

Henri

and the Rules of Engagement

By

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War is hideous, we all know that. Why can't men sit down together and *discuss, debate and decide* on solutions rather than resort to mortal combat to solve a problem? It seems ludicrous to have 'terms of engagement' for what is basically mass annihilation, just as in WW1 the truce was implemented to give both sides a chance to bury their dead. During the truce the cease fire was respected and when it was over they all resumed killing each other again. Mad.

While it is to be commended that mutilation, pillaging and barbarous behaviour towards the dead be discouraged by 'codes of conduct', the outcome is still slaughter and senseless death. This is the story of Heni Te Kiri Karamu at the Battle of Gate Pa during the Maori Land Wars.

The scene is set at Pukehinahina - Gate Pa 1864

Cast:

Heni Te Kiri Karamu- 24 year old half caste aka Jane Russell and later as Jane Foley or Heni Pore.

Neri Russell - her foster brother

Pvt. John Bradhurst - A blue coat soldier of the 43rd regiment

Colonel Booth - 43rd Regiment

Sound:

Gunfire sound can be made by cast explosively with their mouth and/or with a couple of 'clickity clack clack' devices operated by Bradhurst and Booth. These sound devices could also be added to the shaped wooden muskets.

The set

Utilise the 3 large wooden boxes to act as the trench, placed at right angles to the stage so all 4 actors can be seen at all times. A length of Hessian can be draped from the upstage box to represent the bunker and cooking area of the trench.

Bradhurst

Booth

box

box Neri

box Heni

Props in the trench:

A suitably old looking tin water container, some potatoes.

Each player carries a wooden rifle/musket.

Red scarf to signify blood (Bradhurst)

## Heni and the Terms of Engagement

Heni is in the trench with her brother Neri.

Neri: Get down Heni! Get down, or you will be shot!

Heni: I'm alright.

Neri: Get your head down sister!

Heni: The guns won't find me here Neri, remember I helped build this smaller pa, me and the other women, I know where it's protective cover lies.

Neri: You are so stubborn, why didn't you leave with the other women before we came under attack?

Heni: Chief Rawiri told me to go with them, but I refused.

Neri: Why did you refuse?

Heni: We've been together all through the war so far. You may need me little brother (*they laugh and play fight*)

Neri: I need you like a hole in the leg

Heni: Hole in the head you mean, not hole in the leg! (*they laugh again*)

Neri: I'm brave and strong enough, I don't need you to look out for me any more, I'm a warrior!

Heni: I'm just as strong as you, besides we warriors can look after each other you know.

Neri: You should obey our chief, our Rangatira knows what's best.

Heni: He doesn't know what's best for me.

Neri: I'm surprised he let you stay.

Heni: I'm a half caste so the same rules don't apply, I'm not tapu. Anyway I want to fight alongside you.

2.

Neri: I have to fight! Move aside and get your head down before you get hit!

*(There is the sound of gun fire) Get down Heni!! (he pulls her down into the trench and begins to fire his own gun, Heni reloads and joins in the gun fight.)*

Heni: They're wondering where we are, ha, they can't see our trenches.

Neri: Well dug sister, the mist is helping to conceal us too.

Heni: And the fortifications. Aren't they ka pai? Clever too. There are only two places a breach is possible and Henare and Rawiri are stationed there. They will guard it with their lives.

*(There is more gunfire)*

Neri: The British have so many guns, big guns too. Keep low!

Heni: Their guns are too big, the canon fire goes right over the top of us. *(He reloads)*

Neri: Keep hidden in the bunker Heni here they come, I'll tell you when to leap up from the pit and start firing ..... Ahi! *(They fire their guns then retreat back into the trench)*

Heni: Did you see that Neri? They didn't know what hit them!

*(A loud bombardment sends potatoes up in the air when the food store is hit, some of them rain down into the trench - these can be thrown up in the air by Heni and Neri)*

Neri: Potatoes! Well I didn't know that was going to hit us!

Heni: They hit our food store *(shouting to the enemy)* Thanks for that! We can have chips now! *(another volley of shots)*

Neri: *(pulling her down again)* Get down Heni!

Heni: They've breached the left side of the palisade, I saw them charging into the pa! They're being led by the officers, I've seen them Neri!

Neri: Be ready sister

Heni: I'm ready

*(more gunfire sound - they both recoil as the body of a soldier falls into the trench clutching his abdomen)*

3.

All 3: Aghhhhhh!!!

Neri: Well that wasn't supposed to happen

Heni: What do you mean ?

John: Yes what do you mean? (*clutches his stomach*) I'm wounded here.

Neri: But you're not supposed to be dying in our trench, you're supposed to die out there.

John: Oh I'm sorry to be such an inconvenience.

Heni: You can't die here, there isn't room, you'll be in the way.

Neri: We'd have to tread on you.

John: Oh charming. What about your so called code of conduct?

Neri: What about it?

John: Your code of conduct states that if a soldier is wounded and captured he will not be ill treated or ... or maligned.

Neri: What's maligned mean?

John: You don't ill treat me.

Heni: It's true brother, under the rules of engagement as set out by Henare, we are to be decent and not harm wounded soldiers.

John: See.

Neri: You'll feel the butt end of my musket in your face in a minute.

John: Well that's not very decent of you.

Heni: We are to be honourable Neri ...and decent.

Neri: There's nothing decent about battle. Now get out of our trench and go and die somewhere else.

4.

John: Be a good fellow will you and help me out, uggh with this wound I won't last much longer. Uuugggh ... *(they get him out and he goes and lies down outside of the trench.)*

Heni: I don't like this.

Neri: Remember they're trying to take our land. There's more coming, get into the bunker if you haven't got the stomach for it.

Heni: I'm not carried away by my fears. *(They reload and fire their guns again, Colonel Booth runs on shooting his gun and is himself shot. He falls to the ground)*

Neri: An officer's been hit by the look of it *(more gunfire)*

Booth: Ahgg I'm done for, I .... I can't move.

John: The reinforcements will help us sir, I fear I'm dying too.

Booth: Keep your spirits up soldier. Who are you?

John: Private John Bradhurst Sir, from your regiment, the 43rd

Booth: Where have you been injured?

John: Abdominal Sir

Booth: Yes I know it's abominable Private, but where are you hurt?

John: Stomach Sir *(He slowly pulls a red scarf out from his jacket which signifies the blood coming out of his midriff)* Where did they get you Sir?

Booth: I've pain in my back and my arm, *(he groans)* can't tell which is worse frankly.

John: Do you think they'll find us Sir, before we ... you know... die ?

Booth: All the officers are dead Bradhurst, what a debacle. The men are leaderless.

John: And legless by the look of what's left of some of them.

Booth: *(he winces in pain)* Get a grip man and help me up.

*Bradhurst tries to help him up but it's useless and they slump back down against each other amid more gunfire.*

5.

John: It's no good Sir, I can't do it ... I ....ah... help ... (*he passes out*)

Booth: Buck up Bradhurst, I say Private! Don't die! (*he shakes his shoulders*) Wake up!

John: Uh uh sorry Sir, must've passed out. I'm so thirsty.

Booth: I've got no water to give you soldier.

John: I hope someone does come for us Sir, I don't want to die here. I've heard some grim tales about what the Maori do to you once you're dead.

Booth: What have you heard Private?

John: Oh scalping, beheading, disemboweling, even eating!

Neri: (*pokes his head out of the trench*) Just a minute, we don't do that.

Heni: (*pops her head out as well*) Our code of conduct states we don't touch a hair of your head. We're allowed to take your guns, but we're not permitted to touch anything else!

John: Well that's a relief.

*Booth and Bradhurst try to conceal their guns so they can't be taken.*

Booth: That's true, we signed an agreement. Ugh, disemboweling, a fate worse than death.

John: I've never understood that Sir - "A fate worse than death" There *is* nothing worse than death surely is there Sir ? Sir?

Booth: It's my back, Private I can't .... I can't get up ... I can't ...(*they both lie still*)

*The gunfire starts up again*

Neri: It will soon be nightfall and we're running out of ammunition.

Heni: Yes we need to get more supplies. Some of our tribe are already sneaking off I see.

Neri: I suppose you can't fight if there's nothing left to fight with.

Heni: No! Oh now they're all jumping back into their trenches! What's going on?

6.

Neri: More blue coats to the rear, They can't retreat, that's why they're having to come back, there's no way out for them.

Heni: Or for us. We'll have to wait for darkness to come before we can leave.

Neri: Ha, the soldiers in front must've thought there were more of us moving into the trenches and they've got cold feet, they're leaving!

Heni: They think we've got reinforcements (*she laughs*) you're right Neri they're leaving and there are no officers to tell them what to do, ha ha.

Neri: (*yelling*) And don't come back, we'll keep our land ....pokukohua !!

Booth: (*weakly*) ...stay ... stay and fight .... I command you .....

*Heni fires her gun at the soldiers and she and Neri both sit down in the trench.*

Heni: It's nearly dark. We should leave now.

Neri: I want to get their muskets.

Heni: Nothing else Neri, remember.

Booth: Water, water please. Please some water ....

John: Water ....water

*Heni looks over the trench at Booth while he and Bradhurst groan. She sighs and goes to the cooking area to get some water.*

Neri: What are you doing?

Heni: It grieves me to hear them in such pain.

Neri: They are our enemy Heni.

Heni: I can't ignore them. (*she slings her gun over her shoulder, gets the tin of water and begins to leave the trench. Neri is standing with his gun butt on the ground gripping the muzzle, watching her.*) Henare Taratoa said "If thine enemy hunger, feed him, if he thirst, give him drink" We have no food, apart from some shredded potatoes, but we do have water. I cannot refuse them Neri. (*she leaves the trench watchfully and goes over to Booth, kneels down beside him and puts his head on her knees*)



7.

Heni: Here's water.

Booth: God bless you

*She gives some water to Bradhurst and Neri stealthily takes their guns*

Bradhurst: Thank you

*She gives more water to Booth*

Heni: I'll leave the rest of the water here beside you.

Booth: Thank you kind maid (*she goes quickly back to the safety of the trench.*)

Neri: We'll leave now under cover of darkness, over the swamp, come on. (*They both go into the bunker area to collect their remaining supplies*)

Booth: (*gets up on one elbow*) Can I just say, before I die, there will be talk in the future, when I'm dead and gone, about who brought me water while I lay dying on the field of battle. And I just want to categorically state it was Heni Te Kiri Karamu, no one else.

John: I can vouch for that Sir, she was a vision, an angel and don't let anyone say otherwise.

*They both crumple back down.*

Neri: (*He has all the guns under his arm*) Keep low Heni, we need to catch up with the others. This is our victory! (*he exits as Heni comes downstage. She is holding a tied up cloth bundle of a few supplies. She stands there in silence.*)

Heni: I think we won the battle..... but why do I feel as though we've lost? (*she slowly exits following Neri*)

*(some mist would be nice )*