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Dramatic Publishing

KARA IN BLACK

A play
by
MAX BUSH



Dramatic Publishing
Woodstock, Illinois • England • Australia • New Zealand

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(KARA IN BLACK)

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without whose generous support
this play would not have been written.

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On July 9, 2005, *Kara in Black* opened at the Lawrence Arts Center with the following cast and crew:

Kara	CARINA FOWLER
Della	LAUREN BORNSTEIN
Stevens	CHRIS WAUGH
Andrews	CHRIS JOHNSON
Rachel	SOMMER BRECHEISEN
Sue Ellen	SARAH ZIMMERMAN
Juanita	SARA BEZEK
Donovan	CHRIS BOHLING
Chris (Jon)	GEOFFREY LAFORCE
Charles	BRANDON KURTZ
Kelly	CLARA KUNDIN
Ms. Furman.	STEPHANIE ORTON
Bobby	TOMMY COTTON
Danny	JACOB MACK
Christy	ANNA MUNZINGER
Jane	HANNAH KAPP-KLOTE
Marla	AMANDA JONES
Hank/Businessman	PATRICK PATTERSON
Iggy.	RAYYAN KAMAL
Marissa.	SARA CORTESE
Woman in Black	TOLGAY FIGARELLI

Directors MAX BUSH, RIC AVERILL
Program Assistant TAMRA BIRCHFIELD
Costumer. CINDY LYNN
Costume Crew REBECCA SIAHAAN, STEPHANIE ORTON,
SARAH ZIMMERMAN
Composer, Music Design BEN BARTHELL
Set Design DANNY ROGOVEIN, LEE SAYLOR, RIC AVERILL,
MAX BUSH
Set Construction . . THE DRAMA PROGRAM TECHNICAL THEATER
CLASS
Stage Manager. DANNY ROGOVEIN
Asst. Stage Managers COLBY SOSTARICH, SARA CORTESE
Lighting Board Operator KELLEY LIEBST
Sound Board Operator. MICHAEL NELSON
Lighting Design LEE SAYLOR
Scenic Painting LEE SAYLOR, EATON SAYLOR,
DANNY ROGOVEIN
Program and Poster Art BRANDON KURTZ

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KARA IN BLACK

A Play in Two Acts

For 7 to 9m., 10 to 13w.

(15 of these characters are between the ages of 16 and 19)

CHARACTERS:

KARA	18
DELLA	19, Kara's sister
STEVENS	54, Vietnam vet, Juanita's former stepfather
ANDREWS	51, Vietnam vet
RACHEL	19, Della's best friend
SUE ELLEN	18, Kara's friend
JUANITA	18, Kara's friend
DONOVAN	18, Kara's classmate
CHRIS	16, Kara's classmate
CHARLES	18, Kara's classmate
KELLY	18, Charles' girlfriend
MS. FURMAN	25, theater teacher
BOBBY	18, Kara's classmate
DANNY	18, Kara's classmate
CHRISTY	18, Kara's classmate
MARLA	17, Kara's classmate
HANK/BUSINESSMAN	drug buyer/well-dressed young businessman
WOMEN IN BLACK	4 or 5 women, varying ages (includes Marla, Kelly, Furman)

TIME: January through early March 2003.

SETTING: Single unit set suggesting multiple locations:
Kara's bedroom, classroom, hallway, cafeteria, Furman's house, Veterans' Park.

RUNNING TIME: Approximately 1 hour, 35 minutes, plus intermission.

ACT I

AT RISE we see an open unit with multiple playing areas. On one level there is a table and four chairs, in another area stands a memorial with the names of those killed in action in Vietnam. This is not a portion of The Wall, but a tall, local memorial listing the names of the soldiers killed from KARA's area. The memorial stands in the local community Veterans' Park. A park bench sits near the memorial.

LIGHTS COME UP on KARA and DELLA, both half dressed. KARA—wearing a full slip and a green skirt—carries a bundle of her clothes and other objects (hats, photos, bag of Tootsie Rolls, a box tied with a ribbon, calling cards). DELLA, also wearing a slip, is putting on her Class A army uniform. What DELLA isn't wearing has been carefully laid out on a chair: her skirt (or pants), coat, beret, tie and shoes. We're in DELLA's bedroom.

LIGHTS ALSO COME UP on STEVENS and ANDREWS, near the Vietnam memorial in Veterans' Park. They remain frozen. STEVENS wears jeans, a flannel shirt, combat boots and a green army field jacket. ANDREWS

is well groomed, wearing an expensive, stylish coat, gloves and boots.

ALSO, RACHEL stands in the dark, frozen, some distance from KARA and DELLA.

KARA (*dumping clothes and objects on the floor*). Della, I've decided since you enlisted, you can unenlist and stay home with me and open a dress shop. I'll design and make the clothes, and you sell them. (*KARA holds up a purple blouse.*)

DELLA. Kara, I don't think anybody would buy clothes from our store except you. Green and purple?

KARA. Yes! I'm getting better, aren't I? I was inspired by all your green clothes.

DELLA. Kara...I hope you never change. (*KARA and DELLA freeze, STEVENS and ANDREWS move.*)

ANDREWS. I was just at the movies, going to get the car, Jane's waiting in the lobby—and saw you— What you doing out here freezing your ass off?

STEVENS. I told myself I wasn't going out, today, but then I felt like it, so what the hell's the difference.

ANDREWS. Why here? They're not here.

STEVENS. I got to talk to them somewhere. Their names are here. No one bothers me, except the dealers. Well, you know; isn't this where you gave your speech for the Memorial Day ceremony?

ANDREWS. Yeah, but aren't you— (*They freeze, KARA and DELLA animate. DELLA finishes buttoning her shirt. KARA puts on her blouse.*)

KARA. Mom and I were watching the news and they said they're sending 20,000 more troops to Kuwait in the next couple of weeks.

DELLA. I told you we were going in, Kara.

KARA. But Bush keeps saying he hasn't made the decision to invade or not.

DELLA. We're going to Kuwait to prepare for the invasion. I think they decided a long time ago. Maybe even years ago. My unit— (*KARA and DELLA freeze, STEVENS and ANDREWS animate.*)

STEVENS. Some of the guys—their kids—are going. They're asking me: "What do I do? What do I say? I don't want the kid to go but—"

ANDREWS. This was going to happen; plans were probably laid down years ago. Tell the parents to get on the right side of this and make sure their kids get the support we never got in Nam.

STEVENS. Kids... (*They freeze, DELLA and KARA continue. DELLA puts on her skirt [or pants].*)

KARA. Why don't the congressmen send *their* daughters?

DELLA. There wouldn't be enough of them.

KARA. I bet not one congressman is sending his daughter.

DELLA. You don't know that.

KARA. But Della, they'll be shooting at you.

DELLA. I'm not on the front line, and I'll have the entire United States Armed Forces around me. We're the best military in the history of the planet.

KARA. But, why do you have to go?

DELLA (*putting her beret on KARA*). I enlisted. (*They freeze, STEVENS and ANDREWS continue.*)

STEVENS. I called—I went in. They wouldn't take me.
(*STEVENS and ANDREWS freeze. DELLA and KARA move.*)

DELLA. It's a job. A job I signed up for. And I'm going to do my job. (*They freeze; STEVENS and ANDREWS move.*)

ANDREWS (*laughing*). You're fifty years old. What could you do?

STEVENS. Tell me you haven't thought about it.

ANDREWS. I...even told my kids I'd go. Every day I wish I could go. Can you believe that after what we went through?

STEVENS. I belong— (*They freeze, KARA and DELLA animate.*)

KARA. I like you, Della. (*KARA and DELLA freeze, STEVENS and ANDREWS animate.*)

STEVENS. I belong there. (*They freeze, KARA and DELLA animate.*)

KARA. I like you the way you are. What are you going to be like when you come home? That guy in Veterans' Park? (*KARA and DELLA freeze, STEVENS and ANDREWS animate.*)

STEVENS. I belong there—

ANDREWS. Ha!

STEVENS. —at least training the troops. (*They freeze, KARA and DELLA animate. DELLA puts on her coat.*)

DELLA. He was crazy before he went in. Most soldiers don't end up like him. I won't.

KARA. But how can you know that?

DELLA. Why are you so worried all of a sudden? You were never worried before.

KARA. I didn't think about it before. (*They freeze, STEVENS and ANDREWS animate.*)

STEVENS. I told them I'd do it for nothin'. Let me share my combat wisdom with these kids—get this mindset going. You can't have newbies training newbies to go into a war—that will get people killed. Remember the FNG's that came in—

ANDREWS (*laughing*). Cherries—

STEVENS. Thought they were bulletproof, hopping over hedgerows, going head first into tunnels—

ANDREWS. Real tough guys—

STEVENS (*speaking to the FNG's*). “Watch the old-timers, do what they do.”

ANDREWS. Tough guys who saw too many movies—

STEVENS. “If they duck, you duck, if they run, you run”—

ANDREWS. Or they'd stick so close to me—

STEVENS. “Stay away from me, cherry”—

ANDREWS. They'd stick so close they'd be in my skin.

STEVENS. “I'm not dying 'cause of you.”

ANDREWS. They— (*They freeze, KARA and DELLA animate.*)

KARA. What are you going to do if you have to kill someone? You're not a killer, Della. You won't do it and then they'll shoot you.

DELLA. It's taken a long time for women to work our way into the military, and only in the last couple of years has the army allowed women into my unit. I'm a soldier, and I'm ready to prove myself. And to prove that women can perform under any circumstance. I won't fail to do what I need to do, Kara.

(RACHEL animates, runs up to them.)

RACHEL. Della!

DELLA. Rachel! *(RACHEL and DELLA embrace.)*

RACHEL. I'm so glad I caught you. Hi, Kara.

KARA. You want to go with us to the bus station, Rachel?

RACHEL. I'd love to but I have to get to class—exams.

(To KARA about DELLA.) Doesn't she look...strong?

(KARA doesn't know what to say. To DELLA.) Here, I wanted to give you this. It's my grandmother's mezuzah.

DELLA. I know how important this is to you. I can't take your grandmother's mezuzah.

RACHEL. Yes you can. Then you'll know I'm with you.

And you'll know how proud of you I am. You make me guilty for staying in college! I should be there with you, fighting with you.

DELLA *(indicating mezuzah)*. You will be.

RACHEL. You bring that back to me.

DELLA. Thanks. *(DELLA takes it. RACHEL hugs her, begins to exit, turns back to her.)*

RACHEL. *You*, bring that back to me. *(RACHEL exits, KARA and DELLA freeze, STEVENS and ANDREWS move.)*

ANDREWS. Jane's decided to go back with me to Vietnam.

STEVENS *(beat. This wounds STEVENS)*. So *she's* going to use the ticket?

ANDREWS. Yeah, she's been feeling better, decided she could make the trip. Sorry; you and I can go some other time.

STEVENS *(disappointed, STEVENS sits on bench)*. Tell me again why you're going back?

ANDREWS. To get out of the office for a couple of weeks! (*He laughs, and then goes on.*) There's a mystique; a fog about it. I'm an old scout, I see fog I want to go into it. Last year when I was there, I saw new beauty. I hadn't seen the beauty of the place before. We didn't see ninety percent of it; we were in a hell hole. It's a different country. It's romantic. The people are romantic. Their traditional dress; the slits up the side—mmm, the women are sensuous. The beaches are beautiful. The food is beautiful. They take dollars, they love our dollars, they chase you for your dollars; they're capitalists—I don't care if it is a communist country, they are capitalists. (*STEVENS and ANDREWS freeze, KARA and DELLA animate.*)

KARA. But why?

DELLA. The people need our help. (*KARA and DELLA freeze, STEVENS and ANDREWS animate.*)

ANDREWS. And the people—they won the war. (*STEVENS and ANDREWS freeze, KARA and DELLA animate.*)

DELLA. We need to help the people change their government. (*KARA and DELLA freeze, STEVENS and ANDREWS animate.*)

ANDREWS. The people united their country, they kicked out the imperialists. (*STEVENS and ANDREWS freeze, KARA and DELLA animate.*)

KARA. Why can't the people do it themselves?

DELLA. The government kills anyone who disagrees with them. (*KARA and DELLA freeze, STEVENS and ANDREWS animate.*)

ANDREWS. They beat us and everyone else. Even though most of them suspect I was a soldier—and I tell anyone

who asks—we get along fine. I was walking on China Beach one day, having a beer, comparing scars and medals with a Vietcong. Yeah, and, I thought I might be ready to go back to Chuchi. Why do you want to go back? You look like you never left.

STEVENS. Unfinished business.

ANDREWS. What does that mean? (*Silence.*) What does that mean, man?

STEVENS. I would not go back to Chuchi. There's a war memorial there—a victory memorial—for the North Vietnamese; right where our base was. It's a tourist place. I hear they've enlarged the tunnels for the tourists, and the same guy who was in charge of them during the war is in charge of them now. I'd only go back to Chuchi if I could go back fully loaded.

ANDREWS. We didn't kill enough of them? (*Silence. No answer.*) Two million people wasn't enough? (*Silence.*)

STEVENS. Can you imagine...the size of *that* wall? (*Silence.*)

ANDREWS. What'd you mean, unfinished business? (*They freeze. KARA and DELLA move.*)

KARA. Here... (*Looking through the clothes and objects on the floor, she picks out and hands DELLA a stack of calling cards.*) Calling cards from mom and me. Call as often as you can, please.

DELLA. I will.

KARA (*picking them out of clothes on the floor*). And Tootsie Rolls, I know you love them.

DELLA. That won't change.

KARA. And pictures... (*Handing her one.*) of you and Rachel and the volleyball team.

DELLA. Regional champs...

KARA (*handing her another*). Of Eric Lindstrum after you beat him up for making me cry.

DELLA. Black and blue...

KARA. And you and me in the play.

DELLA. I've always liked this picture of you.

KARA. I know. And here. (*Picking out a box, hands it to DELLA.*)

DELLA. What is it? (*DELLA opens box.*)

KARA. Underwear! I designed them myself. It's like I'll be close to you, then.

DELLA (*pulling out a vibrant and spangled pair*). Purple?

KARA. Well, they had to match with your green uniform.

DELLA (*smiling*). Kara....don't ever change. (*They freeze. ANDREWS and STEVENS move.*)

ANDREWS. Hey, you want to have a beer with us at the VFW? You can talk to some real live combat veterans and listen to their lies.

STEVENS. Not tonight.

ANDREWS. Freezing to death isn't going to prove anything, Sergeant.

STEVENS. Not tonight.

ANDREWS. Come on, I could drop Jane off and we could go out like we used to—wild and free, remember? Damn you used to make me laugh.

STEVENS. Buy Jane a drink for me; she's a saint putting up with you for thirty years.

ANDREWS All right. I'm going where it's warm. Next time we'll have that beer. Take care.

(They shake hands firmly. ANDREWS exits, STEVENS sits on bench, freezes. KARA and DELLA move. DELLA is now fully dressed.)

KARA. Mom said: “I know I’m a mother, but...I want to go with her. I should be there, next to her.” I know what she means, now.

DELLA. Well...

KARA. Don’t go. Just...don’t go.

DELLA. I’m doing this for you. You and everyone else in this country. So your world will stay Kara’s world. We have to stop these people before they attack us again. I’m not going to let them hurt you. We are not going to let them hurt you. *(She picks up the things KARA gave her, walks away. Turns back.)* Tell Mom I don’t want her next to me. I want her here, safe. With you. *(She walks off.)*

(MUSIC. Lights go to blues. A crew member hands KARA a school lunch tray with lunch on it. JUANITA and SUE ELLEN enter with trays and join KARA at a lunch table, begin eating. STEVENS remains frozen and unlit on the bench. MUSIC OUT.)

KARA. She said she’s going to Kuwait to prepare for an invasion.

SUE ELLEN. Oh, Kara, I’m sorry.

JUANITA. What have I been saying? My cousin has been over there a month already. Muy malo, hermana, lo siento. *(JUANITA takes something off SUE ELLEN’s tray, eats it. This is something they all do throughout scene, and is perfectly acceptable to each of them.)*

SUE ELLEN. Yeah. But I wouldn’t worry too much. It’s just a game so Saddam will do what we want. We wouldn’t invade anybody that didn’t attack us first.

KARA. They attacked New York.