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# THE MAN IN THE ATTIC

by Timothy Daly

EXTRACT

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77 Salamanca Place Hobart  
7004 Tasmania Australia

[admin@australianplays.org](mailto:admin@australianplays.org)  
<http://australianplays.org>  
Tel +61 3 6223 4675  
Fax +61 3 6223 4678

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## INFORMATION ON THE PLAY

**Time and Setting:** Elmshorn, a small town in the north of Germany, between Bremen and Hamburg, in the months leading up to the end of World War II and the Occupation Period in the American sector; that is, April- November, 1945.

The action alternates between the Moller's living room and their attic.

## CHARACTERS

1. Anna Moller..... Early to mid-30s.
2. Herman Moller..... Mid- to Late-40s.
3. Frau Schorrer..... Early 50s.
4. Daniel Blickman ..... Early 40s.

## NOTE TO THE READER

Not long ago, when in Germany, I came across a brief reference to an amazing true story from World War II: that a Jewish man, taken in by a couple in the north of Germany, was sheltered and fed by them until the end of the War. But there was more: the absolutely true twist was that, driven by poverty and need, the couple made a decision *not* to tell the Jewish man that the War was over. So he remained in his attic 'shelter' for months afterwards, still believing he was being kept 'safe from Hitler'.

That was the only information I obtained, but it fired my imagination, and the result you see in front of you. I had to invent much, but I hope that it adds to the original incident.

In preparation for the play's Australian premiere in our 2010 season, I am currently in communication with the Simon Wiesenthal Centre regarding this story. But in the interim, I have since learned that there was a *second* incident quite similar to this—in Poland, where the Jew was kept in a cellar—for several years! That couple was later tried, and went to prison.

This play, then, rather than being the exact replication of one incident, is a homage to all the imprisoned, the sheltered and 'protected' of that time, who whiled away a part of their lives in fear, uncertainty and boredom. I hope that this play, as well as being a powerful work of imagination, is also worthy act of respect to these 'hidden people'.

Timothy Daly  
2007-06-06

# THE MAN IN THE ATTIC

## **PART 1**

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### **1.**

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**Darkness.**

*On the floor below, a WOMAN has entered.*

**THE WOMAN:**            This is a true story.

*A Man is lying unconscious in an upstairs attic. He is The Jew. He wakes up. Tries to get up. Faints and lies still.*

It happened in April. At the start of Spring.  
After six years of war. After six years of hell on earth--- when a stranger arrived. I was looking for berries. In the heart of the forest. I found him instead.

This is a true story.

### **2.**

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**What the Man Found.**

*A MAN is going through a wallet. He shows the Woman the wallet.*

**THE MAN:**            He's a Jew. You brought us a Jew!

*He goes to a wall-phone.*

**THE WOMAN:**            What if they saw me?

THE MAN: Who saw you?

THE WOMAN: No one!...I think.

THE MAN: Why did you even bring him here?

THE WOMAN: I was looking for food! So we don't starve!  
Can't we just let him go?

THE MAN: If we do that, and they find him, they'll  
ask who found him. Who helped him.

THE WOMAN: That's all I did...I found him.

**3.**  
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**What the Woman Said.**

THE WOMAN: This is a true story.

*The Woman moves closer to the fire-place.*

Can you hear me?... Herr Blickman?

*Upstairs, in the attic, the Jew has regained consciousness.*

THE JEW: Who is it just spoke to me?

THE WOMAN: I'm the woman who found you. Have you  
eaten? There's food there.

THE JEW: May I ask how I got up here?

THE WOMAN: We carried you up there.

THE JEW: May I come down now?

THE WOMAN: This room can be seen from the street  
outside.

THE JEW: When you found me...Was there anyone else?

THE WOMAN Come nearer the chimney. There's a brick been removed.

THE JEW: When you found me...Was there anyone else?

THE WOMAN: There was no one else.

4.  
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### **What the Jew Said.**

THE JEW: This is a true story.

My brother escaped with me. Max. A farmer was hiding us, in his cellar. But we had to leave there, in the middle of the night. They were chasing us. So we split up when we got to the forest. And that's when I lost sight of him. If you do hear anything—about Max, I mean.

THE WOMAN: You'll be safe up there. We're at the end of the street. There's only one person lives next to us. But her husband is very high up in the Party. And she's very nosey.

THE JEW: And you won't report me?

THE WOMAN I promise.

THE JEW: You're very kind to me. A total stranger.

THE MAN Time to talk business.

THE WOMAN I'm sorry to raise this...There'll be some expenses.

THE JEW: I can pay you.

*The Jew realises his wallet is gone.*

THE WOMAN There will be expenses.

THE MAN: He's got more money. They always have.

THE WOMAN: It's going to be expensive, er—

THE MAN: "Hiding you."

THE WOMAN Feeding you.

THE MAN: "And the danger."

THE JEW: May I ask how you know my name?

THE WOMAN: My husband—found your papers. They were in your pocket.

THE JEW: And they must have fallen out. Along with the money I had. And my work-tools. They've gone too.

THE WOMAN: There was no money, Herr Blickman.

*The Woman picks up a leather or suede pouch.*

But we did find some tools.

*The Woman puts the pouch into a BUCKET in the fire-place. She pulls on ropes and the bucket disappears up the chimney.*

And they're coming up now.

THE MAN: There's a war on.

THE WOMAN: We'll do what we can for you. We'll feed you, and do all your washing. But anything else—you'll have to amuse yourself. I'll

bring you some reading material. And I've put the tools in the bucket.

THE JEW: Do you have something broken? I can fix almost anything. I'm a jeweller and watch-maker by trade. I can help you.

THE WOMAN: We can help each other.

THE MAN *(to attic)* It's thirty-five Reichsmark. The rent, I mean. You take it or leave it. And you don't make a sound. And you stay up there, day and night. And you don't speak to us, unless we speak first. Do you understand that?

THE JEW: But— what about nature? A man has to eat, Then a short time afterwards...

THE MAN: There's a chamber-pot up there. If you pour it down through the gutter-pipe, it'll get washed away. And I've rigged up a pulley-system, for your food to come up in. Do you see it?

*The Jew opens a metal door attached to the chimney column. He takes the metal bucket out.*

THE JEW: But surely, with a trap-door, I can just—

THE MAN: No, you can't. Because I've just nailed it up. If anyone searches, they'll think it's unused. It's safer, that way. Do you understand?

THE JEW: I thank you—Herr Landlord. I'm happy. Like a private suite.

THE WOMAN: We could put up a curtain?

THE MAN: And then they'd ask what the curtain is for.

THE JEW: Herr Landlord? I thank you. For saving me.  
Both of you.

5.  
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### Stock-take 1

THE JEW: An inventory of goods held in the attic of  
Hermann and Anna Moller, Number 6  
Heldenstrasse, Ehrenfurht, in the year and  
month of April, 1945....

Item: One table, with uneven leg, suitable  
for writing in short bursts of no more than  
fifteen minutes.

*In the living room below, the Woman ticks off items from a small  
notebook.*

THE WOMAN: *(Checks her list)* Check.

THE JEW: Item: One box, containing various  
implements, most of them broken, all of  
them old. *(To himself)* None of them useful.

THE WOMAN: Check.

THE JEW: Two books. One, *“A History of Germany,  
Suitable for use in infants schools, by way  
of its easy vocabulary and simplified  
concepts.”*

THE WOMAN: Herr Blickman---

THE JEW: The second, Fichte’s *“Introduction to  
Astronomy: A Primer for Interested  
Amateurs. With special emphasis on the  
constellations visible in the Northern Sky”*

THE WOMAN:            You don't have to do this.

THE JEW:                Yes. I do.

*The Jew resumes his stock-taking.*

One hat-box, minus the hat.

THE WOMAN:            *(Checks list)* Check.

*Taking a covering off something, the Jew has discovered a full-sized mannequin (a dressmaker's dummy).*

THE JEW:                One mannequin, suitable for use as a dress-maker's dummy.

THE WOMAN:            Check.

THE JEW:                It's April. And the War goes on. Is that correct?

*The Woman doesn't respond.*

Check.

**6.**

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### **Night-bombing 1**

THE WOMAN:            A bombing raid is almost impossible to fully describe. It can only be lived through.

*Lights change: the hellish concatenation of air raid sirens, bombs, the whistle of falling incendiary devices, the swirl and swish of searchlights as houses crumble, the whoosh of uprooted trees, and the screeching of life in various forms as it is being extinguished: a veritable acoustic Guernica.*

*The sound gradually fades. Lights change.*

7.  
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**The Brand-new Watch.**

THE JEW: Frau Landlady?... Is that you?... That was a close one.

THE WOMAN: There'll be more soon. There'll be lots more.

THE JEW: Do you think we're going to lose this war?

THE WOMAN: Don't *ever* talk like that! Not even in private.

THE JEW: I couldn't sleep, what with all the bombs going off. So I fixed your watch. It's in the fireplace, all carefully wrapped-up...

*The Woman goes to fire-place, and inside the metal bucket, finds a small, cloth bundle.*

Can you find it?

*The Woman unwraps the bundle. It's her watch.*

There's a six-month guarantee on the repair. I'd give you longer, but you can't get the staff.

*The Woman puts the watch on.*

THE WOMAN: It's working!

THE JEW: Do you think I do rubbish?

THE WOMAN: I bought this in Hamburg. Before the war.

THE JEW: I know this.

THE WOMAN: How do you know?