

OTHER PEOPLE

A short play  
By Mark Andrew

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8 / 17-25 Charnwood Crescent, St Kilda 3182

email: mark@scenario.net.au

phone: (03) 9534 2418 / 0419 183 113

CHARACTERS

CANDY            Big Brother (TV reality show) evictee, 20s

NINA             Auschwitz survivor, 70-80s

TIME

The present.

PLACE

Each is being interviewed, separately, that is in separate places, for different purposes. They attend to their respective interviewers between replies.

CANDY

Bloody cow - like she knows about people, and family. It's not like we was picked out by random, know what I mean? We all had a sort of street savvy; I totally believe that. I mean the producers said so. It wasn't random or nuffink.

NINA

Fate. I know that. Fate. Some people are chosen.

CANDY

Example, right? She just stands there, selfish cow, and, like, I'm totally waiting for the shower, she can see that, the idle bitch, but does she hurry up? Does she fuck. We each get given like a few minutes of hot water each day, and she just... sings! In the shower! Like she's sodding Madonna or somefink.

NINA

But it was still a community. We became... a family. We're not animals.

CANDY

Cow. I'm sorry. But she is. 'Candy', she says, in that syrupy voice. 'Candy. Pass me my conditioner darling, my hair just drinks up the chlorine from the pool'. So I pass it, right? And you know what she does? She only goes and tuts. She fucking tuts! On live TV, to millions of viewers, and then that night, Big Brother doesn't even shit her out or nuffink; and I get a bollocking for being difficult! What do I have to do to show people what a cunt she is? Pardon my French.

NINA

I can't talk about the showers. I'd rather we didn't. Some things stay, within you. It's better not to share them.

CANDY

(chomping on a Bounty chockie bar)

I didn't know about her conditioner, some special stuff with bloody herbs or sumink. I thought it was shampoo, so I'd used it. And she just totally lost it. Like it was champagne or somefink!

NINA

We counted each day. Marked them on a wall. So we knew when it was Sabbath. It was very important to maintain those... sacred rituals. No one can take those from you.

CANDY

They don't even tell you what day it is. No newspapers. No TV. And we are the TV! How weird is that!

NINA

News travelled fast. A new consignment arriving. That's what they called a train. Consignment.

CANDY

Then we gets this ringer in.

NINA

Fat. You see fat on their bones. They look at us as they arrive, and you see the... anguish change to shock. They saw how thin we'd become. They were realising their future.

CANDY

Little campy faggot. Hairdresser. A complete ringer.

NINA

We had a welcome committee. It was a good idea. An orientation, to settle them in. Assign them to a family.

CANDY

Of course she starts sucking up to him, calling him a hoot, letting him mess around with her hair. Little campy

gay jokes all day, giggling like a couple of schoolgirls. And the others just encouraged them, the bloody lemons. Honestly, they've got no idea.

NINA

Because we're all from the same family, ultimately.

CANDY

And then he starts singing in the bloody shower! Christ!

NINA

We cleaned them up. Put them together. After the journey.

CANDY

And all I ever get is cold water! It's not fair.

NINA

Some of them had lost parts of their fingers. If they touch the metal inside the wagons, in winter, fingers freeze onto it. There's no other way of freeing them.

CANDY

Rationing. That's what we should have done. Obvious.

NINA

I'm talking about... teeth. There was no other way. You had to bite through the flesh to free them.

CANDY

Then it gets shared around proper, right?

NINA

Of course the children were the worst. They couldn't bite through their own flesh. We had to help them.

CANDY

We had this barbeque right? We all pitched in, right, lit the fire, salads wotnot, you know? And they're just

bludging, horsing around in the diary room, little arse bandit and the primadonna, and then... then...

NINA

When they got off the trains, we'd share the food we'd saved.

CANDY

... she says: bloody vegan sausages! Where are my vegan sausages? Like I stole them or somefink!

NINA

I got chocolate from a guard. He liked my sewing. His wife was having a baby, so I made a bib. Lovely soft cotton, from a shirt. A tailor gave it to me, promised it, before he... Anyway. He thanked me with chocolate. The guard.

CANDY

I never touched her sodding sausages!

NINA

I didn't eat that chocolate. I saved it for the children. If they were badly injured, they got two squares.

CANDY

What's a bloody vegan sausage anyway? I reckon she has a nice burger, outside. Big lump of cow, just like her.

NINA

I never ate any of that chocolate myself. But you know?

CANDY

I said, have a bit of salad wot you never helped make.

NINA

Watching their faces. The children. The silent crowds of shuffling people they saw as they stepped from the

railcars. Turning to a smile, with chocolate. I've never seen anything taste so... comforting.

CANDY

She didn't laugh. Just another tut! On live TV! Fuck!

NINA

When I see my grandchildren, now, with good, fresh food. I give thanks to God.

CANDY

Like it's all my fault! Christ, she can turn things around. Making me look like a complete twat.

NINA

We realised the winter was going to be bad. It was my second winter in the camp.

CANDY

And then the show, right, it's making millions from us, and they put us through this torture. It's humiliating.

NINA

So very cold. So cold, your spit froze. In your mouth. I saw a man walk. To the fence.

CANDY

I just will not sodding put up with it.

NINA

He'd had enough. Walk to the fence. That's what we called it. He just walked, and stopped, gazing through the fence.

CANDY

Cameras everywhere. I know we know. I'm not stupid. You can't even do private things without Big Brother seeing.

NINA

He was looking at something. Something we couldn't see. I hope it was his family, back home. His memories. He reached up, very slowly. He closed his eyes. He reached his hand out, and gently... touched the fence.

CANDY

I mean duhh... they ask you, who do you want to evict Candy? Jesus. I felt like topping meself - it drives you nuts.

NINA

I couldn't watch. Cold air you see, freezing cold air... it makes the shot ring out. It... cracks. As his hand touched the fence, they fired. One shot.

CANDY

I'd like to think they remember me. Now I've gone.

NINA

I have to think his last thought was of his family. I have to know that. It was a choice, his choice, and we accepted that. When you think of the way that so many... went on.

CANDY

The bloody bitch got my bed too.

NINA

I helped collect his body. The guard, my guard, allowed us to prepare him for the... pile. He took a huge risk, doing that. I took the shirt off the body and washed it. He was the tailor. It was his shirt that I made into the bib.

CANDY

Nuffinks sacred. We used to chat through the night, and now that cow and her little knob jockey rule the roost.

NINA

The bib that... joins them. That makes sense, yes? I made that bib. Of course I wondered what became of that baby.

CANDY

When I watch them now on TV, I can see it's all changed.

NINA

After the war. When we made... reparation. I visited the centre in the old camp. They help you find people.

CANDY

As far as I'm concerned they can all go rot in hell.

NINA

It's remarkable how people help. So I looked for him. Many people saw kindness in the guards. They weren't animals.

CANDY

I never want to see them again.

NINA

I found the guard. And his wife. Their baby was healthy, and strong. A son. Grown up. They remembered his bib!

CANDY

I'm not sour. No sour grapes. I mean I'm out now, aren't I? In the real world. The press was all over me like a rash, and my fella, he cried, the big boofhead.

NINA

Another family! Enjoying their freedom. Freedom of... expression. We're all families, in some way.

CANDY

I still say they're all tossers. I don't care who wins. I say what I want, no one can stop me.

NINA

Many guards were shot, for disobeying. It was all about pitting people against each other. You have to... imagine those who designed the system. Why they would do that?

CANDY

Especially her. The bitch. Tossers. I never want to her them again.

NINA

I mean, a guard. The common man. He has no means to rebel, or question authority.

(wonderment, hopeful, trusting)

Except... chocolate. People are... just people.

CANDY

(drops the empty Bounty wrapper)

Unless they call me back. I'm just saying. You never know. I think what I want, no one can stop me. Freedom, right?

(Curtain)