

eagle

Siegfried Adler leaned back from his typewriter and thought about names. He needed a name for a deeply misguided character, whose perversity and moral weakness led her to obstruct the salvation of Europe. He had considered using a Jewish name, to show corruption and disconnection from the life-force. But the point of his Tragedy was that the Jewish-Christian fungus had become so deeply embedded in those times that a German, a purebred well-brought-up daughter of the people, could fall prey to its seductive powers. He needed a name as eloquent as his own, which spoke of the peaceful skies of a victorious nation, in which the eagle could spread its noble cruel wings.

“Anna” might do, an old Christian name. “Anna Fromm” would have the right resonances. In the first act Anna reveals her irresponsible sentimentality during a quarrel with her uncle over a deformed puppy that she was supposed to have drowned but had instead raised secretly and then released into the pack, ruining twenty years of careful breeding. Her uncle asks her if she would be so thoughtless about the future of her family or her people as she has been about his projects. She resolves not to be, but is not sure she can stick to her resolve. When her uncle asks “If an enemy came to kill me, and all that could save me was the pitchfork in your hand, would you really hesitate to use it?” all she can reply is “Oh Uncle, I hope I could, I hope from the depth of my heart, but it is hope and not certainty.”

The second act begins with a knock at the door. Anna, alone in the house, answers it to find Hannah, a Jewess whom Anna had known at school.

"You must know why I'm here" says Hannah. "They've caught all my family. Had I not been delayed coming home from the market they would have found me too. May I come in?"

Anna knows that Hannah cannot cross the threshold unless she invites her. Yet as she feels the intensity of Hannah's gaze her resolve weakens and she knows she is on the point of uttering the fatal words. In desperation she turns her back to the doorway, her fingers on a nearby table to steady herself. "Stay behind me, enemy" she cries "I cannot even see you". "But you know I'm here" says Hannah, touching Anna with her jewel-laden hand "you'll feel my presence even if they take me away."

Anna whirls around, with the vase in her hand, and throws it at Hannah. The vase cuts Hannah slightly on the cheek and, seeing the blood, Anna bursts into tears. While Anna's eyes are clouded Hannah smears the blood all over her own face. Anna is horrified at what she sees and Hannah takes advantage of her reaction. "What you see is nothing" she whispers "to what they'll do when they catch me." Anna collapses against the doorframe, feebly gesturing permission to enter.

When Siegfried had finished drafting act two he paused. The final act would not be easy to get right. Hannah's hold over Anna would become ever tighter, as she sucked the resolve from her veins. The uncle would die as a result, and at the inevitable moment of discovery Anna would be doomed by Hannah's depiction, in a fruitless attempt to save her own skin, of her as having coerced Hannah into the house. Yet Anna is still the central character of the play, and the audience

must keep some sympathy for her. They must see her weakness and her lack of focus, while still feeling that she has a core of true spirit. This would take a lot of careful plotting and some well-judged dialogue. One scene began to form in Siegfried's mind. Anna and Hannah have been together in the house for months, and Hannah has suggested that they exchange clothes so that she can go outside.

Hannah: We're the same height, and have the same colour hair. Anyone who doesn't know you well will just assume that it is me. And I'll have your documents in case of trouble.

Anna: But you are not me. Anyone could tell, from the way you walk, the words you use. And I do not want people thinking I talk that way, or even that it is me when it is not.

Hannah: Anna, Hannah, we're all the same. We all want the same things, life above all.

Anna: Yes, life, my life, that's what you want. You are a life-thief, because I am really alive and you can never be. Well, I am me and whatever you do that is something you can never be.

Good, that's almost right: the moment when Anna is near to escaping, by seeing her own individual will as something precious that could be lost. She sees the trap in Hannah's rhetoric of sameness, how it mixes diamonds with mud. But Anna does not escape, and the hardest bit will be to describe how she is too weak to follow what she has suddenly seen. Siegfried turned away from the work table and went to find his climbing boots. Enough for one day.

