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*For Susan Sampliner, who has believed in this project
since the very beginning, with love and thanks.*

Cast of Characters

Girls:

JANA HELLEROVA, Pronounced “Yah-na.” 6 years old, always carries her doll, “Anna.” She doesn’t know this is not a normal childhood.

ALENA LEDEROVA, 11 years old, she has a very dark side.

GABRIELA WINTEROVA, 12 years old, plays the violin, loves music.

EVA HELLEROVA, 14 years old, Jana’s sister. She has been forced to become mother to Jana. She often wishes she could stop being an “adult” and resume her own childhood.

Boys:

ERIK KOSEK, 8 years old. Idolizes Miroslav.

MARTIN LOWY, 10 years old, the “new kid.” He comes from a wealthy Prague family. He doesn’t fit in on many levels. He loves to draw.

PAVEL HOFFMAN, 14 years old, plays the recorder, loves music.

MIROSLAV WEISS, 15 years old, charismatic, a natural leader and budding socialist.

(Ages listed for characters are for the start of the play.)

Place

The play takes place in Terezin Concentration Camp, Czechoslovakia, 1942-1945.

Author's Note

Thirty miles outside Prague lies a town called Terezin. It was built in 1790 as a fortress and troop garrison. The stone ramparts and Empire-style buildings still stand, giving little evidence of the atrocities that took place in Terezin during World War II.

After occupying Czechoslovakia, the Germans turned Terezin into a concentration camp. Terezin was not a death camp like Auschwitz, though more than 35,000 people died there. Instead, Terezin was a holding place for prisoners who were ultimately shipped on to extermination in the East. More than 160,000 people passed through Terezin between November 1941 and May 1945.

Every room, attic and cellar became living quarters in what the Nazis called, "The Jewish Ghetto." Terezin's prisoners included most of Czechoslovakia's Jewish artists, writers, musicians and political activists – and more than 15,000 children.

Adult prisoners set up schools for the children, and encouraged them to express themselves artistically. The children secretly created hundreds of journals, poems, stories, and drawings. They also issued several underground newspapers.

Fewer than 100 of the children who were sent to Terezin survived the war.

And a Child Shall Lead contains poems and stories written by some of the young prisoners. It is the result of interviews with survivors and from research in archives and museum collections in the Czech Republic.

The play was conceived to be performed by a multi-racial, multi-ethnic cast, as a reminder of the political atrocities children have fallen, and continue to fall, victim to throughout the world.

Note on the Casting

It has been brought to my attention that it is necessary for some school groups to be able to use more than the eight children the play calls for. Though I prefer the play be done as written, I am not unsympathetic to this reality, and thus offer some suggestions that I have seen work to great effect:

Some have found imaginative ways to utilize a larger cast by populating the “camp” with additional kids of various ages, giving them silent activities and interactions, incorporating them into the group scenes, and even splitting up some of the soliloquies and newspaper reports among more than one child. Should this be done, the playwright suggests that the additional characters be given names and be incorporated into the scene early on in which the current prisoners state their names and ages, and the new prisoners state theirs. The additional names should be listed with an age, but no additional information, and should be interspersed among the others. The names chosen should reflect names that would be appropriate for Eastern European children to have. These additional characters should also be added to the scenes in which various kids get their transport notices and are shipped out of the camp. But in no event should anyone besides Pavel be left on stage after the last set of transports.

Note on the Music

There are various times where it is indicated that Pavel and/or Gabriela play their recorder and violin. They can play a variety of pieces, or can always be playing the music to the Lullaby... which would only necessitate the actors learning the one simple piece. Alternatively, a production could use a pre-record of the music, and the actors could mime playing their instruments.

The choice of piano music that is heard while Pavel and Gabriela are at the concert in Act Two should be both virtuosic and dramatic; perhaps the 3rd Movement from Beethoven’s Piano Sonata #14 in C Sharp Minor (*Moonlight*), opus 27 or the 3rd Movement from Beethoven’s Piano Sonata #23 in F Minor (*Appassionata*), opus 57.

Sheet Music

Sheet music can be found at the back of this book.

Acknowledgments

All production groups performing this play are required to include the following credits on the title page of every program:

Music by David Lawrence and Original Lyrics to
“We Shall Lead” by Faye Greenberg.

AND A CHILD SHALL LEAD

by Michael Slade

ACT I

(Terezin. A children's world within the camp. Partly secret. Partly open. Some of it is real. The rest, a dream. There is mist/fog.)

(A dirge-like piece of music is played on a recorder, sounding very far away. Gradually, we hear the taped sound of children's distant, ghostly laughter. The sounds get closer and louder.)

(As the mist clears, ERIK, 8, races on, desperately looking for a hiding place. We should fear for him. A moment later, MIROSLAV, 15, runs on, chasing ERIK. Suddenly, we realize they are playing hide-and-seek. ERIK gets to Home Base.)

ERIK. Home free, you can't catch me!

MIROSLAV. I'll get you next time.

ERIK. Oh, yeah?

MIROSLAV. Yeah!

(Lights come up on PAVEL, 14, off by himself. He is the one playing the recorder.)

Hey, Pavel! Come play hide-and seek.

(PAVEL continues playing his recorder.)

Music won't keep up your strength.

(PAVEL ignores him, continues to play.)

ERIK. *(Calling to PAVEL:)* Couldn't you at least play a happier song?

MIROSLAV. *(Starts toward PAVEL:)* Pavel—

ERIK. *(Stops MIROSLAV.)* Where are you going? We're in the middle of a game. And you're it!

MIROSLAV. *(Giving in:)* All right.

(As ERIK runs back to Home Base, MIROSLAV searches for the other kids. ALENA, 11, appears from her hiding place. She starts towards Home Base, then scurries back, unseen, as MIROSLAV turns in her direction.)

MIROSLAV. No one else is going to get past me!

ERIK. Oh, yeah?

MIROSLAV. Yeah!

(JANA, 6, giggles from her hiding place. As MIROSLAV turns toward the sound, EVA, 14, pops up from her own spot to distract him.)

EVA. Hey, Miroslav!

(She runs. MIROSLAV chases her. As he does, JANA jumps up and runs toward Home Base. MIROSLAV gives up on EVA, who quickly finds a new hiding place, and goes after JANA. ERIK holds onto Home Base with one hand and stretches out his other arm to JANA.)

ERIK. Quick, Jana!

(JANA grabs his hand just before MIROSLAV tags her.)

JANA. Home free, you can't catch me!

(As MIROSLAV shakes his head, ALENA races over and slides into Home Base.)

ALENA. Home free!

MIROSLAV. Why, you...!

(JANA, ALENA and ERIK laugh.)

ERIK. You can't catch anyone!

MIROSLAV. There's still Eva.

(On cue, unseen by MIROSLAV, EVA pops up from her hiding place. ERIK tries to distract MIROSLAV from turning by taking a step away from Home Base.)

ERIK. Whoops! I'm away from Home Base!

(MIROSLAV lunges for him, but misses.)

MIROSLAV. You'd better watch it.

(Just then, EVA runs behind MIROSLAV and reaches Home Base.)

EVA. No, *you'd* better watch it!

(OTHERS cheer.)

ALENA. (To MIROSLAV:) You're it, again!

ERIK. (Dancing away from Home Base:) You're it, you're it, you're it...

(MIROSLAV tags him.)

MIROSLAV. No, *you're* it!

(OTHERS laugh.)

ERIK. That's not fair!

MIROSLAV. You were off base.

ERIK. But the game was over.

MIROSLAV. No, it wasn't.

ALENA. (To ERIK, agreeing with MIROSLAV:) He didn't start counting again.

ERIK. But—

EVA. (To ERIK:) Alena's right. Ready?

ERIK. I don't want to be it.

MIROSLAV. Those are the rules.

JANA. Eva, I'm hungry.

EVA. (To JANA:) We're going to play again.

JANA. But I'm hungry.

MIROSLAV. (To ERIK:) Start counting.

ERIK. (Giving in:) All right. But it's not fair. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6...

(OTHERS scatter. Suddenly, we hear the sound of a train in the distance. ALENA climbs a wall and looks off.)

ALENA. A train!

(ALL stop playing, and become deadly serious.)

MIROSLAV. Empty or full?

ALENA. I can't see from here.

EVA. It must be full. There weren't any transport notices.

JANA. More people?

ALENA. There's not enough room now!

JANA. Or food.

ERIK. I'm going to see what's going on.

EVA. We're in the middle of a game.

ALENA. You can't get out of playing. You're it.

JANA. You're it, you're it, you're it...

ERIK. I don't care.

(He starts to run off. MIROSLAV grabs him by the shirt.)

MIROSLAV. We're not allowed near the trains.

ERIK. Let me go!

EVA. You could get shot.

ERIK. Don't worry. I know how to hide.

EVA. *(Trying to cajole him back into the game:)* Okay. You hide, and I'll be it.

ERIK. *(Struggling to get free:)* That's not what I meant!

(He breaks free and runs.)

EVA. Erik!

(She and MIROSLAV start after him, but he is gone.)

JANA. *(Runs to EVA:)* Eva! Don't go!

(EVA hugs her. MIROSLAV looks at the OTHERS' worried faces, then makes a decision to resume the game.)

MIROSLAV. Okay. I'm it. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5...

(Looks up, to OTHERS, who are hesitant to play.)

MIROSLAV. You'd better hide!

(He covers his eyes, and resumes counting.)

ALENA. I've got a good spot.

(She runs to it.)

EVA. Come on, Jana, you hide with me.

(They run off.)

MIROSLAV. *(Continuing to count:)* ...9, 10, 11, 12...

(Lights shift. ALENA is alone.)

ALENA. The last butterfly, the very last, so richly, brightly, dazzlingly yellow. Such a yellow as if the sun dripped tears upon a white, white stone. The last butterfly, the very last, was carried lightly way up high. It went away, I'm sure, because it wished to kiss the world goodbye. For seven weeks I've lived in here, penned up inside this ghetto. The dandelions call to me, and the white chestnut tree flowers in the court. But I never saw another butterfly. That one was the last. Butterflies don't live here. In the ghetto.

(Lights cross-fade to EVA and JANA in the barrack. EVE is combing JANA's hair. JANA holds her doll. EVA's speech is a soliloquy. OTHERS enter the barrack as she speaks, going about their business. they don't hear her.)

EVA. I've lived here in the ghetto more than a year, in Terezin, in the Black Town. And when I remember my dear old home, I find I love it more than I did. I want to go back home again. Home. It makes me think of sweet, spring flowers. Before, when I lived there, it never seemed so warm and safe.

(She finishes combing JANA's hair. JANA quietly crosses away to play with her doll. EVA, caught up in her thoughts, doesn't notice.)

But now, I look around and see at once I'm in a ghetto... A place of evil and of fear. There's little to eat, and much to want. And bit by bit, it's a horror just to live. But no one must give up! The world turns, and times change. We —

(She's startled out of her thoughts, notices JANA is missing. She calls out, frightened:)

Jana?! Where are you?

JANA. Over here.

EVA. Stay where I can see you.

JANA. I'm hungry.

EVA. I know.

(Back to her own thoughts:)

We all hope the day will come when we'll go back home again. Now I know how dear it is, and often I remember it.

(The CHILDREN are all momentarily frozen in a tableau of their life in the barracks. Then, EVA stands and faces out, as do the OTHERS on their lines. Perhaps the BOYS and GIRLS line up on opposite sides of the stage to suggest the two separate barracks.)

EVA. Eva Hellerova, fourteen, barrack L-310.

JANA. Jana Hellerova, six, barrack L-310.

MIROSLAV. Miroslav Weiss, fifteen, barrack L-318.

PAVEL. *(Apart:)* Pavel Hoffman, fourteen, barrack L-318.

ALENA. Alena Lederova, eleven, barrack L-310.

ALL. Terezin, Czechoslovakia, 1942.

(ERIK races in and falls in line.)

ERIK. Erik Kosek, eight, barrack L-318.

(ALL turn to him.)

EVA. Are you all right?

ERIK. Sure. I told you I wouldn't get caught.

MIROSLAV. What did you see?

ERIK. It's a small transport. About ten cars. But a lot more kids.

(GABRIELA, 12, enters. She carries a bag, and clutches a violin. She is followed by MARTIN, 10. He is better dressed than the OTHERS.)

GABRIELA. Gabriela Winterova, twelve, 83 Celetna Street, Prague.

MARTIN. Martin Lowy, ten, 317 Maisel Street, Prague.

(MARTIN is with the BOYS, GABRIELA with the GIRLS. Though their dialog is intertwined, the BOYS and GIRLS speak separately for the time being.)

ERIK. *(To MARTIN:)* Not anymore.

MARTIN. What do you mean?

PAVEL. He means, now you live in Terezin.

MARTIN. Yes, but—

EVA. *(To GABRIELA:)* Life here is going to be a little different.

MARTIN. Where's my room?

ERIK. *(Sarcastic:)* Your room?!

ALENA. *(To GABRIELA:)* You don't get a room.

MIROSLAV. *(To MARTIN:)* You sleep over there with everybody else.

PAVEL. When you can sleep.

EVA. *(To GABRIELA:)* Nighttime can be scary.

ALENA. You hear people crying and screaming.

JANA. And guards shouting.

MARTIN. *(To BOYS:)* There must be some mistake.

ERIK. There's no mistake.

MARTIN. You don't understand. I want to speak to someone in charge. I'm Martin Lowy. I didn't do anything wrong. They came to

our house. They chased away the servants. They made us get in a line. I got separated from my parents. I tried to tell them, but no one would listen. I was pushed into a boxcar with all these people I didn't even know. They closed the doors. The train started moving, and when it stopped, we were here. It's a mistake. I'm Martin Lowy. My father is Vaclav Lowy. My mother is Etela. I have a little brother, Josef. I live at 317 Maisel Street in Prague.

MIROSLAV. (*Comforting:*) We all used to live somewhere else.

MARTIN. I don't belong here! And I'm hungry. I haven't eaten since they took us from our house.

ERIK. Awww! He's hungry!

(He trips MARTIN, who falls to the ground. ERIK laughs.)

MIROSLAV. Erik, stop it!

(PAVEL helps MARTIN up.)

PAVEL. We wait in line at 7 a.m., noon and 7 p.m. to get some warm water with either a salty or a coffee taste, and a crust of bread.

JANA. (*To GABRIELA:*) Sometimes they give us moldy potatoes.

ALENA. When we're lucky.

GABRIELA. My mother's a wonderful cook. And she used to sing with the opera. That's where she met my father. He's a musician, and – Ouch! Something bit me!

JANA. Bugs. You'll get used to them.

MARTIN. (*To BOYS:*) Where's the adult in charge?

PAVEL. Who?

ERIK. He wants to see Colonel Rahm.

MIROSLAV. (*To MARTIN:*) No, you don't.

(He crosses away and peers out a window slat.)

GABRIELA. (*To GIRLS:*) Where are the parents?

EVA. Some are in the camp.

JANA. Not ours.

EVA. No, not ours.

ALENA. Some get sent other places.

MARTIN. (*To BOYS:*) I want to go home.

PAVEL. So do we all.

GABRIELA. (*To GIRLS:*) I don't know where they took my mother and father.

(As EVA puts an arm around her, MIROSLAV stealthily moves away from the window, to EVA.)

MIROSLAV. (*Quietly, to EVA:*) The guards have gone to process the new prisoners. I'm going to try to get Mrs. Kafkova.

EVA. Be careful.

MIROSLAV. Bring everyone to the storeroom behind C-17.

(He exits furtively. EVA watches him go.)

PAVEL. (*To MARTIN and GABRIELA:*) Don't leave anything lying around.

ALENA. Unless you want it to disappear.

(GABRIELA hides her violin.)

JANA. You'll get used to it.

PAVEL. You just have to remember the rules.

ALENA. Which change every day.

(EVA moves to OTHERS.)

EVA. Miroslav went to get Mrs. Kafkova. We're going to try to have school.

GABRIELA. School?

JANA. It's secret. They don't want us to learn anything here.

EVA. So we have to be careful. Like hide and seek.

MARTIN. Why do you go to school if you don't have to?

ALENA. Just hurry up!

EVA. *(To GABRIELA:)* Follow me.

PAVEL. *(Stops GABRIELA.)* Did she tell you it's against the rules? That you could get shot?

EVA. Pavel!

PAVEL. She has a right to know the truth.

EVA. *(To GABRIELA:)* You'll be safe.

JANA. *(Whispers:)* But you have to watch out for the guards.

GABRIELA. Thanks.

(She joins EVA and JANA as they and the OTHERS scurry to the secret school. PAVEL looks at his recorder, then puts it in his pocket as he decides to hurry after them.)

EVA. *(As they head to the "school":)* Keep an eye out for scraps of paper, old office forms, anything you can write on. Or with.

PAVEL. *(Arriving:)* Just don't let the guards see you pick them up.

EVA. *(To PAVEL, surprised:)* You came.

PAVEL. *(Shrugs.)* Yeah.

(ERIK hands MARTIN and GABRIELA pencil stubs and scraps of paper.)

ERIK. *(To MARTIN and GABRIELA:)* You have to be very careful. All the time.

GABRIELA. Do you have school every day?

EVA. No. Sometimes it's too dangerous.

(MIROSLAV enters, carrying a bag of books. He is upset.)

JANA. Where's Mrs. Kafkova?

MIROSLAV. She won't be coming anymore.

ALENA. You mean, she's dead.

MIROSLAV. Yes.

EVA. How?

MIROSLAV. Shot.

EVA. For what?

MIROSLAV. Does it matter?

EVA. I want to know!

MIROSLAV. No one would tell me.

ERIK. No more school!

MIROSLAV. Erik!

EVA. (*Crying:*) She was my friend.

MARTIN. I saw a man shot. He wouldn't get on the train. For a second it looked like he was flying. I wonder if it feels like you're flying.

PAVEL. Did they find out about the school?

MIROSLAV. I don't think so.

PAVEL. You don't *think* so? Were you followed?

MIROSLAV. No!

PAVEL. (*Looking outside:*) Are you sure?

MIROSLAV. They'd have come in by now.

PAVEL. You put us all in danger.

EVA. (*Holding JANA, to MIROSLAV:*) What are we going to do?

PAVEL. We're going to stop breaking the rules. We're going to stop this stupid school. We're going to stop giving them reasons to kill us.

MIROSLAV. They don't need reasons! Mrs. Kafkova isn't dead because of the school. The school was what kept her going. And we're going to continue it!

PAVEL. What?!

EVA. How? Who's going to be the teacher?

MIROSLAV. I've got her books. We can teach each other.

PAVEL. You're crazy.

MIROSLAV. The school will continue. In her memory. We'll meet in the barracks from now on. It'll draw less attention.

PAVEL. So we won't even be safe there?!

MIROSLAV. We'll be careful. Someone will always be watching. Later, we'll go through the books and see who can teach what. Today, I'll start with a history lesson.

EVA. No. Today should be for poetry.

MIROSLAV. Poetry?! We don't have time for —

EVA. (*Cutting him off:*) Mrs. Kafkova loved poetry.

JANA. She helped me and Erik write a poem.

(They take out some scraps of paper.)

PAVEL. History, poetry... You'll get us all killed.

(He crosses to exit the "school".)

EVA. Pavel!

PAVEL. Don't worry. I won't give you away.

(He exits furtively. EVA looks at JANA, concerned.)

EVA. (*To MIROSLAV:*) Maybe he's right.

MIROSLAV. We've got to keep our minds alive! Read the poetry. I'll stand guard.

(He does.)

JANA & ERIK. We'll read our poem!

EVA. Okay.

(ERIK and JANA move to the front.)

JANA & ERIK. (*With great fanfare:*) "The Little Mousie!"

EVA. But quietly.

ERIK. A mousie sat upon a shelf,
Looking for a flea, deep in his fur.
But he couldn't catch it. Grrr.
It was hidden way inside his skin.
He turned and wriggled, knew no rest,
That flea was such a nasty pest!

JANA. His mommy came
And searched his coat.
She caught the flea, and off she ran
To cook it in a frying pan.
Then she called to the mousie,

JANA & ERIK. "Come and see!
For lunch we've got a nice, fat flea!"

(They bow. Applause. MIROSLAV and EVA quiet OTHERS. ERIK and JANA sit. EVA crosses to MARTIN who is busy working.)

EVA. *(To MARTIN:)* Are you writing a poem?

MARTIN. No. Just drawing.

EVA. Do you want to show it to the others?

(MARTIN shakes his head, "no." EVA turns to others.)

Then who's next?

ERIK. Can we do our poem again?

JANA. Please?

EVA. Let's give someone else a chance.

(ALENA rises.)

ALENA. I wrote a poem.

EVA. Good.

ALENA. The poor thing stands their vainly.
Vainly she strains her voice.
Perhaps she'll die.

Then can you say, "How beautiful the world is today"?

(Silence as she looks at the OTHERS.)

JANA. I don't like your poem.

(EVA crosses to the front. ALENA sits.)

EVA. Mine's called, "Birdsong."

(She begins, pointedly to ALENA.)

She doesn't know the world at all,
Who stays in her nest and doesn't go out.
She doesn't know what birds know best
Nor what I want to talk about.

(MIROSLAV having spotted something or someone outside, whistles his special "danger" signal. ALL freeze. A beat. MIROSLAV finally gives the "all clear" signal. EVA continues, more quietly.)

That the world is full of loveliness.
When dewdrops sparkle in the grass
And Earth's aflood with morning light,
A blackbird sings upon a bush,
To greet the dawning after night.
Then I know how wonderful it is to be alive.
Go to the woods someday, and —

(MIROSLAV gives the "danger" signal again. ALL freeze. After a beat, he repeats the warning. ALL quickly scatter to quiet, private places, alone. EVA and JANA are together.)

ALENA. In silence, the dream-reel unwinds its thread. And the heart, like a loom, slowly weaves the thread. The dreamer tried to reach for that thread, but fell, and never found her way back to hope.

MARTIN. *(Writing a letter:)*

Dear Brother,

It may seem strange that I am writing you, since I don't know where you are, and couldn't mail this letter even if I did. But I will write you anyway and save the letters until we see each other again. I am in Terezin. Barrack L-318. It is about sixty kilometers from Prague, and it used to be a fort. But not anymore. There are many grown-ups, and many children. The older kids have to work in underground factories during the day. But we have a secret school

where we study and write and draw pictures. I like drawing the best. We aren't given paper. But yesterday around dusk, I saw a soldier throwing out some forms. I hid for a long time until I was sure he was gone. It was very scary. Then I snuck over to the trash barrel, reached in, grabbed the forms, shoved them in my shirt, and made it back to the barracks. The forms have German writing all over them. I don't know what it says. But the backs are blank. I wish I was home in Prague with you and Mommy and Daddy. I don't like it here. The other kids make fun of me. But at least I can draw. I drew a picture of our home, so I'll remember it. And I'm drawing a picture of me in Terezin for you, so you'll remember me. See you soon. Love, Martin.

(He draws.)

MIROSLAV. *(Writing in his diary:)*

Since Mrs. Kafkova was murdered, we've realized that we can run the school ourselves.

(Excited:)

There must be other things we can do, also.

JANA. Eva?

EVA. Yes?

JANA. I miss Mommy and Daddy.

EVA. So, do I.

(PAVEL has taken out his recorder. GABRIELA watches him from a distance.)

GABRIELA. *(To herself:)* He's going to play.

JANA. *(Continuing to EVA:)* Where did they go?

EVA. I don't know.

PAVEL. *(Notices GABRIELA watching him:)* She's watching me again.

(He shakes his head, then begins to play.)

JANA. *(Continuing to EVA:)* When will we all be together again?

EVA. I don't know.

JANA. When?

EVA. Someday.

JANA. When?

EVA. Soon.

JANA. When?

ALENA. When I grow up, I'm going to be a Nazi. Then I'll be treated well.

JANA. *(Continuing to EVA:)* Why did they take us away?

EVA. We've been through this.

JANA. Why?

EVA. Because that's the law.

JANA. Why?

EVA. Because we're Jewish.

JANA. Why?

EVA. Because we were born Jewish.

JANA. Why?

EVA. Enough, Jana!

(GABRIELA has taken out her violin and begins playing the same folk tune PAVEL is playing. He stops to listen.)

MIROSLAV. *(Still writing in his diary:)*

The Germans started making a film here yesterday. Propaganda to show the outside world.

ALENA. *(Writing in her diary:)*

Yesterday, I heard a bird singing. Another spring.

MIROSLAV. ... "The Fuhrer Presents the Jews With a City." Is it possible the world will believe their lies?

JANA. Eva?

EVA. Yes?

JANA. I love you.

EVA. And I love you.

ERIK. (*Crosses to ALENA:*) Tell me a story.

ALENA. Not now.

ERIK. Please?

MIROSLAV. (*Calling to MARTIN and EVA:*) Martin! Eva! I've got an idea.

(*MARTIN crosses to him.*)

EVA. (*To JANA:*) Stay here.

(*She joins MIROSLAV and MARTIN.*)

ERIK. (*To ALENA:*) Well?

ALENA. (*Giving in:*) Once upon a time there was a little girl...

ERIK. A little *boy*.

ALENA. Whose story is it?

ERIK. Yours.

(*GABRIELA has stopped playing her violin, and begun writing.*)

GABRIELA. Dear Diary, this morning I stood looking out at the countryside through the fortress walls. The blue of the river, the red, yellow and purple of the spring wildflowers and butterflies...

ALENA. (*Continuing to ERIK:*) Once upon a time there was a little girl...

GABRIELA. ...The green mountains and small houses far in the distance...

ALENA. ...She lived with her mother and father in a beautiful little house, far, far away...

GABRIELA. ...But closer, I saw a group of adult prisoners being marched away from the walls. I don't know where...

ALENA. ...They all loved each other very much...

GABRIELA. ...Perhaps they didn't know either. Some of the prisoners were crying. They were all so thin and grey. Will I look like that soon, too?

ALENA. ...Sometimes the little girl got into fights with her mother. But down deep they loved each other very much...

ERIK. You already said that.

ALENA. Shh! One morning, the little girl and her mother had a big fight. She said some terrible things, and ran off. Later, when she came home, her mother was gone...

GABRIELA. Later, I heard gunshots in the distance. Maybe the guards were shooting rabbits...

ALENA. ...And she never got to say she was sorry. The End.

ERIK. That story stinks.

GABRIELA. ...It makes me sad to know I can't go out to the fields and pick wild flowers. But I do believe that one day, all of us will be free.

(MIROSLAV, EVA and MARTIN turn to the OTHERS.)

MIROSLAV. Everybody! Martin, Eva and I are going to do a skit!

ALL. Hooray!

EVA. Shh! Not too loud.

(She, MIROSLAV and MARTIN have set the "stage" with a desk and a chair. They each hold a script. The OTHERS sit on the floor to watch. The skit is a silly burlesque. MIROSLAV plays the camp commander, EVA is his cute but dumb secretary, MARTIN is another German officer. They use broad, comic German accents. It begins with MARTIN addressing the "audience" as EVA sits on MIROSLAV's lap.)

MARTIN. *(Self-consciously reading from his script:)* The scene is Berlin...

ERIK. Speak up!

MARTIN. *(Still quiet/nervous:)* ...The office of the commander of Concentration Camp, Terezin.

ERIK. He's terrible. Let me do it!

(He jumps up and grabs MARTIN's script.)

MIROSLAV. Erik!

MARTIN. It's okay. He'll do it better.

(He sits alone as ERIK begins. ERIK is considerably better.)

ERIK. The scene is Berlin...

"AUDIENCE". Boo!

ERIK. ...The office of the commander of Concentration Camp, Terezin.

"AUDIENCE". Boo! Hiss!

(MIROSLAV and EVA pretend to kiss. "AUDIENCE" laughs. ERIK turns to an imaginary door.)

ERIK. Knock, knock, knock.

(He "enters" the office. MIROSLAV jumps up to salute. EVA falls to the floor, from where she salutes. "AUDIENCE" laughs.)

MIROSLAV. *(Commander.)* Heil Hitler.

ERIK. *(Propaganda Minister.)* Heil Hitler.

EVA. *(Secretary.) (From the floor:)* Heil Hitler.

MIROSLAV. *(Commander.) (To ERIK:)* What brings the Minister of Propaganda to our humble prison camp?

ERIK. *(Propaganda Minister.)* Word has it that the Jews in Terezin are not treated well.

(EVA bursts out laughing.)

MIROSLAV. *(Commander.)* Isn't that the point?

ERIK. *(Propaganda Minister.)* Absolutely. But stories about their condition are being published in foreign newspapers. And that must be stopped!

(He slams his hand down on the desk, hurting it. "AUDIENCE" laughs.)

EVA. *(Secretary.)* Yes! It could mean a whole lot of trouble.

ERIK. *(Propaganda Minister.)* Precisely!

(He slams his hand again, hurting it again. "AUDIENCE" laughs again.)

EVA. *(Secretary.)* But what can we do? We can't give them more food or improve their living conditions. That's against our...our...

MIROSLAV. *(Commander.)* Our anti-Semitic principles.

EVA. *(Secretary.)* Exactly!

(She slams her hand down on the desk, hurting it. "AUDIENCE" laughs.)

ERIK. *(Propaganda Minister.)* I agree. But we can't risk having the world believe these reports!

EVA. *(Secretary.)* Leave it to the Jews and their friends to ruin all our fun.

ERIK. *(Propaganda Minister.)* Wait! I've got it!

EVA. *(Secretary.)* He's got it!

MIROSLAV. *(Commander.)* He's got what?

EVA. *(Secretary.)* I don't know.

ERIK. *(Propaganda Minister.)* We'll shoot a film.

EVA & MIROSLAV. *(Sec'y/Comm.)* A film!

(They do a take.)

Huh?

ERIK. *(Propaganda Minister.)* You know all about film tricks, don't you? The magic of the cinema?

EVA. *(Secretary.)* Errol Flynn, Clark Gable, Rin-Tin-Tin.

ERIK. *(Propaganda Minister.)* We'll make a movie showing what wonderful lives our "guests" have here. And we'll send it to all

those wretched countries that are poking their noses into our business!

MIROSLAV. (*Commander.*) Wonderful!

EVA. (*Secretary.*) Brilliant!

MIROSLAV. (*Commander.*) Lights!

EVA. (*Secretary.*) Camera!

ERIK. (*Propaganda Minister.*) Action!

(*They bow, "AUDIENCE" applauds.*)

ERIK. (*As himself:*) Let's make our own film!

ALL. (*Except PAVEL:*) Yeah!

MIROSLAV. (*Hands PAVEL an imaginary camera.*) Why don't you be the cameraman?

PAVEL. No, thanks.

MIROSLAV. It'll be fun.

(*PAVEL walks away.*)

MIROSLAV. Okay, I'll be the cameraman.

ALENA. I'll be a Nazi guard.

EVA. We don't need guards.

ALENA. Someone has to be in charge.

MARTIN. I'll be a guard, too.

ALENA. There's only one.

ERIK. Besides, you wouldn't be any good at it.

(*He pushes MARTIN.*)

MARTIN. Cut it out.

ERIK. Make me.

(*MIROSLAV intercedes.*)

MIROSLAV. Enough.

(Turns to OTHERS:)

Ready?

EVA. *(Uses imaginary clapboard:)* Action!

(They make their pretend movie. MIROSLAV works the “camera” and narrates. The OTHERS act out various roles. ALENA as the guard, bullies the OTHERS. Throughout, PAVEL, sitting apart, plays his recorder, which inadvertently serves as a soundtrack.)

[NOTE: A NAZI PROPAGANDA FILM, “THE FUHRER PRESENTS THE JEWS WITH A CITY” WAS ACTUALLY FILMED IN TEREZIN.]

MIROSLAV. “The Fuhrer Presents the Jews With a City.” Terezin is a model community. Here, Jews are free to wait out the war in safety and comfort, while maintaining normal, everyday lives.

(EVA and JANA smile for the camera.)

There is no shortage of jobs here. Work is plentiful, and everyone happily pitches in to do their share.

(MARTIN “digs” with pained expression. ALENA points her “gun” at him, and he breaks into an enormous grin.)

Food is served family style in a large dining hall. And it certainly looks like people enjoy it.

(A fat ERIK licks his fingers. As “the camera” moves on, he removes the padding from under his shirt – Jana’s doll.)

For healthy bodies, there is a constant program of athletic activities at Terezin. With regular competitions.

(MARTIN and EVA prepare to run a race.)

ALENA. On your mark, get set...

(Lowers her “gun,” pointing it at them.)

Don’t run too far.

MIROSLAV. Cultural events take place often.

(EVA sings one loud, sustained, off-pitch note. The OTHERS stop her.)

MIROSLAV. The elderly can often be found relaxing in the park, just enjoying the day.

(GABRIELA and JANA are “elderly residents” at a tea party.)

GABRIELA. I wish those children would play more quietly.

JANA. Yes, they get on my nerves.

GABRIELA. When I was young, children had better manners.

JANA. We certainly did. More tea?

MIROSLAV. Terezin has its own independent government, which works closely with a representative of the Reich, Colonel Rahm, to insure that the community runs smoothly. Colonel Rahm makes a point of personally welcoming new Terezin residents, in this case a group of Jewish orphans.

(He quickly passes the “camera” to EVA, and assumes the role of Colonel Rahm. He greets ERIK and JANA, pats them on the head, kisses them, then picks them up. As he does, ALL form a group pose, smiling and waving at the “camera”.)

MIROSLAV. Yes, Terezin is a wonderful, happy place to live. A place where Jews, thanks to the glorious Fuhrer who has given them this city, are free to live in peace, away from the horrors of the war.

(ALL freeze. Lights change to a surreal effect. PAVEL’s music becomes unsettling, dissonant.)

EVA. I wish that I could fly away...

(One by one, the OTHERS join in. They cross to new places, spread about the stage. The chant builds from longing to great anger and power.)

To somewhere very far from here.
Where grown-ups laugh and children play,
And people do not kill each other.

(PAVEL stops playing his recorder and joins in the chant.)

ALL. Maybe all of us,
Ten million strong,

Will find that world
Before too long.

(Lights change back to reality. Energized MIROSLAV addresses the OTHERS.)

MIROSLAV. The Germans make their propaganda movies, and show them to the world. And the world chooses to believe their lies. No one is going to magically come to our rescue. Because no one knows what is really happening here. So, it's up to us! Skits and games aren't enough. These are *our* lives! This is *our* future! We have to fight back in whatever ways we can!

ERIK. I want to fight!

(He begins air-boxing around MARTIN.)

MARTIN. Stop it!

MIROSLAV. Not that kind of fighting. Some of us write poems, some keep diaries —

PAVEL. *(Cuts MIROSLAV off:)* And you could get shot for it.

(EVA reflexively hugs JANA.)

MIROSLAV. Yes, but why?

ALENA. Because it's against the rules.

MIROSLAV. Because there's power in the written word! What if we organized our writing into a newspaper? Document everything going on here, the bad and the good. Fight their lies with the truth.

PAVEL. Who would read it?

MIROSLAV. Us. The other prisoners. It could be an inspiration. And maybe one day we'll find a way to get a copy to the world outside.

EVA. *(Excited:)* I wrote for my school's newspaper.

MIROSLAV. And I was editor of mine.

EVA. You were?

MIROSLAV. We can do this, Eva.

MARTIN. We don't have a printing press.

EVA. We can hand-write the copies.

MARTIN. We'd have to find a lot of paper.

MIROSLAV. That can be your job.

PAVEL. Who put you in charge?

MIROSLAV. What?

PAVEL. You said they're *our* lives. So, who put you in charge of them?

MIROSLAV. I'm not in charge of – [anything.]

PAVEL. (*Cutting him off:*) You sure act like you are. And you're putting them all in danger.

ERIK. You'd rather sit around playing music and doing nothing?

PAVEL. (*Impassioned:*) Playing music is something! Holding on to a bit of art and beauty and humanity is something! Staying alive is something!

MIROSLAV. But is it enough?

PAVEL. It is for me. More than enough.

MIROSLAV. Not for me.

ERIK. Me, neither.

PAVEL. Let the grown-ups do the fighting. We're kids!

(He walks away. There is a long, fraught silence. In the distance, PAVEL begins to play his recorder. GABRIELA picks up her violin and heads toward him.)

EVA. (*To MIROSLAV, sobered:*) Anyone caught doing this will be killed.

MIROSLAV. We won't get caught.

EVA. (*Looks at JANA:*) I won't put the little kids at risk.

MIROSLAV. Then you and I can put out the first issue. Alone.

ERIK. That's not fair!

MIROSLAV. After the first one, it'll be each person's decision.

EVA. *(After a pause, agrees:)* It's got to have a name.

MIROSLAV. I know! Vedem! "We are leading!"

EVA. I love it.

(Lights come up on PAVEL and GABRIELA.)

GABRIELA. I know that piece.

(She plays along with him. They stop.)

PAVEL. You play very well.

GABRIELA. Not really.

PAVEL. You do.

GABRIELA. Thanks.

PAVEL. You're lucky they let you keep your violin. I used to study the piano, but...

GABRIELA. I'd die if they took my violin away.

PAVEL. *(Holds up his recorder:)* At least I was able to bring this. It's not a piano, but it's something.

GABRIELA. I couldn't live without music.

PAVEL. The hardest part is having to play everything from memory.

GABRIELA. Maybe we could sort-of help each other. Play together. Teach each other.

PAVEL. I don't know.

GABRIELA. Of course, I don't play very well yet.

PAVEL. You play beautifully.

GABRIELA. No, *you* play beautifully.

PAVEL. Then it's settled. We both play beautifully.

GABRIELA. (*Aware she's younger than he is:*) I'm twelve.

PAVEL. (*Shrugs.*) I'm fourteen. My name's Pavel. Pavel Hoffman.

GABRIELA. I know. I'm Gabriela.

PAVEL. (*Nods.*) Gabriela Winterova. It's nice to officially meet you.

(They shake hands.)

Play something. Anything.

(He watches as GABRIELA begins to play. A light comes up on EVA.)

EVA. Everything leans, like tottering, hunched old women.

Every eye shines with fixed waiting, and for the word, "when?" You believe every bit of news you hear. The buildings now are fuller. Body smelling close to body. And the garrets scream with light for long, long hours. This evening I walked along the street of death. On one wagon they were taking the dead away. Why have so many marches been drummed here? Why so many soldiers?

Then, a week after the end, everything will be empty here. A hungry dove will peck for bread. In the middle of the street will stand an empty, dirty hearse.

(Lights dim on her, and come up brighter on PAVEL, still watching GABRIELA play.)

PAVEL. (*A soliloquy as he watches her:*)

Terezin is full of beauty, you just have to look for it.

Through you, with you, perhaps I could put on blinders and see only life and art and love.

(GABRIELA finishes playing. As she turns to him, anxiously, the lights shift and come up on ERIK and JANA. She holds her doll, "Anna." ALENA watches from a distance. MARTIN watches as HE draws.)

JANA. Let's play house. I'll be the mommy and you'll be the daddy, and Anna will be the child.

ERIK. No. I want to play, “My Best Meal.” My best meal is... chicken soup with noodles, and roasted chicken, and potatoes, and —

JANA. (*Cuts him off:*) No! We’re playing house!

(*ERIK gives in. JANA speaks to the doll:*)

JANA. Give Mommy a big hug. That’s a good girl. Now give Daddy a hug before he goes to work.

ERIK. Daddy’s not going to work.

JANA. Why not?

ERIK. I have a holiday.

JANA. Then you can play with the baby.

ERIK. She can play by herself.

JANA. Well, if you’re not going to the office, and you won’t play with our child, then you can help me with the housework.

ERIK. Okay. But first I want you to make me something to eat.

JANA. Okay. What would you like?

ERIK. Chicken soup with noodles, and roasted chicken, and potatoes, and —

JANA. Erik! You’re not playing right!

(*MIROSLAV races into the barrack, and runs to EVA.*)

MIROSLAV. (*Excited:*) I found it! I found the underground room! I met Berthold Ordner, the blind artist!

EVA. I don’t believe it!

MIROSLAV. You can’t imagine what that place is like. The stench hits you five minutes before you’re even there. And the filth. There are no toilets, just holes. I didn’t think I’d find it at first. No one would take me. They said kids didn’t belong there, and they didn’t want to be responsible. But, finally an old woman gave me directions. Only I got lost. There’s hardly any light. But then...Eva...He lives in a space that’s...I don’t know, five by five. He sleeps on the

dirt floor. You wouldn't think anything but an animal could exist there. But when your eyes finally adjust, you look around and...the whole place is filled with these beautiful little sculptures. He makes them out of bits of wire and garbage that people bring him. He was so happy to speak to me.

EVA. Did you take notes?

MIROSLAV. It was too dark.

EVA. *(She hands him scraps of paper.)* Do it now. Before you forget anything.

(As MIROSLAV begins writing, MARTIN lifts a stone and hides his drawing. Lights come up on PAVEL and GABRIELA.)

GABRIELA. I think Miroslav's newspaper is a good idea.

PAVEL. They're going to get themselves killed.

GABRIELA. If you were writing an article, what would it be about?

PAVEL. I wouldn't.

GABRIELA. I'd write about us. Finding each other here, in this place. Practicing our music in spite of everything.

PAVEL. Are we going to play or not?

GABRIELA. I'd want people to know about this.

(As she picks up her violin, lights up on MIROSLAV reading to EVA.)

MIROSLAV. I asked Berthold Ordner, "Do you wish you weren't blind?" He thought for a long moment before responding. "Sometimes. But other times I find my blindness to be a blessing. You don't need eyes to think. And when I concentrate, I can think myself away from this dirt and filth and travel to beautiful places."

EVA. It's going to be a wonderful article.

MIROSLAV. Have you finished your editorial?

EVA. Almost.

(As they each write, lights up on JANA and ERIK, still playing. MARTIN approaches.)

MARTIN. Can I play, too?

ERIK. I don't know.

JANA. He can be the older brother.

(To MARTIN:) Go take your sister for a ride in your wagon.

MARTIN. Where is it?

ERIK. You have to pretend. Don't you know anything?

JANA. Don't talk to our son that way. Now, you watch the children while I make dinner.

ERIK. *(Giving in:)* Okay.

(MARTIN has found a piece of cloth. He places the doll on it and drags it around. ALENA approaches.)

ALENA. What are you doing?

MARTIN. Taking my sister for a ride in my wagon.

(ALENA stares at him.)

It's just pretend, Alena.

ALENA. I'm not Alena. I'm a Nazi soldier. And Jews aren't allowed to have wagons!

(She throws the doll at him, and takes the "wagon" away.)

MARTIN. It's just a game!

ALENA. No, it isn't!

JANA. *(To ERIK:)* Why did you let them take away our son's wagon?

ERIK. Why did my daddy let them take away my bicycle?

ALENA. Because daddies are just daddies, but Nazis are the law.

MARTIN. I don't want to play anymore.

(He crosses back to the spot he hid his drawing, takes out some paper and a pencil stub, and draws again.)

JANA. *(To ALENA:)* You ruined our game, Alena.

(Lights up on EVA reading to MIROSLAV. As she does, one, by one, the OTHERS crowd around to hear. MARTIN holds his drawings.)

EVA. More and more we hear of prisoners stealing food from each other. What can we say about these people? That they are hungry? We are all hungry. But we don't all become thieves. Should we not blame them because Terezin drives them to do things they would never ordinarily do? Then what about the people who risk their own lives to help others here? Yes, we do see examples of the most extreme selfishness. However, we also see examples of the most extreme selflessness. And the truth is, neither is caused by Terezin. Both are the individuals' real faces coming through, stripped of their masks of social pretense.

(MIROSLAV lifts the collection of pages.)

MIROSLAV. Vedem. Volume One, Issue One.

(OTHERS cheer.)

ALL. Vedem!

ALENA. It's beautiful.

MIROSLAV. Tomorrow I'm going to start bringing it to the other barracks.

EVA. That's too dangerous. You could get caught.

MIROSLAV. It's a chance I have to take.

ALENA. I can write out some extra copies.

MARTIN. Me, too.

ERIK. You'll probably mess it up.

MIROSLAV. *(Interceding:)* We need all the help we can get.

GABRIELA. *(To MIROSLAV:)* I loved the article about the sculptor still creating art.

MIROSLAV. *(To PAVEL:)* Isn't that what you said was important?

PAVEL. *(Grudgingly:)* Yeah. Congratulations.

MIROSLAV. Maybe you could write a piece about some of the musicians in the camp. And the secret concerts.

PAVEL. I don't think so. Come on, Gabriela.

(He takes her hand, and she reluctantly moves away with him.)

ERIK. I want to write an article!

JANA. Me, too!

MIROSLAV. About what?

JANA. I don't know.

EVA. We agreed not to put the little kids in danger.

MIROSLAV. We agreed after this issue, it would be each person's decision.

EVA. Jana is not going to get involved.

JANA. That's not fair!

(She storms off with her doll. EVA runs after her.)

EVA. Jana!

ERIK. *(To MIROSLAV:)* I'll help you bring it to the other barracks.

MIROSLAV. First we'll need more copies.

ERIK. I'll get Alena to start.

(MIROSLAV hands him the newspaper.)

MIROSLAV. Be careful.

(As ERIK runs to ALENA, MIROSLAV moves to MARTIN, who is sitting with some of his drawings.)

MIROSLAV. What are those?

MARTIN. Nothing. Just drawings.

(MIROSLAV is looking at them.)

MIROSLAV. They're good.

MARTIN. You think so?

MIROSLAV. Maybe you could do some for the newspaper.

MARTIN. Really?

MIROSLAV. Yeah.

MARTIN. This one's you. Breaking down the walls of the camp.

MIROSLAV. Using words as my weapon.

MARTIN. You can have it.

MIROSLAV. Thanks.

MARTIN. I've done pictures of lots of the kids.

MIROSLAV. Have you shown them to them?

MARTIN. They'd just make fun of me.

MIROSLAV. They do that a lot, don't they?

MARTIN. (*Ignoring the question:*) This one's Alena's house. You know how she's always missing it so much.

MIROSLAV. (*Glances from the picture, to the other side of the bunk, where ALENA is writing out a copy of the newspaper.*) I think she'd like it.

MARTIN. You do?

MIROSLAV. A lot.

(They alert to the sound of guards marching outside the barrack.)

MIROSLAV. But be careful with these. Don't let any of the guards see them.

MARTIN. Don't worry. I've got a special hiding place.

MIROSLAV. Good.

(Lights come up on EVA holding JANA, as MIROSLAV watches MARTIN hide all but one of his drawings.)

JANA. Why can't I work on the newspaper?

EVA. Because I don't want anything bad to happen to you.

JANA. Because you promised Mommy and Daddy?

EVA. And because I love you.

(Lights up on GABRIELA and PAVEL, as MARTIN crosses to ALENA, carrying the picture of her house. PAVEL is playing a folk melody.)

GABRIELA. *(Over the music, a soliloquy:)* On a purple, sun-shot evening, under white-flowering chestnut trees, I stand looking, full of wonder at all that nature brings us every day. The world's abloom and seems to smile. I want to fly, but where? How high? If in barbed wire, things can bloom, why couldn't I? I will not die!

(As PAVEL continues to play, lights up on MARTIN and ALENA. She holds the picture MARTIN drew.)

ALENA. It looks just like my house. Thank you.

MARTIN. You're welcome.

ALENA. If I describe my mother to you real well, do you think you could draw a picture of her for me, too?

MARTIN. Maybe.

(He sits and begins to draw. ALENA stares at the picture.)

ALENA. *(Soliloquy:)* My old house, now abandoned, stands in silence, stands asleep. So beautiful when filled with life. So beautiful a place to live.

(Lights dim to a pin-spot on her.)

Abandoned now. Rotting in silence. Tainted house. Tainted time.

(As ALENA finishes speaking, PAVEL finishes playing. A momentary BLACKOUT, broken by the light of a match, as EVA, with JANA by her side, lights two candle stubs. OTHERS are grouped around her. ALENA and MARTIN stand together, as do PAVEL and GABRIELA. MIROSLAV stands guard, apart.)

EVA. Baruch, atah, adonoy, elohaynu melech ha'olam, asher, kidshanu b'mizvosav, vitsivanu l'hadliknair, shel shabbos.

(JANA takes a crust of bread from her pocket.)

JANA. Baruch atah, adonoy, elohaynu melech ha'olam, hamotzee lechem min ha'aretz.

(As one by one, each child breaks off a bit of the bread, then passes the rest on, EVA speaks.)

EVA. Twilight. Only a dreamlike whisper of prayers as day journeys to evening. Two flickering candles weep their tears of wax. Rustling pages, the breath of prayers, a breeze. Sabbath, the day of stillness, comes. We have known such longing for centuries. We are waiting to find our home again.

(ERIK begins quietly singing. Gradually, the OTHERS join in. MIROSLAV continues standing guard.)

ERIK. TOWARD A GLIMMER OF LIGHT
IN THE DARK, DARK NIGHT
WE SHALL LEAD
WE SHALL LEAD THE WAY

(OTHERS join in, one by one.)

ERIK & OTHERS. WITH OUR EYES OPEN WIDE
WE WON'T BE DENIED
WE SHALL LEAD
WE SHALL LEAD THE WAY

WE PRAY FOR PEACE
WITH ALL OUR MIGHT
BUT WE'RE NOT AFRAID TO FIGHT

OUR SPIRITS ARE HIGH
NO MORE STANDING BY
WE SHALL LEAD
WE SHALL LEAD THE WAY

WHEN THE BATTLE IS DONE
WE SHALL SING AS ONE
WE SHALL LEAD
WE SHALL LEAD THE WAY

MIROSLAV. *(He speaks over the song, starting when the OTHERS join ERIK:)* Another day has gone for keeps, into the bottomless pit of time. But in the ghetto, darkness, too, is kind to weary eyes which all day long have had to watch.

(The OTHERS' song continues, their voices grow louder. MIROSLAV watches proudly. Suddenly, he hears something. He gives the "danger" signal. The shadow of a guard covers the stage. EVA blows out the candles. ALL scatter.)

End of Act I

ACT II

(Six months later.)

(Lights up on MARTIN. His time in the camp has taken a toll. His clothes are ragged and threadbare. He is gaunt. He writes a letter.)

(As he speaks, a giant shadow of a guard gradually looms over him.)

MARTIN.

Dear Brother,

Sometimes it's hard to believe I've only been here for six months. My memories of our life in Prague seem more and more like a dream. Like a story I was once told, but that never really happened. I don't remember ever not being hungry. I don't remember ever not being frightened. But the scariest part is that it's getting harder and harder to remember what you and Mommy and Daddy look like. I try to draw you all. I close my eyes and try so hard to picture your faces, but I can't. Would I recognize you if I saw you? Would you recognize me?

(Pause.)

They've started to do a lot of work around the camp. Old buildings are being painted. New structures seem to be being built. Gardens are being dug. They've put up a sign calling Terezin, "The Jewish Settlement Area." No one is sure why. But the rumor is that the Germans have agreed to let the Red Cross visit. Hopes are high that conditions will change, and not a moment too soon. Despite the fresh paint, things have gotten so much worse. There is even less food. There is even more sickness. This morning, Alena and I saw a mother holding a small child...maybe one or two years old. It was so hungry it didn't even have enough strength to cry. A hawk was perched nearby on one of the fortress walls...watching. It knew the child was about to die.

(Pause.)

When I get out of here, when I grow up, I want to become a doctor...to take care of sick children.

Love, Martin.

P.S. I drew you a picture of the mother and the baby and the hawk.

(MARTIN moves to hide his letter. As he does, he notices the off-stage GUARD for the first time. He starts to run the other way. The shadow of another GUARD appears, then another and another, from every direction MARTIN tries to run. The SHADOWS overlap until MARTIN is standing in the only spot of light. Then that, too, is gone. BLACKOUT. Gun shots as MARTIN screams.)

(Lights up on the OTHERS. Six months have taken their toll on them, as well. Clothes are more threadbare. The CHILDREN are thinner, sickly. They are scattered about the stage. MIROSLAV faces the OTHERS.)

MIROSLAV. Martin Lowy was executed today.

(OTHERS respond.)

His offense...being caught writing a letter to his brother. We'll dedicate the next issue of Vedem to him. We'll include a biography, and some of his drawings and letters...

PAVEL. (Interrupting, angry:) Haven't you learned anything?!

GABRIELA. Pavel, don't...

PAVEL. (Continuing over her:) Do you really think they don't know about your newspaper? About everything we do? Do you think it was an accident they caught Martin? They're watching us. They're watching everyone. All the time!

ERIK. They can't watch everywhere at once.

PAVEL. They have informers.

ALENA. What?

PAVEL. Prisoners who get special treatment in return for information. Extra food. Blankets.

MIROSLAV. (Dismissive:) Those are just rumors.

PAVEL. How many deaths are you willing to be responsible for?

EVA. (To MIROSLAV:) Maybe we should stop for a while.

MIROSLAV. (Driven:) No, we can't! Not now! The Red Cross is coming. This could be our only chance to show the world what's

going on here. We've got to put out even bigger issues of Vedem, filled with as much information as possible. So we can get them to the delegation. So we can let them know the truth. So they can take them away with them and show them to the world.

EVA. It's too dangerous now.

MIROSLAV. We don't have a choice, Eva! I'm doing this even if I have to do it alone.

ERIK. I'll help!

ALENA. Me, too.

GABRIELA. So will I.

PAVEL. Do you want to be the next martyr?!

GABRIELA. We have to, Pavel.

MIROSLAV. Eva?

EVA. If I get caught, what will happen to Jana?

MIROSLAV. What will happen to her if we sit back and do nothing? Look at us! Is this how anyone should be forced to live?

(He jumps up on a bench.)

They tore us away from our homes, families and culture for only one purpose. To destroy us. But we can't let them succeed. Separated from the love and happiness of family, we've created our own family. Removed from the rest of civilization by violent hatred, we are creating our own society based on love for our fellow men, and respect, and trust...a society with nothing but contempt for any kind of persecution!

(ALENA, coughing, walks away from the OTHERS, as MIROSLAV continues.)

We will continue to write. We will continue to draw. We will continue to learn. We will continue to grow. We will continue to document!

(Lights dim on the group and come up on ALENA. She takes the picture MARTIN drew for her from her pocket, unfolds it, and looks at it.)

ALENA. A little garden, fragrant and full of roses. The path is narrow, and a young boy walks along it. A little boy, a sweet boy... like that growing blossom. But when the blossom comes to bloom, the little boy will be no more.

(As she wipes her eyes, ERIK, at MIROSLAV's urging, moves to uncover Martin's hidden drawings and letters. ALENA sees him uncover the hiding spot.)

Don't you touch Martin's things!

ERIK. I just —

ALENA. *(Cutting him off:)* You leave his stuff alone! I mean it!

ERIK. Miroslav wants to put some of Martin's drawings in the newspaper.

ALENA. You don't touch his things! All you ever did was make fun of him.

(JANA starts to cry.)

JANA. Eva!

EVA. It's okay. Shh.

ALENA. *(To ERIK:)* I said, put them down!

MIROSLAV. Put them down, Erik.

ERIK. But you said...

MIROSLAV. Put them down.

(ERIK does. MIROSLAV picks them up and carries them to ALENA.)

How about if you go through them, and bring me the ones you think Martin would have wanted us to put in the newspaper? For the Red Cross to see.

(ALENA takes the pile of papers.)

ALENA. He was my friend.

MIROSLAV. I know.

(He moves away. GABRIELA approaches ALENA.)

GABRIELA. *(Gently:)* Can I help?

ALENA. Leave me alone!

(She walks away with Martin's papers. The OTHERS disperse. Lights up on EVA, a soliloquy:)

EVA. The heaviest wheel rolls across our foreheads, to bury itself deep somewhere inside our memories. We've suffered more than enough, here in this clot of grief and shame. A fourth year of waiting, like standing above a swamp from which any moment might gush forth a spring. But instead, the rivers flow another way... another way, not letting you die, not letting you live. And the cannons don't scream, and the guns don't bark, and you don't see blood here. Nothing. Only silent hunger. Children steal bread here and ask and ask and ask. And all would like to sleep, keep silent, and just go to sleep again. The heaviest wheel rolls across our foreheads, to bury itself deep somewhere inside our memories.

(Lights change as MIROSLAV races on, finds a hiding place, climbs into it, and writes. [NOTE: Each time MIROSLAV and the OTHERS are working on Vedem Reports, they are in small, hidden areas of the set].)

MIROSLAV. *(With great urgency:)* VEDEM REPORT. "Wandering Around Terezin." The central morgue is situated deep in the fortifications, accessible only through a maze of windowless tunnels. Regularly, carts with dead bodies rattle along the stone floors, the bearers' steps echoing underground. Stacked throughout the blind alleys are wooden coffins, some full; ready to be taken away, others empty; waiting for their inhabitants. The morgue has been in existence since August 12, 1942, and 21,000 corpses have gone through its corridors. I watched as the workers wrapped a dead body. I asked them what it's like to handle corpses all the time—washing them, wrapping them, putting them in coffins, and taking them to the crematorium. "We take our work seriously," I was told. "Though the authorities won't permit us to bury the bodies as custom dictates, still we treat the dead respectfully. Last September was a good example. That month, we had to prepare over four

thousand dead bodies. There was no time to sleep, barely time to eat, but we did not fail."

(Stops writing, looks up, struck.)

It wasn't their physical strength that kept them going... it was something more!

(MIROSLAV hurriedly finishes writing, checks for guards, then races off. Meanwhile, lights have come up on EVA and GABRIELA, writing out a copy of the newspaper.)

GABRIELA. My hand's getting a cramp.

EVA. What if we die here?

GABRIELA. Eva!

EVA. We could.

GABRIELA. I know. But I try not to think about it.

EVA. *(Awkward:)* But if we did...wouldn't it be horrible to die...you know...virgins?

GABRIELA. *(Shocked:)* Eva! What if Jana heard you?!

EVA. I'm tired of worrying about Jana. We're young. We're supposed to have fun.

GABRIELA. "Supposed to's" don't matter anymore.

EVA. You're right, they don't. So? Wouldn't it?

GABRIELA. *(Evasive:)* Wouldn't it what?

EVA. Be horrible.

GABRIELA. I guess.

EVA. What if Pavel asked you?

GABRIELA. He wouldn't.

EVA. But what if he did? Do you think about it?

GABRIELA. I don't know.

EVA. *(A confession:)* I think about Miroslav.

GABRIELA. I know!

EVA. What do you mean?!

GABRIELA. The way you look at him.

EVA. Did he ever say anything to you about me?

GABRIELA. Once.

EVA. Really? What?

GABRIELA. He told me to watch you, that you could write out a page of Vedem faster and neater than anyone else.

EVA. He's not human!

GABRIELA. He's driven.

EVA. I might as well be a boy for all he cares.

GABRIELA. Boys are strange. My mother told me that once. She said, if you're interested in one, usually you have to be the one who speaks up.

EVA. Maybe I will.

GABRIELA. Will what?

EVA. Speak up.

(Pause as they continue to write.)

So?

GABRIELA. So, what?

EVA. You never answered. Do you think about it?

GABRIELA. *(Evasive:)* We're falling behind.

(EVA grabs GABRIELA's paper.)

EVA. Do you?

GABRIELA. *(After a pause:)* Yes.

EVA. And?

GARIELLE. Sometimes I wish he would...ask. But I wouldn't say, yes.

EVA. Neither would I.

GABRIELA. I wouldn't.

(ALENA enters, coughing.)

ALENA. Wouldn't what?

GABRIELA. Are you all right?

ALENA. I found some more paper.

(Hands some office forms to them.)

EVA. *(Curt:)* Thanks.

(As ALENA leaves, coughing, GABRIELA goes back to copying out the issue of Vedem.)

GABRIELA. *(To EVA, with a smile:)* We'd better get back to work...you don't want to disappoint Miroslav.

(As EVA gives her a look, and they resume work, lights come up on MIROSLAV in another hiding spot. He writes.)

MIROSLAV. *(With great urgency:)* VEDEM REPORT. "Wandering Around Terezin" Today I visited the so-called hospital, to report on it for this newspaper. Men and women of all ages, as well as children, were crowded into a long, dark, smelly corridor. There was barely enough room to stand. Crowds were pushing. Disease and suffering were everywhere.

(Shadow of a GUARD appears. MIROSLAV freezes. The shadow passes. MIROSLAV furtively moves to a new area, and continues.)

I started to worry about the risks I was placing my own health in. The few doctors were overwhelmed with the number of patients and lack of supplies. Even so, they kept working, tirelessly, endlessly. Suddenly a man rushed in, "Dr. Herz!" he called, trying to catch his breath. "You are on the list!" "What list?" Dr. Herz asked, still working, not even taking his eyes from his patient. "The Polish transport." The man answered. "You're leaving tonight." Dr. Herz stopped. He is one of only a handful of doctors in the camp. For a

short time, the entire area was filled with a death-like silence. Finally, Dr. Herz spoke. "Then I will have to work fast. There is much to do here." He worked right up until the moment he had to leave for the transport.

(Lights shift. JANA plays hopscotch by herself. She holds her doll, and talks to it as she plays.)

JANA. I heard a man and a woman talking about the trains to Poland. They said they take you to bigger camps where they kill thousands of people at a time. With gas. Don't cry, Anna. I'll protect you. I won't let them kill you.

(Lights shift. EVA and GABRIELA have taken a break from their work, and are dancing. From a distance, ALENA watches. She coughs from time to time.)

EVA. That's great. Where did you learn it?

GABRIELA. From my father. My parents used to go dancing all the time. And before they'd go out, they'd always have one dance with me and my brother. We had such fun. And the next morning, I'd make my mother tell me everything they did, and who was there, and what they were wearing, and what music was playing. And she would. And then she'd say, "Just you wait, Gabi, when you're a little older, boys will line up to take you dancing every night."

EVA. My parents were very strict. I mean, they loved us, but...they're just old-fashioned.

(ALENA approaches.)

ALENA. Could you teach me that?

EVA. What are you doing, sneaking up on us?

ALENA. *(To GABRIELA:)* Will you teach me?

GABRIELA. Sure. See, you start like this...No, *that* foot. Then...

(ALENA has a coughing fit.)

GABRIELA. Maybe you should stop for a while.

ALENA. Why?

GABRIELA. You don't want to get sick.

ALENA. Martin didn't get sick, and he's dead, anyway. My parents didn't get sick, and...

(Coughs.)

What's the difference?

(She walks away.)

GABRIELA. *(To EVA:)* You could've been nicer to her.

EVA. I don't like her. She scares Jana.

GABRIELA. Does she scare you, too?

EVA. Come on, let's dance some more.

GABRIELA. We should get back to work. Miroslav's waiting for our articles.

EVA. Just a few more minutes. Pretend I'm Pavel.

GABRIELA. Eva!

(Lights up on ERIK. He is in another hiding spot, writing. JANA is nearby, playing with her doll.)

ERIK. VEDEM REPORT. "The Old Woman" A March storm has covered everything with snow. This afternoon, I stood watching the people. It was very cold out. But it was just as cold inside. I saw an old woman with white hair, and a torn scarf. She kind of looked like my grandmother. It's funny, I haven't thought about any of my family for a long, long time. The old woman walked quickly and carried a metal dish. She must have been going for her lunch. Suddenly, she slipped on the icy pavement. She hit her head, and didn't get up. Some other prisoners tried to help her, but she was dead. My feelings are never very emotional, but later on, when I thought about the old woman, and about my grandmother...I felt like crying.

(He moves out of his hiding spot, JANA sees him.)

JANA. Erik, do you want to play?

ERIK. I don't have time for games anymore.

(He races off. JANA sees MIROSLAV. She makes the decision to work on the newspaper, too.)

JANA. Miroslav!

(She runs to him. Lights up on EVA and GABRIELA. EVA keeps an eye out for guards as GABRIELA reads to her.)

GABRIELA. (*Passionately:*) VEDEM REPORT. "The Recitation" On March 18th at 6:30 pm, Vlasta Schonova recited Macha's "May" in L-203. A Terezin attic, dim light, freezing cold. Fifty to seventy people starved for culture, crowded into a few square meters, willing to risk their lives to hear a poem. A gong signaled the start of the performance. Vlasta Schonova's recitation was perfect. It was a song, it was a picture. The expression on her face, her gestures, her voice, all filled us with the spirit of the piece. We traveled with her deep into the forest, felt the warm night rain, smelled the scent of pine needles. We basked in the moonlight, and heard the song of the wind blowing through the tops of ancient trees. The beauty, the magic, the power of the spoken word.

EVA. Did Pavel go with you?

(GABRIELA shakes her head, "no".)

GABRIELA. If her words could affect me like that, Miroslav has to be right about the newspaper.

EVA. (*Nods.*) And it won't just inspire the other prisoners. Everyone says the Red Cross is coming soon.

GABRIELA. (*Hopeful:*) I know. Read me your article.

EVA. (*Reads her own article:*) VEDEM REPORT. "Rules" One of the hardest rules to live with in Terezin is the rule that the rules change every day. For some time, we haven't been allowed to walk on the sidewalks. But yesterday it was decided that we are only to walk on the sidewalks. Of course, there was no announcement. But once the first "law-breakers" were beaten, word quickly spread quickly through the camp. Another new rule is the "flower rule." I was walking by the walls, trying to see the crocuses beginning to bloom outside the camp, when a guard stopped me. He didn't look much older than me...

(They hear something.)

GABRIELA. Someone's coming!

(They grab their writings and hide them. PAVEL enters.)

GABRIELA. Pavel! You scared us.

(She and EVA retrieve their writing.)

PAVEL. *(Upset, to GABRIELA:)* We were supposed to be practicing. I waited and waited. I thought something...

(He stops himself.)

GABRIELA. I'm sorry. I lost track of the time.

PAVEL. I told you not to let them talk you into this.

GABRIELA. Nobody talked me into anything. I want to do it.

PAVEL. Why? So you can end up like Martin?

GABRIELA. I could wind up like Martin by walking on the sidewalks the wrong day, or by picking a flower. What if tomorrow's rule is that we can't play music? Or sing? Or whistle? Or hum?

PAVEL. I don't want you to die.

GABRIELA. Are we living if we can't even ask an adult to give us music lessons? If people have to sneak into attics to hear a poem recited?

(PAVEL turns and exits.)

GABRIELA. Pavel!

(She runs after him. Lights come up on MIROSLAV and JANA. He is exhausted, but helps her write her story.)

MIROSLAV. Start with, "Vedem Report."

JANA. Then what?

MIROSLAV. Just tell me the story, and I'll write it down.

JANA. I saw an old man sitting on the ground.

MIROSLAV. What did he look like?

JANA. He was very old. And very skinny. And he had a long white beard that went all the way down to his lap.

MIROSLAV. Anything else?

JANA. He only had one tooth.

(Points to one of her own.)

This one.

MIROSLAV. Good. Why was he sitting on the ground?

JANA. There was nowhere else to sit. He was trying to eat some crusts of bread. Only he couldn't because the bread was too hard for that one tooth to chew. But he kept trying. I told him some of my teeth fell out, too. But that Eva said new ones would grow.

(MIROSLAV has fallen asleep. JANA pushes him.)

JANA. Miroslav! Wake up!

MIROSLAV. I'm awake.

JANA. Isn't my story good?

MIROSLAV. It's fine. I'm just very tired.

JANA. If you want, I'll sing you a lullaby and you can take a nap. You can even hold my doll.

(EVA approaches.)

EVA. What are you doing?

JANA. Miroslav's helping me write a story for the newspaper.

EVA. No! *(To MIROSLAV:)* I told you I don't want her involved. She's too young.

JANA. I want to do it, Eva.

MIROSLAV. It's her decision.

JANA. *(Stares EVA down:)* I'm not a baby anymore.

(EVA walks away.)

MIROSLAV. *(After a pause. To JANA:)* What happened next?

JANA. I told the old man I was sure he'd grow new teeth, too...

(Lights fade on JANA and MIROSLAV. A light comes up on ALENA. She coughs through this.)

ALENA. VEDEM REPORT. The typhus epidemic that is raging through Terezin claims more and more lives. The rumor is, it was deliberately started with a transport of infected prisoners that the Germans scattered about the camp. It's more economical than transports to Poland. We have come to believe that anything is possible.

(As she has a coughing fit, lights come up on MIROSLAV and ERIK. ERIK is unrelenting.)

ERIK. Have you got a plan to get the papers to the Red Cross?

MIROSLAV. I'm working on it.

ERIK. What about my report on the factories? Are you putting it in the next edition?

MIROSLAV. I want you to rewrite it, and include the other side.

ERIK. What other side?! They're using kids...prisoners just a little older than us, as slave labor in their munitions factories. And whose idea was it in the first place?

MIROSLAV. Erik...

ERIK. Mr. Epstein, and the other Jewish Elders!

MIROSLAV. Mr. Epstein says he's saving their lives. That it's only because those kids are useful to the factories that they're not being shipped to Poland.

ERIK. Which one's worse?

MIROSLAV. I'm not saying he's right. I'm just saying, include his reasons.

ERIK. Maybe I'll also include that he looks well fed!

(ERIK storms off.)

MIROSLAV. *(Gathering up his papers:)* Erik! Erik, wait! Erik!

(As he hurries off after ERIK. A light comes up on ERIK, who has changed into a new jacket or sweater.)

ERIK. *(Sarcastic:)* VEDEM REPORT. "The Big Joke" Today the Red Cross visited the camp. Yesterday's final preparation was to ship over one third of Terezin's residents to Poland...so it wouldn't seem too crowded here. This morning, old Mr. Epstein was given a new suit and a top hat, and named the Mayor. He was the only Jew to tour with the Red Cross visitors. He was accompanied by his "chauffeur." Of course his chauffeur was really an S.S. Officer in civilian clothes. The delegation had a lovely day. Photos were taken. Some of the younger children were given new clothes and got to ride on the carousel in the new play area...which was all specially built for the occasion. We got to go round and round on the carousel all day. For eight hours we got to go round and round without a stop...so the Red Cross wouldn't miss us. The Red Cross people were very happy to see that the rumors they had heard were false. That living conditions were fine. That there was no over-crowding. That food was ample. That we had our own independent government. They were careful not to open any doors they weren't shown. Not to touch the wet paint. Not to speak to anyone they weren't introduced to. Not to continue down the road to the crematorium. Everyone was very, very happy.

(Lights up on OTHERS around him. He crumbles up the piece of paper and throws it at MIROSLAV.)

ERIK. Why didn't you get our newspaper to the Red Cross?! Why didn't you even try?!

MIROSLAV. Nobody was allowed anywhere near them!

ALENA. They didn't see it?!

ERIK. *(To MIROSLAV:)* If you'd given the copies to me like I asked, I would've run straight at them, screaming, "Read this!" I would have jumped off that damned carousel, waving the newspaper at them!

MIROSLAV. And you'd be dead!

ERIK. At least I would've died doing something. You were too scared to even try.

EVA. That's not fair.

ERIK. Fair?! Is it fair that we're here?!

ALENA. No!

PAVEL. (*Whispers to GABRIELA:*) Come on.

GABRIELA. But —

PAVEL. Shh.

(He quietly leads her off.)

ERIK. We've got to fight back!

MIROSLAV. We are! By staying alive. By defying them.

ERIK. I used to think you had all the answers. If only I could be like Miroslav...But it's just talk.

MIROSLAV. Stop it, Erik.

ERIK. Make me.

(He pushes MIROSLAV.)

ERIK. You won't do anything to me. You won't do anything to the Germans. You won't do anything to anyone.

MIROSLAV. I'm warning you.

ERIK. (*Pushes MIROSLAV again:*) You're nothing but a fast-talking coward!

(MIROSLAV swings at him. They fight. EVA tries to separate them.)

EVA. Stop it! Stop it!

(As the fight continues, lights fade on them, and come up on PAVEL and GABRIELA.)

PAVEL. Close your eyes.

GABRIELA. Pavel...

PAVEL. Close your eyes.

GABRIELA. Okay.

(She does.)

PAVEL. Now put out your hand.

(She does. PAVEL takes a small flower from his pocket and places it in her hand.)

Happy Birthday.

GABRIELA. You remembered!

(She opens her eyes, sees the flower.)

How did you...? Where did you...?

PAVEL. It was growing by the wall.

GABRIELA. But it's against the rules. You could have been...

(She doesn't say, "shot.")

PAVEL. *(Gently:)* But I wasn't.

GABRIELA. It's beautiful.

PAVEL. And now, I'm going to take you dancing.

GABRIELA. Dancing? Where?

PAVEL. The most beautiful restaurant in the world. With the most wonderful orchestra. Close your eyes again. Close them.

(They both do.)

Can you see it? The waiters are all in tails.

GABRIELA. Oh, yes.

PAVEL. And the tables are beautifully set.

GABRIELA. With flowers...

PAVEL. And silver...

GABRIELA. And fine china...

PAVEL. The orchestra has begun playing...

GABRIELA. A waltz! I love waltzes!

PAVEL. *(Opens his eyes.)* May I have this dance?

(GABRIELA *opens her eyes*. PAVEL *bows*.)

GABRIELA. Certainly.

(*She curtsies. They dance in silence. They are slowly drawn closer. They kiss, awkwardly. Then again.*)

PAVEL. I love you.

GABRIELA. I love you, too.

(*They kiss again.*)

PAVEL. I've got another surprise.

GABRIELA. What is it?

PAVEL. (*Takes out a piece of paper, reads:*) VEDEM REPORT...

GABRIELA. (*Touched:*) Pavel...!

PAVEL. Months ago, pianist Gideon Klein discovered a grand piano in the old school garret. It appeared not to have been touched in fifty years. Since finding it, Mr. Klein has spent his every free moment restoring the instrument. He broke many rules, he took many risks. But the result is...he is going to be able to play a concert in the garret for as many people as can squeeze in. "The opportunity," Mr. Klein said, "to give a gift of my music to my fellow prisoners, makes all the risks worthwhile."

(*He puts away the paper.*)

The concert's tonight. Will you go with me?

GABRIELA. Of course!

PAVEL. It doesn't start until seven o'clock, but I want to be sure to get in. That garret isn't very big.

(*GABRIELA hugs him. They start off to the concert. Lights up on EVA, alone.*)

EVA. As you poets, I would like to write about spring and love... about sunny days. About cool evenings filled with the charm of moonlight. About birds and flowers, and trees in bud, as I did in the past when I was not as tired as I am now. As you, I would like to say goodbye to summer, to the bright sun whose rays do not get

through bars. Or to caress withering buds for a while. But I cannot. I cannot. I am in prison.

(Lights shift to PAVEL and GABRIELA at the concert. They sit, facing out. Piano music plays. They hold hands.)

PAVEL. *(A soliloquy, as he watches the concert:)* Half a century since anyone so much as touched this piano...since anyone let it sing as it was meant to. Loving hands, which strike softly or which thunder. The music of this man is as heady as the heavens before it rains.

And the springs, under the weight of excitement, forget to squeak. Half a century it is since anyone so much as touched this piano. But now, with closed eyes, this fine musician sits, and with closed eyes, his fingers lovingly search the keys. Keys, like veins through which the blood of music softly flows. As the kiss of a knife can free the blood, so, the touch of a finger can free the song. And this man cuts all the veins, frees all the blood, touches all the keys, frees all the music, causes the very air to sing. To sing.

Even though the harsh fingers of the jailer restrain us, your music is as heady as the heavens before it rains.

(Music ends. The sound of trains braking fills the stage. PAVEL and GABRIELA stand, then run towards the barracks.)

(Lights shift to the barracks. MIROSLAV sits with his diary and a pencil stub. ERIK paces. OTHERS make themselves busy. They are all on edge as PAVEL and GABRIELA race in, out of breath.)

PAVEL & GABRIELA. There are transports!

EVA. We know.

ERIK. The whole camp knows.

GABRIELA. I've never seen so many trains.

EVA. I heard they're going to Birkenau.

GABRIELA. Someone told us, Auschwitz.

ALENA. Who cares where they're going?

(JANA has been playing with her doll. A limb breaks off.)

JANA. Eva, my doll broke!

EVA. (*Ignores JANA, responds to ALENA:*) I care!

JANA. Eva, my doll!

EVA. Not now.

GABRIELA. Pavel, I'm scared.

PAVEL. We've been through it all before.

ERIK. Not like this. They say they're going to ship out the whole camp.

MIROSLAV. (*Looks up from his writing:*) They who?

ERIK. Everyone. They say the Allies are getting close, so the Germans want to speed up the exterminating.

MIROSLAV. They've been wrong before. They could be wrong again.

ERIK. And I say, this time they aren't.

JANA. (*Crying, because of the doll, and the situation.*) Eva, she's broken!

MIROSLAV. (*Moves away from ERIK, to JANA:*) I'll fix your doll.

(He begins working on it.)

PAVEL. Everyone says the war is ending. That the Germans are about to be defeated.

ERIK. Yeah, and they don't want any survivors.

EVA. A man who knows someone who works in the secretariat told me the same thing. He said his friend overheard one of the guards say that things will go badly for them after the war, if there are witnesses.

ERIK. Exactly.

GABRIELA. It would go just as badly if the Allies discovered camps full of bodies.

ERIK. Which is why they're shipping everyone to Poland, where they can use the gas and the mass crematoriums —

PAVEL. We don't know that.

ERIK. — Otherwise, they'd just machine gun us all here.

GABRIELA. Pavel!

PAVEL. (*Comforting her:*) Somebody knows somebody who knows somebody who knows somebody who overheard something? It's all rumors.

GABRIELA. What if it isn't? What if we're on the list?

(*As PAVEL puts his arm around her, MIROSLAV hands JANA back the doll. He has managed to fix it somewhat. JANA hugs the doll close.*)

MIROSLAV. (*To OTHERS:*) We've got to hide our work. All of it. The poems, the drawings, the newspaper. We can't take them to Poland, they could be lost forever there. And we've all got to know each other's hiding places...so whoever's left, whoever survives can uncover them.

EVA. I can't think that way.

MIROSLAV. We have to. Otherwise, it will all have been for nothing. Everything we've done...Everything we've worked for...For nothing.

ERIK. Pretty good joke.

(*MIROSLAV ignores him. He finds a loose floorboard.*)

MIROSLAV. Here's my hiding spot. Under this floorboard.

(*He hides his writing.*)

ALENA. (*Crosses to Martin's spot.*) This was Martin's spot.

(*Uncovers it.*)

I'm putting my writing in with his.

(*She does. EVA finds a broken space in the wall.*)

EVA. This is for ours. Mine and Jana's.

JANA. I don't want to go to Poland.

EVA. *(To JANA:)* We're not going anywhere yet.

GABRIELA. *(She finds a hiding spot, as does PAVEL.)* This is my spot.

PAVEL. And here's mine.

MIROSLAV. Erik?

ERIK. I don't care about my stupid writing. I care about fighting back.

MIROSLAV. With what?

ERIK. With whatever I can. Rocks, sticks...my fists.

MIROSLAV. The transport list must be up. I'm going to see who's on it.

GABRIELA. Pavel...?

PAVEL. It's better to know.

JANA. *(To her doll:)* Don't worry, Anna. I won't let anything happen to you. I promise. I'll be right with you wherever you go. You'll see.

(As a group, they face upstage and move to the back wall, where the "list" is posted. The sense should be that they are behind hundreds of other people. They strain to read the names.)

EVA. Can you get any closer?

MIROSLAV. There are too many people.

GABRIELA. Someone up front's reading out the names.

(She repeats what she hears.)

Bachner, Petr; Blum, Alfred; Friedman, Nina; Hochberg, Mark; Kohn, Liana; Langova, Marianna...

(ALENA turns to face forward. She holds a transport summons.)

ALENA. Lederova, Alena.

(Weak and sick, she walks away to the barrack. JANA watches her go, as GABRIELA continues.)

GABRIELA. Mayer, Erika; Pykova, Hannah; Redlich, Franz; Stein, Milan; Synkova, Ruth; Ullman, Hans; Weinberg, Josef...

(MIROSLAV turns to face forward. He holds a transport summons.)

MIROSLAV. Weiss, Miroslav.

EVA. No!

(GABRIELA holds her.)

(The OTHERS part to let MIROSLAV through. They watch him walk downstage and back to the barrack in silence, then follow. ALENA is there, her small bag packed. She starts coughing.)

MIROSLAV puts his few things together in a bag. He looks around. The OTHERS watch. He crosses to ERIK.)

MIROSLAV. Maybe you were right. Maybe we should have been fighting.

(He crosses to his hiding spot, takes out his diary and writes:)

Dear Diary, this is my final entry. I am off to Poland.

(He hides the diary again, then turns to ALENA.)

Ready?

(ALENA nods EVA runs to MIROSLAV. She hugs him.)

EVA. I love you.

MIROSLAV. Maybe we'll find each other...when it's over. Look at us. We're supposed to be kids.

(He and ALENA start to walk off stage. ALENA has a coughing fit. She is too weak to walk. MIROSLAV picks her up and carries her off stage. He plays the "Best Meal" game with her as they go. The OTHERS watch. GABRIELA holds EVA, who sobs.)

MIROSLAV. My best meal is cherry soup, and warm fresh-baked bread with butter...

ALENA. And goulash with noodles. And peas.

MIROSLAV. And apple strudel, and...

(They have exited. PAVEL takes out a scrap of paper and pencil stub. He writes:)

PAVEL. As the first trains pull out, further lists are promised for tomorrow.

(The OTHERS move about, not necessarily speaking to specific people.)

EVA. They are going to kill us all.

ERIK. They're going to try.

JANA. Eva...

GABRIELA. *(To PAVEL:)* I'm afraid.

PAVEL. So am I.

(He writes:)

I want someone to know I was here. I want someone to know I existed. I want someone to know about me and Gabriela. And about our music.

(Pause.)

Not much is said as afternoon turns to evening and evening turns to night. And yet, there is a strange sense of solidarity.

(It is now late that night. ALL light candle stubs, and place them by their "beds".)

Tonight there is only candlelight. And as we sit in the barracks, the shadows on the walls seem fantastic. Nobody feels like sleeping.

(Each CHILD is in his/her "bed." EVA and JANA sleep together. Beds are on various levels, suggesting tiered bunks. They can always have been present, suggested by platforms or crates or benches. Some might sleep on the floor. Stubs of candles continue to burn. GABRIELA plays a simple melody on her violin.)

PAVEL. I am afraid of Poland. I see my mother's worried eyes searching for me. Over and over I watch Miroslav carrying Alena to the trains. What's tomorrow going to be like?

(He lies back in his bed, his eyes open.)

ERIK. *(In bed, over GABRIELA's music:)* Destroyed people marching along a street. The children are quite pale. They carry back packs. It's a Polish Transport.

The old are going, and the young are going, and the healthy are going, and the sick are going. And they don't know if they will survive.

(GABRIELA finishes playing. She puts the violin down, blows out her candle, and goes to sleep.)

The A-Transport has left, and more transports are leaving. Thousands of people have died. But it is not enough. The German weasel wants more and more blood.

We have to fight back. We have to prove we're not sheep!

(He takes out a home-made slingshot. He puts out his candle. Through EVA's song, he sneaks to MIROSLAV's hiding spot, and puts his own writing inside. Then he sneaks out of the barrack.)

(EVA rocks JANA and sings. This is the melody GABRIELA was playing on her violin.)

EVA. LISTEN, NOW IT'S TIME
LISTEN, NOW IT'S TIME
THE BOAT WHISTLE HAS SOUNDED,
AND WE MUST SAIL OUT TOWARD AN UNKNOWN PORT.
WE'LL SAIL A LONG, LONG WAY.
AND DREAMS WILL TURN TO TRUTH.
THE WIND SINGS SONGS OF FAR AWAY,
OH, HOW BEAUTIFUL THE NAME, MOROCCO!
JUST LOOK UP TO HEAVEN
AND THINK ABOUT THE VIOLETS.

(PAVEL begins playing the same melody on his recorder.)

I was once a little child, three years ago. That child who longed for other worlds. But now I am no longer a child, for I have learned to hate. I am a grown-up person now, I have known fear.

(She puts the sleeping JANA to bed.)

But anyway, I still believe I only sleep today, that I'll wake up, a child again, and start to laugh and play. Somewhere far away out

there, childhood sweetly sleeps. Along that path among the trees, there... by that house which was once my pride and joy. There my mother gave me birth into this world...so I could weep...

(JANA stirs. EVA hums the melody along with PAVEL's recorder for a moment. JANA settles.)

In the flame of candles by my bed, I sleep. And once, perhaps, I'll understand that I was such a little thing, as little as this poem.

Those thirty-thousand souls who sleep among the trees will wake, open an eye, and because they see... a lot, they'll fall asleep again.

(EVA puts out her candle, and lies back in bed. PAVEL finishes playing. He puts down the recorder, picks up the pencil and scrap of paper. He begins hesitantly.)

PAVEL. VEDEM REPORT...

(Somewhere on the stage, we see ERIK, a dim silhouette, his sling-shot drawn.)

Tonight, Erik Kosek fought back.

(A burst of machine gun fire resounds like a fanfare. ERIK falls. If possible, for the briefest moment he should appear to fly. PAVEL puts out his candle. The fanfare of machine gun fire continues for a moment in the BLACKOUT.)

(The BLACKOUT continues for a long moment, then the lights explode, full up. The remaining CHILDREN race about, setting up a puppet stage. It should face the audience, but be constructed to allow us to watch both the puppet show and the CHILDREN creating it. The puppets, though obviously handmade of found materials, should be bright splashes of color. The first we've seen on the stage.)

(EVA sits to one side of the puppet stage, facing out. She speaks to the audience as the stage is being set up. As the puppet show is presented, the CHILDREN not involved in a particular scene should be visibly and audibly enjoying the performance.)

EVA. The residents of Barracks L-310 and L-318 present..."The Snow Queen!" Written by Eva Hellerova and Miroslav Weiss. From the story by Hans Christian Andersen.

(Each bows as his or her name is said.)

Puppets made by Jana Hellerova, Gabriela Winterova, Alena Led-
erova and Pavel Hoffman.

(PAVEL plays a fanfare on his recorder.)

Once upon a time, there were two little children...Karl and Gerta.

(The puppets appear.)

They lived in a big city in little garrets across the alley from each other, which their parents had connected by means of a roof garden...

KARL. *(PAVEL.)* Hello, Gerta.

GERTA. *(GABRIELA.)* Good morning, Karl.

KARL. *(PAVEL.)* Do you want to play?

GERTA. *(GABRIELA.)* Oh, yes. We are so lucky. Because our parents built this roof garden, we can play together without having to go outside.

(The PUPPETS play together.)

KARL. *(PAVEL.)* But be careful, Gerta, there's still space to fall down to the street, and it's a long way down.

GERTA. *(GABRIELA.)* I'll be careful, Karl. This is so lovely. I wish we could stay here forever.

KARL. *(PAVEL.)* Not me. I want to go out and see the world. Someday I want to have a house in the country. With a big garden and grass and trees.

GERTA. *(GABRIELA.)* Oh, yes.

KARL. *(PAVEL.)* And then we could grow lots of food, and never be hungry.

(PUPPETS exit. GABRIELA switches places with EVA.)

GABRIELA. Scene Two. Far away at the North Pole, in the Snow Queen's fortress.

SNOW QUEEN. *(EVA.)* It's so lonely here all by myself.

WIZARD. (*PAVEL.*) You have me, your highness.

SNOW QUEEN. (*EVA.*) You, Wizard?! You're old and ugly and useless. I think it's time to send you to Poland.

WIZARD. (*PAVEL.*) Oh, no, your highness. I'm still useful. Look. I have a magic mirror. A mirror that will let you see all over the world.

SNOW QUEEN. (*EVA.*) So what?

WIZARD. (*PAVEL.*) So we can use it to find you a companion. A beautiful little child that you can put a spell on and bring here to keep with you forever.

SNOW QUEEN. (*EVA.*) A beautiful little child. What a wonderful idea!

(*PUPPETS exit. GABRIELA and EVA change places again.*)

EVA. Scene Three. Karl and Gerta's roof garden.

(*JANA tosses cut-up paper.*)

KARL. (*PAVEL.*) It's starting to snow.

GERTA. (*GABRIELA.*) We have to go inside.

KARL. (*PAVEL.*) Not me. I'm going to take my sled and go to the park.

GERTA. (*GABRIELA.*) But you can't, Karl. It's not allowed.

KARL. (*PAVEL.*) I don't care. I'm going.

(*He exits, then GERTA exits.*)

EVA. Scene Four. The park.

KARL. (*PAVEL.*) Wheeee! This is fun!

(*SNOW QUEEN PUPPET enters.*)

SNOW QUEEN. (*EVA.*) Do you like the snow, little boy?

KARL. (*PAVEL.*) (*Startled:*) Huh? Oh, yes.

SNOW QUEEN. (*EVA.*) I know a place where the snow is even better.

THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!

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