of a girl. Only a few years older than Nellie but looked like she'd lived a whole life. She had probably been born that way. Her freckly red skin, her pudgy arms. Her fingers already had creases. But she would never drive the children to the Cyclops' cave. She would never make Michael run along a road terrified. She would love him. She would love them all. Maybe even love him back to happiness and forgetting. If I wasn't there. And I couldn't be there anymore. I was broken. At three in the morning she was still there, still snoring. I kissed my sleeping girls and left. I thought maybe I could come back in a few months. But it would be sixteen years before I would see them again.

(SFX: Abrasive sound of war. Two British officers in uniform enter.)

1ST BRITISH OFFICER

An Australian Greek? Why would she want to help the British war effort?

2ND BRITISH OFFICER

That's why she's perfect. She's a naturalised Australian, so she's British. She left her family in Australia, so if they catch her, they can't threaten her husband or children.

1ST BRITISH OFFICER'S VOICE

You place a lot of store in her coming from Australia. She's probably caught the Australian laziness. What do they call it in Australia? Walkaround?

2ND BRITISH OFFICER

Walkabout, I think the term is.

1ST BRITISH OFFICER

An Australian woman who goes walkaround is not the sort of person we need. And what use would a Greek be in saving Greece?

2ND BRITISH OFFICER

She has the skills we need. She speaks German.

1ST BRITISH OFFICER

That's suspicious in itself.

2ND BRITISH OFFICER

She also speaks Egyptian, French and Italian. So, if she is a partisan based on language, she's on everyone's side.

1ST BRITISH OFFICER

Parents?

2ND BRITISH OFFICER

Even that works for us. No natural parents that we know of. No family to be used against her. Brought up by a seamstress in Egypt. She spent a lot of time with the Greek royal children while her foster mother made dresses for the Queen.

1ST BRITISH OFFICER

A royalist orphan. That's more like it.

2ND BRITISH OFFICER

And she did some training as an actress. Not much. Some amateur plays in Egypt. And in Sydney. She even used her children in some of them.

1ST BRITISH OFFICER

Let's make the approach. But be careful. Some things are too good to be true.

OLGA

(To audience.)

I meant it. Each month in Greece was going to be the last. Then something would happen. A governess job with an ambassador. Or a lease on a good apartment. Or a letter from home that told me they were doing very well without me. The invasion by Italy. Then the real invasion. By Germany. When that happened, I stayed to help the ambassador with his children, until he had to go. I was like the swallow in the Happy Prince. Just stayed too long. No-one could get out. Then a British man flirted with me in a café..

1ST BRITISH OFFICER

We won't be drinking in cafes soon.

OLGA

Will they ban coffee?

1ST BRITISH OFFICER

People just won't want to come out.

OLGA

You just try to stop Greeks having their coffees.

1ST BRITISH OFFICER

The Nazis will do whatever they want.

OLGA

They say they will be friendly.

1ST BRITISH OFFICER

You've lived in Egypt in the Great War. You know what promises mean..

OLGA

How did you know I lived in Egypt?

1ST BRITISH OFFICER

Olga Stambolis, we know everything about you.

OLGA

Who knows everything about me? What are you talking about?

1ST BRITISH OFFICER

You helped the resistance against the Italians last year.

OLGA

I didn't do much. Just passed on messages.

1ST BRITISH OFFICER

We know you can do more. We need resourceful people like you.

OLGA

I need to get back to my family.

1ST BRITISH OFFICER

Help us, and we will get you out of Greece and back to Australia.

OLGA

(To audience.)

It was a lie, but I didn't know that then. So I said yes. Things moved fast. They introduced me to Lela right there in the cafe. She had been waiting at the next table for his signal. This beautiful tall powerful woman who was born to fight. Her great-grandmother fought the Turks a hundred years ago. In her memory Lela had started a cell to help rescue trapped pilots.

(Lela sits at the table. She is halfway through a story.)

LELA

.. and he didn't do anything. He and his cousin were passing through a little town up in the north and there were all these Germans bashing on doors, pulling men out onto the street. The cousin ran and hid.

OLGA

Very sensible.

LELA

But he didn't run. He stayed to ask these Germans what they were doing in Greece.

OLGA

Brave.

LELA

No. Stupid. A German soldier. Not an officer mind, but a soldier, shot him in the face. In the face. In the face. Just for asking a question.

OLGA

As I said, brave.

LELA

He is a brave corpse. They killed all the men in that village. Someone had fired a gun at the troops as they had walked past, so they killed all of them. Every single one of them. That is why we fight.

OLGA

(To audience.)

It had started as a gentleman's invasion. The Germans respected the Greek fighters. The Greeks fought hard and

clean. They were like a line of bricks. But the Germans just kept adding more and more soldiers and the line had to crumble. Greece surrendered, and that was it for the respect of the Germans.

(To Lela.)

I have never heard of such a thing.

LELA

Will you join us?

OLGA

What can I do? I'm a governess.

LELA

My great-grandmother asked that too. And she then threw out the Turks.

OLGA

I can't use a gun.

LELA

That's easy. It's looking people in the eye as you fire it that's hard.

OLGA

Do you need to look them in eye?

LELA

We have honour, even if they don't.

(The 1st British Officer enters and gives Olga a pitchfork.)

1ST BRITISH OFFICER

This could be the only weapon you will have. You have to know how to use it.

OLGA

What do I do with this. Hay-bale them to death?

(Stabs at the air with it, gingerly at first, trying to work out how to do it.)

2ND BRITISH OFFICER

She seems to be getting the hang of it.

(Her stabbing becomes more definite.)

1ST BRITISH OFFICER

Most of the women are a bit shy about it.

(To audience.)

OLGA

They gave me a codename. 'Olga Stambolis', they said eventually, we have your codename. From now on you will be... 'Olga'. Honestly! How original.

1st BRITISH OFFICER

How is she taking to the guerilla training?

2nd BRITISH OFFICER

Remarkably good. She seems to enjoy it, and has even become a kind of leader of the other recruits.

1st BRITISH OFFICER

We'll try her out. Send her north. Send her on Stavros' next mission.

OLGA

(To audience.)

Plenty of servicemen, British, Australians, New Zealanders got caught behind the lines. The people in the villages hid them, but could only do it for so long. I had to get them through the lines and to boats that would take them out of the country. That meant nights of no sleep and days of slow movement through passes and ridges. They had taught us how to move quietly and not be seen. But that wasn't with German patrols around you.

STAVROS

The cave's just over the hill. Keep low.

(Gunshots and torch lights.)

This way.

(He leads Olga, both hunching, looking around.)

Just a little further.

OLGA

You said that half an hour ago, Stavros.

STAVROS

Here, what you said half an hour ago doesn't mean much. Quiet!

(Stavros and Olga listen as footsteps pass them)

It will be safe now.

OLGA

In half an hour will you still be right?

(Pause. Whispering urgently.)

Stavros. Where are you?

(Gunfire. Olga drops to the stage and covers her head.)

Damn this. Alone in a nest of Germans. I should've stayed in Michael's damned fish shop.

1st BRITISH OFFICER'S VOICE

Remember what we said in the training. The pitchfork.

OLGA

The pitchfork being a match for a lugar?

1st BRITISH OFFICER'S VOICE

If in the right hands.

OLGA

But I don't have a pitchfork. And it would be useful if you were here to help me.

1st BRITISH OFFICER'S VOICE

It's not the pitchfork. Or me. They have good weapons and tailored uniforms. But they are in your country. I'd bet on a Greek with a pitchfork every time.

OLGA

(To audience.)

Stavros had gone quiet because a patrol walked right onto him. We joined up again after they had passed, and made it through the assignment. We saved an Australian man named Bill. We led him across roads after German patrols had gone through. We got him to the coast and onto a boat. It was tight, but we got there. Then home. Walking back to Athens, Stavros and me, like a husband and wife. Two days it took. Did I expect a hero's welcome?

(Olga and Lela are back in the café)

LELA

So you did it. Very good. Now, you've got to do three this time. On your own.

OLGA

Three? Isn't that against the rules, Lela? Rescue one at a time. Slowly. Safely. Even if it means leaving some to be caught.

LELA

These ones are too important. They are New Zealanders. They worked with a sabotage team near Lamia. If any of them are caught, the northern cell is done. So it's all three. Together.

OLGA

Endaxi. Okay. If it has to..

LELA

And you need to get them from Karpenisi.

OLGA

Karpenisi? That must be a hundred miles from Athens.

LELA

No. It's 160 miles

OLGA

Do you have papers for the roadblocks?

LELA

No. You can't use the main roads. They are looking for our patrols. You will have to go across country. By foot. We might be able to arrange a donkey for some of it.

OLGA

More wonderful by the moment.

LELA

Get them, Olga. And you can't get caught.

OLGA

(To audience.)

I did this work for months. Weaving between villages and German patrols. The villagers knew they were risking their lives, but they helped us. They gave us their beds, their food. They lied to the Germans for us. It was always close. A wrong word would be death. A traitor or a scared woman would be death. But it never happened. No. It happened once. And that was when I killed for the first time. I was with Stavros. A farmer woman told a patrol about us. We needed to stop the patrol before they could report.

STAVROS

There are two of them. Just under the cliff. One's leaning against their car, smoking, like it's a seaside excursion. The other is taking a piss.

OLGA

Are their weapons out?

STAVROS

They have their pistols, but they're in holsters. Their rifles are leaning against the car. If you take the smoker, I'll get the other. We will have to drop at the same time.

OLGA

(To audience.)

My first kill. I didn't have the luxury of firing a rifle from 200 yards. This was close and slow and awful. A knife in the back of a German who was too young to be there. Don't listen to what people say. They don't die on the spot. Life oozes out and they have all these questions in their eyes. His hand reached behind him and tried to scratch where the knife went in. His face could've been my Nicky's. He was losing the life that his mother and his father adored. My life would never be the same. Stavros called out to drag him back and put the body in the boot of the car. I did, and my new life began.

(Lights rise on the rear of the stage. The two British officers have been watching Olga).

2ND BRITISH OFFICER

She seems to have no nerves. No hesitation. Not even the first-time. Stavros said she did what she had to do and there was nothing in her face.

1ST BRITISH OFFICER

Psychotic murderers have those traits too.

2ND BRITISH OFFICER

Psychotics make the perfect spies. But there's nothing in her background to suggest she's mad.

1ST BRITISH OFFICER

So a woman who acts as a psychotic, but isn't. Legs eleven, Bingo. And she has nice legs. For a woman with five children.

2ND BRITISH OFFICER

Four children. One died remember.

1ST BRITISH OFFICER

Yes, in terrible circumstances. I hope that hasn't damaged her.

2ND BRITISH OFFICER

How could it not.

1ST BRITISH OFFICER

Death. There are two types of people in the world. Those who understand death. And those who can't.

(1st British Officer becomes 1st German Officer. He addresses the audience as if they are to witness the execution. 2nd British Officer becomes German firing squad soldier with rifle.)

1st GERMAN OFFICER

These men will be executed in reprisal for the murder of two German soldiers near Glyfadia by unknown attackers. Remember the fates of these men. Squad. Ready. Fire.

(SFX firing)

OLGA

(To audience.)

I went to one of those executions once. The Germans make the wives watch. Why would they do that? I did hear one story where it didn't work out so well for the Germans. It was on Crete. All the village men were herded into the square to be shot. What the Germans didn't know was that Australian and New Zealand sharpshooters were waiting up in the mountain ridge, maybe two miles away. The German officer ordered his men to raise their weapons, and on that order, the men in the mountains fired down. Every one hit their target. To the people in the square it must have been something to see. All the Germans dropping to the ground. The people watching say it was dead quiet... because the sound of the shots didn't reach the square until after the Germans fell. There were smiles that day in that village. They all knew there would be more retribution, but that day the Greeks knew they weren't alone. The soldiers of the British Empire were with them, and the villagers loved them for it. They still do.

(Enter adult Nellie.)

NELLIE

How do you live with yourself, mum? All this killing.

OLGA

It's easy when it's you or them, Nellie.

NELLIE

Why didn't you come home?

(Nellie leaves.)

OLGA

(To audience.)

How do you tell your children? I knew that in Australia, all the way over here, my girls were safe. I couldn't know Nellie was in Darwin. Michael had sent her up there to be with a cousin. He thought she'd be safer there. There. Across from New Guinea. Not far from Singapore. Not far from the Japanese who I couldn't know were planning bombing raids. No, I never thought she would be so close to danger. I never thought I would be so close to danger.

1ST GERMAN OFFICER

Olga Stambolis, you are under arrest.

(Drop to black.)

END OF ACT ONE

ACT 2

Scene 1

(Light comes up showing the bars across the room. Olga is on the bed. She jumps awake.)

OLGA

Where am I? Where the hell am I? Nellie? Where am I..

2nd JAILER'S VOICE

She wants to know where she is.

1st JAILER'S VOICE

Wait for when she remembers.

2nd JAILER'S VOICE

It's always the same. Poor things.

OLGA

My God. No.

1st JAILER'S VOICE

She's remembered. *(laughs)*

OLGA

(To audience.)

Averoff Prison. On the north road out of Athens. But it could've been anywhere. They put all the resistance fighters in there. Men and women. Separately of course. And under the ground. You saw no daylight. Here, the guards were the kings of the hour. They decided when you saw light. It could have been midnight when they turned the lights on so you and the

rats could start your day. One to a cell. Not even the grace of bars between cells so we could look at each other. Mothers and daughters and sisters. It was the cruellest thing. Most of them didn't even do anything against the Nazis. They were picked up by mistake. The good resistance fighters were too smart to get caught. But I got caught. I nearly beat them, but I let them beat me.

(Light goes suddenly bright. Bars disappear. Olga sits upright at a table, staring across it at 1st German Officer. 2nd German Officer waits on the other side of the wall, unseen by Olga.)

OLGA

I don't know what you mean. I don't know any of them. I am a widow. What would I want to do with those rebels. It is hard enough to find food without..

1ST GERMAN OFFICER

So you blame the German nation for your hunger?

OLGA

No. It's the Greeks who can't organise their food. It's just that I have to fight everyone else to get the food before it goes..

1ST GERMAN OFFICER

Are you telling us what you think we want to hear?

OLGA

I am just telling you the truth. I..

1ST GERMAN OFFICER

(Gets up and goes around wall to 2nd German Officer.)

What do you think?

2ND GERMAN OFFICER

I think she's what she appears to be. A stupid washer woman who is scared of everything.

1ST GERMAN OFFICER

Could be, but if she's who we are looking for, then she would be smart enough to tell us what would make us let her go.

2ND GERMAN OFFICER

Would Olga the spy know German?

1ST GERMAN OFFICER

No. She's still a Greek. They barely know their own language.

2ND GERMAN OFFICER

All right. We know she was at Piraeus on the 2nd. We will ask her if she was there. If she denies it, then we have her.

1ST GERMAN OFFICER

I hope it's her. If it's not, can we say it's her? The colonel will..

(Olga moves over to an imagined wall. Listens.)

2ND GERMAN OFFICER

That's a bright plan. Until the real Olga does something again. Then we will be looking like the lazy fools that we would be. No, we need to know if this is her.

1ST GERMAN OFFICER

So ask her then about Piraeus. If she admits that she was there, then she's just a stupid Greek woman.

(Olga dashes back to her seat, and looks up, her eyes following the 1st German Officer back to the other side of the table.)

OLGA

Please sir. I don't know what I've done.

1ST GERMAN OFFICER

Where were you on the night of the 2nd?

OLGA

The night of the second. I don't know. I don't do well with numbers. What night was it?

1ST GERMAN OFFICER

It was Sunday night. Five days ago. Schnell, schnell.

OLGA

(Starts to say something quickly. Then realises, stops and takes a breath before answering.)

I do not understand. I do not know a Mr. Shell..

1ST GERMAN OFFICER

(More kindly.)

Did you go out that night?

OLGA

A Sunday night you say. On Sundays I go get some herbs for the week. I go down the road to get some from a market garden that a friend has. She doesn't mind me taking some things. I help her with her washing sometimes. So really, it is not stealing. Is that what this is about? I am sorry, but really I am allowed to do it. Did she lay a complaint against me?

1ST GERMAN OFFICER

It was the night that it rained a storm, woman. You wouldn't have gone collecting herbs that night.

OLGA

Rain? Rain. Yes. I remember. I went to Piraeus. I had to take some letters to my friend. She gets her mail sent to my house. I was halfway there when it rained all of a sudden. The bus was leaking and everyone was crowding away from the drips.

1ST GERMAN OFFICER

Greek buses, eh?

OLGA

No, this was French I think. We don't know what's worse, when they don't work, or when they do work. My friend says..

1ST GERMAN OFFICER

Did you get to Piraeus to drop off the letters?

OLGA

I was most of the way there. I had to walk to her house from the bus station. It took ten minutes in the rain. I don't know why I bothered. I should have just gone back home.

1ST GERMAN OFFICER

You must be a good friend to go through all that to deliver some letters.

OLGA

I get so bored in the house. It gives me something to do. And who knows what might be in the letters. Her friend might give me something as a thank you.

2ND GERMAN OFFICER

(As he enters the room.)

So you reached Piraeus? And delivered the letters.

OLGA

She wasn't there. I put them under her door. Was I there after the curfew? Did I break the law? I am sorry. But with the bus running like a billy cart and the weather, it took so long. I didn't get there until late. By time I came home it was later than I..

2ND GERMAN OFFICER

I don't care about the curfew.

OLGA

Thank Jesus for that. I am sorry. I should not use the Lord's name in vain. I understand you Germans are very Christian.

(She makes a Christian cross across her chest. Up down & left to right.)

2ND GERMAN OFFICER

Just get out.

OLGA

(To audience.)

I was freed. I had fooled them. It might sound strange to you, but it was like childbirth. That feeling that you are the only one who has ever done it. And I wanted to rub their stupid German noses on the ground. I walked out of that room and saw the stairs. Today I would not use stairs. I would use the elevator like the German officers. Damned if I was going to scurry down some stairs.

(Walks to the elevator. Presses button.)

It's a stupid protest I know. They take a long time, these Greek elevators. They must drive the Germans crazy. They'd probably have them shot if they could. Here it comes.

(Elevator dings. Door opens. Olga starts to walk in. Two soldiers grab her under the arms and pull her out.)

What is this? I am free. You let me go.

1st GERMAN OFFICER

The Major decided that if you were still in the building, arrest you and take you to the Prison.

OLGA

(To audience.)

They took me downstairs and into the courtyard. There was a truck full of women. Mothers and daughters. Old women too. All going to jail. You know what you think in these times? You think of how they don't have the right to do this. Not to you. Not to your children.

GREEK RADIO ANNOUNCER'S VOICEOVER (RECORDED)

Another seventeen subversive women have been arrested in Athens. They claimed to be simple housewives, but the evidence proves they are vicious women who have posed a danger to your friendly occupying forces and to the good people of Greece. They have been taken to Averoff Prison where they will be interrogated. The security forces warn citizens against trying to contact them or forming any kind of protest. That will in itself be considered subversive and will be dealt with severely.

(The lighting casts the prison bars across her room. Two buckets are at the foot of the bed. A tin cup is on a small table.

She turns to face the cell, her back to the audience.)

1st JAILER

This is your cell. You will keep it clean. You will not talk loudly. You will not draw on the walls. You will not touch the bars. You will not spit. You will not allow your women's needs to soil the sheets, because you will get no more. You have two buckets. One has your water. The other is for your hygienic needs.

OLGA

(To audience.)

Your hygienic needs, he says. They pull me into a dungeon. There are rats and fleas and a bucket for a bathroom, but they are too shy to say shit and piss and honest blood. At least they've given me a bucket. Let me show you through my home. Mailing address: lower lower ground floor, Averoff Prison, North Athens.

(She walks back to the cell, talking as she goes.)

These cells weren't built by the Germans, but they probably liked the style. All cells exactly the same. The bed's soft. A surprise. It's amazing how tender the bed bugs are in here. The table. Three legs. No, don't worry. All the tables in here have three legs. They never warn you when you arrive. You have to fall over with it. It's like a rite of passage. The walls. They are built in the old Greek style. Over built, probably from some mason who wanted to brag that his walls were thicker than his cousin Spiro. But there is one good thing. Look.

(Reaches her arm from inside the cell around the front wall towards the adjoining cell.)

The walls were just the right thickness so you can touch fingertips with the woman in the next cell. It is so much more tender than a handshake. Yes, you become a bit of rat down here. You learn to understand rats in Averoff.

(Banging from off stage.)

The baying begins. So early today. Oh well, better earlier than never.

(She takes the metal cup and bangs it on the bed frame, looking bored. To audience.)

Don't worry. This doesn't go on for long. We do it every morning. It's the song of the damned. Our only song while we're here. It's not going to change anything. No-one's going to charge down that corridor and rescue us because we're banging plates and cups. But it's a thing we have to do. It's a 'good morning' if you like. You see..

(All banging stops.)

Thank God for that..

(She flings the cup over onto the table.)

There are a lot of us here. At inspection last night they counted out fifty-eight of us. Now it's morning there could be more, there could be less. They make the changes at night. Women are dragged in; women are dragged out. Why would it be, do you think, that people would need to be dragged out of here? Running, pulling the guards behind them.. yes. But they all resist. It's an odd thing about the prisoners here.. they're like birds in a cage when the door is opened. They want to stay.

(Uplight comes on her face. Yells out.)

Now.

VOICE OF WOMAN IN NEXT CELL

Damn.

OLGA

It's our game. The first one to say 'now' when the lights come on, wins. Yes. How pathetic this place makes you.

(She starts to straighten things.. the buckets; the cup on the table; the bed.)

I should have bet her something. Not that she has anything to bet. Not that I have anything to bet.

1st JAILER'S VOICE

Morning inspection. Two minutes. Be dressed. Cell orderly. No hidden places. Be at attention at the bars.

(Olga moves a little quicker. Stands to attention in the door.)

OLGA

They're Greek, these guards. There's an occasional Italian sent by the Germans for a couple of days to keep watch on them. But what those Nazis don't know is that the Italians don't like them either. An Italian will come, sit, drink the Greek guards' wine, gamble a bit, then go back to his other

duties, back on top, poorer and sorrier. Greeks don't lose at gambling, except my Michael.

(She stops still. Shadow moves across from stage right to left, representing a guard. She looks ahead, making no acknowledgement. The shadow moves on. She relaxes.)

(A woman cries. Olga listens to the cell wall. To audience.)

She's crying again.

(Listens.)

Strange how someone in pain can make you feel better. I mean everyone here is suffering. And like monks who whip themselves in punishment, they make it harder on themselves. They think about the years they're losing. Because frankly, these women aren't chickens anymore. There's only so many years of lovemaking for a woman, when the man looks at them with none of that lust that they only have for girls too young for them. Yes, this place achieves two things. It gets women off the streets, and it helps breasts to sag.

(Listens.)

This woman has nice breasts. She takes her blouse off when we go to the trough. Most of the others are too ashamed. Christians acting like Muslims. Once a fortnight they get the chance to wash, and they don't take all their clothes off. Well, actually, neither do I. It's not modesty. I do it because I choose not to.

(Listens.)

We do rub each other. No hands. Just arms and thighs. Just to feel, you understand. Loneliness can kill you, you know. You need to be in a place like this to learn that.

(Listens.)

She's stopped. Sleep, my lady.

(Lights fade.)

ACT 2

Scene 2

(Light comes up. Olga is sitting in her room in 1960. She is holding the letter. She puts it down, then takes it up again. She opens it.)

NELLIE'S VOICE

My Dear Mother. I still cannot understand how you could leave us, we were three growing girls who needed a mother's understanding and guidance. Were we not worth the sacrifice you may have had to make? How easily we could have slipped, but Thank God and only him, for a decent life. Even so, how the Greeks did talk! My name was dragged through the mud, and Freda's too, only because we did not have a mother to protect us. Still, that is all forgotten. But just let them pick on Katie and we'll see that they shut up quick and lively. You have no need to worry about us any further, Mother, for our own great hour of need has passed, just look after yourself. Your loving daughter Nellie.

OLGA

How a stab in the heart can be so sweetly written. The taximidraio.. the post office.. loses everything, but it manages to get this letter to me. In wartime. What Nellie wrote was all true of course. I should've fought and kicked my way back to Australia. I just thought.. after that night in the truck. You know what it takes to make a mother think she is better away from her chicks? I never thought they would miss me. Just as well I didn't get this letter when I was in prison. I might've given up.

(The light bars come across the set.)

1ST JAILER

Washing time. Line up.

(Olga stands to attention.)

(To audience.)

OLGA

The trough was also our newspaper. I don't know how. We had all been locked in rat's cells all week with no visitors and no light, but somehow we all knew what was happening on top. We heard there was a famine. We heard the Germans had taken food out of Greece. We heard that thousands were dying up there and Germany was winning the war.

(Makes as if to be feeling her way to an imaginary fountain, then takes off her dress, leaving on a slip. She makes as if washing herself as dialogue occurs.)

Who's here?

STEPHANIE

Stephanie.

OLGA

Who else?

MARIA

(After a pause.)

Maria.

OLGA

What's the matter Maria.

MARIA

They've caught Nikotsara.

STEPHANIE

But how?

MARIE

I don't know. But the way she worked, it was a wonder they didn't catch her eighteen times.

OLGA

Do you know where they've taken her?

STEPHANIE

No. But they'll use that famous womanhood against her, you can bet.

MARIA

But she knows all the workings, she..

(SFX Door slam)

1ST JAILER'S VOICE

Time is up. Back to your cells.

(Olga picks up her dress and feels her way back to her cell. The cell becomes her 1941 room and Olga goes to her table and starts putting on make-up. As she talks she makes up, puts on a good dress and jewellery.)

OLGA

Nikotsara was the woman we all wanted to be. Some said she was half man, but I saw nothing but woman in her. She took risks. She used to go to the Greek council during the occupation and make complaints. Of course, she had no power. No Greeks had any power. They were like husbands, too scared of upsetting the wife. We all said she shouldn't do it. We said it would jeopardise all the work we were doing. If they arrested her for being a nuisance, they might make her tell all she knew, and she knew everything. The escape routes, even our own codes. But no, she said it would look suspicious if she wasn't so obvious. First rule, she said, don't do what they expect you to do. Yes, they caught our beautiful Nikotsara, not for making complaints, but because her own friend put her in. They tortured her, and killed her. But she never told them anything. War makes heroes. And cowards.

(She checks herself in the dresser mirror, and does a final dab of the lipstick.)

Bravery comes in all sorts. Early in the war I had to act brave by being a woman. The German commanders liked women.

(Light orchestra music plays. The sound of a crowd, murmurs, glasses, laughs. Olga walks over to the table with champagne on it. She looks pleased to see a man who is sitting at the table. He looks at her with warmth.)

Hello. No please don't get up.

(Lets him take her coat off.)

GERMAN MAN

How beautiful you are. Champagne?

OLGA

How did you get that? Sorry. Of course. Never ask. Never tell. You're looking dashing tonight.

(They sit.)

GERMAN MAN

Don't let it get warm.

OLGA

Yes, of course. Thank you. *(takes a sip)*. I'd forgotten what that was like. I've only had it once, when I got married and even then it was an extravagance. My husband.. I'm sorry. I shouldn't have brought him up. You don't want to know about him. Are you..

GERMAN MAN

No. I never did. I was a victim of my mother's ambition. Heidelberg University. Then I taught. Then the party. Then the war. Here I am. I always thought..

OLGA

(To audience as he talks.)

That's what we do. Get them talking about themselves. Any little thing. It's a line to tread. You don't want to make them suspicious. You don't want to fall in love either.

(Talking to him.)

Yes, two. Both grown up now. They live with their grandmother in Santorini. I miss them terribly. There must've been a trainload of women lined up to your door before the war.

GERMAN MAN

You're flattering me.

OLGA

(Takes his hand.)

No, I'm not. I'm a bad liar and I always get caught out. Look, let's dance.

GERMAN MAN

I can't dance. *(laughing)* What do you think I am? French?

OLGA

Of course you can. I'll lead you, but I'll make it look like you're leading me.

(They start to dance.)

This is nice. You are meant to dance.

(Lights come up. Club sounds stop. She stops dancing. He leaves.)

(To audience.)

I didn't sleep with him. It was hard not to. Not because he pushed for it, but because he really was a gentle man. I think he didn't want to anyway. He wasn't really a ladies' man. We started seeing each other because I wanted information from him, and he wanted to show the other officers that he was a man. I got my information and he got his respect. I found out later that he had protected me, that he knew I worked for the underground.

(Light fades.)

ACT 2

Scene 3

(The light comes up on Olga in her prison cell straightening up papers and blankets. She is upbeat. She is wigged and her hair is covered)

OLGA

I'm being released. It comes from a very reliable source. Christa told me. I think it was Christa. It might have been Olive. I couldn't see. One of them whispered it when we were at the trough.

(A flicker of doubt.. then excited again. She sits on the bed, wanting to tell.)

When I get out of here, I'm going to get right into action. There's so much to do. I'm.. going to.. have a Greek coffee. Then I'm going to tear my blouse off.. right there in Syntagma square, and let the sun touch me. I'm going to wave my arms in the air and curse Hitler and dare them all to come and get me. I'm going to slap the first German who comes near me. Then I'll go straight into the police station and see that man.. the Officer.. the man who sent me here, and grab him by the balls. I'll make him regret. I'll make him release every other woman here. I'll make him apologise to them; kiss every hand and beg forgiveness of them for the time that they were away from their children. For the time they made me feel like a slave.

(Looks around.)

I must clean my cell first. It's important, you know. The cell has to be clean. Some woman will come here, and I'll be damned if they find this cell just like I found it. Everything all over the place. Dirty. All right, so it wasn't dirty. But I want them to see a woman's hand. I want them to see that a woman was here and she got out. I want them to feel like this is a lucky cell. It matters you know. Just a folded blanket, or a bucket lined up neatly against the bars. That means a woman. If it was a man.. they wouldn't know.

(Listens.)

I wonder when they'll be coming.

(To audience.)

This happened seven times. The promise of freedom. It happened to all of us.

1st JAILER

Maria Dakis. Stand ready.

OLGA

Oh, to see Maria on that morning. So many hopes for one woman.

MARIA

I promise Olga to get word to your family, to tell them that you are alive.

OLGA

Yes, Maria. That would be nice if you could. 318 Harris Street, Ultimo. Sydney.

MARIA

Olly-moe?

OLGA

Ultimo. Ul-tee-mo. Ul-tee..

(To audience.)

They came and took her. The Germans. You could tell in the way they pushed her. We knew. They shot people upstairs in the courtyard, near the big palm tree. It became something to fear, being taken up top. Something to doubt, then something to fear.

(Light goes down. When it comes up, Olga is unseen in an unlit part of her cell. Olga makes change to wig and puts scarf on top in the dark. Jailer comes to the cell with a trolley of dixie pans of food. He takes one dixie and slides it on the floor towards Olga.)

1st JAILER

How long you been in here, Stamboli?

OLGA

I don't know, sir. We can't even see if it's day or night.
Maybe just one long day.

1st JAILER

It's been six months. Don't you wish you were up on top?

OLGA

From what I hear, things are terrible up on top.

1st JAILER

Yes, at least you get food down here. Aren't you lonely?

OLGA

We have the baths. And I have my memories.

1st JAILER

Do you have children?

OLGA

Everyone seems to ask me that. Yes, far away.

1st JAILER

In one of the villages?

OLGA

No, much further than that.

1st JAILER

What would you do to get yourself free?

OLGA

(Olga goes into the light in the cell. To audience.)

What a question. One of the ancient Greek riddles. A man offers you a chance of freedom if you give the last part of your dignity. But to get free! If you were free you could fight, you could save lives. I did what any Greek woman in that position would do.

(To the jailer.)

I am Greek, You are Greek. Don't be stupid.

1st JAILER

I'm sorry. You're free anyway. I don't know how they did it, but somehow they've got you released.

OLGA

Who?

1st JAILER

The Resistance of course.

OLGA

Never heard of them.

1ST JAILER

I will come back for you soon. Eat your food. There isn't much up there.

(To audience.)

Can you dare to believe? No. In that black I heard his footsteps leaving, and then his footsteps coming back. Just his. A lamp. The keys in the lock. The door opens. No-one else

was there. Germans, no Italians. Just the Greek jailer. I went past my friends. They put out their hands. Fingertips. They didn't know if I was to live or to die. Up the same steps as Maria Dakis. Still no Germans. Could I really be free? I tripped on the top step. The jailer stopped at the top of the steps. For the first time in my life I felt faint. But why would they be releasing me in the middle of the night?

(Walks towards audience. Sound of a metal door opening) A bright light hits her face. She shields her eyes.)

Daylight. Full daylight. Down there we think it is midnight, but it is midday. Everything down there is upside down. If I have been down there six months, like he says, then it must be autumn, but the sun still burns like summer.

(Walks across the stage. A woman is lying on the stage in front of her. Olga stops and kneels.)

Hello. Are you all right? She's dead. Help. Can someone send for a doctor? Anyone? She's too dead for that. How can people not do anything. Hello?

(Stands and looks around).

Hello?

(Lighting casts more shadows of bodies on the stage around her.)

What the hell is happening? Hello? Is anybody alive?

RAGGED GREEK MAN

This is new to you? Where have you been?

OLGA

I have just been released from Averoff.

RAGGED GREEK MAN

No-one gets released from Averoff.

OLGA

What is this? Why so many dead?

RAGGED GREEK MAN

The famine. Do you have any money for my daughter's baby?

OLGA

They gave me a piece of old bread.

RAGGED GREEK MAN

A piece of old bread then.

OLGA

Where is your daughter?

RAGGED GREEK MAN

She was the woman you stepped over.

OLGA

Take the bread.

(He takes the bread, and touches a wisp of her hair from under her scarf.)

RAGGED GREEK MAN

Thank you. Your hair is very beautiful. White like my wife's was. She's dead now.

OLGA

Hunger must be affecting your sight, my man. My hair is jet black. See.

(She takes off her scarf to reveal white hair. She pulls a lock to the front of her face and sees it is white.)

RAGGED GREEK MAN

I'm sorry.

OLGA

The prison had taken my country, six months of my life, and now my youth.

Light fades.

ACT 2

Scene 4

(Light stays low. The stage is empty.)

WOMAN'S VOICE

Olga is free.

2ND WOMAN'S VOICE

Where is she?

WOMAN'S VOICE

We don't know.

2ND WOMAN'S VOICE

Could she have turned?

WOMAN'S VOICE

That's why they got her out. They were planning to interrogate the women. If they got to Olga..

2ND WOMAN'S VOICE

She's too tough.

WOMAN'S VOICE

Nobody's too tough.

(Light comes up to show Olga is asleep under a blanket on the bed in Lela's house. She wears only a slip. She wakes suddenly and jumps up. Lela is across the stage.)

OLGA

My God. Where am I? What are you doing to me?

LELA

You are safe. You are safe. You are in my home.

OLGA

Lela?

LELA

You were wandering like a crazy woman.

OLGA

There are a lot of crazy women.

LELA

Yes. It surprised me too when I got out.

OLGA

They got you too?

LELA

Yes. I was arrested in the same Gestapo round-up as you.

OLGA

How did you get out?

LELA

The same way as you. A friend here. A sympathiser there. You know, it was only luck that our scout recognised you.. with your white hair.

OLGA

My white hair.

LELA

Youth does not survive war.

OLGA

Has there been any word from my family?

LELA

I'm sorry. There are no letters in or out. That goes for your diary too. Where is it?

OLGA

I destroyed it.

(To audience as she puts on trousers and naval shirt.)

But I hadn't. I couldn't. I had been hiding it beneath a loose floorboard under a wardrobe in my bedroom. Then, the night before my arrest I had one of those premonitions that only Greek women get.

I moved the wardrobe and took out the diary. I wrote some more in it.. a last letter to Nellie. Then I wrapped it again and left the house with it. I don't think I even knew what I was planning to do with it. Near the house was a small cliff. I found a little piece of canvas on a German motorcycle. I ripped it off and wrapped it around the diary and climbed down the cliff to a crack big enough to take the diary. I pushed it in as far as I could.

LELA

So the diary is destroyed. Good. It could have brought us all down.

OLGA

I would never let that happen.

LELA

Why did you start writing such a thing?

OLGA

It is for my children.

LELA

Was.

OLGA

Yes. Was.

LELA

Are you willing to work again? We have six Australian soldiers to get to Egypt.

OLGA

Yes. I can't wait to spit in those German eyes again.

(Light and vision turns the stage into an ocean. Sound of wind. Olga has naval cap and is standing, as if on a boat. Australian man comes and stands next to her.)

AUSTRALIAN MAN

These are the very waters that Odysseus sailed.

OLGA

You know your history. What do you think? Maybe the famous Sirens sang their songs of lust from that little island over there.

AUSTRALIAN MAN

Or maybe the Cyclops still lives in those caves waiting for more soldiers to eat. How much history do these waters have.

OLGA

Yes, so much history. People celebrate Homer's Odysseus travelling these oceans and fighting these demons. But all he wanted was to get home.

AUSTRALIAN MAN

Just like me.

OLGA

Just like all of us.

(Fade to black.)

ACT 2

SCENE 5

(In a British military base in Cairo. At rise Olga is sitting at a table across from Australian soldier. They are playing a simple five card poker.)

AUSTRALIAN SOLDIER

Your boat back to Athens will be ready soon. I will be coming back with you.

OLGA

Coming back? Our people risk their lives to get you lot here to Cairo, and you want to go back to Greece?

AUSTRALIAN SOLDIER

(As he speaks he takes two cards out of his five and puts them down.)

I have my woman in Athens. She's alone. Two cards.

OLGA

(Dealing him two cards)

And you think it's a good idea to go into the hornet's nest?

AUSTRALIAN SOLDIER

That's more like it. As I said. She's alone.

OLGA

You got good cards eh? Have we tried to get her out?

AUSTRALIAN SOLDIER

Oh, yes. It was all planned. That's why I came here. She was supposed to follow me. The contact went to her house to get her. But she told them she didn't want to leave. She said Greece was her home, and she was going to stay there until the Germans were thrown out. You going to bet or are you going to sit there admiring your cards all day?

OLGA

(Throws a brown coin in the middle.)

Tuppence. She sounds like a hell of a woman.

AUSTRALIAN SOLDIER

You see why I need to be with her. Meet you and raise you another.

OLGA

She is a woman who knows her home. And I raise you.

AUSTRALIAN SOLDIER

(Pauses. Looks at his cards.)

Why don't you go home? Sydney, isn't it?

OLGA

Yes. It is.

AUSTRALIAN SOLDIER

Children?

OLGA

Five. No. Four. Five.

AUSTRALIAN SOLDIER

Go to them. You have done enough. Raise you again.

OLGA

Enough? What do you tell me of enough?

AUSTRALIAN SOLDIER

It's enough when you save one, but you have saved a lot of people.

OLGA

I have lost more.

AUSTRALIAN SOLDIER

Are we going to have to go into arithmetic? Do you think what you do is about numbers? Okay. Call.

(Olga lays out her cards.)

A straight flush. How the hell..

OLGA

I'll tell you what it's about. It's about running away.

AUSTRALIAN SOLDIER

Hell, woman. You don't run away from anybody.

OLGA

I am running all the time. I ran from my children because I thought I could hurt them. When a woman gets to that, she fails. How's that for cowardice.

AUSTRALIAN SOLDIER

That sounds awfully like bravery to me.

OLGA

Bravery.

AUSTRALIAN SOLDIER

A coward would have stayed. A coward would have risked them. You chose to leave so that they would be safe.

OLGA

I am a coward, my friend. I should have stayed and fought. I should have fought myself. I should have fought and won. For my babies.

2nd AUSTRALIAN SOLDIER

Olga? Olga Stam? Is that Olga Stam?

OLGA

Who are you? How do you know me?

2nd AUSTRALIAN SOLDIER

Boys. Olga Stam is here.

3rd AUSTRALIAN SOLDIER

Olga? The girl of my dreams? Here?

OLGA

I don't..

3rd AUSTRALIAN SOLDIER

You rescued me from that house in Piraeus. Remember? The friggin' SS were everywhere, and you dressed me up as a Greek. Could you imagine? Me as a grocer's wife?

2nd AUSTRALIAN SOLDIER

And you waited with me all night in a sheep shed near Lamia.
Remember? Errol.

OLGA

Errol?

AUSTRALIAN SOLDIER

Tony. Come here it's Olga.

4th AUSTRALIAN SOLDIER

Olga? I heard they caught you.

OLGA

They did their best. But I got out.

4th AUSTRALIAN SOLDIER

You and Lela hid me for a month. I fell in love with you
remember? You told me not to be an arse.

OLGA

Of course I did. I'm married. You arse.

(Laughter.)

AUSTRALIAN SOLDIER

So you see. You have done so many good deeds, you have
forgotten them. You've done enough.

OLGA

(To audience.)

A few kind words that change a life. I would go back to Athens
with him, finish my work with the Bouboulina cell. And I would
go back to my family. The joy of that last trip back to
Athens. We passed two German patrols and fooled them by

dressing as fishermen. It was passing the Cyclops, who I feared no more. Those Sirens, who could tempt no more. The gods who tried to steer me with ill winds. I would not be moved. There was one wind for me, and that was the wind that would take me home.

(Fade to black.)

ACT 2

SCENE 6

(Olga enters Lela's apartment in Greece after the return from Cairo. Stavros enters after her.)

OLGA

(Speaks as she changes her naval clothes into a dress.)

Thank you, Stavros. Could you arrange a meeting with Lela? She's in Volos tonight. I need to tell her something important.

STAVROS

About what?

OLGA

All right my friend. I am leaving the movement. I'm going home to my family. I am taking two pilots to Cairo tomorrow morning, and I will not be returning. I'm going home.

STAVROS

Tomorrow. So soon.

OLGA

My time is done.

STAVROS

We will miss you. I will miss you. No-one can work a German officer like Olga Stam. We had times..

OLGA

Let's have a drink. To remember. Here's an Albanian wine I've had for a while. Let's open it. What the hell.

STAVROS

A drink. Yes. Albanians can't be bad at everything. Maybe this (*sips and spits it out*) is awful.

OLGA

No Albanian is going to ruin tonight. (*drinks*). It really is bad.

STAVROS

If you are going tomorrow, I will need to pass the message to Lela tonight. She will need to reorganise next week's rota. I'm sure she'll be happy for you.

OLGA

Thank you, Stavros. My friend. Always.

STAVROS

Always. Andio.

(*Olga goes to close the door after Stavros, sees two letters on the floor. Opens the first one. Nellie speaks to the audience, reciting what's in the first letter.*)

NELLIE

Mum, we have just heard that you are alive. It was a surprise after all this time. We have a lot of news from here. Dad's writing to you, but I wanted to tell you first that I am married and I have a daughter. We named her Sofia, but everyone calls her Sylvia. To date it has been rather a struggle because my husband Steve has been in the army and doesn't see me very much, but we are getting onto our feet, with Dad's help. Your loving daughter, Nellie.

OLGA

My baby is a mother. I have a grandchild. Her name is Sylvia.
Thank you. Thank you, gods.

(Opens the second letter.)

It's the letter from Michael.

(Reads aloud.)

Olga. I have just found out that you are alive. A man came to
our shop. He was a pilot that you rescued..

BILL

(Knocks on the glass.)

Hello? Is anyone there. I'm looking for Nellie Stambolis.
Hello?

(Jean enters on the other side of the glass)

JEAN

Yes? Who is it?

BILL

My name is Sergeant Bill Luckett. I have a message for Nellie
Stambolis. Is this the right house?

JEAN

Yes, it is. It's late, and Nellie is in bed with her baby. Can
I pass on the message?

BILL

I'm supposed to give it to her directly. It's from her mother,
Olga.

JEAN

Oh, my God. Wait there. Nellie?

(Goes into the dark)

NELLIE'S VOICE

What is it Jean?

JEAN'S VOICE

A soldier is here with a message from your mother.

NELLIE'S VOICE

That can't be. She's dead.

JEAN'S VOICE

Come down and speak with him. He must've come a long way.

NELLIE'S VOICE

No Jean. I don't want to. I can't.

JEAN'S VOICE

I know love. But try. Please.

NELLIE'S VOICE

No.

(Jean returns to the shop.)

JEAN

I'm sorry. She doesn't want to see you.

BILL

But I promised Olga. I promised.

JEAN

I know. I'm sorry.

OLGA

(Reading on as Bill walks away.)

.. so you must understand. It was..

OLGA and MICHAEL VOICE

.. a shock to have this Bill come to the door after we hadn't heard..

MICHAEL VOICE

.. from you in so many years. Even the Australian government people said you must be dead. I must tell you now that two years ago I had you declared dead, and I married Jean. You must understand that the children needed a mother. A proper mother, made through church and priest. My wife Jean and I now have two children, little Jimmy and little John. I don't know what to do. The girls and Nicky have settled into their new lives. Jean has been very good for them.

(Fade to black.)

ACT 2

SCENE 7

ACTOR 1

For a lightning moment she wanted to cry out. To scream and wake her husband, the archons, the guards, the slaves. Her soul cried out for help, but her heart felt ashamed. (*The Odyssey, a Modern Sequel, Kazantzakis 4.1160*)

ACTOR 2

That was a strange thing, that soft sleep that shrouded me. How I wish chaste Artemis would give me a death so soft, and now. (*The Odyssey, Book XIII, 201*)

(Lights come up to show Olga with clipboard. She opens one of the crates and takes out a carton of cigarettes. German officer is looking through a box.)

GESTAPO OFFICER

Not this Turkish shit again.

OLGA

That's all we can get. You know that. What with the embargo by Britain and the Americans, this is it.

(German Officer hands Olga some notes.)

We are going to need more money than that. These cigarettes were hard to ship, just getting past your own German patrols was a miracle. Then the coffee, from South America. Preserves from Egypt. This wasn't just a grocery trip from the Plaka.

GESTAPO OFFICER

You talk to me like this? One snap of my fingers and you will be back in Averoff. No. One snap of my fingers and you will be dead.

OLGA

Then do it. But never again could you expect any kind of trade with my people. You will never smoke another cigarette in Greece and you will come out of this war with only your soldiers' savings. If you win the war that is.

(He takes out a pistol and points it at her. She reacts defiantly).

It is a pretty gun. It is a gun like that that will change a war. Shoot me then. Shoot me, or do business with me. On my side, we have the same argument. Most of us want to have nothing to do with you. So shoot me or take the goods.

(He moves offstage.)

I will let you know the place for next week's exchange. And remember the extra money for this week's lot.

LELA

(Watches as Olga counts boxes. Then Recites from The Odyssey, Book IX, 33)

"But never could she persuade the heart within me. So it is that nothing is so sweet in the end than country and parents ever, even when far away one lives in a fertile place, when it is in alien country, far from his parents."

STAVROS

She seems not to care if she dies or not, but she does her job, Lela.

LELA

She is broken.

STAVROS

We are all broken. She tries to redeem herself through too much work.

LELA

She has always done that.

(Olga leaves.)

STAVROS

What happened to her? She was going to leave.. and then she turns up at the next mission.

LELA

I don't know. She missed the boat to Cairo. She has never told anyone why. It's over anyhow.

STAVROS

How much time does she have?

LELA

Our informant says it could be days. Once you're on their list, you are gone. They know her house. They know the French car.

STAVROS

But she refuses to go underground.

LELA

As you say, she is not scared of death anymore.

STAVROS

Isn't that a perfect spy? Someone who is not scared of death but fights to avoid it.

LELA

If you're going to play the dance with death, you need firm steps.

(Olga enters with gun raised as Stavros becomes a peasant. Lela leaves.)

OLGA

So what do you say to all this?

PEASANT

It is a mistake. I would never do that.

OLGA

These people say they saw you talking to the patrol.

PEASANT

They're lying. I didn't speak to anyone.

OLGA

And that right after you spoke to them, they turned around and went back to the village.

(Enter peasant woman.)

PEASANT WOMAN

And shot my husband. You liar.

PEASANT

This woman speaks in grief. She would blame anyone.

PEASANT WOMAN

Just shoot him, damn you. You know he is guilty.

OLGA

Yes. He is guilty.

PEASANT WOMAN

Then shoot him.

(Olga points the gun.)

Shoot him. What's the matter with you?

OLGA

I can't do it.

(Peasant woman takes the gun from Olga and shoots the peasant.)

OLGA

(To audience.)

Right from the start, I could do the fight. It was as if all my life had been training for it. I thought I was fighting the battle here for my family. But they never knew.

(As she speaks the following, actors 2 and 3 play out her words.)

In my eye Michael was battering his pieces of fish, and the girls were wrapping them. In my eye he was telling them that the Olga Stambolis.. the one who put them in the truck that night.. went to Greece to fight in the war and is coming back brand new and brave and better and healed. I can't hate him. I can't even hate her. In my head he told me to go. But he never told me to go.

(Anna Enters. As a ghost)

ANNA

I'm sorry sister.

OLGA

Sorry for what? My marriage? Not your fault my dear. Sorry for the Germans sticking me in a hole for six months? It wasn't your fault.

ANNA

Maybe it was.

OLGA

Anna. Was it you?

ANNA

I'm sorry. I can never tell you. I have gone.

OLGA

Then why do you apologise?

ANNA

You know. You have always known. Christopher.

OLGA

(Runs to her desk and shuffles through her diary pages.)

She told me. I remember that she told me. I don't remember what. Did I dare write it?

(Finds a page and reads. Throws it away and keeps looking.)

We forget. We have to forget.

(Finds another page and reads.)

Please no.

(To audience.)

My Christopher didn't die of colic or cholera or measles. I knew that. No baby dies of disease in a day. From strong as strong to blue and dead.

(Enter Lela.)

LELA

Tell me.

OLGA

Lela, have you lost a baby?

LELA

Yes.

OLGA

How my life would have been different if I had lied to Michael about it. Then I would just have had guilt. I could live with guilt.

LELA

Tell me.

OLGA

You will hate me.

LELA

I can't hate anymore.

OLGA

It comes down to a broken pair of slippers. I told you I first came back to Greece to find my mother in 1929. When I wanted to breathe with the woman who birthed me. When I had a good marriage and five healthy children. I didn't have to be there long to decide this woman, she could not be my mother.

(As Olga speaks, Mrs Mavromati's son enters and stands next to Lela. Lela slowly stands and becomes Mrs Mavromati. Olga)

She was not like me at all. I didn't like her. I didn't like her son. This was not my blood. This could not be my blood. So I went to her. I didn't want to, but I felt I had to say goodbye.

(Olga rises and faces the Mavromatis.)

MRS MAVROMATI

So you're leaving us?

MRS MAVROMATI'S SON

I told you she was just using us.

OLGA

I'm sorry. I need to get back to my other children.

(Olga looks down at the woman's feet.)

MRS MAVROMATI

We have given you hospitality.

MRS MAVROMATI'S SON

Our welcome.

MRS MAVROMATI

Our love.

MRS MAVROMATI'S SON

Our family.

MRS MAVROMATI

And you leave us like this. With nothing.

MRS MAVROMATI'S SON

I told you she was a bitch.

MRS MAVROMATI

Answer me girl. You can't leave without some kind of payment for all we've done for you.

OLGA

You have a birthmark on your foot.

MRS MAVROMATI

I see. You walk out on us to go back to your rich husband, and all you can do is criticise how we look.

(They freeze.)

OLGA

(To audience.)

I wasn't criticising her. That birthmark. I have one just like it. On the top right here. The same as hers. This woman who was not like me, nothing like me. She really was my mother after all.

MRS MAVROMATI

(Warmly.)

We are so pleased you decided to stay for a little while. When you do go back to Australia, your sister Anna will go with you.

(Olga hugs Mrs Mavromati, who doesn't respond.)

Don't be silly girl.

OLGA

(To audience.)

So I stayed. It was only going to be for a little while, but the steamship company wouldn't give me back my money. I found work as a governess for an ambassador. Nellie, I put in school but I couldn't take Christopher with me to the embassy. So every day I left him with my mother. I paid her good money, most of my wage, to look after him, and every night I would get him from her and take him to my apartment. Those were good days. Nellie, me and Christopher. We lived like this for a few months while I saved drachma by drachma. Then one evening I came to pick up Christopher.

MRS MAVROMATI

He's disappeared.

OLGA

What? When? Where?

MRS MAVROMATI

This afternoon. He just wasn't here anymore. We looked but he was gone.

OLGA

No. No. Don't you tell me that. He is your grandson. You will find him with me.

(Olga grabs her arm. Mrs Mavromati's son enters.)

MRS MAVROMATI'S SON

What are you doing to my mother you bitch?

(Olga grabs him by the throat.)

OLGA

Find my son or I will tear the throat off your neck. Brother.

(Mrs Mavromati and her son pretend to be searching. They leave the stage. To audience.)

We searched. The dirt patch out the back. Under the house. The house next door. It was when I said I would get the police, that they told me. They had a 17-year-old girl. My half sister. A woman with a baby's brain. I had never seen her. They kept her locked away. My mother left her to play with Christopher that morning. She played at giving him food. She thought it was food, but it wasn't food. The poor girl didn't understand. She fed my beautiful Christopher parts from a sewing machine. They say knowing is a relief. They say it helps you to understand. They lie. My mind's eye is always a picture of that moment. And I know Michael's life was always about that moment. I told him and I should have lied. I know now he didn't hate. He just had nothing left for me. We always saw Christopher in each other's eye. No marriage can be worth a damn after that. No, my baby didn't die of colic or cholera or measles. He died because of me.

(Lela returns.)

LELA

We all die.

OLGA

Lela, if I had gone home when I was supposed to..

LELA

He would still die.

(Lela leaves the stage.)

OLGA

If I hadn't needed to see my family, then we wouldn't be there, and he wouldn't have been with them. Lela?

(Enter Stavros.)

Stavros. I can't hear Lela.

STAVROS

Lela has been caught.

OLGA

(To audience.)

The Gestapo came for Lela at a hospital. She had been sick. But sick or not, she stood up to it. Never spoke a word. Not a word. For three days they tried. Then the most extraordinary thing. They gave up. Their great inquisitor.. the one with the tools.. nothing he did could open her mouth. They took her to a little square in the south of Athens with some of the others. She died. I lived.

STAVROS

But you were still on the list.

OLGA

I was still on the list.

STAVROS

We will get you out. Through the south of France to England. The hun will be watching for this. You will probably die.

OLGA

(To audience.)

I lived. All those brave men and women got me to England, hiding me and shuffling me like I used to do with the pilots we rescued. I came back to Greece just in time to see the Nazis thrown out. You would think life after war would be a celebration. There were celebrations, but not for long. The legacy of war was a civil war between the resistance groups.. communists trying to save Greeks by murdering them. The British sided with the Royalists. British snipers were on the Acropolis trying to pick out anyone with a red scarf in Monastiraki below. No good could ever come of it. None did. I worked for the Americans, who were trying to sort things out. Six years I stayed. I let Jean be the wife to my husband and the mother for my girls. And then in 1951, Nellie wrote to me.

OLGA & NELLIE

Mother, I sincerely hope..

NELLIE

..that the war years have not treated you too harshly. I also hope it has not made you bitter towards Dad, for you of course remember you went away because you wanted to. I can only hope that there will be no unpleasantness when you meet up with Dad again, for it will only be natural for us to side with the one that reared us. My husband and children, Sylvia and Sotiras send lots of love and kisses. Your loving daughter Nellie.

OLGA

It was hardly an invitation. But it was enough. I went home. The boat to Perth, then the aeroplane to Sydney. Would they hate me? Would Michael hate me after 16 years? I was never to know. They wired me on the boat to tell me Michael had died. A heart attack. When the aeroplane landed in Sydney, I was the last one in my seat. The hostess sat down next to me. Hostesses were older back then. They had seen war and depression. They knew faces. They will love you, she said. She knew nothing of my family or of me, and knew everything. It won't be easy, she said, but they will love you. She didn't know of Christopher or Michael or Nellie or of the many men I had killed. She took my hand and led me to the stairs, and there they were behind the barrier. Nellie and Freda and Tina and Nicky, and so many of their children, smiling and waving. Lives that have come down from Michael and me. Yes, everyone smiling. Except Nellie. She just stared. Searching my face. For regret maybe. The others swarmed around me while the men, the husbands I had never seen before fussed about getting my luggage. The littlest children hid behind their mothers' skirts. Their love would come later. I had already started loving them. We went to Freda's house and sat in a giant circle in the lounge room. There were too many questions for them to ask, and they didn't ask any of them. They talked of little things that meant nothing to either of us. The men brought out bottles of beer and jokes, and Nellie still just stared. It was a strange stare. It said nothing of hate or love or pain. It was just a stare. After a little while the men and children went out the back yard to play cricket. Freda and Tina went to make sandwiches. Nellie stayed in the lounge room with me. After a while she spoke the first words she had given me in sixteen years.

NELLIE

Mum. Would you like to have a cup of tea with me?

OLGA

Yes, my darling. I would love to have a cup of tea with you.

(Fade to black.)

ENDS

Links to the visual recordings of scenes from the workshop.

This three-day workshop in January 2019 culminated in a recording of the play in the Studio A at RMIT in Swanston St, Melbourne.

It was directed by Gary Young (Andrew Lloyd Webber Award recipient for his musical *Jekyll*, and inaugural Pratt Prize winner for *Sideshow Alley*).

Olga Stambolis was played by Jackie Rees (Helpmann Award nominee for her role of Madame Giry in *Phantom of the Opera*). The remaining thirty-four characters were divided between Hannah Fredericksen (Sydney Theatre Award nominee for her performance as Sandra Dee in *Dreamlover*) and Stephen Mahy (who played Danny in the Asian and Australian tours of *Grease*).

The following scenes have been taken from the workshop recording. It should be noted that because of the pace of the workshop and the short time allowed in a three-day workshop, not all scenes from the play were recorded. Below is a list of excerpts recorded in the last two days of the workshop, along with closed YouTube links to those scenes:

Finding her mother: <https://youtu.be/-WqKYIs87F8>

In this excerpt from the 2019 workshop Olga (Jackie Rees) finds her birth mother (Hannah Fredericksen) and brother (Stephen Mahy), only to discover they are less interested in her than in her perceived wealth. (Directed by Gary Young; edited by Phil Kafcaloudes)

Recruitment scene: <https://youtu.be/AGMyFPzi7fE>

In this scene in the workshop in January 2019, Olga (Jackie Rees) is being recruited to the Greek resistance by Lela Carayannis (Hannah Fredericksen) (Directed by Gary Young; edited by Phil Kafcaloudes).

Operative training scene: <https://youtu.be/RfviYgyoH2E>

In this excerpt from the 2019 workshop Olga (Jackie Rees) begins training as an operative (Directed by Gary Young; edited by Phil Kafcaloudes).

Interrogation Scene: <https://youtu.be/prw1KTCT0qM>

In this excerpt, Olga (Jackie Rees) is interrogated by two SS officers (Hannah Fredericksen & Stephen Mahy). Olga's understanding of German leads her to outwit them.. and save her life. This is part of the recording of the workshop of Lady of Arrows, which took place in January 2019 at the studios of RMIT in Melbourne. (Directed by Gary Young; edited by Dan Mavric).

Going to jail: <https://youtu.be/FAICI-RO2uk>

In this first scene from Act 2, Olga (Jackie Rees) is starting her six months in Averoff prison in North Athens. This is part of the Lady of Arrows workshop as recorded at the RMIT studios in January 2019 (Directed by Gary Young; edited by Dan Mavric).

Crying in Averoff: <https://youtu.be/t3i2vcCjwv>

In this scene from the Lady of Arrows, Olga (Jackie Rees) laments the passing off time in prison. This scene was part of a workshop recorded at the RMIT studios in January 2019. (Directed by Gary Young; edited by Dan Mavric).

Maria Dakis: <https://youtu.be/9vVN7Dpsvyc>

In this scene from Lady of Arrows, prisoner Maria Dakis (Hannah Fredericksen) believes she is about to be released. But it is not to be. This excerpt is from the play's workshop as recorded at the RMIT studios in January 2019. (Directed by Gary Young; edited by Dan Mavric).

Release from Averoff: <https://youtu.be/8-yiDrIEySE>

In this scene from Lady of Arrows, Olga (Jackie Rees) is released from Averoff prison, but in many ways life on the outside is not what she expects. This excerpt is from the play's workshop as recorded at the RMIT studios in January 2019. (Directed by Gary Young; edited by Dan Mavric).

Nightclub Scene: <https://youtu.be/1uilCQBPwTc>

In this scene Olga (Jackie Rees) goes to a nightclub with a German officer (Stephen Mahy) in order to gain information on German operations. (Director Gary Young; edited by Phil Kafcalouides).

Black market scene: https://youtu.be/7aJYG_VWA0U

In this excerpt, Olga (Jackie Rees) does a black market trade with a German officer (Stephen Mahy) and it brings her to the muzzle of a gun. This is part of the recording of the workshop of Lady of Arrows, which took place in January 2019 at the studios of RMIT in Melbourne. (Directed by Gary Young; edited by Dan Mavric).

Cairo card-playing scene: <https://youtu.be/d3TUrzWgny4>

In this excerpt from Lady of Arrows, Olga (Jackie Rees) is in Cairo, having just completed a rescue mission. She is playing cards with an Australian soldier (Stephen Mahy) who convinces her it is time to go home. This is part of the recording of the workshop of Lady of Arrows, which took place in January 2019 at the studios of RMIT in Melbourne. (Directed by Gary Young; edited by Dan Mavric).

Letters from home: <https://youtu.be/tbyysw1rk5c>

In this excerpt, Olga (Jackie Rees) received two letters from home. One brings joy; the other brings something quite different, and would change the next fifteen years of her life. This second letter leads her to decide to stay in Greece rather than return home. This is part of the recording of the workshop of Lady of Arrows, which took place in January 2019 at the studios of RMIT in Melbourne. (Directed by Gary Young; edited by Dan Mavric).

Olga Stays: <https://youtu.be/pplOWwARu3M>

In this short scene, two of Olga's resistance comrades (Hannah Fredericksen & Stephen Mahy) show their surprise at Olga's decision to stay with in Greece rather than go home to Australia. This is part of the recording of the workshop of Lady of Arrows, which took place

in January 2019 at the studios of RMIT in Melbourne. (Directed by Gary Young; edited by Dan Mavric).

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The following workshop excerpts have already been referenced in the exegesis:

<https://youtu.be/JWS7JNEdwcg>

Director Gary Young discusses how to open the play on the first day of the January 2019 workshop for Lady of Arrows. This discussion takes place at the first reading of the play in the RMIT studios in Swanston St, Melbourne. This is discussed on page 116 of the exegesis.

<https://youtu.be/1ZcVTK9h6qQ>

This excerpt is from the first day of the 2019 workshop. The actors are doing a round-table read of the script. Olga (Jackie Rees) recounts her first kill with her comrade Stavros (Stephen Mahy). The scene is discussed on page 116 of the exegesis.

<https://youtu.be/YLbv14YffBw>

In this excerpt from the 2019 workshop, the director Gary Young sets the first scene by blocking the actors into their first positions on the RMIT studio floor. This is discussed on page 117 of the exegesis.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=COSYU2qB6xA&feature=youtu.be>

This excerpt is an emotional peak in the play as Olga is harangued by her birth mother and brother. It demonstrates the Freeze technique discussed on page 128 of the exegesis.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rvFyt1k9AQ0&feature=youtu.be>

This scene demonstrated how the inventiveness of the actors and the direction could change the meaning of a scene. This is discussed on page 129 of the exegesis.

