

Crimes Of War



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ASPECTED, RETIRED BUSINESSMAN IN WINNIPEG, well liked by his neighbors, is shattered

when he receives mysterious photographs in the mail, photos of him as a young man in his SS uniform.

The Special Prosecutions Unit in Ottawa is dedicated to investigating and indicting Nazi war criminals in Canada. However, they never manage to successfully prosecute a single one. Dozens of lawyers, historians, policemen, and

clerks amass hundreds of files on suspects, most of whom inconveniently die. Increasingly demoralized by the prospect of the inevitable closing of the unit, many at the SPU begin to look forward to the prospect of prosecuting criminals who are not wheelchair bound. Denis Connor, a historian, is eventually left as the last employee of the SPU, charged with the closing of all the files.

But one file he cannot give up. The crimes Friedrich Reile committed with an SS unit on the eastern front are so terrible that Connor cannot close the file and forget them. And so with no legal recourse, Connor begins to send anonymous letters to Reile.

The letters and photos bring back memories, and Reile tells his story of how an ordinary seventeen-year-old boy gradually turns into a war criminal, a mass murderer. But Reile, for all his monstrous crimes, is not a monster. Just as Connor who wishes to be a crusading knight in shining armor, is, in fact, a cynical bureaucrat leading a joyless life. By showing the human aspect of both these men, Peter brings a new, deeper element into what could have been

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