



Source: Martin Chulov, 'One Gaza gate opens to future, another locks in past', *The Australian online*, 09/03/07.

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Lusitania née Ginzburg-then-Weibrecht-again-Ginzburg sits in the closet holding her little brother, Moishe, once called Bismarck, for safekeeping during the War. 'I will give you a picture from when we hid in plain sight in Villefranche-sur-Mer that will explain why you must remove the last part of you that is Bismarck, so you'll be Moishe again.'

In this picture Lusie and younger sister Mina crouch behind a warehouse on a rickety pier. It is that darkest hour before dawn; a cool mist thickly coats everything. Mina's nose is bleeding, her dress is torn, her thighs slick with semen which, mixed with her sweat, has begun to stink when she moves. She is slung low in a squat and holds down a large mass with all her might, even though it has been dead for an hour. She has never before held a dead man; she doesn't believe he is dead so she won't let go. The blood from her nose drips into a pool of blood not her own. It is the blood of the dead man, whose semen is still on her legs. She would wipe it off but she doesn't want to touch it. The pool of blood is what remains of the dead man's face. Lusie, too, is crouched, her shoulders hunched lower than her knees, arms working fast. She is in a man's white shirt, but stained dark red. She pries the man's eyes out with surprising dexterity, like she is deboning a fish. It's harder than she imagined, but the left one comes out in one piece, and she flings it into the water behind her. Mina wonders if the eye will float, but is afraid that if she opens her mouth to ask she will be sick. Lusie has taken them out because of something she read once. Certain American Indian nations believe that without the eyes the soul can't find its way to the spirit world, and she wants this particular soul to wander forever between Nothing and Worse-than-Nothing.

Lusitania quietly lays the knife along the side of her foot, and takes up a small hammer, the kind used to drive wedges of wood between larger objects. She reaches into the bloody pool with her free hand and pries the dead man's mouth open. It is harder than she thought; the body is already starting to stiffen, and she has to put the hammer down and use both hands to get it open far enough. She doesn't want Mina to have to touch him more than she has to, so instead of asking her to hold his mouth open, she wedges the knife in. The point of the blade sinks a few inches into the roof of his mouth, but stops eventually, and holds steady. Her workspace cleared, she sets to with the hammer, smashing as many teeth as she can at once. She does not expect it to sound the way it does, sad, small crunching, with no echo, little white pebbles dropping into a puddle without leaving a ripple. It takes time to get the molars to surrender. She has to go outside the mouth and pound on the cheek to loosen them. When she finally gets them free, she pulls

the knife out of his head and forces the lower jaw back into place by striking it with the hammer. When that doesn't work she stands up, feeling blood rush painfully back into her knee joints. She shakes her legs out and kicks the jaw shut with one sturdy black oxford. The noise is muted; there are no more teeth. She looks for water to wash her hands, but Mina reminds her that he is still in uniform.

'Burn his clothes,' Mina says, and clamps her mouth down in a protracted dry heave. Lusie strips the officer of his medals, hurling them into the water. They sink immediately. She realizes this is the only mistake she's made so far—those medals can be found and connected with the body, and then what will have been the point of knocking out his teeth? But she forces herself to move on. She cuts his uniform off with the knife and wraps it in her own bloody shirt. Now she is naked from the waist up. Some of the blood has seeped through to her skin. What hasn't already dried crusty brownish-black on her chest and shoulders chills her as the wind increases, signalling encroaching morning.

Naked, the dead officer is small, and glints bluish in the vanishing fog. His penis is fully retracted, wizened and shrivelled, buried deep in its foreskin. Lusie is taken aback. She has never really gotten a good look at an uncircumcised penis before. She laughs suddenly, and Mina looks up terrified that her sister has snapped. Lusie whispers to her as she points down at it, 'It's wearing a turtleneck.' They laugh the laughter of madness, but it's chaperoned by the mirth of surprise. That laugh and the sight of a missed wreath-shaped medal lying on the dock give Lusie an idea. She raises the medal like a coin and whispers to Mina, 'this is for Moishe.' Mina nods and smiles. Taking up the butcher knife, Lusie passes the medal around the dead SS captain. She puts it down and pulls the foreskin out as far as she can. Taking up the knife again she cuts and cuts until it comes off. Then she is holding in her right hand a piece of flesh that has shrunk to almost nothing now that it is detached from its body. This small object she stuffs in her front right pocket, it rests between a pack of cigarettes and a butane lighter.

Moishe looks saucer-eyed at Lusie, like an uncomprehending lemur. 'Am I going to die?' Their tiny world in the dark closet is all he wants.

'No, Moishe, but that's enough for one picture. Sleep now. When you wake you may have the other one. And something else, too.'

*Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Alexandra Keller.*