

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



# Black Hands / Dead Section

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by Van Badham

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EXTRACT

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**Scene:** Another country, 1967-1977.

**Characters:**

RUDI, *a student leader*

BENNO, *a student activist*

TOMMY, *a student activist*

GENIE, *a student activist*

RECTOR of the Free University of Berlin

IRMGARD, *a student activist*

JAN-CARL, *a student activist*

EDELGARD, *a student activist*

“BOMMI”, *a communard*

“FROG”, *a student activist. Petra’s boyfriend*

INGRID, *a student activist*

REPORTER #1

ASTRID, *an activist, sister of Thorwald*

PETRA, *an activist. Frog’s girlfriend*

DIETER, *a communard*

GUDRUN, *a student activist*

IRENE, *a youth activist*

RAINER, *a communard*

HOLGER, *a young filmmaker*

INTERVIEWER

MEDIA COMMENTATOR #1

MEDIA COMMENTATOR #2

ULRIKE, *a journalist. Klaus’ wife*

HORST, *a lawyer*

ANDY, *an activist*

KLAUS, *an editor. Ulrike’s husband*

Horst SOHNNLEIN, *an actor*

THORWALD, *a student activist. Astrid’s brother*

Josef BACHMANN, *a housepainter*

COP #1

NURSE #1

JUDGE #1

State PROSECUTOR

KARL, *a mechanic and activist*

MONIKA, *Horst's secretary*

BEATE, *an activist*

GEORGE Linke, *a librarian*

PRISON SECURITY #1

PRISON SECURITY #2

COP #2

COP #3

ABU HASSAN, *Palestinian Camp Commandant*

ACHMED, *Abu Hassan's Deputy*

Horst HEROLD, *chief of investigative police*

Jens BROCKMANN, *assistant to Herold*

THE MINISTER of the Interior

LANDLORD

DR Wolfgang HUBER, *lecturer in Psychiatry at the University of Heidelberg*

MARGRIT, *one of Dr Huber's patients*

SUSANNE, *one of Dr Huber's patients*

GERHARD, *one of Dr Huber's patients*

JUDGE #2

BANK MANAGER

REPORTER #2

REPORTER #3

TEACHER

Klaus CROISSANT, *an RAF lawyer*

Marielouise BECKER, *an RAF lawyer*

Otto SCHILY, *an RAF lawyer*

JUDGE #3

JUDGE FOTH

VOLKER, *court-appointed assisting defence counsel*

Holocaust SURVIVOR

Hans Heinz HELDMANN, *court-appointed defence counsel*

Prison DOCTOR

Hans-Martin SCHLEYER, *Head of the West German Employers' Association*

NURSE #2

FRAU SCHLEYER, *Schleyer's wife*

FRAU ENSSLIN, *Gudrun's mother*

*Also: Cops and riot cops, court personnel, prison guards, journalists/press corps, Palestinians, line-up girls, force-feeders.*

## Prologue

*Light illuminates RUDI, mid-speech, at a lectern in a university, addressing a gathering of students, academics and the public at a conference/teach-in opposing the war.*

**RUDI:** ... Let us make ourselves, then, manifestly clear: this invasion by the United States, and some of her allies, of an impoverished third-world nation, has not been made as a result of an attack on the United States nor an attack upon those allies. While it's intellectually convenient – and even, sometimes, fun – to suggest that American military involvement in this war is spurious, a maverick act of a cowboy President, it's wrong. To presume this war is being fought for foreign resources the United States already has and controls is also wrong. What the United States is fighting in this war is not a hostile or reluctant resource market – it's not a state, not a nation, nor a people – it's not really even the radical ideology we're told we must destroy in order to preserve our freedoms. The United States is fighting for nothing less than the project of imperialism. No threat to her sphere of influence can be tolerated, no matter how limited the conflict, how civil the war, how tin-pot the dictator.

The issue is not democracy, nor dictatorship – a quick scan of the regimes America actively supports is littered with pretenders to democracy, opposers of democracy, shibboleths and Shahs. The issue is refusal to co-operate – anywhere, for any reason. Refusal from an impoverished, divided Eastern nation has brought about the wrath of the wealthiest, most powerful nation that history has ever known. Why? I put to you the sheer size of the US invasion reveals how weak the US military-industrial complex perceives its own system to be. At the heart of US imperialism – and let's call it what it is, the capitalist system – there are no red, white and blue veins pumping blood into the values of liberty – the central principle of the capitalist system is exploitation, by the rich of the poor, by the few of the many. The environment is violently exploited for resources. The labour classes are violently exploited through dehumanising physical work. They're kept in check by us – the indoctrinated middle class. If we refuse – if we seize that concept "democracy" rather than mouth it – there are cops to greet us with water cannons on the street, batons, beatings, surveillance, arrests. If the system cannot rule us through manipulation, it will own us through fear.

Of course, we're lucky: we live in the West. We're white. For other nations and races there are B-52s, and cluster bombs, sponsored coups, assassinations, Agent Orange and napalm. There are more invasions, and this war, and the next one.

If we believe in moral and intellectual freedom – if we value spiritual and even physical survival, ladies and gentlemen – we are compelled to fight the system of exploitation, fight its structures, fight its agents. I put to you – and I put it tentatively, as if I were a man stepping onto a lightless path – that as our refusal will be met by violence we must no longer be repressed through fear of violence, but take that beating and shout out our resistance in the only language the system understands. Disruption. Disorder! Revolt! We can and must be the candle that not only flickers but ignites all around it!

**ACT ONE: “Destroy That Which Destroys You”**

**Scene 1:** *Student protestors swarm over the stage – they have successfully occupied the Chancellery of the Free University of Berlin.*

**RUDI:** Everyone, we’ve hit the jackpot. The University have already issued a media release and we have been condemned!

*Cheers. BENNO runs in.*

**BENNO:** The rector’s moving!

**TOMMY:** Everybody get those phones off the hook, stop / what you’re doing.

**GENIE:** / Stop, everybody stop and gather!

*Some twitching movements, but silence. The RECTOR appears at the doorway. He has an assistant taking notes and two cops with him.*

**RECTOR:** My favourite students...

**ALL STUDENTS:** Good evening, Herr Magnificence!

**RECTOR:** What’ve you done to my office? Look at this –

**INGRID:** The two monkeys stay outside.

**RECTOR:** I’m here not in my official capacity but as a private person. I have no scepter of authority to wield –

**IRMGARD:** The cops stay at the door, you hear our demands. You go.

*Cheers.*

**RECTOR:** I’m a peaceful and reasonable man and I’m willing to negotiate peacefully and reasonably and I don’t understand why you kids go to all this trouble

when my door is always open. I should speak to your tutors – they're clearly not giving you enough work. We went through this all last month.

**JAN-CARL:** Since last month, the situation hasn't changed.

**RECTOR:** You want the world changed overnight –

**TOMMY:** Student control of student affairs!

*Cheers.*

**RECTOR:** I can give you no more than is in my power to give. If you want to attend a Utopian university, you are within your rights / to emigrate to Utopia.

**RUDI:** / *(reading)* We demand that the University remove from staff former Nazi academics, 2.) the University broaden course diversity and improve campus facilities, 3.) students be given majority positions on all governing boards of the university and 4.) that the University release, forthwith, a public statement condemning the war and the US government for the murder of the innocent civilians of a –

**RECTOR:** This is an academic office, not the press unit for a student club,

**IRMGARD:** This is an institution of behavioural control and indoctrination!

**RECTOR:** - that affords you the freedom to express the views you hold. You kids are growing up in a period of incredible prosperity – funded by American investment. You're so privileged, / looking at futures of well –

**EDELGARD:** / Maybe we don't want to ascend the capitalist meritocracy.

*Cheers.*

**RUDI:** - We won't ignore the deficiencies of the education system that maintains employment of Nazis because it won't employ Marxists.

**RECTOR:** Rudi, *you* are tutoring here –

**ALL STUDENTS:** Nazis out! Nazis out! Nazis out!

**RECTOR:** *(to RUDI)* You know – you personally know / there are proper channels within the administration for you to pursue and advance –

*/ BOMMI enters on a bicycle, smoking a cigar.*

**BOMMI:** Advance up channels?! Thank GOD I brought my phallic symbol!

*Someone honks the bicycle horn twice, while BOMMI puts a cigar in his mouth.*

**RECTOR:** Why does everything have to be turned into a carnival?

**FROG:** Because the carnival, traditionally, has inverted social hierarchies therefore, by its very nature, is revolutionary.

**BOMMI:** Anyone wanna cigar? *(sharing them out)*

**RECTOR:** They're my cigars.

**BOMMI:** Sorry, comrade – your cigars have been collectivised!

**RECTOR:** Any concerns you may still wish addressed on Monday morning, I will meet a delegation of one, in this office at nine. Now, please, remove your paraphernalia and get out of my office before there's an incident.

**RUDI:** If you want us to leave, you'll have to use force.

**RECTOR:** Can't you kids go to café or something? Can't you get your kicks from the drive-in anymore...?

**INGRID:** With respect, Magnificence, it's not 1950.

**RECTOR:** When I was your age, university was seen as a *privilege* –

**IRMGARD:** When you were our age, you invaded Poland.

*The RECTOR and his crew are leaving.*

**JAN-CARL:** Magnificence, I have a statement to read out.

**RECTOR:** I will hear it at nine on Monday –

*Crowd: let him speak, c'mon sir, don't be a turd, etc.*

**JAN-CARL:** “As a third year student of the university I wish to state the following. The university’s interest is not in education. It’s in brainwashing – you’re trying to *indoctrinate me* into becoming a cog in the capitalist money-making machine. I’m sick of it. If that means my degree ends here –

**RECTOR:** Have it your way, champion – I’ll see you serving burgers at MacDonald’s. *(to the cops)* The ringleaders are him *(pointing at RUDI)*, him *(pointing at BOMMI)* and her *(pointing at IRMGARD)*. Arrest all of them, hold those three for questioning and charge the one on the bicycle for theft. *(Looking at the cigar)* And for arson. Goodnight, kids!

*More police have arrived. As the RECTOR sweeps out of the room, the cops move in. Chaos, beatings, students flee. Over the top of this...*

**Scene 2:** *Outside the Berlin Opera House. A journalist reports a news article while students tussle with police and try to maintain a picket.*

**JOURNALIST:** Chaos on the streets outside the Opera House tonight, but it's hardly Wagnerian hysteria, nor insurgent classical music fans outraged at class opera-pression. It's the city's university students - after the recent occupation by students of a university chancellery ended in several arrests and accusations of police violence, students are still prepared to swap their late mornings and café sessions for placards, chanting and the long arm of the law. The cause they're fighting is the city's hosting of the visiting Shah of Iran. Amidst accusations that protesting is nothing more than a social fad, we asked some of the protestors why they were here.

**RUDI:** Our city's supporting the visit of an autocrat and a dictator whose nation is infamous for barbaric human rights abuses!

**ASTRID:** I think it's really important to protest this –

**PETRA:** It's great. Everyone I know is here.

**FROG:** Just because some governments want to stick their hands up his arse and call him a puppet doesn't mean we should.

**DIETER:** Who is he? Some Persian guy? I don't give a shit. I'm just here to get laid.

**RUDI:** The Shah locks up and tortures dissidents in Iran – this is a sight he doesn't often let himself see.

*The media people disperse. It's a messy scene – cluttered from earlier scuffles.*

*GUDRUN scribbles on a placard. GUDRUN has her newly-born infant son strapped to her back in a kind of papoose. ASTRID stands in the middle of the stage, trying to make sense of what she's witnessing. IRENE and PETRA are also making placards.*

**TOMMY:** *(with placard reading "Shah Out!")* What do you think?

- BENNO:** There's an American activist who believes the best slogans are incomplete. Instead of writing "Stop the War", you put "Stop the – " to force the reader to make the logical conclusion.
- TOMMY:** Are you thirsty?
- BENNO:** Yes.
- TOMMY:** Why are we still here? Everyone else's at the pub.
- BENNO:** Someone's got to keep watch. The police might try something.
- TOMMY:** They're probably heading to the pub as well. The other night we struck a bunch of them at a place on the Ku-damm. Walked in, freaked out – tall, broad, lots of cropped hair –
- BENNO:** Police?
- TOMMY:** Couple of beers, everyone's a family. We were hugging and singing round the pool table.
- ASTRID:** - The cops are moving! – They're changing the guard, or exchanging –
- IRENE:** - we've got to regroup –
- BENNO:** Everyone's gone down the road!
- ASTRID:** We've got to reassemble the picket! *(to GUDRUN)* Get the others!
- They run off.*
- BENNO:** Do your placards.
- TOMMY:** It's taking too long! You don't need a thesis on a stick. Just put "OUT" in great big letters.
- BENNO:** *(looking up)* They're bringing out reserves -

**PETRA:**       Something bad is going to happen...

**BENNO:**       It's a demo! It's us against the state and the state wants to win!

**TOMMY:**       C'mon – you can stand a bit of pushing and shoving.

*ASTRID, GUDRUN and the others run back in.*

**IRENE:**       Everyone! Make a line!

**BENNO:**       Take a placard!

*PETRA begins a chant: "Shah – out! Shah – out! Shah – out!" – softly – the others join her. The line forms. The placards read "US Puppet", "Dictator!", "Killer! Torturer!"*

**BENNO:**       A state maintained by violence is not a democracy! Stand for democracy!  
Stand for - !

*The cops attack – roaring – TOMMY is one of the first to be grabbed. BENNO furiously fights the cop who is holding TOMMY by the hair and belting him in the face. A gun lands on the ground. A cop grabs it.*

**BENNO:**       *(Screaming at the cop hitting his friend)* GET OFF HIM, YOU MONGREL!

*The cop with the gun holds it shaking in his hand as he points it at BENNO. The shaking gun fires. There are screams, people instinctively hit the ground. BENNO's body slumps to the ground. PETRA lands on him. Protestors try to flee. The cops don't know what to do.*

**IRENE:**       GET OUT OF HERE! EVERYONE GET OUT OF HERE!

**ASTRID:**       Murderers! MURDERERS!

*An officer belts ASTRID in the mouth. Cops flee in all directions. Protestors flee. TOMMY leaps on BENNO's tumbled body. So does PETRA. His stomach gushes blood*

**TOMMY:** Benno!

**PETRA:** *(trying to cradle his head, hysterical)* HELP US! SOMEBODY!  
SOMEBODY!

*BENNO groans.*

**TOMMY:** Just hold tight, mate. Just hold tight. There'll be – there'll be someone –

**BENNO:** *(bleeding to death)* I don't understand. *(beat)* I'm a pacifist.

*The baby on GUDRUN's back cries. She's desperately trying to shield it from seeing any of this. It is the only sound before...*

**Scene 3:** *In the SDS organizing centre. The baby is still crying. Students have hastily reformed into a group beginning a meeting at the SDS organizing centre. People filter in. ASTRID, GUDRUN, GENIE, FROG, JAN-CARL, IRMGARD, RUDI, BOMMI, HOLGER, INGRID, RAINER, DIETER and EDELGARD will all be here.*

*Enter JAN-CARL, brandishing a newspaper.*

**JAN-CARL:** I can't believe it –

**FROG:** My Dad read it to me over breakfast.

**RUDI:** How much longer do we want to wait before we start this meeting?

**HOLGER:** Read it out.

**JAN-CARL:** *(reading from the newspaper)* “First they were kicking, then they pulled out their knives – ”

**GENIE:** The police didn't have knives.

**JAN-CARL:** They're talking about us! / It's in here!

**GENIE:** / They're WHAT?!

**HOLGER:** Everyone shut up so we can hear this!

**JAN-CARL:** “They pushed the officer into a yard, surrounded him, and kicked him down. When they pulled out their knives, the officer fired his gun in self-defense. The 26-year-old student was a known troublemaker and it is thought that only the actions of the quick-thinking sergeant prevented greater violence.”

**GENIE:** Lying bastards!

**EDELGARD:** He was a committed Protestant and pacifist.

**JAN-CARL:** *(giving the paper to RUDI)* Read the article next to it.

**RUDI:** “Loyal Citizens, Do the Police a Favour and Shoot this Man”.

**FROG:** Shoot who?!

**RUDI:** Me.

**GENIE:** They wrote that?!

**RUDI:** I'll be fine – it's a terrible photo.

*A bustle. BOMMI and RAINER enter.*

**BOMMI:** Have you *seen* the fucking *paper*, man?!

**GENIE:** Maybe we should discuss this in the meeting proper...

**EDELGARD:** Can we open a window?

**JAN-CARL:** Evil, lying Nazi cunts!

**GENIE:** Guys, *shut up*. Who's facilitating?

**FROG:** Genie, I'll do it.

**RAINER:** I will.

**EDELGARD:** Can someone please open a window?

**GENIE:** Are there any women interested in facilitating this meeting?

**GUDRUN:** Doesn't this all seem a bit pointless to everyone?

**RUDI:** What do you mean?

**GUDRUN:** That boy's dead –

**GENIE:** And we are *trying* to formulate a response.

**GU DRUN:** We're sitting in a fucking circle!

**GENIE:** Give me the pad. I will facilitate. Put your names on an attendance list as it's passed around. Everyone knows the process.

**ALL:** Yes.

**GENIE:** We'll start in open session. If you wish to speak, raise your hand.

*EDELGARD's hand goes up.*

**EDELGARD:** Can people not smoke in here?

**FROG:** That's all you've got to say?!

**GENIE:** Speaking list!

**EDELGARD:** I can't fucking breathe!

*Grunts, discontent.*

**GENIE:** Everyone! We have a process!

*RUDI's hand goes up.*

**RUDI:** I think we've got to change our tactics in response to the new situation. They're now shooting at us and we have to formulate an ideological and practical response.

**JAN-CARL:** And they've banned placards, slogans and any visible form of street protest.

**BOMMI:** No fucking way!

**GENIE:** People! Stick to the list.

*JAN-CARL puts up his hand amongst hubbub.*

**JAN-CARL:** So our non-violent strategies are somewhat curtailed.

*RAINER, FROG, BOMMI and ASTRID's hands go up. GENIE takes them all down.*

**RUDI:** Our non-violent strategies are only curtailed by our imagination.

**BOMMI:** Fuck non-violence!

**GENIE:** Bommi, shut up!

**EDELGARD:** Stick to the process - !

**BOMMI:** You stick to the fucking process and they'll fucking shoot you and me and everyone else.

**GENIE:** I realise this is difficult, please make an effort.

**RAINER:** *(on the list)* I propose that we change our tactics from peaceful protest to one of open confrontation.

*A hand goes up from INGRID.*

**INGRID:** Point of clarification?

**RAINER:** Instead of lying there and getting shot we defend ourselves through whatever mean necessary.

**INGRID:** Violence.

**RAINER:** If it's necessary.

*BOMMI claps while other people shout out "no way! That's fucked!" etc.*

**GENIE:** Is there any dissent to this proposal?

*A bunch of hands go up.*

**GENIE:** I'm prioritising putting women at the top of the speaking list. / Astrid.

**ASTRID:** / This has happened because they're frightened. We've been flexing our muscle on the streets and that's provoked what seems like a disproportionate response.

**GUDRUN:** A boy is dead!

**ASTRID:** - Which shows that the government are worried that this movement could grow! Demonstrations are attracting more and more people – not just students anymore. If trade unions start supporting us, the government won't be able to ignore our demands! The shooting is to scare people away!

**GENIE:** Frog.

**FROG:** Any hope we ever had of pressuring the government ended when the major parties formed a coalition.

**ASTRID:** We have to build a mass movement!

**FROG:** The tactics have got to change! We walk out into the street with placards, peace and kum-bay-ahs they'll shoot us where we stand! We have to protect ourselves –

**HOLGER:** By staying home?

**FROG:** By fighting back!

*Uproar.*

**EDELGARD:** Why can't we do it the Gandhi way?