

The 1325 Key to Peace

A Comedy in One Act

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CHARACTERS

THE HON. Ivan PISTOL — Minister of Foreign Affairs.

GENERAL BULLIER — Canadian Chief of Staff.

MR. TYCOON — A prominent businessman.

FAITH — A member of the Canadian Voice of Women for Peace.

AMIRA — A woman from Roguestan.

GRACE — A nongovernmental supporter of the United Nations.

Author's Preface

All the stage's a world in this play as the implications of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 passed unanimously on October 30, 2000, are demonstrated. The three women in the PEACE ROOM occupy the WAR ROOM using the 1325 key to the surprise of the three men negotiating there.

This play was first performed on November 13, 2010, in Toronto at the 50th Anniversary celebration of the founding of the Canadian Voice of Women for Peace.

The role of the General was played by a short mustached woman in military uniform.

SCENE 1 — WAR ROOM

The stage is divided in two halves. On stage left is the WAR ROOM and on stage right is the PEACE ROOM labeled as such. A sign indicates that this is a meeting of the Canadian Voice of women for Peace to discuss United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325. The War Room has a world map on the wall and three men, one in military uniform, one in business attire and one in civil servant attire. There are 3 chairs but each person stands up to speak.

In the Peace Room there are three women sitting around a round table. One is in jeans and peace T-shirt, one in ordinary clothes, and one in the costume of her native land Roguestan.

The figures in the Peace Room remain frozen as the action starts in the War Room.

The men stand at attention as they sing the last two lines of “O Canada,” the national anthem.

Pistol — At ease, gentlemen. Do you know each other? General Bullier this is Mr. Tycoon and I’m Ivan Pistol. *(They shake hands)*

In my position as Minister of Foreign Affairs I have invited you to meet with me today to address the current crisis in a country called Roguestan. I greatly value the opinions of both of you as you represent the business interests and the military interests of Canada. I should tell you this is a secret meeting organized by the Prime Minister himself, although he will deny that. He denies most things these days. We need to decide how to deal with that little country and its protesters. Let me see now. Where exactly is it? *(All start looking over the map for it)*

General – Here I found it!

Pistol – Good! It doesn’t look too big. I’m hoping we can come to an agreement quickly. I have a tee-off time at 3 o’clock. So I ask you, what should we in the Department of Foreign Affairs be prepared to do?

General — There’s no need for Canada to worry. A look at the map shows that Roguestan is surrounded by American military bases. As an ally of a country with 735 bases we can look forward to permanent peace. No more terrorists, insurgents, or protesters with ugly signs, orange hair and painted faces.

Pistol — I agree, except that in Roguestan they've just had a big street protest. Our satellite shows hundreds of people wanting to topple our man – the one we've been supporting and sending arms to for years.

Tycoon — What's the matter with this place? What about a little gratitude for all we've done? Haven't we invested in their oil and gas? And now they want a new leader — a woman.

Pistol — Yes, a woman.

General — A woman! Have they gone nuts?

Pistol — She is campaigning on getting all foreign troops out. She doesn't understand geopolitics. If Roguestan goes the whole of Punjabiwocki will go. The Al Kidya and the Talibums will move in. I have an idea. We could organize a conference, but we don't have anyone who speaks Roguestani, not even our ambassador.

Tycoon — Oh, they can speak English alright; just speak louder. I don't think we need a conference. Negotiations are so tedious. The real problem is that we will lose our oil and gas investments. They'll want more in royalties. They'll refuse to let our mercenaries in there. We should at least send in enough force to guard the resources. Do they have any national troops?

Pistol — As far as we can tell they have about 4000 regulars and a few reserves.

General — Gentlemen, I think we have no choice. Better to go in now before the opposition gets stronger. We could mount a coalition with many more troops if necessary. Let's nip this thing in the bud and then get out. We'll call it Operation Over Easy, just like breaking a few eggs.

Tycoon — The fact that we have nuclear weapons to back us up will no doubt persuade them.

Pistol — Actually, Tycoon, Canada does not have nuclear weapons.

Tycoon — We don't? Well, we'd better get some right away. Why doesn't anyone ever tell me these things? If we have to surround the protesters and control them we can always use landmines.

Pistol — No, we can't do that either. Canada signed the Anti-personnel Landmines Treaty

General — These agreements are really making it hard to conduct a decent war. But we have the troops. I say let's go in.

Pistol — I don't think we can just start a military action without a debate in parliament.

General — You mean to say we have to wait ‘till that bunch gets their act together? It has to be a surprise or it won’t work. Shock and Awe shucks!

Tycoon — Don’t worry about Parliament. My lobby group can take care of that.

Pistol — We could ask the Pentagon what they think, we always do that. Also we have that UN agreement “Responsibility to Protect” Can we use that?

Tycoon — Of course we can. We’re protecting our global trade and preventing a nasty uprising. No telling how many lives will be saved.

Pistol — Then it’s agreed. We’ve thought about this long enough and anyway it’s nearly 3 o’clock. We’ll mobilize immediately. Thank you gentlemen. You’ve been a great help. *Actors freeze.*

SCENE 2 — PEACE ROOM

Faith — At our meeting of Voice of Women today we have a special guest all the way from Roguestan. Welcome to our group, Amira.

Amira — It’s such pleasure to meet women in Canada. Faith and Grace you have such nice names. I beg pardon my accent. When you sent the money for my ticket I so happy I thank V-ow.

Grace — We’re just so glad you could make it.

Amira — V-ow must be a rich group with many members. I thank all them. Canada is peaceful country and my country in such turmoil. Please help.

Grace — When we heard you were coming we asked one of our professors to tell us about Roguestan so that we could learn more about the situation. We have that report here but we want you who have lived there all your life to tell us what the problems are. Then we’ll see what we can do.

Amira — It’s terrible mess. Trouble began when we got loan from Interventional Monetary Fund ten years ago. You know about them?”

Faith — We sure do.

Amira — It was supposed to be big help. All our leaders told us it would get us out of poverty. But money went to building roads to help foreign companies steal our resources. The Prime Minister built a few government buildings and a big place for himself but not much for the people. As interest on IMF debt grew and grew we had to quit our family farms and grow things for export: grapes for wine, tea and coffee, peanuts, flowers, all things for rich people in other countries. Even this did not help us pay

off debt because all countries around us did same thing so the price we could get went down, down.

Faith — What happened to the farmers?

Amira — They had to sell their land and move to city looking for work. But there wasn't any work there either. We were told to attract tourists but they didn't come. Why would they? Who wants to visit a poor country of unemployed unhappy people? Roguestan is not on their map.

Grace — Tell us how the recent troubles started.

Amira — Our leaders kept promising us better life - life like we sometimes see on television. Do you have television and computers at home?

Grace — Yes, most of us do.

Amira — We only have electricity for one hour a day. You so lucky. Maybe I forget Roguestan and move here. What you say?

Grace — Yes, you could do that.

Faith — No. Think of how much your people need you.

Amira — I guess you're right. I can't be Canadian; I would miss Roguestan too much. Let me tell you the problem. Our leaders promised us schools and hospitals. Where are they? It's only lives of our leaders that get better. So people finally took to streets all carrying orange flags and demanding resignation of prime minister. But the military defended him and the demonstrators were attacked with tear gas, dogs, horses and clubs. My husband was put in jail. (*Women put arms around her*)

Faith — We have heard that our government is planning to send in troops to stop the protesting. They are calling your country an "evil Empire."

Amira — That so silly. We too small to be Empire and too busy to be evil.

Grace — They are using the excuse that the trouble is being caused by Al Kidya.

Amira — What is this Al Kidya? We don't know about that.

Faith — This is the name of a group of people who are called terrorists and don't like the actions of the United States. So they send in suicide bombers to kill innocent people.

Amira — What is this suicide bomber?

Faith — Some people, even some women, strap on explosives and blow themselves up along with other people.

Amira — That's terrible. We not allowed to commit suicide. God wouldn't like that so we don't have any of that in Roguestan. Our women's groups would know if that was happening.

Faith — So the protests are just against the present government, are they? What would you suggest to stop them?

Amira — Most important things to keep my people happy would be more schools, more doctors and hospitals, clean drinking water, good food and free elections. It's difficult because aid organizations not allowed in.

Faith — Do you think the protests would stop if those needs were met?

Amira — I'm sure they would stop especially if army supported the people. Army is made up of our poor people who join up just to get regular meals, a job and some respect.

Grace — Have your groups heard of United Nations Resolution 1325 passed 10 years ago by all the members of the Security Council?

Amira — No, I don't think so. We don't hear much about United Nations. Has resolution been translated into our language?

Faith — Not yet, I guess. The Resolution calls for the inclusion of women in all negotiations related to war and peace. We believe that when women are included the results will be better, more peaceful.

Grace — I believe there are negotiations going on right now in the next room. We should be part of that. Maybe we can change their minds about invading.

Amira — There are men in there?

Grace — Yes, of course.

Amira — How can you go in? You so beautiful they will look at you and want to marry you. What you say?

Faith and Grace — We will say No thanks!

Faith — Don't worry Amira we'll be right beside you. Now let's use our 1325 key and open the door to the War Room.

SCENE 3

Everyone together in the War Room. The women change the sign to "Peace Room"

General — Well, well, what do we have here?

Faith — We are a delegation on behalf of the people of Roguestan. I am Faith from the Canadian Voice of Women for Peace. This is Grace from the United Nations Peace-building Commission and Amira is from Roguestan.

Pistol — You're not supposed to be here.

Grace — Oh, but we are supposed to be here.

Pistol — How did you get in?

Grace — We used our 1325 key. It comes from the UN Security Council and says that women must be part of all peace and war negotiations. Isn't that what's happening here?

General — What's happening here is none of your business unless of course you're here to serve us coffee.

Grace — No, we're not here to serve coffee, we're here to help you. We have consulted experts on Roguestan and this representative of the women's movement there has explained what is wrong. So we have some suggestions for solving the crisis.

Pistol — Well, that's great except we don't want any suggestions, we have it all under control.

Faith — That's not true. The protests are getting bigger and bigger. So you better listen to us.

Amira — I think answers lie in providing more for ordinary people. We need clean water, schools, hospitals, more food and jobs. If that could happen there would be no more protests.

General — Well, that may be true but you have to be practical. Where would we get the money for those things?

Grace — You spend a great deal more right now on the military.

Pistol — Well, we have to do that. It's our role as partners of the United States. As for your suggestion, this is not the type of work we do. We don't build schools and hospitals.

Faith — No, not now, but you could learn. You could even train people in Roguestan to do the work.

General — That kind of work is not much fun.

Grace — But it's much safer and wouldn't it be good if the people were actually glad to see you helping them in their country?

General — You don't understand. This is not the type of equipment we have. We have planes, missiles, cluster bombs and bullets. And we're going to get some cool F-35s. I especially like those drones — they are so Darth

Vader. What will we do with all the equipment we have? It cost a lot of money you know.

Faith — You mean the type of equipment determines the policy?

Tycoon — Of course. In the military equipment is the most important thing.

Pistol — Our job has been set by the Pentagon and they say Al Kidya must be stopped wherever it is.

Grace — You have no evidence of Al Kidya in Roguestan.

Pistol — We don't need evidence. It's our policy. We give support to those we put in power and defend them against the terrorists.

Faith — Doesn't that make you the same as the terrorists?

General — Of course not. Some countries are evil and we are not.

Faith — What makes you think Roguestan is an evil power?

Tycoon — They haven't signed a Free Trade Agreement, and they are not a member of the World Trade Organization and their men wear beards.

Amira — We think those trade agreements would rob us of our resources and anyway we like men with beards. In fact we don't trust men without beards. Their faces are like bums of babies.

General — Never mind that stuff about beards. Don't forget Canada is a partner of the greatest nuclear power and so no one can oppose us anywhere in the world.

Grace — Do you mean you would use nuclear weapons on Roguestan?

General — No, no. We wouldn't actually use them.

Faith — Doesn't that mean they are useless?

General — Now you're trying to confuse me. As long as people think we might use them they're an important part of our defence. Can't you women understand that?

Grace — Who exactly are you defending against? Do you think little Roguestan is going to invade?

General — We have plans for every contingency. We, and our allies are prepared to fight one major and two minor wars at all times.

Faith — That takes a lot of our money.

Tycoon — Money doesn't matter. The government can borrow as much as it wants.

Grace — And are Canadians happy about how you spend their money?

Tycoon — We're not in the business of keeping people happy. At least a lot of people are employed making the equipment.

Faith — We think you need to change all that. Listen to us and you won't need all those cluster bombs, drones, nuclear weapons, mercenaries, and you will no longer be supporting dictators.

Pistol — I beg your pardon, we never support dictators. We are spreading democracy and good governance.

Grace — Except it hasn't worked out that way, has it? The people in Roguestan can see that you are part of the forces that are killing ordinary people, destroying the land with bombs and depleted uranium that causes health defects for generations. They used to welcome Canadians and would welcome them again if the policies were changed.

Pistol — We've heard enough from you. Come men we'll talk over here.

(The three men form a little group at one side).

Pistol — That woman they brought in must be lying. Look at how she is dressed. Our intelligence says there are suspicious-looking people in Roguestan. And CISIS is always right.

General — If she's lying then we'll get the truth out of her with torture.

Pistol — No, we can't do that, it's against the Geneva Accords.

General — I never could understand those cords; they really tie us up. I say we should stick to our guns. And speaking of guns I'd better frisk these women to check for weapons. *(Makes gestures of female body).*

Pistol — No, don't do that. The metal detector would have found any weapons on them.

Tycoon — You know what I think? We mustn't be seen to be listening to a bunch of women. What would the Pentagon say?

Pistol — Well, the US Secretary of State is a woman. And my mother is in a peace group called Voice of Women.

General — You never told us that!

Pistol — Let's do what we always do with women. We'll be polite and pretend to agree with them for now.

Tycoon — *(to the General)* Hey, Bullier what do you say we have a little drink together after this is over?

General — Don't ask.

Tycoon — Don't tell.

In the meantime the women have moved the furniture so that the square table is replaced with a round table from the former Peace Room and a bouquet of flowers is on it. The map is dotted with peace symbols and the 6 chairs are arranged around the table, but facing the audience. The men return.

Pistol — What have you done here? And why have you moved our furniture?

Faith — We know from experience that negotiations are best carried out in a circle where all are equal and we can see each other's faces. It's important to talk in a relaxed atmosphere. Take off your ties and shoes and sit down. Take a deep breath. Isn't that better?

Pistol — Ha, you're just trying to change our minds. I can tell you that will never happen. We are directed by rational thinking, not the dreams of a few women. And I must remind you it is time for my three o'clock appointment.

Faith — Oh we took care of that. We had your secretary cancel it.

Pistol — What! How dare you. Just because you have that key. We will change the locks!

Faith — That won't work with this key. Try taking your mind off the weapons, the soldiers, the marching bands and think about the women and children of Roguestan. Close your eyes for a minute and imagine you are visiting the country for the first time. A little child runs up to you and asks, "What are you doing?" You will say you're looking for terrorists. The child will say, "What are terrorists?" And you say they are people who want to kill other people. The child says, "What will you do if you find a terrorist?" You say, "We will kill them." The child asks, "How do you know if someone is a terrorist? Do they wear a special T-shirt? Are my parents terrorists?" Now open your eyes. (*Tycoon, Bullier and the General have been peeking during this*). The children will have so many questions. How many children do you have?"

Pistol — I have four myself. We won't be killing any children; we want to make the world safe for them.

Grace — Tell me, General Bullier, will it be safer for children if you invade Roguestan?

General — That's the whole point. Of course it will be safer after we invade.

Grace — Safer for everyone? This could be a very bad idea, it could lead other countries to come to the rescue of their neighbours and escalate the war. This is why so many people don't trust Americans any more.

All the men — We are not Americans.

Grace — I think, in a way, we are. Since Canada sells most of its weapons to the US the rest of the world thinks we have the same policies. And they're right.

Pistol — We tried to change NATO policy but the Pentagon wouldn't listen. And I am getting a bit tired of being told what to buy, what to manufacture, where to go in all these military training sessions and even what to think. Maybe you have a point. It would be nice to be able to go to countries where we are welcomed again like we used to be. We could go back to peacekeeping and Rapid Response Teams to help with earthquakes and climate catastrophes. We could even help Roguestan in peaceful ways like planting trees and buying their rugs.

General — Their drugs?

Pistol — No, I said rugs.

General — The Pentagon will hate this. Ha, Ha.

Tycoon — Hold on a minute here. What about my defence and security business?

Grace — There are so many other products you could make. It's called conversion.

Tycoon — I thought that was about becoming a Hindu.

Grace — No, conversion is about changing military production to civilian products.

Amira — In Roguestan we need many things. We have some resources and we work cheap. Our roguedamian nuts are delicious. Mr. Tycoon, you could be a big man in nuts. We just need to change the things we make and grow now for export which don't benefit the people. I'm sure if you came to visit us we could work something out. Please to come and stay with my family in our home. We save you the best part of the meal. You can have eye of the sheep for dinner.

General — You're all forgetting about me. How do you think I will figure in this?

Grace — If you retire from the military we will see that you get a good pension and a big medal.

General — Hmmm. Maybe I'd be a hero in Roguestan.

Amira — I would call you big tall hero. We hold big party.

Grace — Maybe we could get you a job at the United Nations and you could work on peacebuilding and on Resolution 1325. You could take off that tight uniform and put those old medals away. Here is a better medal. *(She puts a big gaudy medal on the General)*

General — Where would I go for this job?

Grace — The head office of the United Nations is in New York and there are agencies in many countries around the world.

General — I think I will work for NATO. It's bigger and better. How many members are there in the UN?

Grace — It has 192 member states.

General — Wow! Including Canada?

Grace — Canada was one of the founding members as well as the originator of the Blue Helmets Peacekeeping Force.

General — Oh, great, I will look good in blue. I hope it's OK to drink and swear in a blue helmet. Pistol, don't you want to be a big shot?

Pistol — Well I was going to retire soon anyway, so I say let's give this new way a try. The whole UN Security Council voted for Resolution 1325. Maybe it's not so bad. Maybe we can convince the prime minister; If not, remember he won't be around for long, no woman will vote for him again. *(pause)* When I think about our meeting I realize no one can ever prove we agreed to this.

Faith — Actually we have it all on tape and we'll put it on Facebook and WikiLeaks if you back down. *(She takes a tape out of her pocket)*

Amira — How about we will tell everyone it was your idea in first place? That way you feel better.

General — I already feel good. I will be big man at the United Nations.

Tycoon — And I will be big man in the nut business.

Pistol — And I will be big shot with peace activists like my mother.

All shake hands and the women hug each other and hand the flowers to the men. All stand together at the front and sing, "O Roguestan, we stand on guard for thee" to the tune of the last line of O Canada.

Curtain