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This play is dedicated to the memory of my grandmother,
Rita Cork McMahan
1911-2000

Are not two sparrows worth only a penny? Yet not one of them falls to the ground without the knowledge of your Father.

Matthew 10:29

Cast of Characters

VIKTOR, a member of the Hitler Youth

ALINA, Viktor's developmentally disabled twin sister

JOSEF, Viktor's friend and a Hitler Youth

KARL, another Hitler Youth

The Chorus

The Instigators: the OFFICER, the LEADER, the INSPECTOR, the TEACHER, the DOCTOR

The Followers: the NURSES, the ADMINISTRATORS, the YOUTH, the GUARD

The Victims: the BLIND MAN, the PEOPLE, the PATIENTS

Setting

Germany, 1939

Author's Note

Sending Down the Sparrows was conceived and written with students in mind. I wanted to create a play which was educational, which contained some universal elements of the teen experience, and which would provide a meaningful challenge to the younger actor. I also wanted to bring attention to the plight of people with disabilities in Nazi Germany, a lesser-known but no less tragic part of the Holocaust.

Students and teachers should consider further reading on the subject matter dealt with in *Sending Down the Sparrows*. I highly recommend the following works: *The Nazi Doctors* by Robert Jay Lifton, Basic Books, 1986; *The Origins of Nazi Genocide: From Euthanasia to the Final Solution* by Henry Friedlander, The University of North Carolina Press, 1995; *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany* by William L. Shirer, Simon and Schuster, 1960; and *The 12-Year Reich: A Social History of Nazi Germany 1933–1945* by Richard Grunberger, Da Capo Press, 1995. The invaluable historical information contained in these texts helped me create the framework for *Sending Down the Sparrows*, and I am deeply indebted to their authors.

The requirements for the physical set are quite minimal. However, I strongly suggest the use of multimedia capabilities, particularly rear projection, to further inform the setting.

Directors should be aware that the chorus roles offer very flexible casting opportunities. The gender of the roles within the chorus can be changed to suit available students. The exception to this is the role of the Blind Man. One should understand that some liberties have already been taken regarding the roles of women during this period, and thus be aware of the possible impact of further changes.

Please note that during my research several conflicting dates were found regarding the date when membership in the Hitler Youth organization became mandatory. In this case, I have chosen to defer to the date presented by William L. Shirer in his book *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany*, which is considered by many to be the definitive text.

As important pieces of the history of the Third Reich, both the *Law for the Prevention of Offspring with Hereditary Diseases* and the *Hitler Youth Oath* can be found in a multitude of sources. One source for the *Law for the Prevention of Offspring with Hereditary Diseases* is Henry Friedlander's *The Origins of Nazi Genocide: From Euthanasia to the Final Solution*, the University of North Carolina Press, 1995. *The Hitler Youth Oath* is easily found in many texts dealing with the Nazi Regime, including William L. Shirer's *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany*, Simon and Schuster, 1960. The letters from Stetten (Administrators' letters) appear in *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression, Supplement A*, Office of the United States, Chief of Counsel For Prosecution of Axis Criminality, United States Printing Office, Washington, 1947.

—Laura Lundgren Smith
January 2001

Acknowledgments

Sending Down the Sparrows received its world premiere at Paris High School on March 24, 2001. The cast was as follows:

NAZI OFFICER, BLIND MAN, DOCTOR. . . . . Todd Cobb
VIKTOR . . . . . Nick Murillo
ALINA. . . . . Heather Whitsell
NURSE, PATIENT 1 . . . . . Amber James
LEADER, GUARD . . . . . Bentley Greb
KARL. . . . . Rick Spann
JOSEPH . . . . . Philip Dodd
ADMINISTRATOR 1, PERSON 2, NURSE 2 . . . . . Jeni Hall
ADMINISTRATOR 2, PATIENT 2 . . . . . Jesse King
INSPECTOR, TEACHER, PERSON 1 . . . . . Sheila Crawford

Director . . . . . Jayna Shull
Crew . . . . . Angela Snellen, Miranda Sykes, Amber Maloy, Janna Phan

Thanks to my family, particularly to my husband Ben, my mother Delores, and my sister Jo, whose collective support is unwavering. Thanks to my many friends, especially to Pam Conine, for her knowledge and input as a theatre professional. Many thanks to Christiane and Hai Woon Duncker, for their translation assistance and for their insights as native Germans. I am forever indebted to my friend Gail Herman for her invaluable proofreading skills, creative wisdom, and limitless encouragement. Finally, very special thanks to Jessie Lendennie, Siobhán Hutson, and Tim Jeanotte of Salmon. I am deeply grateful for this remarkable opportunity.

SENDING DOWN THE SPARROWS
by Laura Lundgren Smith

(A single light rises on a solitary girl who sits in a straight chair, just left of center stage. A male figure crosses, spine held straight, walking with confidence and authority, and turns and stands in front of her, blocking her from the audience. He speaks in a stentorian voice. He wears the uniform of a Nazi officer.)

OFFICER. Gentlemen, our Führer has thoughts on the useless eaters who fill our institutions and drain our Reich and Fatherland of its reichsmarks, marks that could be used to educate our sons, build their bodies, and fill their minds. He has decreed that the idiots, the crazy, the physically deficient should be erased from our midst. Our wise and prudent leader has set forth a manner for ridding ourselves of that burden, that life not worthy of life. For now, this plan remains among us, is this understood? Not everyone has the best interests of our country at heart. Our methods must remain confidential.

(The man turns and exits stage right. From stage left enters VIKTOR, *a teenage boy wearing an overcoat. He calls out to the girl in the chair.)*

VIKTOR. *(Looks around nervously:)* Alina. Alina!

(She does not turn to look at him. He goes to stand beside her and gently strokes her hair.)

VIKTOR. Alina, look. Look at what I brought for you.

(He pulls a small doll from beneath the coat. ALINA *crosses her arms, pouting, silent.)*

VIKTOR. Isn't she pretty? She has pretty hair just like you.

*(*VIKTOR *goes to* ALINA *and strokes her hair, then looks closely at it, frowning. A* NURSE *crosses carrying dirty linen.)*

VIKTOR. Nurse? Excuse me, but has my sister been bathed this morning?

NURSE. *(Gives him an exasperated look:)* No, and it's not likely she will get a bath until the end of the week.

VIKTOR. The end of the week?!

NURSE. The end of the week, yes. You don't come to visit often, do you?

*(*VIKTOR *looks embarrassed and drops his head a little.)*

VIKTOR. I . . . no. I don't.

NURSE. Well, if you did, then you might have noticed how short-staffed we are around here these days. The government has cut our funding. We haven't enough workers.

VIKTOR. They've cut your funding? But why?

NURSE. Ask your precious Führer!

VIKTOR. But I . . .

NURSE. Oh, don't pretend with me. I see you, sneaking in here, afraid someone will see you, wearing that big coat in all types of weather to hide that uniform. Hiding from the doctors. You're one of the Hitler Youth, aren't you? Well, you aren't fooling anyone.

VIKTOR. My sister's bath . . . I could . . .

NURSE. Why don't you go ask the Reich to give us the money back? Or are you afraid your friends will find out you've a retarded sister?

VIKTOR. Look, the Führer . . . the Hitler Youth . . . we want what's best for all Germans, and I . . .

NURSE. Even for them? *(Points at* ALINA*, then clucks her tongue and shakes her head:)* Think again, boy.

(She exits.)

*(*ALINA *looks at the doll, touching its hair, then touching her own.* VIKTOR *returns to her.)*

VIKTOR. You're not angry with me, are you? I know I haven't been for a visit in a while.

*(*ALINA *shoves him with one hand.)*

ALINA. You don't come long time! Long! Long!

Viktor. I'm sorry. I have school. I have meetings . . .

*(*ALINA *turns her back to him.)*

ALINA. You don't come. Long time. I sleep five, six, ten, eight days!

(She holds up many angry fingers.)

VIKTOR. *(Taking* ALINA's *hands in his own:)* Twenty-two days. I'm afraid you don't have enough fingers.

ALINA. I want Mama! I want Papa! They don't come. Don't come. nine hundred, six, fifteen days!!

VIKTOR. Alina . . .

ALINA. No!

(She puts her hands over her ears. VIKTOR *slowly and gently removes her hands.)*

VIKTOR. Alina.

ALINA. No! You don't tell me. You shut up!

VIKTOR. Alina, remember why Mama and Papa can't come to visit you?

ALINA. No. I forget. Forget, forget, forget!

VIKTOR. No. You have to remember. It's important.

*(*ALINA *says nothing, and just shakes her head violently "no.")*

VIKTOR. Remember? Mama and Papa went to be with the angels.

ALINA. Left me.

VIKTOR. *(Gently:)* Alina . . .

ALINA. Everybody leave.

VIKTOR. I won't. I won't leave.

*(*VIKTOR *embraces his sister. Lights down to half on them.)*

(Lights up on a group of chairs on another part of the stage. A man in a Hitler-Youth leader's uniform is present, as are VIKTOR, KARL, *and* JOSEF.*)*

LEADER. *(Raps on the podium:)* Now, before we end today's meeting, I would like to hear at least one of the poems I asked you to write in honor of our Führer. Who will read? Viktor?

*(*VIKTOR *stands and reads, somewhat uncomfortably.)*

VIKTOR. "In Honor of Adolf Hitler."

"In his wisdom, he helps Germany.
He helps the poor, he remembers the sick,
He looks after the children.
He looks after the old.
We are all one in his eyes,
from the strongest of us to the least of us.
With his mighty hands he makes
a stronger nation.
He is the father of us all,
the father of the Fatherland."

(The group applauds. One student stands, however.)

KARL. What a lot of saccharine nonsense.

LEADER. You are out of order. The poem is a wonderful tribute to our leader. Sit down, Karl.

KARL. No, I will not sit down. I find fault with the poem and I intend to have my say.

LEADER. Very well. Speak, then.

KARL. If our Führer is truly building a stronger Germany, then I think he would have no time for the poorest or the least of us. Would you not agree that Germany has no place for the weak?

JOSEF. Like the weak but greedy Jews.

KARL. Just so. They fill our streets like rats. They take our jobs!

VIKTOR. I only meant that the Führer has the well-being of all Germans as his concern.

KARL. Faulty thinking. There is no room in the Reich for those who cannot carry their own weight.

JOSEF. Karl has a point, I think. In my grandfather's building there is a blind man. He gets a pension from the government. All he does is drink all day and listen to the radio. How is that a good use of government money?

VIKTOR. The blind man is still a German, after all.

LEADER. Yes, but not a good German. A good German advances Germany. This blind man is like one of many who hold it back.

KARL. On my street there is a family who has an idiot son. He sits on the curb all day, drooling and staring at nothing. They, too, get government money. The government gives them money to buy bread for this idiot, who is good for nothing. My father pointed him out to me the other day. He said that idiot is like a lame horse, eating the oats in the field. The oats go to waste. Why not feed them to a horse which pulls a plow? The bread they feed that idiot could go to our soldiers in Poland. It could be of some use.

LEADER. Well said. And we all know a good German, a good Aryan, is strong and healthy in all respects. This has been illustrated by our Führer. No simpering, weak-backed Poles. No cheating Gypsy blood, with their shifty black eyes. No greedy, money-grubbing Jews, breaking the backs of Germans.

VIKTOR. Yes, but surely that is different from a blind man or an idiot. They harm no one.

JOSEF. Maybe Viktor is right. Those people can't work, but I don't suppose they really hurt anyone.

KARL. Yes, but they don't help anyone either, least of all themselves. All they do is take resources from worthy people. Haven't you been listening?! Do you have any sensibility at all?

LEADER. Surely you students haven't forgotten the Law? Who can quote the law to which I am referring? If you can do it, I will personally write you a letter of commendation to the head of the Hitler Youth, Herr von Schirach.

KARL. I can, sir! It is The Law for the Prevention of Offspring with Hereditary Diseases: "Anyone who suffers from an inheritable disease may be surgically sterilized if, in the judgment of medical science, it could be expected that his descendants will suffer from serious inherited mental or physical defects."

LEADER. Very good, Karl! Can anyone tell me some of the mental or physical defects included in the law? Viktor? How about you?

VIKTOR. *(Quietly:)* Congenital feeble-mindedness.

LEADER. Correct.

JOSEF. Schizophrenia and manic depression.

KARL. And the blind and the deaf and the chronically drunk.

LEADER. *(Laughs:)* Yes, chronic alcoholics may be sterilized, too. Very good. Very good. You see, we needn't worry about such people. Our leader has provided for the future of Germany.

KARL. Yes, but what about the ones among us now? What about the blind man? And the idiot? What about them?

(Lights dim on the area, lights up center stage. A man and a woman stand a few feet apart, facing the audience. They hold letters in their hands.)

ADMINISTRATOR 1. Dear Reich Minister,
As Chief of Institution for the Feeble-minded at Stetten, I must tell you the measures being taken at present with mental patients of all kinds have caused a complete lack of confidence in justice among large groups of people. Without the consent of relatives and guardians, such patients are being transferred to different institutions. After a short time they are notified that the person concerned has died of some disease. The truth of what happens to them is being concealed . . .

ADMINISTRATOR 2. Dear Reich Minister,
On July 19th I sent you a letter about the systematic extermination of lunatics, feeble-minded, and epileptic persons. Since then this practice has reached tremendous proportions: recently the inmates of old-age homes have also been included. The basis for this practice

seems to be that in an efficient nation there should be no room for the weak and the frail . . .

(Lights down on the men, up on another part of the stage, on ALINA, *a different* NURSE, *and a woman in a suit.)*

INSPECTOR. Open your mouth, girl.

*(*ALINA *backs up a step. The* NURSE *stops her.)*

NURSE. It's all right, Alina. She isn't going to hurt you.

ALINA. No.

(She puts her hands over her mouth.)

NURSE. Alina, if you open your mouth, I'll give you a sweet when she's done. You'd like a sweet, wouldn't you?

INSPECTOR. Why do you coddle her so? You should never coddle animals.

NURSE. She isn't an animal.

INSPECTOR. What a noble attitude. Either you get your little friend to open her mouth or I will open it for her.

NURSE. Alina, open your mouth, dear. The lady only wants to see your pretty teeth. Just let her have a look and then I'll get you your sweet.

*(*ALINA *takes a tentative step forward and hesitates.* ALINA *suddenly throws her mouth open wide.)*

NURSE. That's a girl. Go ahead. That's right.

INSPECTOR. Tilt your head back.

(She peers into ALINA's *mouth and makes notes on a chart.)*

ALINA. *(Turns to* NURSE *with hands out:)* Sweet!

INSPECTOR. *(Then turns to the* NURSE, *smiles flatly:)* It would appear from the number of cavities that she has had quite enough sweets. *(She refers to her chart again:)* Annika?

NURSE. Her name is Alina.

INSPECTOR. You mind your place! *(Harshly:)* Alina? Alina Schmidt? Can you tell me how old you are?

ALINA. *(Holding up many fingers:)* Four, twelve, five!!

(She laughs loudly.)

INSPECTOR. *(Makes a note:)* You are seventeen years old. Her sterilization date is not noted. She has been sterilized, has she not?

NURSE. Yes, she had the procedure some time ago. The scars are visible, if you'd like to examine her.

INSPECTOR. That won't be necessary. Now then, does this girl have any kind of skills?

NURSE. Skills?

INSPECTOR. Yes, can she sew, can she chop vegetables, that kind of thing?

ALINA. Sew! Momma sew! Sew a dress for my doll! She sew!! *(She holds up her doll and laughs and squeals loudly, then suddenly remembering:)* No! Not with angels! NO!

(She begins to hit herself on the head. The NURSE *rushes to restrain her.)*

NURSE. She is very excitable. She has trouble sitting still.

INSPECTOR. *(As if nothing has happened:)* Does she require assistance in eating?

NURSE. *(Cradling a crumpled* ALINA*:)* Yes, we try to help her if we have time. She has difficulty . . .

INSPECTOR. Very well. I think I have seen enough.

NURSE. Wait.

(She quickly hands ALINA *her doll and crosses to the* INSPECTOR.*)*

INSPECTOR. Yes?

NURSE. Where do the buses go?

INSPECTOR. Buses?

NURSE. Yes, the buses which have been coming recently to pick up some of the patients.

INSPECTOR. *(Pauses:)* They are transferring the patients to free beds for our soldiers coming from the battlefields.

NURSE. But no soldiers come, inspector. There is strange talk about the fate of the mental patients.

INSPECTOR. You shouldn't listen to idle talk. If you did your job properly, you would not have time for gossip. I suggest you mind your business. Good day.

(She exits.)

(Lights down to half. Lights up on a classroom. VIKTOR *and a couple of students sit while a* TEACHER *hands out books. During*

this activity, the NURSE *places* ALINA *in the straight chair and then fetches a tray of food. She begins to try to feed* ALINA, *who is quiet but jerks her head and interferes with her hands. The movement should settle before the dialogue begins. Lights very low on* ALINA *and* NURSE.*)*

TEACHER. Today we have been given new books by our Führer. We are fortunate that he feels your education is so important to both your future and the future of Germany, aren't we?

ALL. Yes, ma'am.

TEACHER. Very well, then. Let us begin. Turn to page six. Who will solve the problems at the blackboard?

VIKTOR. I will.

*(*VIKTOR *takes his place at the blackboard and picks up some chalk.)*

TEACHER. Write down this sum: 6 million marks.

*(*VIKTOR *does so.)*

TEACHER. This is the amount it costs to build an asylum.

*(*VIKTOR *turns suddenly.)*

TEACHER. Now, figure how many schools, at 40 thousand marks apiece, could be built with this money.

VIKTOR. Excuse me, but why are we doing arithmetic problems about asylums?

TEACHER. Because there is a lesson in it.

VIKTOR. And what lesson is that, exactly?

TEACHER. A lesson of economics, designed to teach you how our precious German resources are being wasted. Wouldn't you agree that building housing for productive citizens is better than building an expensive nursery for cripples and the retarded?

KARL. Of course! It's stupid to waste money on idiots. I don't need a child's arithmetic problem to tell me that!

JOSEF. I have the answer, ma'am. The answer is 150 schools.

TEACHER. Correct. 150 schools could be built with the money it takes to build one asylum. Let's move on to the next problem. On average, the German government spends 60 pfennigs per meal to feed a mentally retarded asylum inmate. If an asylum had 125 inmates, how much money would the government spend per year to feed them?

(The lights come up a bit more on ALINA *and the* NURSE, *who feeds her, wiping her mouth with a cloth.* VIKTOR *works the problem on the board.)*

VIKTOR. *(Trying to contain his anger and frustration:)* The answer is . . . the answer is . . . 82,125 marks.

TEACHER. Good work. Now for the second part of the problem. Taking the sum of 82,125 marks, figure how many loaves of bread, at a tenth of a mark per loaf, one could buy with this amount.

(The lights have continued to gradually rise on ALINA *and the* NURSE, *who still patiently feeds her.* VIKTOR *works the problem. However, another student completes the work first.)*

KARL. The answer is 821,250 loaves of bread.

TEACHER. Excellent work. And those loaves could go to feed our soldiers. That bread would feed many soldiers, would it not?

VIKTOR. Yes, if the government decides to starve 125 people, 2 million soldiers could eat for a day.

*(*ALINA *suddenly yelps out in joy and throws her arms around the nurse, hugging her.)*

TEACHER. Surely you would not put 125 useless individuals ahead of those young men who fight for your future.

VIKTOR. The people in the asylum may be useless, but they are still people.

TEACHER. People with whom you have little in common. You are superior in every way to the crippled and retarded.

VIKTOR. But I am not sure that I am.

JOSEF. Viktor!

TEACHER. What talk, coming from a member of the Hitler Youth!

KARL. He was forced in, weren't you, Viktor? He didn't join the Youth willingly. A member since last March, only.

TEACHER. I see. No wonder he resists these forward-thinking ideas. He is not a true believer in our Führer's policies, in his vision for our future. Are you, Viktor?

KARL. Isn't it obvious that he isn't?

JOSEF. *(Whispering fiercely:)* Karl, stop!

VIKTOR. No, I mean, yes, I am, I do. I do believe. I . . . just. It's just that . . . well, haven't any of you ever known someone who was blind or crippled, or . . . or . . .

TEACHER. *(Interrupting:)* The good of the nation goes before the good of the individual. Last year my very own sister gave birth to a severely deformed child. He would have spent his life in an asylum, surely. My sister and her husband decided to let the doctor end the child's life, in the interest of our Führer, and his plans and hopes for Germany. She even wrote a letter to Hitler to inform him of their sacrifice. He was so pleased that he sent them a certificate marking their service to the Reich and the future of Germany.

VIKTOR. They gave up their child?

TEACHER. Yes, they knew it was best for everyone, for their country. You see, we must all sacrifice for the good of Germany.

KARL. So, do you know any idiots, Viktor? Other than yourself, that is.

VIKTOR. No. I don't.

(The NURSE *takes* ALINA *by the hand and leads her offstage.* VIKTOR *stares out into the distance.)*

TEACHER. Eventually, when there is no longer a need for asylums, you will all see the value of Adolf Hitler's great vision for Germany. He sees a land full of only happy, healthy people. Won't that be wonderful?

(The TEACHER *exits. Lights down on the classroom.* VIKTOR *and* JOSEF *exit, walking along.* KARL *hurries to catch them.)*

KARL. What have you planned for the youth rally? I want to make my speech very special. I want to be noticed. They say our Führer can hand out commissions for officers whenever he wishes!

JOSEF. Well, I have no worries there, since my father is an Oberstleutnant. I am all but guaranteed an officer's commission. What about you, Viktor? Where do you want to serve?

VIKTOR. I haven't thought about it much.

KARL. Have you already forgotten about Viktor, Josef? He isn't a true Hitler Youth. *(He laughs:)* He doesn't want to serve anywhere. He didn't even want to join the Youth.

JOSEF. Yes, I wanted to ask you about that. Is it true? Were you made to join, Viktor? You didn't join willingly?

VIKTOR. It's not important. I didn't join until last March. That's all.

JOSEF. But wasn't that . . . when membership became mandatory?

KARL. *(Interrupting:)* Yes, see, I told you. He was forced in.

JOSEF. But why, Viktor?

KARL. I heard his mother was a foreigner. An American. He's only half Aryan.

VIKTOR. That's a lie. My mother's parents were German. She only lived in America for a while.

JOSEF. Was it your parents? Were they against Hitler?

VIKTOR. *(Walking off:)* You wouldn't understand, Josef.

KARL. Well, then, enlighten us. Or are you afraid?

VIKTOR. I'm not afraid. I just don't want to talk about it.

KARL. Well, Josef, what do you think? Is he a communist spy? Or maybe he's a Gypsy, or worse, a Jew. Who knows, maybe his American mother was a Jewess.

VIKTOR. *(Stops and turns:)* I am not a Jew.

KARL. A spy then? A Gypsy?

JOSEF. Stop it. Come on, Viktor. Tell us. We're sure you have a good reason.

KARL. Yes, you should explain. Maybe that will stop the gossip about you.

VIKTOR. What gossip?

KARL. People are saying you may be anti-government. That perhaps you should be questioned.

VIKTOR. Who is saying those things? Tell me!

JOSEF. Just tell us why you didn't join willingly, Viktor. I'm sure that will go a long way toward quieting people's suspicions.

(The group has reached a point on stage where a man sits leaning against a wall. His crutch is beside him. He holds a cup in one hand and wears the dark glasses of the blind.)

MAN. *(Hearing the boys approach, he raises his cup and speaks fast:)* Help the blind, please, help the blind.

KARL. Well, well. Look at this, would you? How did the Gestapo miss you, old man?

(He nudges the man with his toe.)

MAN. Help the blind and bless our mighty Führer.

KARL. Oh, I see. You've survived by pretending to be one of us. How pathetic.

VIKTOR. I have to go.

KARL. Wait. I have an idea. I think we have stumbled across a perfect way for Viktor to prove his loyalty.

JOSEF. What are you talking about, Karl?

KARL. I say we all give this leech here a taste of the Youth.

(He kicks the man in the leg, not very hard, testing.)

MAN. Please don't hurt me. *(Desperately, he throws up his arm:)* Heil Hitler! Heil Hitler!

VIKTOR. Leave him alone.

JOSEF. Come on, Karl. He's beneath us.

KARL. Haven't you been listening in our classes? In our youth meetings? People like this are just taking up space.

(He kicks the man again.)

MAN. Please! Don't hurt me!

KARL. Shut up, you worm!

(Slaps the man.)

VIKTOR. Just leave him alone, Karl.

KARL. You really would go against the wishes of the Reich, wouldn't you? You selfish coward. You would have never joined the Youth if they hadn't made you.

JOSEF. That's enough, Karl. Leave him alone. He'll die soon enough anyway. And look, he's in the gutter where he belongs.

KARL. Are you afraid too, Josef? And what would your precious Oberstleutnant father think of you if you passed up such an opportunity?

JOSEF. My father w . . .

KARL. Your father, who has, I have heard, spent many fine hours working over Jews with the butt end of a rifle. You're nothing like him. You're just like Viktor. Weak and scared.

VIKTOR. Shut up, Karl.

KARL. *(Pushing* JOSEF*:)* I bet you wouldn't even be in the Youth if it weren't for your father.

JOSEF. That isn't true!

KARL. What a disappointment you must be. He should have a son like me!

JOSEF. My father would . . .

KARL. Your father would think you a yellow coward, is what he would think!

*(*JOSEF *rushes forward and kicks the man hard.)*

JOSEF. I am not a coward!

(He kicks the man again, who whimpers and cries for mercy now.)

VIKTOR. Josef!

KARL. *(Slaps the man on the head, then grins at* VIKTOR*:)* So what will it be, Viktor, old friend? Will you help us clean up this trash, or shall we report you to the group leader as a traitor and a communist sympathizer?

VIKTOR. I am not a traitor.

KARL. Prove it.

JOSEF. *(Quietly:)* Do it.

VIKTOR. Josef . . .

JOSEF. Do it!!!

*(*VIKTOR *makes his decision. He walks slowly up to the man. He kicks him once, head down.)*

KARL. Show us some spirit, child of Hitler!

*(*VIKTOR *kicks the man again, a little harder, turning his head to the side as if it sickens him.)*

MAN. Stop! Please!

KARL. Human filth!

(They fall upon the man, beating him.)

MAN. Help me! Please, help me!

(As the lights fade on this scene, the lights rise on the LEADER *and two or more Hitler Youth. An appropriate marching or nationalist song rises with the lights [or the actors may sing, or both singing and recorded music may be used]. The oath is recited in unison. The music or singing should fade into* ALINA's *singing at the beginning of the next scene.)*

LEADER. Are you ready to devote yourselves to our Führer and the future of Germany?

YOUTH. Yes, sir!

LEADER. Have you examined your souls? Are you sure that you are worthy?

YOUTH. We are worthy, sir!

LEADER. Adolf Hitler has said the weak and gentle have no place in his service. Are you weak?

YOUTH. No, sir!

LEADER. Are you gentle?

YOUTH. No, sir!

LEADER. Adolf Hitler has said he wants young people who are brutal, fearless, and cruel. Are you brutal?

YOUTH. Yes!

LEADER. Are you fearless?

YOUTH. Yes!

LEADER. Are you cruel?

YOUTH. Yes!

LEADER. Then you are ready to speak the oath.

YOUTH. "In the presence of this blood banner which represents our Führer, I swear to devote all my energies and my strength to the savior of our country, Adolf Hitler. I am willing and ready to give up my life for him, so help me God."

LEADER. Let us pray.

YOUTH. Führer, our Führer, savior of Germany, our gift from God. We kneel at your feet, we bend to your will. Your heart is our shield, it protects us from our enemies. May the Third Reich rule throughout the world, and may every man speak your name. We exalt you, our glorious Führer! Heil Hitler!

(The music and/or singing swells as the lights come up on ALINA, *fading out as her singing begins.)*

(She cradles her doll. She sings to it softly, gently stroking its hair:)

ALINA.
Ladybug, ladybug, fly away home.
Your house is on fire, your children are home.
Lady. Bug. Lady. Bug. Your house is on fire.
Your house is fire. Fire.

*(*VIKTOR *runs in, stumbling, sobbing. He falls at* ALINA's *feet, hugging her knees. Unknown to* VIKTOR, JOSEF *has followed, and he watches, hiding, from a distance.)*

VIKTOR. Alina! Alina!

ALINA. Brother, why you cry? Don't be sad.

VIKTOR. I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry, Alina. So sorry. So sorry.

ALINA. Don't cry, brother.

VIKTOR. Your brother is a very bad person. I've done a very bad thing, Alina. Very bad.

ALINA. *(Throws her arms around* VIKTOR's *neck:)* I miss you! Very much! Very much!

VIKTOR. I hurt someone. I hurt them. I hurt them.

ALINA. Hurt?

VIKTOR. Yes, I hurt someone.

ALINA. Did they cry?

VIKTOR. Yes.

ALINA. Kiss and make it better.

VIKTOR. I wish I could. Oh, how I wish I could.

ALINA. Say you're sorry. Mama says.

VIKTOR. I am. I am sorry. Do you still love your brother, Alina?

ALINA. Look, birdie!

(She gets up, moving forward, and points at the window.)

VIKTOR. *(Drops his head:)* Yes. That's a sparrow. Mama used to call you her little sparrow. Do you remember?

ALINA. Mama says. Mama says . . . God watches . . . He sees . . . *(Grabs her head, seems to struggle furiously to think:)* MAMA SAYS!

VIKTOR. God watches over everyone, even the sparrows.

ALINA. Yes! He knows! All the sparrows. Ten, twelve, eight! He watches!! He sees!

*(*VIKTOR *begins to weep again. His shoulders shake.* ALINA *goes back to the chair. She gives* VIKTOR *her doll and sits, putting her brother's head in her lap.)*

ALINA. I cry. Mama sing. Sing birdie song.

VIKTOR. Yes, I remember.

ALINA. She sing six, fourteen, eight times.

VIKTOR. She always sang that song when you were sad.

ALINA. You sing.

VIKTOR. I don't feel like singing. *(He takes* ALINA's *hand:)* You sing, little sparrow.

ALINA. *(Begins to sing, tunelessly, and missing most of the words:)* Look! Me! I sparrow! Fly! God will catch!

(Eventually VIKTOR *joins her, and she falls silent and puts her arms around him and lets him sing for her.)*

VIKTOR.

Look at me, a little sparrow.
I can fly across the land.
I am not afraid, for if I fall,
God watches and will catch me in his hands . . .

(As VIKTOR *sings the last words,* JOSEF *moves into the light with them.)*

JOSEF. Viktor? . . .

VIKTOR. *(Leaping up:)* What are you doing here?

JOSEF. I understand now.

VIKTOR. What do you mean?

JOSEF. I heard everything. This is your sister?

VIKTOR. . . . Yes. She *is* my sister. Is that what you came here to find out? *(Mockingly:)* How many loaves of bread go to my *idiot* sister? My *retarded* sister. My *mentally deficient* sister . . . *(After a pause, he puts his arm protectively around* ALINA. *Quietly:)* . . . my twin sister.

JOSEF. Your twin?! Viktor, you can't come here anymore. You know what will happen if they learn you have a twin sister who is a, a . . .

VIKTOR. You can't even say it, can you?

JOSEF. Viktor, the law . . .

VIKTOR. I know! The hereditary hygiene law. I will be sterilized, in case I carry the defect.

JOSEF. Or worse, for lying about it! For hiding it!

VIKTOR. Yes. I have lied about my own sister, been ashamed of her. I have kept her like a dirty secret. I have even beaten a blind man in the street. Tell me, Josef. Who is defective here?

JOSEF. Listen to me. I won't tell anyone, Viktor, but you must separate yourself from her. We have to leave here. Now.

VIKTOR. *(Crosses to where* ALINA *sits:)* Alina?

(She has been watching JOSEF *carefully. She points at him:)*

ALINA. Friend?

VIKTOR. *(After a moment:)* I think so. Yes. He's my friend.

*(*ALINA *crosses to* JOSEF *and hugs him.* JOSEF *looks uncomfortable.)*

ALINA. Friend!

JOSEF. *(To* VIKTOR*:)* We have to get out of here.

ALINA. You hurt them too? You made them cry?

JOSEF. . . . Yes.

ALINA. Say you're sorry. Mama says.

JOSEF. All right. I will.

(He looks at VIKTOR*.)*

ALINA. You sad?

VIKTOR. Yes, he is sad.

ALINA. Then sing.

JOSEF. Sing?

ALINA. Sing like Mama. Make all better. Sing nine, fifteen, ten times!

(She holds up many fingers.)

JOSEF. Viktor . . .

VIKTOR. *(To* ALINA*:)* I have to go now.

ALINA. No! No leave! Please!

VIKTOR. Shh. You sing. Sing and remember the sparrow.

*(*ALINA *pouts for a moment, then resumes her tuneless singing. They exit, with* JOSEF *guiding* VIKTOR *and looking around nervously. Lights up on another part of the stage. Three chairs, with* PATIENTS *sitting in them.* ALINA *sits in the third chair. Two more* PEOPLE *stand behind the first two chairs. Please note: the names of the* PATIENTS *may be changed to suit the gender of the actor portraying them.)*

PERSON ONE. *(Reads from a letter sent by the asylum:)* 13 September, 1940. Dear Madam, We send this letter to inform you that your daughter Hannah has been transferred from our facility to a better-equipped asylum in the German countryside . . .

PERSON TWO. *(Also reading a letter from the asylum:)* Rest assured that your loved one will be much happier here, where he will be able

to have fresh air and sunshine. As always, we have your father's best interests at heart.

PERSON ONE. Sincerely,

PERSON TWO. Sincerely,

PERSON ONE. *(Reading his/her own letter:)* 16 September, 1940. To the Ward Supervisor: Could you please tell me where my daughter Hannah has been sent? I would like very much to be able to continue visiting her . . .

PERSON TWO. *(Also reading his/her own letter:)* Please send me the address. My father gets frantic when he must pass a week without seeing me. Could you mail your reply as soon as possible, please?

PERSON ONE. Sincerely,

PERSON TWO. Sincerely,

PERSON ONE. *(Reads letter:)* 21 September, 1940. Dear Madam, We are truly sorry to inform you of the death of your daughter Hannah Berning . . .

*(*PATIENT ONE *gets up from chair and exits into darkness.)*

PERSON TWO. To inform you of the death of your father Hugo Lindl . . .

*(*PATIENT TWO *gets up from chair and exits into darkness.)*

PERSON ONE. She developed sepsis from an infected wound.

PERSON TWO. He died from a severe case of influenza.

PERSON ONE. And unfortunately medical intervention had no effect.

PERSON TWO. And unfortunately medical intervention had no effect.

PERSON ONE. Considering the agony of life spent in an institution,

PERSON TWO. You should consider your loved one's death a release.

PERSON ONE. Sincerely . . .

PERSON TWO. Sincerely.

(They exit, taking the empty chairs. ALINA *sits alone, in low lighting.* VIKTOR *enters, sits at a table. In his hand he holds several pieces of mail, which he places on the table. He begins to make himself a cup of tea and then picks up a photo of his father.)*

VIKTOR. Father, what would you think of me now? Not much, I would wager. Not much. They made me join the Hitler Youth, but you would say now I have joined them in my heart. Maybe you would be right. I remember your saying once that war is simply a high-minded schoolyard brawl. I know you are right about that. We are bullies, father. No one is safe from us.

(A knock on the door. VIKTOR *opens it and* JOSEF *enters.)*

VIKTOR. Josef. I'm surprised to see you here.

JOSEF. You weren't at the meeting today. I haven't seen you in over a week. Not since . . .

VIKTOR. I didn't think you would want to see me.

JOSEF. Viktor . . . For the past few days, I've been thinking. Things are going so wrong, Viktor, and I . . . I have something to tell you, but first you must swear to me that you will never say where you've gotten this information.

VIKTOR. What information? What are you talking about?

JOSEF. My father has been working on a special project of the Reich. They call it T-4. I overheard him discussing it with some other officers.

VIKTOR. Yes, and?

JOSEF. Swear to me, Viktor. Swear on your honor you won't tell.

VIKTOR. Very well, I swear on my honor.

JOSEF. *(He goes and stands in front of the door:)* Has there been a letter from your sister's asylum?

VIKTOR. What? Why do you ask that?

JOSEF. The T-4 project is designed to reduce the need for asylums in Germany.

VIKTOR. *(Nervously:)* Josef, what are trying to tell me?

JOSEF. The institutions send letters to the families explaining the patients are being transferred to a new facility. *(Pauses.)* The family then gets a second letter saying the patient has died of natural causes.

VIKTOR. I don't understand.

JOSEF. They don't just die, Viktor. They're gassed. Killed.

*(*VIKTOR *stands, looking horrified. He rushes to the table and rifles frantically through the mail. He removes one letter and grabs the edge of the table for support.)*

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