

***Writing and Developing a Play: From Initial Idea to Final Draft
&
Roses on the Wire***

MPhil (B) Playwriting Studies
The University of Birmingham

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September 2009

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Writing and Developing a Play: From Initial Idea to Final Draft

I first started writing my MPhil play, *Roses on the Wire*, in October 2008. By September 2009 I had completed a total of six drafts, and the purpose of this essay is to examine *Roses on the Wire* – hereafter referred to as *Roses* – in relation to such elements as character, structure, themes and issues, and dialogue, as well as seeking to explain decisions made during the playwriting process and to address any questions that may arise from a reading or performance of the play.

The idea for *Roses* was first conceived in mid-2008, after I had read Carol Ann Lee's biography of Anne Frank, *Roses from the Earth*. The book looks in depth at the experiences of Anne's father, Otto Frank, before, during and after the Second World War; these included his remarriage and his determined efforts to get Anne's diary published to the world. It struck me that whilst much was known about Anne and the Secret Annexe in which she, her family and friends of theirs hid from the Nazis, relatively little was widely known about her father. Otto Frank suffered the loss of his wife and daughters and survived the concentration camps, and yet his story has not – to my knowledge at least – been explored in a 'dramatic' context. This, it seemed, was going to be the basis for my play; the survival of Otto Frank at the concentration camps and his subsequent struggles with coming back to terms with 'ordinary' life.

However, the idea took a new twist when I came across previous research that I had done as part of my BA degree. This research was an article by Curt Daniel, detailing "concentration camp theatre". It was – and is – an extremely interesting piece, as it discusses in detail the theatre and 'variety' performances put on by inmates of German concentration camps in order, amongst other purposes, to entertain the SS guards. Yet again, it struck me that I had

never heard of such a thing, and that the likelihood was that it was not a widely known fact. The idea for my play became one where Otto Frank, incarcerated without his family, takes on the role of helping to direct one of these ‘variety’ shows in order to keep his hope alive and somehow distract him from his wretched circumstances. He finds a surrogate daughter figure in one of the young women, Hannah, who reminds him greatly of Anne and so encourages him to keep fighting for survival. It is only when the show has been successfully put on and the camp eventually liberated that he is told that Anne is dead; however, spurred on by Hannah and his new wife, he finds the courage to take Anne’s diary out into the world. This, then, was to be the germ of the initial idea, with the figure of Otto Frank and the idea of concentration camp theatre merged into one play that, I hoped, would educate and inform.

My idea took yet again another twist when I contacted several rabbis in Birmingham to request their help. I knew a little about Judaism, but what I did know I did not feel was enough to adequately inform the shaping of my characters, and – in a state that in hindsight I can only describe as ignorance – I wanted to find out more about customs, beliefs and religious celebrations, as well as ‘outward appearances’ that might possibly be used to denote someone as being Jewish, much as in the same way that a Christian wears a crucifix, for example. One rabbi, who shall remain nameless, refused explicitly to help, declaring that “there are people still alive who knew and remember Otto Frank” and stating that I did not know what I was talking about as she had certainly never heard of ‘concentration camp theatre’. She did change her attitude slightly when I replied with a copy of Daniel’s article, but I sensed that my project would not be rigorously supported from that quarter and decided to drop the matter. Another rabbi I approached, who shall also remain nameless, promised to help but said that he would not be available for several months. When we did finally arrange a meeting, he was less than impressed with my proposals and seemed more interested in the

research trip that I had taken to Auschwitz two months earlier, as he was intending to go there with a group of his congregation. Despite his ensuing generous offers of help and my attempts to access it, such help never materialised.

The rabbi's comment about Otto Frank struck a chord, and I decided that a play that portrayed him in more 'realistic' and less fictitious circumstances might be better. However, I did not want to write what I thought amounted to an 'adaptation'; I wanted something that came from my own mind, and I concluded that it would be best to put a play about Otto Frank to one side for now. Instead, I substituted Otto Frank with a fictitious character called Albert, who would also have lost a wife and daughters, and have a father-daughter relationship with a girl called Hannah. The play undertook several metamorphoses as my research progressed, most notably when I discovered that there had been orchestras at the concentration camp of Auschwitz, as well as an infirmary where prisoners actually went when they were sick. Again, these were two aspects of Auschwitz that I had never heard of, and it fired something in me to take these subjects to an audience. Thus *Roses on the Wire* was born.

The title of the play came about as a result from a research trip that I undertook to Auschwitz itself in September 2008. On the barbed wire that stretches away on either side of the infamous gates that bear the slogan *Arbeit macht frei* ("Work brings freedom"), people had placed single red roses in acts of remembrance. While I toyed with the idea of other titles brought about by my visit to Auschwitz, such as *Walking on Ashes* – grimly self-explanatory – it was ultimately *Roses on the Wire* that I preferred.

In *The Playwright's Voice*, Tony Kushner states that, "There's a kind of safety in writing a history play – you can make up everything." (Savran, pp. 109) Whilst certain elements of the play are fictional – the main ones being the characters themselves – many of them are not, with the infirmary and the women's orchestra being the prime examples. In addition, there are several recorded cases of SS officers having affairs with female Jewish prisoners, including that of Rudolph Höss, as mentioned within the play. I deliberately set out to combine fact and fiction in a way that would enable me to present some 'unknown truths' to my audience without turning the play into a 'docu-drama'.

Roses does not seek to confirm or represent the stereotypes that have arisen over the years in relation to the Holocaust: the 'nasty Nazi', the 'patiently suffering Jew'. Instead, the intention of the play is to explore, amongst others, the idea of 'humanity'; not just those 'good' qualities that the general term 'humanity' encompasses, but the whole range of actions and motives that drive us, as human beings, to behave as we do in certain situations and under certain circumstances. This is not just limited to Jewish Hannah's allying herself to a Nazi, but also Metzger's behaviour when placed in a high position over his fellow human beings.

If anything, the characters – especially Hannah and Metzger – are intended to go against type. Hannah is more of a 'survivor' than a 'victim', and never is this more vividly demonstrated than when – despite her apparent reluctance to be Metzger's 'mistress' – she simultaneously rejects his advances and draws him on. Were she a 'victim', she would unwillingly submit to everything demanded of her. Hannah, on the other hand, does not; she recognises the power that she has and plays it for all its worth, even to the point of enjoying it, as Ibi disgustedly points out: "...You *love* it. The kisses, the whispers...him attending to your every need..."

(pp. 70) It is Hannah's awareness that once Metzger has had sex with her he may very well tire of her that spurs her on, and so her beauty is both her curse and her weapon. However, it is this knowledge that drives her to marry Daniel; a typical case of 'cause and effect', as once Metzger discovers the truth, Hannah's fate is sealed.

In his interviews with Auschwitz survivors, Laurence Rees notes that "Inmates describe how the best way to ensure survival...was to become useful to a specific German. If that German came to depend on you, you would be looked after." (pp. 125) While Metzger perhaps does not "depend" on Hannah in the way that Rees means, he does "depend" on her for affection and warmth – which, it could be argued, therefore makes her "useful" to him. Ibi certainly operates on a more 'functional' level in terms of being "useful", as she helps in the 'removal' of the children born as a result of Metzger and other SS officers' sexual exploits.

Hannah constantly asserts herself as being a "realist" throughout the play, and her lack of disillusion over her relationship with Metzger is fully illustrated by her response to Ibi's remark about using her influence with Metzger to go out and treat Sonya: "For extra soup, yes. Not for something like this!" (pp. 63). Yet, when confronted with losing Metzger, Hannah declares to him: "I love you." (pp. 83) She veers between passionate declarations and outright threats in a bid to win him back to her; the response of a woman terrified at the prospect of losing the man she really loves – or the 'kneejerk reaction' of a desperate woman on the brink of destruction? It may be taken as being either, and this is a decision to be left in the hands of a director. However, it is this element of Hannah's character that makes her so 'human'; like Metzger, she is not a stereotype. Hannah is a human being doing her best in the circumstances with the little that she has – in her case, her looks, wits and luck. Hannah's

situation can be summed up in the following statement by Irma Eigi: “You can’t live with this guilt. But on the other hand, every person has an instinct for self-preservation.” (Rees, pp. 42)

One of the most haunting passages that I read over the course of my research whilst writing the play – and one that spurred me on – is the following from Claude Schumacher’s *Staging the Holocaust*:

“...at last they [Holocaust survivors] could speak...at last they would be heard. But the world...refused to listen – they were told that their ghostly physical appearance was eloquent enough – and the survivors came up against an unexpected and insurmountable obstacle. Soon, to the survivors themselves, to the victims who still bore all the scars of months and years of torture, what they had suffered took on an air of unreality, what had happened to them became unimaginable; the monstrously unimaginable became unimaginable even to those who had endured the unimaginable.” (pp. 2)

Hannah originally started out as one of these survivors, whose “unimaginable” was the rape at the hands of a Nazi officer she had originally looked to for protection. As the play evolved and progressed, so did Hannah’s character – but the above passage was always borne in mind.

In his memoirs, Rudolph Höss describes what he sees as the three types of SS guard:

“The first category...is the malicious, nasty, basically evil, vulgar, vile, low-natured type...The second category...is the majority. These are the apathetic and indifferent

ones who ploddingly perform their duties in a careless or deficient manner and do only what is absolutely necessary...The third category consists of those who by nature are kind, have a good heart, have compassion and empathy for human suffering.” (pp. 88-89)

Metzger is intended to be a combination of the first and third categories. With Hannah he is certainly in the third category, being a caring presence and taking care of her physical comfort:

“(He gestures for her to sit and rubs her arms)”

METZGER: I shall organise blankets.” (pp. 48)

He is meant to be a very real and complex character; a man capable of loving and caring for others (as demonstrated by his being married), whose ‘better’ feelings are at the same time somewhat tempered by his Nazi ideals. The complexity of his character is further highlighted when he comments that Hannah reminds him of his wife, and states that he “was” married (pp. 68). His turning on Hannah towards the end of the play is not just his meting out the treatment that might be expected from a Nazi to a Jew, but also a jilted man exacting revenge on the woman he believed – although to what extent may be left to the imagination – that he loved, and whom he thought loved him in return. ‘Justification’ of his appalling treatment of her may also be found in the fact that Metzger’s actions – that is, his relationship with Hannah – are potentially dangerous to him, as “sexual relationships between members of the SS and camp inmates were expressly forbidden. Such acts constituted a ‘race crime’ for the Germans.” (Rees, pp. 235)

Although he has gone against his 'ideology' on many occasions before, as revealed by Ibi, Hannah is the first woman in the camp that he has truly developed feelings for, and this lies at the heart of his turning upon her.

His treatment of Ibi – for example, mocking her when she comes looking for Hannah – can also be viewed in two lights: on the one hand, he is a Nazi and she is a Jew; on the other, she is interrupting a private moment between Hannah and himself. The levels of barbarism to which he descends after Hannah's marriage are only justifiable in that he has been placed in the ultimate position of power over Hannah and the others; this in turn poses the question to the audience: "What would you do if...?" It is to be hoped that the majority of people would not become 'monsters' in the face of war, but I believe that never was this capacity for evil and wrongdoing more exploited than during the Holocaust. However, this essay does not seek to explain the mass motives and causes surrounding concentration camp guards as a whole; what it is intended to do is to examine a character in a play who happens to be one. As previously stated, is possible to identify in Metzger aspects of the first and the third categories of SS guard, and this in turn depends on with whom he is dealing at the time. However, as also previously mentioned, he descends into the worst kind of first when he discovers Hannah's 'betrayal': her marriage to Daniel. Whilst creating Metzger, I tried to bear in mind Laurence Rees' comment:

"...just as the Kapos [a kind of guard-prisoner] could vary widely in temperament, so could the SS. A common theme amongst the reminiscences of camp survivors is that there was no single identikit model of their captors. Crucial to surviving in the camp

was the ability to read the different characters...of the SS...On such a talent could rest your life.” (Rees, pp. 57)

Ibi is intended to represent what Hannah claims she “...could have become. Just another one of thousands.” (pp. 47) Ibi is the representation of the young women who met their deaths in the concentration camps, who had neither Nazi protector or the strength to carry on once their family and loved ones were gone. There is a sense that had Metzger not arranged Ibi’s murder, the girl would have pined to death after Sonya’s death in any case. Whilst in earlier drafts Ibi served merely as a ‘functional’ – a character who brought news or reacted to it – by the final draft she had developed as a character in her own right. This is demonstrated during the first scene of Act II, when she and Hannah discuss Ibi’s emerging feelings for unseen musician Sonya (a conversation taken from the pages of Fania Fénelon’s *The Musicians of Auschwitz*). By the end of the play, these feelings have developed into a full-blown love affair – mirroring Hannah’s own relationship with Daniel – and Ibi is no longer a naïve girl, but an embittered woman who has thus come to be a typical ‘product’ of Auschwitz. While Ibi’s death should not be belittled to the extent of also being labeled ‘typical’ – as to do so would be to minimize the extent of suffering at the camp to the point of obscenity – it is Hannah’s narrow escape from this fate that marks her out. The ‘mirroring’ effect between the two young women – both have lovers that are talked about but never seen (also presenting an financially economic way of using characters); both are in the prime of life; both are embittered by what they face on a daily basis within the camp; both have come from good backgrounds – serves to heighten ‘what might have been’.

Albert is the most ‘subtle’ of the characters in *Roses*: a pious, caring and gentle old man who – due to the Holocaust – is now a widower and grieving parent. Yet, like Hannah, Albert too

has not emerged from Auschwitz able to look to the future and move on from the past; although he has ‘replaced’ his beloved daughter with Hannah, he is looking to avenge what has happened through the medium of the child that Hannah carries. Throughout the play, he constantly refers to the child, and even though this can – and should – be construed to his love for Hannah (the implication being that he has accepted the child already, knowing its parentage, and does not condemn either mother or child), it is the final line of the play that gives Albert’s intentions away: “But what better revenge than for a Nazi child to be brought up as a Jew?” (pp. 98) Despite Metzger’s death, and the fact that Metzger never knew that Hannah was pregnant, Albert seeks to ‘take’ Metzger’s child from him in a reversal of the ‘taking’ of Albert’s daughter; to turn Metzger’s own flesh and blood into a being that would be abhorrent to him. This, of course, supports the Jewish belief that a child’s religion comes through its mother rather than its father.

Eben arrives at the displaced persons’ camp as someone who views things very much in ‘black and white’; he does not appear to see a situation in possible shades of grey. This is established foremost when he demonstrates that he is more than ready to believe that his sister is a collaborator, based solely upon the fact that this is what he has been told by others. Towards the end of Act I, the intention is for the audience to still be given the impression that he is ready to denounce Hannah at any moment; that any statement she gives will merely be a formality, despite his request for her to tell him “everything” so that he can “decide what makes it into the report” (pp. 43). This ‘black and white’ element of his character is further highlighted when he talks of his thoughts when the letters from his family stopped when he was in England: “I thought you were all...nobody to go home to. I was on my own and it was up to me to make the best of it.” (pp. 36) Whereas Hannah never loses hope of one day finding her brother, Eben gives up hope for his family almost immediately. However, by the

end of the play Eben has been forced into a 'grey' area, stimulated by the underlying question constantly being presented to the audience: 'What would you do if...?'

When Eben smashes his violin in the final scene, this is intended to show his realisation of his predicament, caught between familial love and judicial duty, and the stark consequences of his sister's actions; a symbolic gesture that marks once and for all his realisation that the 'old' world – the world before the war – is over. It is a symbol of his loss of the last remaining shred of hope that he might find his sister, instead of the virtual stranger that Auschwitz has made her, and a sign that – like Hannah – Eben will have to now relinquish what he thought he knew and look to the future for new answers. There is an alternative ending that I used in previous drafts: the hut door opens and Daniel steps into the room. I left this ending deliberately ambiguous: has Daniel really come home, or is he a ghost? The intention behind this was to give the audience another talking point to consider – if Daniel really is alive, what is in store for Hannah? Is it the beginning of a new nightmare for her? Would it have been better – for her at least – if Daniel had never returned? The alternative – that Daniel is a ghost – once more illustrates that Hannah will never be able to get over what has happened, and that she will forever be haunted by the ghosts of the past. I felt, however, that for the reasons stated above, the 'Eben Ending' was more suitable.

While it may be construed through the Prologue that *Roses* is actually Metzger's story – after all, the audience do not find out that he is dead until the very last moments of the play – this is not the case. The intention of the Prologue is to open up a set of questions within the mind of the audience: 'What has the prisoner done to warrant being treated in such a way? What, if any, is the relationship between the prisoner and the soldier? What authority is the soldier acting under?' The Prologue also serves to try and make the audience wary of Eben;

they do not initially know that Eben and Hannah are brother and sister, and the intention is to set up their expectations in one direction and then lead these expectations off somewhere totally new – in my opinion, the essence of good drama. I deliberately wanted to use the device of setting Eben up as a potential ‘bad guy’ in the eyes of the audience and then reveal him for what he really is: a long-suffering young man who, despite not being there, is just as much a victim of the Holocaust as his survivor sister; and who, despite his condemnation of his sister’s actions, avenges what has happened to her.

The play is not intended to be a ‘Holocaust play’, but rather to examine the impact of the events on an ordinary family. The play’s theme of ‘family’ is brought home forcefully through the fact that Hannah’s family has now been totally destroyed by the Holocaust, despite the fact that the actual genocide is over. Eben is unable to face what his sister has done, and so resorts to leaving for Israel; if I were to be asked what Eben would be doing ten years after the play’s events, the answer is simple – he would be a Mossad agent. Despite the fact that both Hannah and Eben have survived, they are lost to each other. Albert has lost his own family in the Holocaust, yet is offered a ‘second chance’ through Hannah and her unborn child.

The themes of ‘redemption’ and ‘justice’ are key ones in *Roses*. While Metzger may have paid the ultimate price for what he has done, the nightmare will never go away for Hannah and Albert, and the ‘justice’ that has been meted out to him in itself can be deemed either ‘right’ or ‘wrong’, depending on the individual’s view of the circumstances. The ‘baddie’ may have received his comeuppance, but – as in real life – the suffering continues. The fact that it is Hannah’s brother who beats Metzger to death may also be construed as a form of ‘poetic justice’. Hannah’s terrible knowledge of her baby’s parentage, and yet her choice to

continue with the pregnancy, shows that she is ‘accepting’ the pregnancy as her ‘punishment’ for her actions whilst in Auschwitz, and through this looks to the child for her ‘redemption’. Albert, however, is set on using the child to get his own form of ‘justice’. There are not meant to be any ‘straight-cut’ answers or solutions in *Roses*; at best, there may be found a dim hope.

The use of ‘time’ within the play is intended to be a fairly straightforward one. In the Prologue, time is suspended; Eben waits to hear what captive Metzger has to say. In Act I, the intention is for there to be a sense of time ticking by without anything really happening; the action takes place over the course of a day and a night. In Act II, however, time is marching irrevocably on, mercilessly counting down to the final fate of Ibi, Albert and Hannah. Whilst Act II becomes slightly episodic at times, I have attempted to redress the balance through the means of enabling the act to flow as one long, continuous scene; there is no change of location and the characters move out of the previous scene briefly before plunging straight in to the next one. Act I is intended to be what Steve Waters refers to as “closed time, closed space”: the action takes place over a certain length of time within one location, Hannah and Albert’s hut in the displaced persons’ camp. Act II is intended to be what Waters refers to as “open time, closed space”: that is, the action takes place at different times within a non-specified time frame and is still within one location, this time the infirmary at Auschwitz. In original drafts of *Roses*, Act II shifted location quite considerably, from the infirmary to the musicians’ block and an electrified fence. This was identified as being too ‘cinematic’, and I managed to rewrite accordingly so that outside events – such as Hannah and Daniel’s wedding – were talked about but not shown, so that the key action took place inside the infirmary. Although I had several ideas to enable free movement between locations in Act II – such as mounting the barbed wire fence in panels on casters for ease of movement! – I

ultimately decided that this was impractical for a number of reasons, the main one being that the momentum of the play would be lost if numerous set changes had to be continuously carried out.

In Act II in particular of *Roses* I have tried to achieve what David Edgar refers to as:

“...a dramatic seamlessness which allows the creation of a highly concentrated emotional intensity, deceiving the audience into thinking that the action they are witnessing is inevitable, and there is no authorial decision-making going on at all.”
(pp. 106)

This idea of ‘cause and effect’ is one that I constantly tried to bear in mind, especially in view of the fact that not only is it one of Steve Waters’ basic teachings, but it also helps to focus the mind on what is important to the story and what is not. Thus, actions taken by Hannah achieve greater significance later on: by trying to protect Ibi from Metzger’s wrath by suggesting that she came to discuss a transfer to the pregnancy block, Hannah causes this transfer to be carried out. This in turn leads Ibi to be placed in the unenviable position of being forced to kill children to save their mothers; in doing so, Ibi discovers the ‘open secret’ of the SS officers and is thus placed in even more danger from Metzger; and so on, until she is finally murdered at Metzger’s behest.

The device of keeping Eben onstage throughout Act II was taken by me from April de Angelis’ 2008 adaptation of Bronte’s *Wuthering Heights*, where Lockwood starts the story as its narrator and then is a witness to the ensuing action – sometimes involved, sometimes seeking answers to questions. Eben is the eyes and ears of the audience in the world onstage,

but I deliberately did not bring him in to the action at every available opportunity; Act II is Hannah's story, and I felt that to keep having Eben come forward would detract from the power. He is, however, intended to help offer a smoother transition between scenes and to offer a 'safe refuge' for the audience; the Holocaust is "emotional petrol" (as so beautifully described by one of my classmates) and some of the issues raised may be distressing for some audience members. With Eben as a guide onstage, the intention is to offer some reassurance – he is the 'safe' presence, and the sight of him in control over Metzger at the beginning of the play goes, I hope, some way towards this. In addition, he is the point of reference to which Albert turns when taking over the story from Hannah.

In the world of the play, the characters speak Polish as their main language. The first notion behind this is that this was the common language of Auschwitz; the second is, as Albert says, he and Hannah do not speak German anymore – they "only speak the languages of civilised peoples." (pp. 35) Metzger speaks Polish to Hannah out of his Nazi belief that only the 'Master Race' should speak German, although this is never said during the play. The intention behind the usage of Yiddish words and phrases such as "*Boychik*", "*Bubeleh*" (pp. 38) and "*Kayn ahora*" (pp. 22) by Albert, Hannah and Eben is to help keep up not only a reminder of who they are, but also the ties that bind them – that is, Judaism. Additionally, the use of language ties the 'past' and 'present' of the play together: both Metzger and Eben have a habit of lapsing into German – or at least, using German phrases – when talking to Hannah. Albert's sometimes stilted and usually formal way of speaking denotes how he has learnt Polish; the younger characters speak more quickly and informally. I did toy with the idea of using accents rather than actual foreign languages in order to convey which language was being spoken, but decided against this on the grounds that it might become somewhat farcical – in the vein of popular television comedy programme '*Allo 'Allo*.'

Eben uses language as a hidden weapon; when questioning Hannah about the impending arrival of her baby, his brotherly questions in fact have more sinister and hidden meanings behind them, hinting that he knows more than he is letting on. This is quickly picked up upon by Hannah, the intention being to create palpable tension for the audience to see between Eben and Hannah and so give a foretaste of things to come:

“EBEN: Have you thought of any names yet?

HANNAH: No. Not really.

EBEN: I suppose he’ll take his father’s name?

*(An awful pause. **Albert** slowly turns. **Hannah** tries to keep her voice light)*

HANNAH: What do you mean?

EBEN: Surname. I suppose he’ll be a Kowalewski?

HANNAH: Of course he will. *(Attempts to laugh)* Why would he not?

EBEN: I thought you might want to give him another.” (pp. 33)

This particular scene begins with Eben, Hannah and Albert sitting around after dinner, laughing and talking about happy memories of the past. While it may seem that the scene

goes against Tim Fountain's dictum that "dialogue must never be chatter" (Fountain, pp. 18), and that the three characters are simply 'chattering' after dinner, they are in fact trying to avoid the deeper and more painful conversation that they know will eventually come.

The main subject of the play – that is, the relationship between a Jewess and a Nazi officer – may outrage some audience members. I asked April de Angelis about this, and received the reply: "The more you think a play will outrage someone, the more you should write the play." Whilst I have not written *Roses* with the sole purpose of alienating all those who read or witness it, I do seek to make my audience *think*. The play is not intended to be 'cathartic'; I do not want the audience to go with Hannah on her 'journey', shed a tear and go home feeling somehow uplifted. As previously mentioned, many Holocaust survivors were given no such catharsis. It is a sad fact that while teachers and groups in the past were all too eager to hear stories of brave resistance, hope against the odds and ultimate triumph over evil, the 'everyday' stories – the tales of privation, fear, desperation and utter horror – were overlooked and outright ignored. *Roses* cannot tell these stories, but I would like to think that it can somehow redress the balance; that my audience will question what is true in the play that they did not know about before, and that while it may not lead them to delve deeper into the annals of history, it will cause them to stop and *think* – even if only for a moment.

In *The Playwright's Voice*, Tony Kushner asks several valid questions that I feel have particular relevance to *Roses*:

"If our lives are...shaped by trauma and loss...how do you address that? And how does one progress in the face of that?...Even after the Holocaust, the monsters are still among us. And can you forgive?" (pp. 107)

Roses on the Wire does not provide answers, nor does it look to. Instead, it seeks to address these ideas of “trauma and loss”; to try to find a path for its characters to “progress in the face” of what has happened; and ultimately to ask its audience, not “Can you forgive?” but ‘What if...?’

Roses on the Wire

Roses on the Wire

Characters

Hannah – a German-Jewish woman in her twenties. German accent.

Albert – a Jewish man in his early sixties. Yiddish accent.

Eben – German-born; in his twenties. English accent.

Ibi – a Czechoslovakian-Jewish woman in her late teens/early twenties. Czech accent.

Metzger – a German SS officer in his thirties. German accent.

Male Patient

Prisoners

SS Guards

The play is set in the summer of 1945.

The action of the play takes place in Metzger's cell, Hannah and Albert's hut and the infirmary of Auschwitz.

Prologue

*(A basic and anonymous room, the edges deep in shadow. **Metzger**, handcuffed, is seated on a chair in the middle of it. Unkempt and dressed in ragged clothes, he is very different to the man we see later on. He is blindfolded and bleeding. A British corporal – **Eben** – stands nearby, watching)*

METZGER: Is this what they told you we did to them?

(No reply)

Did they tell you we tied them up and beat them?

(No reply)

Maybe we did...but we weren't cowards. At least we let them see our faces.

*(**Eben** comes forward and yanks off the blindfold. **Metzger** winces in the light, then laughs)*

Young. Younger than I thought. What have they taught you? Taught you to hate us? You'll be thanking us in the years to come. You'll be looking back at us and venerating us, thanking us, remembering us for the work that we started...

*(**Eben** launches a vicious blow, which sends **Metzger** toppling sideways, then kicks him savagely in the stomach. **Metzger** coughs and spits up blood)*

EBEN: You're boring me now.

METZGER: I thought you wanted the truth.

EBEN: Not your version of it.

METZGER: What can I say? The truth hurts.

*(**Eben** gestures to his injuries)*

EBEN: You'd be the first to know that. But now I want *the* truth – not *your* truth. "The Jews are evil, they started it"...I've had enough of hearing it. So let's strike a deal.

METZGER: A deal?

EBEN: You catch on quickly. Yes, a deal. You tell me the truth and I'll see about getting you a shower, some clean clothes, maybe hot tea.

*(**Metzger** laughs painfully, quietly)*

METZGER: That was what we told them. "Have a shower, it's to prevent the spread of

infection...don't forget to tie your shoes together."

EBEN: That's what I'm aiming at. The *truth*.

(*He produces a paper from his uniform. Slowly, deliberately, he unfolds it and holds it before Metzger's eyes*)

It's up to you whether you die square with the house, un beholden to anybody, with as clear a conscience as a piece like you can have. Or whether you'll go down purely on hearsay.

METZGER: A death warrant? Is that what they told you would work? "Show him this and he'll crumble..." (*Reads*) Half of those charges are lies! I never...it was never like that! It never happened like that!

EBEN: You're beginning to understand my point.

METZGER: I never laid my hand on a child...!

EBEN: Yes, infanticide. Not a particularly...*noble* charge. Especially for one of your noble calling. Whew...not very pleasant reading, is it? And there was me, thinking that your kind had a higher purpose. And what do we have? Infanticide... rape...unlawful acquirement...assault...assault with intent... attempted murder...not forgetting, of course, genocide.

METZGER: Wait! Can it be changed? If I...if I tell you what happened, can it be changed?

(*Pause*)

What do I have to tell you? What do you want to know?

(*Pause*)

EBEN: *Everything.*

(*Blackout*)

Act I

Scene 1

(A fairly large wooden hut. It is furnished with a wooden table, several stools and basic chairs, a bookcase and a basic bunk against one wall. The bookcase contains several books in German, English and Polish, a couple of tin plates and mugs and two blankets. There is a tin jug with some apple blossom in it on the table and the general appearance of the room is shabby but clean. There are two doors into the room: one in the back wall and one on stage right. There are several small windows set into the walls, framed by very basic curtains. The room is surprisingly full of sunlight. It sounds like a busy village street outside.)

Hannah is sitting at the table, sewing. She is German and would be beautiful if she wasn't so sad. She is heavily pregnant, wearing a coarse apron over a sack-like dress, and wears a wedding ring. She has dark and pretty hair.

Albert enters. He is a rabbi, a robust but slim man of about 60, with white hair and beard. He has a Yiddish accent. He is dressed in a shirt, waistcoat and suit, which are slightly too big for him. An old trilby hat is perched on his head and a new red scarf is wound around his neck. He carries a string bag. He goes to **Hannah** and attempts to kiss her in greeting whilst also attempting to remove his scarf)

ALBERT: Wretched thing...hanging about my neck like a vulture...

HANNAH (*kissing him*): How are you this morning?

ALBERT: Tired. I had Levi rabbiting in my ear last night, extolling the virtues of this new driving and mechanics course they are trying to enrol everybody on...me! A driver! A mechanic! I told him, my days of driving and machining are over. I am an old man, I just want to lay in the sun and have tea and books in the garden...and my little surrogate grandchild sit on my knee and learn his lessons... (*He places a fond hand on Hannah's bump*) And my surrogate daughter sit with us and we will live out our days in peace.

(He begins to unpack his bag)

HANNAH: What happened?

ALBERT: Eh?

HANNAH: Your back...

(He turns. The back of his jacket is plastered with mud)

ALBERT: Ach...the boys in the village...

HANNAH: Albert...

ALBERT: Truly, Hannah.

*(They exchange a long look. **Albert** pats her hand and resumes his unpacking)*

HANNAH: Do you think they'll come?

ALBERT: Who?

HANNAH: Our quota numbers.

ALBERT: Of course.

(Beat)

With luck, they will be here before the baby is born.

HANNAH: I hope so. Dear...I hope so. I don't...

(Beat)

I don't want it to be born a German.

ALBERT: Ah.

(Beat)

Well even if it *is* born before, we can always get it repatriated the same as –

HANNAH: I don't want it to be the same as us. I want it to be born *free*.

(Pause)

ALBERT: I always used to think, what do I want with America? I am too old to start again. Leave the New World to the young. I shall sleep in my garden. And now I shall have my garden...in the New World.

*(He fishes in his bag and brings out some potatoes and onions. From the battered band of his hat he produces a bunch of wild herbs with a flourish and presents it to **Hannah** like a bouquet)*

I shall grow my own potatoes and cook them with my own parsley and mint.
No more of these endless rations...faugh.

HANNAH: Where did you get these from?

ALBERT: I took a walk into the village. One of the widowed ladies there has taken a shine to me, and I told her of my poor little daughter, expecting her first child...

HANNAH: *Albert...*

ALBERT: She was happy to help. Soon the day will come and I will be able to offer you and everybody else potatoes grown in *my* garden, *kayn ahora*.¹

HANNAH: Well it'll make a nice change from rice. I can make *kugel* tonight.

*(A knock on the door. They both freeze. A long moment before a telegram is thrust under the door. Cautiously **Albert** retrieves it)*

ALBERT: For you.

(A long pause)

HANNAH: I can't.

ALBERT: Well, at least it is not edged in black.

HANNAH: Don't say that.

ALBERT: What is the worst it can bring?

(Pause)

HANNAH: What if...what if it's about...

ALBERT: Better to know.

*(**Hannah** slowly takes it. **Albert** holds his hand out; she squeezes it briefly. **Albert** turns away to give her a moment. **Hannah** steels herself; opens the telegram; reads; sinks back, crumpling the telegram against her chest. **Albert** eventually turns)*

Lieverd?

*(**Hannah** holds the telegram out to him. He takes it and reads)*

Hannah, Hannah...

(She is half-laughing, half-crying. They hug each other. Finally)

HANNAH: Oh Albert...I wish...I wish it could have been about –

ALBERT: Yes.

(Beat)

At least she is with her mother.

(Beat)

¹ A Yiddish expression similar to “knock on wood” – Albert is trying not to jinx his dream.

Oh Hannah, it is wonderful news.

*(They hug each other again. **Hannah** starts to weep in earnest. **Albert** cradles her)*

Lieverd...lieverd...what is the matter?

HANNAH: I thought it was going to be about Metzger.

ALBERT *(trying to make light)*: That old devil?

HANNAH: What if he comes back?

ALBERT *(calmly)*: He would be ripped apart and his limbs scattered to the winds. The others would see to that. He would not dare come here, Hannah. In spite of everything...we are protected here. And once we are in America he will never find you.

HANNAH: I had a dream about Ibi last night. She got out of her grave and stood at the end of the bed. She wanted to know why I let him...she wanted to know why I didn't try harder to save her.

(Beat. She puts her hands on her pregnant belly)

What would she say if she saw me now...

ALBERT *(tenderly)*: Poor little pale face... *(Kisses her)* But it is good news! No more of Metzger. It is bad enough that you should have dreams of it. Do not talk of him by choice. *(He takes the telegram and reads it through again)* It is at times like this that one feels new faith, a new closeness to God...

HANNAH: I want to go and stand in the middle of a field and raise my face to the sky and thank Him from the bottom of my heart.

ALBERT: And so you shall, *lieverd*. Every day of your new life. We will be surrounded by hills and fields, wide open space, good clean air –

*(A knock on the door. They lock eyes. Pause. Another knock. **Albert** slowly approaches the door, listening hard. He puts his eye to a crack. Another knock)*

Who is there?

EBEN: *Britische Armee.*²

*(**Albert** opens the door. **Eben** stands outside, uniformed. He is tall and muscular with dark curly hair and dark eyes. He is polite but his manner is always somehow distant and his smiles are rare and hard-won. Much of the surface 'niceness' has been knocked out of him by his experiences over the war years; he is quietly dignified, almost to the point of coldness at times. He carries a violin case under one arm)*

² German: "British Army."

*Guten tag. Entschuldigen Sie, dass ich store. Ich suche nämlich Frau Kowalewski. Mir wurde gesagt, dass sie irgendwo hier wohnt.*³

*(Albert turns quickly to look at **Hannah** with something akin to horror. She stands)*

HANNAH: *Ja...ich bin Frau Kowalewski. Wie kann ich Ihnen helfen?*⁴

(Pause)

EBEN: Hannah...?

HANNAH: *Ja...?*

*(A pause. Albert suddenly realises who it is. He takes **Hannah** by the hand)*

ALBERT: Hannah?

HANNAH: Yes?

ALBERT: It is Eben.

(She draws him to one side and they talk in quick, low voices)

HANNAH: No...no, it can't be! I don't have any stockings on.

ALBERT *(incredulous)*: He has not seen you for...it is of no matter!

HANNAH: Of course it is! You can always tell a lady by whether she's wearing stockings.

ALBERT *(confidentially)*: Well, my rear is shiny.

HANNAH: Albert!

ALBERT: It is! This is not my good suit...I put this on in the morning. I sit down to breakfast. I get up to go to the window for some air. I go back to my seat. I get up and pace a little. I sit to read but I cannot get comfortable. So I get up and down...up and down, up and down...like a demented jack-in-the-box. And my suit gets shiny.

(Eben is listening to the exchange, half-smiling. They don't realise. He clears his throat and they turn)

EBEN: *Entschuldigung*⁵...maybe Polish would be better.

(Hannah stares at him. Gently)

³ German: "Good morning. I'm sorry to disturb you. I'm trying to find Mrs. Kowalewski. I asked and somebody said she lived around here."

⁴ German: "Yes...I'm Mrs. Kowalewski. How can I help you?"

⁵ German: "Excuse me..."

Hannah.

HANNAH: My brother – oh, my brother!

(They rush to each other but at the last moment stop, smiling but unsure)

You've grown.

EBEN *(indicating her stomach)*: So have you.

HANNAH: You're in the Army...you're a soldier.

EBEN: I joined up four years ago.

HANNAH: Why are you here – I mean, how did you –

EBEN: A relief effort. I knew you were here, they said in the Red Cross telegram. I pulled a few strings, and...well. Here I am.

(Hannah throws her arms around him. After a moment he responds. Hannah is crying. Albert surreptitiously folds his jacket so that the mud can't be seen. Finally)

You're a married woman now, then? *(To Albert)* You must be the elder Mr. Kowalewski?

(Hannah has no idea what to say. Albert finally steps forward and holds out a hand)

ALBERT: Rabbi Albert Cassel, at your service.

EBEN: Oh...how do you do.

HANNAH: I don't know what I would have done without Albert. He's been like a father to me.

(Eben studies him. Albert is uncomfortable)

EBEN: Where is –

(Hannah talks over the top of him)

HANNAH: Would you like a drink? Coffee?

(Beat)

EBEN: Yes. Coffee would be nice.

ALBERT: Will you sit down?

EBEN: Thank you.

*(He sits. **Albert** makes coffee. **Hannah** shyly approaches her brother and sits nearby. As she does so she picks up a blanket from the back of a chair and arranges it around her shoulders like a shawl. **Eben** is looking at some tiny, half-finished garments on the table)*

EBEN: You still sew.

HANNAH: For the baby.

EBEN: They're beautiful.

HANNAH: Thank you.

(Pause)

I can't believe how much you've grown! Look at him, Albert. After all my stories, you wouldn't believe it was the same boy, would you?

ALBERT: No. No.

(Pause)

EBEN: How did you and Hannah meet, Rabbi Cassel?

HANNAH: Call him Albert, we do...

EBEN: Apologies. *Albert* – how did you and Hannah meet?

(Pause)

HANNAH: He helped me through. When things were...when things were pretty bad.

(Pause)

EBEN: Then may I thank you, on behalf of my father. And our mother, too.

(Albert slowly shakes hands with Eben)

*Und daher ist er wie ein Vater für dich?*⁶

(Pause. Hannah chooses her words carefully)

HANNAH: Yes. Although nobody could ever replace Papa...ever...he's – he has – he is very kind, and very good to me. To us.

(Beat)

ALBERT: Here we are...

⁶ German: "Is that why he's like a father to you?"

*(Business as **Hannah** moves the baby clothes and coffee is poured. **Albert** too retrieves a blanket and wraps it around himself. There is very much a sense that this is a habit for both him and **Hannah**, much like putting on a pair of slippers)*

HANNAH: Do you take sugar? We don't have real sugar, only saccharin...with the rations and everything.

EBEN: It's all right. You don't think I'd come and see you without bringing a present, do you? *(Produces a small paper bag)* It's in short supply but I managed to get you some. *(Grinning)* You were always a pig for your sweets.

*(**Hannah** sticks her tongue out at him. He holds the bag out. Gently she takes it and smiles at him, proffering the bag)*

HANNAH: Sugar?

EBEN: Yes, please. Just a spoonful.

HANNAH: Do you take milk? It's only powdered...the coffee's good, though.

EBEN: Yes, please.

(They sit around, savouring the taste of the sugar in the coffee)

Oh, I brought you a little something else, as well. *(Produces a pair of stockings)* Nylons.

HANNAH: Oh, Eben...

EBEN: I thought you might not have any. We can get them in England now. *(To **Albert**)* Do you smoke?

ALBERT: Sometimes.

EBEN: Here. *(Opens a cigarette case)* Try one of these.

HANNAH: You don't smoke...?

EBEN: *Ja, liebe Schwester.*⁷

*(He lights up. **Albert** remains holding his cigarette. **Eben** lovingly draws on his, exhaling clouds of smoke. A few moments)*

HANNAH: Eben...would you mind going outside with that?

EBEN: Just one...?

⁷ German: "I do, dear sister."

HANNAH: Please.

EBEN: What's the problem, Han? *Nur das eine*⁸ – it's been an eventful morning –

HANNAH: It's just...

(She falls silent. Eben takes another drag)

I don't like it.

(Pause)

The smell. The smell of the smoke. It's like being... *(Appealing to Albert)* It reminds me of *him*.

ALBERT: Do you mind if I have one, *lieverd*? Outside. Eben can come with me.

(Pause)

HANNAH: Of course.

EBEN: Why don't you come with us?

HANNAH: Uh...no, it's all right...

EBEN: The fresh air'll do you good.

HANNAH: No...I...my leg. It gets painful if I'm on it too long.

(Eben goes to speak but Albert jumps in)

ALBERT: Stay away from the windows, *lieverd*.

EBEN: *Lieverd*? What does that mean?

HANNAH: It's Dutch. It means "darling".

EBEN: You've been to Holland, Albert?

(Beat)

HANNAH: It was Papa's nickname for me. When we were in Amsterdam. Now Albert calls me by it. A reminder.

(Pause)

ALBERT: Remember – stay away from the windows. The smoke.

⁸ German: "Just one –"

(**Hannah** beckons **Eben** to her and kisses him. He drops an awkward kiss on her forehead and goes outside. **Albert** lingers thoughtfully)

ALBERT: He does not like me.

HANNAH: Oh, Albert –

ALBERT: What you said about me being like a father to you. He disapproves.

HANNAH: I only wanted him to know –

ALBERT: I know, *lieverd*. Look at it from his point of view – he finds out his mother and father are both dead. He comes to find his sister, all he has left...he is the man of the family now. But she has a ‘father’ already –

HANNAH: Mamma and Papa...they...they went nearly *two years* ago –

ALBERT: We know that but he does not. The wound is still fresh.

(*Pause*)

He is young, Hannah, he is a boy, all dressed up like a man. Give him time. He does not know what we have been through. Talk to him and he will understand. Treat him like the man he wants to be. (*Stands and stretches*) Me, I am going to sit in the sun and dream of potatoes. (*Kisses her. A pause*) Maybe it not such a good idea for me to be here when Eben is –

HANNAH: No, Albert, no, I won't have that. You're as much a part of this family as he is. You've a right to be here. You need to talk to him, too. You need to tell him what it was like. The more he hears the more he'll understand. (*Pause. A touch of uncertainty*) Won't he?

ALBERT: Bless your sweet face...if you wish it, I will come.

HANNAH: I do.

EBEN (*off*): Albert?

ALBERT: Coming!

HANNAH: You and Eben...you're all I have left now.

(**Albert** lightly pats her bump)

ALBERT: And the little one. A phoenix from the ashes.

(**Hannah** tries to smile)

Madam, I shall return!

*(He kisses her and exits. The sounds of his and **Eben's** voices drift into the room, harmonious. After a moment, **Hannah** picks up one of the garments and begins to sew)*

Scene 2

*(The hut. The next evening. The remains of what to **Hannah** and **Albert** is a lavish meal are spread out on the table; the meal is coming to an end. **Hannah** and **Albert** have their blankets around their shoulders. The conversation flows quickly and easily)*

HANNAH: What about those pickles from Gerhardt's father's deli?

EBEN: Now they were *divine*...crunchy...so full of vinegar you could feel your taste buds shrivelling up but you always came back for more...and of course it always helped that Gerhardt had a crush on you. No, no, don't deny it – he thought the sun shone from your petticoats. Honestly, Albert, he adored her so much he used to bring her pickles and peppermints for lunch hour –

ALBERT (*laughing*): How romantic.

EBEN: Snivelling little twerp.

ALBERT: Was Gerhardt lucky in love?

EBEN: No he was not, much to my relief. Honestly, Han, at the age of eight your taste in men was deplorable.

HANNAH: You're a fine one to talk! What about Gretel? The little Shirley Temple *doppelganger*? He used to steal my lunchtime pickles to give to her –

EBEN: I was ten!

HANNAH: And so cute in your little shorts...the girls couldn't resist him –

EBEN: We swore a solemn vow never to speak of those shorts again –

HANNAH: Do you remember when she told you she didn't love you anymore, and that she wanted to be with Walter forever and ever? She recited that poem to you: "The time has come for us to part..."

EBEN: How could I forget? You slapped her –

HANNAH: She was a hopeless little prig! A miniature of her sister.

EBEN: Yes...you never really did like Brigitte –

HANNAH: She was a stuck-up little cow.

EBEN: Han!

HANNAH: Oh, she was. “Our papa this” and “my papa that”. Drove me insane.

(**Eben** takes a final mouthful and pushes his plate away)

Good?

EBEN: That *kugel* is like manna from Heaven. (*Belches*) Sorry.

HANNAH: At least I know you’ve enjoyed it.

(*She starts to clear the table*)

EBEN: I wonder where they are now.

HANNAH: Gerhardt joined the army. His father used to go around saying to people, “I wish I’d been born blind rather than see him in that uniform”. And then of course they came for him in the middle of the night, and Gerhardt made sure the story went out that his wonderful old father had been suffering from cancer of the brain, and that his ramblings were the work of a tumour...and that was the last anybody ever heard of him.

(*Pause*)

Brigitte married a lieutenant and began breeding little Nazis. Just before we left she gave birth to twins. She was always skinny. Narrow hips. (*With relish*) It must have really hurt.

EBEN (*lazily*): Hannah Blech, behave yourself.

HANNAH (*grins*): That’s Mrs. Kowalewski to you. (*Her smile fades. Pause*) I don’t know what happened to Gretel. She turned out to be quite a nice little thing. They said she went to Dresden.

ALBERT: Dear God –

HANNAH: If she survived...I suppose nobody will ever know.

ALBERT: Leave the dishes, *lieverd*. Come and sit down with Eben.

(*He pulls a chair up by her rocking chair for **Eben** and sits nearby, ostensibly reading but listening to the conversation. A moment*)

EBEN: So...I’m to be Uncle Eben.

HANNAH: Yes.

EBEN: How long?

HANNAH: About two months.

EBEN: *Ist das alles?*⁹

HANNAH: Yes.

EBEN: Excited?

HANNAH: I suppose so... (*Smiling*) I haven't really thought about it. I haven't made it past the birth.

EBEN: I don't think I'd be able to think of anything else!

HANNAH: Do you have a wife? A sweetheart?

EBEN: Not yet.

(*Beat*)

What are you hoping for – boy or girl?

HANNAH: It kicks so much I'm sure it must be a boy.

EBEN: Have you thought of any names yet?

HANNAH: No. Not really.

EBEN: I suppose he'll take his father's name?

(*An awful pause. Albert slowly turns. Hannah tries to keep her voice light*)

HANNAH: What do you mean?

EBEN: Surname. I suppose he'll be a Kowalewski?

HANNAH: Of course he will. (*Attempts to laugh*) Why would he not?

EBEN: I thought you might want to give him another.

(*Beat*)

HANNAH: Such as?

EBEN: Well, Blech. For Mama and Papa. *In memoriam*.

HANNAH: Oh! Oh, Blech...yes. Of course. Blech. I'd thought of Blech for a middle name. Kowalewski for Daniel.

(*Beat*)

⁹ German: "Is that all?"

In memoriam.

EBEN: With a bit of luck he'll look like his father, eh?

HANNAH: Yes.

(Beat)

Yes.

EBEN: I'm sorry...perhaps I shouldn't speak about it. *(With brotherly concern)*
You've gone very pale.

HANNAH: No, I'm all right. I suppose I should get used to talking about it...after all, people will ask in America, won't they?

EBEN: It'll be nice for you to have a little version of him. A part of him to carry on, so to speak.

(Albert forces a laugh and brings his book to Hannah)

ALBERT: Here, *lieverd*, read this...it really is quite amusing.

(Hannah gratefully takes the book, reads a few sentences and forces a laugh too)

HANNAH: What a situation to get into!

EBEN: You like to read, Albert?

ALBERT: Now that I am grasping English, I find more books are opening to me. Your sister is a very good teacher.

EBEN: She always was the clever one. The child won't have any problems with lessons with her around, eh?

ALBERT: No...no.

(Unwillingly he returns to his seat)

EBEN: What do you think, Han – will he grow up to be a little bookworm like his mother? Or will he take after his father?

(Beat)

What was he like?

HANNAH *(slowly)*: He loved...music. Dancing. He waltzed beautifully. And the open air. He loved his horses. He was a very robust sort of man. Clever. Too clever for his own good, I sometimes thought. And handsome. Very handsome.

EBEN: Sounds like we would have had him at the house!

HANNAH: We might have done. Before the war. I think Mamma and Papa would have liked him.

(She looks up; Eben is watching her steadily)

Clever and musical. Just like Papa. Just like you.

(Albert goes to say something but stops himself. Hannah smiles and changes the subject)

You don't have an accent anymore.

EBEN: I know. *Aber ich spreche immer noch Deutsches.*¹⁰

ALBERT *(sharply)*: Well we do not. We only speak the languages of civilised peoples.

(Pause)

EBEN: I do remember, Han.

(Beat)

The music.

HANNAH *(breathless)*: You still...? From the parties?

EBEN: I could never forget them, they're written here –

(Hand on heart. Slight pause)

I remembered them, but couldn't play them. George paid for my music lessons. They were both so good to me – still are –

HANNAH: Who are Georgi and Edie?

EBEN: Not Georgi – George.

HANNAH: Gorge.

EBEN: No – George.

HANNAH: George.

EBEN: That's it.

HANNAH: George. George. Who's George?

¹⁰ German: "But I still speak German."

EBEN: George and Edie. They took me in when I went to England –

HANNAH: But – you were in a children’s home. That’s what they told us.

(Pause)

I hardly know anything about you. About what happened while you were away.

(Beat)

Talk to me. Tell me. What was it like?

(Beat)

EBEN: I hated the boys in my dorm. Merciless, unforgiving little...“You started the war, you’re the reason everybody’s being killed”. I wished, I *wished* they’d seen *Kristallnacht*. The yellow stars, the decrees...grown men made to scrub streets...

(He stops and they exchange looks. A pause)

A new country, a language I only knew from speaking it sometimes at home...and I was away from you all... *(He cannot speak for a moment)* When the letters stopped, I –

HANNAH: It was too dangerous. We couldn’t risk it once we were in Amsterdam. We wanted you back with us one day and if the Nazis had found out who we really –

(Pause)

EBEN: I thought you were all...nobody to go home to. I was on my own and it was up to me to make the best of it. I used to go walking. Just walking, by myself. My mind would be back home with you. That’s how I met George and Edie. They own a bakery in the Jewish district. I walked in there one day, looking for something to remind me of home. Edie gave me some *latke*. As soon as I bit into it I started to cry. She comforted me, said I wasn’t the first Jewish boy to come from a distant land and find his way into her shop. I started to go there all the time. When they offered to adopt me –

HANNAH: *Adopt* you?

EBEN: In name only. They got me out of the home.

(Beat)

They had a son who’d been in the Army. He was killed. But Edie used to say that when she looked at me...it reminded them what he’d been fighting for.

Who he'd been fighting to save.

HANNAH: Is that why you joined up?

EBEN: Partly. I wanted to get revenge. I had no peace, Han. I was burning up from the inside. George tried to persuade me to go to synagogue, but I had no use for a god. They were good to me. Let me be.

(Pause)

HANNAH: Play something for us. Go on.

(Eben smiles, gets his violin and begins to play. Hannah is breathless with memories, eyes brimming, a hand on her chest. Eben stops, concerned, when he sees her tears. Hannah laughs shamefacedly and reaches out to him. Suddenly a rock is hurled through the window, sending glass everywhere. In a flash Eben has drawn his gun. A jumble of shouts can be heard from outside – a group of women)

WOMEN: *Nazi-hure!*¹¹ *Miststück!*¹² *Verräterin!*¹³ *Mörderin!*¹⁴

(Albert flies to the window. Eben runs outside)

ALBERT: *Los! Weg da! Bestien! Lasst sie allein!*¹⁵

(Hannah is terrified. Albert stays at the window, watching something. He glances around and sees Hannah's terror, going to her)

ALBERT: Hush, *lieverd*, hush...they are going away now.

HANNAH: Eben...where's Eben?

ALBERT: He will be back in a minute.

HANNAH: Oh my – ...he didn't go outside!

(Eben enters, replacing his gun in its holster)

What on *earth* were you *thinking*?

ALBERT *(trying to calm her)*: I will see Levi about the glass in the morning.

EBEN: This has happened before?

ALBERT: Childish pranks or anti-Semites...either way, it is the same.

¹¹ German: "Nazi whore!"

¹² German: "Bitch!"

¹³ German: "Traitor!"

¹⁴ German: "Murderer!"

¹⁵ German: "Get away! Brutes! Leave her alone!"

EBEN: I don't quite think a joke and racial hatred equal the same thing, Albert.

HANNAH: You shouldn't have gone out there. It'll only make things worse.

EBEN: Why were they shouting after you? Why did you shout back, "Leave *her* alone?"

(Beat)

ALBERT: Jealousy. Some women were not so lucky as Hannah. Even now, they cannot find it in their hearts to try and forget and forgive...even now.

(Pause. Eben doesn't look convinced. Albert avoids his gaze and helps Hannah to her chair. She sits back and closes her eyes)

All this excitement...it is not good for you. You must try and rest.

HANNAH *(wearily)*: How can I when they come here?

(Eben has moved to the window and is standing to one side of it, looking out into the night and with a hand resting on his gun. He catches Albert watching him, flushes slightly and moves back into the room)

EBEN: Are you all right?

(Hannah sighs and opens her eyes. She looks at him and smiles wanly)

HANNAH: Let me look at you.

(He kneels beside her. Hannah studies him)

*Boychik...*¹⁶

EBEN *(smiling)*: *Bubeleh.*¹⁷

(She strokes his hair. He takes her hand and kisses it. They touch foreheads. A long moment. A sudden loud knock on the door. Eben jumps up, hand flying to his holster)

ALBERT *(voice quavering)*: Who is there?

VOICE *(off)*: Private Kaplan. I'm looking for Corporal Blech.

EBEN *(calling)*: All right, Reg, I'm coming. *(To Hannah)* Curfew.

HANNAH: Will you come back tomorrow?

EBEN: Same time? I'll be here. *(Kisses her)* Try not to worry. They shouldn't come

¹⁶ A Yiddish term of affection, meaning almost exactly what it sounds like: a young boy.

¹⁷ Pronounced "BOO-balah", a Yiddish word that means "little grandmother" – used in place of almost any endearment.

back tonight. The food was delicious. Albert. Until tomorrow.

*(He opens the door and slips out, leaving **Hannah** looking after him, perplexed)*

Scene 3

*(The hut. The middle of the night. Moonlight streams in through the windows. The door opens quietly and **Eben** comes stealthily in, closing it behind him. He gets out a torch and begins to search the hut, flipping through books, looking under the bunk, etc. The door opens again – **Hannah**. She is wearing a voluminous nightgown, has a blanket about her shoulders and leans heavily on her stick. She watches him for a moment before closing the door with an audible click. **Eben** spins, going for his gun)*

EBEN: Han! Thank God...I almost shot you.

HANNAH: What are you doing? It's the middle of the night.

(Beat)

It's also rude to go through other people's belongings without their permission.

(She finds matches and lights a lamp. Long pause)

EBEN: I didn't want to frighten you.

HANNAH: Then don't.

(Beat)

Why are you searching my home in the middle of the night?

EBEN: They're doing random searches. Contraband and all that. I thought it would be better if I did it. Less invasive.

HANNAH: Try again. I'm really not impressed, Eben. I'm pregnant, in case you hadn't noticed. I don't have time for games.

(Pause)

I'm waiting.

EBEN: All right.

(Beat)

All right.

(Calmly he sits at the table)

HANNAH: What were you looking for?

EBEN: Evidence.

HANNAH: For what?

EBEN: An investigation.

HANNAH: Into...?

(Beat)

Well it's not contraband. Forbidden literature?

EBEN: No.

HANNAH: Dealing in stolen goods?

EBEN: No.

HANNAH: Membership of an illegal organisation?

EBEN *(slight smile)*: No.

HANNAH: Quisling?¹⁸

(Beat)

EBEN: You.

HANNAH: *What?*

(No reply)

Eben – *what* are you talking about?

(Pause)

Eben. I'm talking to you.

EBEN: Those women. The ones who threw the rock through the window.

HANNAH: What about them?

(Beat)

¹⁸ “An individual who co-operates with an enemy who has occupied his or her country” – pp. 721, **The Readers' Digest Great Encyclopaedic Dictionary, Third Ed.** (1980)

What's that got to do with anything? Albert already told you –

EBEN: Lies, Hannah. All lies.

HANNAH: Oh go to bed, Eben. You don't know what you're talking about.

*(She goes to leave but **Eben** lunges for her and grabs her wrist)*

Eben! You're hurting me! Eben...*let go...*

EBEN: I want you to tell me the truth.

HANNAH: About what?

EBEN: About what you really got up to. When you were *there*.

HANNAH: What are you –

EBEN: I have statements that name you as a collaborator, that say you were...that you were a Nazi's whore.

HANNAH: *What?*

(Pause)

No...

EBEN: Is it true?

HANNAH: Leave me alone, Eben.

EBEN: Or you'll what? Set your Nazi lover on me?

(Beat)

Is it true?

HANNAH: It's got nothing to do with –

EBEN: It has everything to do with me!

HANNAH *(with dawning realisation)*: That's why you're here...you were never here just to find me...

EBEN: Do you really think it's that easy to just "pull some strings" and get myself assigned here? I'm doing my *duty*.

HANNAH: My God...I don't believe it. You. My own *brother*...

EBEN: They already *know*, Han. They came to me and asked me to do it because they thought you'd be more likely to talk to me...but now I know. I've heard it straight from women who were there.

HANNAH: What do you mean, "they"?

EBEN: There's a unit of us. We hunt them down. Those bastards. The bastards who killed my mother and my father and my people. Nazis and the traitors who helped them. Who still help them. Including, it would seem, my dearly beloved sister.

HANNAH: What's been said? What have you been told?

EBEN: You mean, "how much does he know?" I have signed affidavits from women who were there, all saying the same thing –

HANNAH: Eben, listen to me...those women –

EBEN: Damn them! I don't want to hear about *them*. I want to hear it from *you*.

(Pause)

Dear God. A collaborator and a war criminal.

HANNAH: The Nazis are the criminals – they're the ones who –

EBEN: You helped them, Han! You helped them to save your own hide!

HANNAH: No...it wasn't like that...*Eben!*

*(He lunges for her and knocks the lamp from the table. It goes out. She manages to evade his grasp and whirls to face him. The door opens and **Albert** is there in his nightclothes, blanket hurriedly thrown on over the top. Neither of them pay attention)*

Get out! Papa would be ashamed of you! Go on – get out!

EBEN: Don't you dare...don't you dare mention his name –

HANNAH: Why not? I was there when he died. Where were you?

EBEN: I was in exile – I was growing up!

HANNAH (*screaming*): *Where were you when I needed you! When we needed you!*

ALBERT: Hannah!

HANNAH: You march in here, all outraged dignity and puffed up with your duty – your *duty*! Our mother and father were murdered and *you* have the audacity to march in here and proclaim me a monster like one of *them*?

ALBERT: Peace, *lieverd*, peace...the baby...

EBEN: I'm not staying to listen to this –

HANNAH: You *will* listen! You *will*! You want to know what happened? I'll tell you *everything* that happened, my *brother*. I'll tell you what we went through all the time that you were supposedly in exile!

ALBERT: Both of you – calm down. Take a moment. Calm down.

(Hannah and Eben glare at each other, breathing heavily. A long moment)

HANNAH: He wants to know about what happened. And so he shall. *(To Eben)* What do you want to know?

(Pause)

EBEN: Everything.

HANNAH: You're writing a report.

(A long pause. Eben has mastered himself again. Hannah is calm in the manner of a woman on the way to her execution)

EBEN: I'm going to write down what you say...but I decide what makes it into the report.

(It is a concession on his part. Hannah limps to the table and sits with quiet dignity. A moment, then Eben sits and faces her. Albert remains standing a little way off. Pause)

Hannah, before we...one of the guards has been captured.

(Beat)

HANNAH: Metzger.

EBEN: Yes.

(Albert wordlessly goes to Hannah's side)

HANNAH: When?

EBEN: About six weeks ago. He was trying to cross the border into France. He's...one of the reasons I'm here. When he was questioned he gave your name.

(Beat)

He seemed to know you quite well. He seemed to think that you'd put in a good word for him.

HANNAH: Is that what he told you?

(No reply. Her voice takes on a new depth of emotion)

And so it all begins again.

(Pause)

Auschwitz.

(Blackout. The instant that the lights go out there is the deafening scream of a train whistle. The sound of a train rumbling along; children crying; men and women calling to each other in different European languages. The screech of train brakes; wooden doors being slid back. Dogs bark and snarl; soldiers shout orders in German; the hubbub of frightened people rises. Women plead; men shout; children and babies wail. The sound of tramping feet; metal doors clanging; the roar of immense fires. Each of these effects should come at the audience from different places and in close quarters: the aim is not to allow them to get used to it, but to unsettle them.)

A sudden blast of light, and searchlights sweep the stage. They fade into the infirmary)

END OF ACT ONE

(**Eben** is a constant presence throughout the whole of Act II, watching, witnessing and writing notes from time to time. Any specific reactions from him or to him are given in the stage directions. Any other stage business may be determined by the actor and director)

Act II

Scene 1

(The infirmary, a dank and damp place crowded with rough bunks. The lighting here is perpetually dimmed. It is a cold night. **Hannah** is at a desk, adding up columns of numbers. Throughout Act II her manner is often serious, almost hard-faced, and she acts at times like a woman twice her age. **Ibi** comes into the room quietly. She is younger than **Hannah**, with an air of innocence. She wears a similar uniform to **Hannah**. **Hannah** doesn't look up)

HANNAH (*writing*): Finally deigned to join us, have you? I was going to send out a search party.

IBI: Yes.

(She wanders about a little, looking over **Hannah's** shoulder, picking up papers and reading them, etc. **Hannah** glances at **Eben**)

HANNAH: Ibi.

EBEN: Ibi?

HANNAH (*with a twinkle*): Ibi. A new arrival from Eastern Europe – Czech. She was put into the *Revier* with me.

EBEN: The what?

HANNAH: The *Revier*. The infirmary.

(*Beat. With a shrug*)

The waiting room for the gas chamber.

(*Beat. To Ibi*)

Where were you?

IBI: Sorting out some linen.

HANNAH: And now the truth?

(*Pause. Ibi leans against the desk and fidgets*)

Ah...Sonya.

IBI: I don't know what to do. I mean, I do. I know what I'd like to do. But I don't know. I don't know if I should.

HANNAH: Let's play a game. Let's pretend that you're going to get straight to the point and that I'm going to listen.

(Pause)

IBI: I was watching them rehearse.

HANNAH: That's nice...?

(Unseen by them, Metzger moves into the shadows of the doorway, listening. He is faintly amused)

IBI: She plays very well. Much better with a bow than I am with a bedpan.

(Hannah smiles. Ibi ploughs on, not bringing herself to look at her)

I like her way of behaving. She has a way of looking them in the eye, standing in front of them, and it impresses them. Firm but not provoking. And I love her face. She's so beautiful. Much more than I am.

HANNAH: Tell me what you don't like about her. It'll be quicker.

IBI: You're right, but you see, Hannah, I'm worried. I don't understand.

(Beat)

I love my sister, but not like I love Sonya. When I watch her play – when she holds her bow – I just want to grab her hand. Kiss it. Oh, she's marvellous! *(In a rush)* All I think about is her. Knowing she's asleep, not far from me, that tomorrow she'll be there...do you know what I dream of?

HANNAH: Go on.

IBI: She puts her hand on mine, and we never leave each other again. *(Tries to laugh)* I can't sleep, I think about her so hard. Hannah, I adore her.

(Mild revulsion from Metzger. Both Hannah and Eben look uncomfortable)

HANNAH *(finally)*: No, little one. You love her.

IBI: No, Hannah, it's not possible!

HANNAH *(trying to believe in what she says)*: Of course it is, and it's no disaster. My father always used to say to me, "If you're square with your conscience, then there's nothing that you can't do".

IBI: But I... (*In a whisper*) I desire her. I want to...I want to...

HANNAH (*trying to be airy*): You want to make love. So?

IBI: Hannah...it's not wrong to love as I do, then?

(*Beat*)

HANNAH: In this place you might really call it a blessing.¹⁹

IBI: Like you and Daniel.

(*For the first time, Hannah truly smiles*)

HANNAH: Yes. Like me and Daniel.

IBI: Does it count, though? If you're in love before you come here?

HANNAH: I think it counts more if you stay in love.

(*With girlish delight, Ibi grabs Hannah's hands*)

IBI: But isn't being in love the most wonderful feeling in the world?

HANNAH: Sssh, keep it down! (*With a laugh*) Yes! All right! There you go, I've said it.

IBI: How could it have happened? In this place?

HANNAH: Don't get philosophical on me, for pity's sake. There's a big bucket of slops in the storeroom with your name on it. It won't empty itself.

IBI: Don't you miss him?

(*Beat*)

HANNAH: All the time. Every day.

IBI: At least he's here with you.

HANNAH: Yes.

IBI: Do you ever see him?

HANNAH: Sometimes. At the fence. He got a note smuggled to me last month.

IBI: Oh! What did it say?

¹⁹ Fénelon, Fania (1977) **The Musicians of Auschwitz** (Michael Joseph Ltd: London)

HANNAH: The usual protestations of undying love and devotion.

IBI: You're so cynical!

HANNAH: More of a realist. Ibi, I'll dance and sing for joy when I'm veiled on my wedding day.

(**Metzger** melts away)

IBI: At least you've got that to look forward to.

HANNAH: Ibi. Bucket. Go.

IBI: All right, all right...

(*She exits. **Hannah** rubs her face and turns to **Eben***)

EBEN: A lesbian?

HANNAH: I know, I know. What would Mamma and Papa have said? (*Sees the look on **Eben's** face and has a momentary flash of impatience*) Oh for pity's sake! How could I judge her when it was being judged that got us here in the first place? It was everywhere in the camp. The women needed the love and attention. They craved it. Most weren't so *lucky* as to have their fiancés deported at the same time as them.

(*Beat*)

Ibi was who I'd been before the camp. She wasn't really any different to any one of thousands of women there.

EBEN: So?

HANNAH: And that was so easily what I could have become. Just another one of thousands.

Scene 2

(*She goes back to her desk and resumes her paperwork. A few moments. The door opens silently and **Metzger** is standing there. His uniform and general appearance is immaculate; he is almost beautiful to look at. He never raises his voice and is almost polite with his insults. Sensing someone there, **Hannah** turns and jumps to her feet, knocking her chair over*)

METZGER: *Schusselig*.²⁰ (*Retrieves the chair*)

²⁰ German: "Clumsy".

HANNAH: *Ja. Es tut mir leid.*²¹

(He waves a hand)

METZGER: Polish.

HANNAH: My apologies.

METZGER: *Hauptsturmführer.*²²

HANNAH: *Hauptsturmführer.*

(He shuts the door and turns with a slight smile)

METZGER: Today?

HANNAH: Freezing. It's so cold.

(He gestures for her to sit and rubs her arms)

METZGER: I shall organise blankets. *(Laughs)* Not 'organise' in the sense that you know it.

(A moment, then she smiles. He kneels beside her)

Sing for me again.

HANNAH: Ach...

METZGER: Just one.

HANNAH: If they hear...

METZGER: Yes. True.

HANNAH: Another time.

METZGER: *Ja.*

(He gives her a smile and flips through her paperwork. After a moment he lights a cigarette)

EBEN: You *sang* for him?

HANNAH: They ordered it. It was his birthday. They wanted someone who could sing in German. I didn't want to, I hated it...he loved every second. He made me sing it again. From then on...I had myself a protector.

²¹ German: "Sorry."

²² An SS rank equivalent to a British captain.

(Beat)

He said he loved me.

EBEN (*disgusted*): Ach...

(Beat)

How long ago was that?

HANNAH: Just after Ibi arrived. So about a month.

METZGER: Hannah, *was ist das?* (*Corrects himself*) What is this?

HANNAH: The latest count. We did it five times and we still –

METZGER: None of them add up! For the love of God...how can I justify keeping you alive when things are left to get in this state?

(A long moment)

I didn't...

(Beat)

From now on you get someone else to do this, understand? There must not be any excuse for anyone to find a fault with you. I forbid it, you understand?

HANNAH: Yes, *Hauptsturmführer*.

(Pause)

METZGER: Can I get you anything else? Apart from blankets?

HANNAH: *Nein...*no thank you, *Hauptsturmführer*.

(Pause. He moves to her and touches her cheek. He makes to kiss her but the door suddenly opens. **Hannah** snaps to attention. **Ibi** comes in timidly and halts when she sees **Metzger** – terrified)

METZGER: What do you want?

IBI: I'm sorry...I was looking for Nurse Blech.

METZGER: You have found her.

IBI: Yes.

(Beat)

METZGER: Well?

IBI: I – I want to speak with her.

METZGER: She is here. Speak.

(Silence)

Are you deaf as well as stupid?

IBI: Uh – I – I – w-was –

METZGER (*mocking*): I – I – I – I...speak!

IBI: It – it is private, *Hauptsturmführer*.

(A terrible pause. Metzger stares at her)

METZGER: Private?

IBI: Yes, *Hauptsturmführer*.

METZGER (*almost purring*): Oh, nurse, my dear little nurse... (*To Hannah*) She wishes to speak privately with you.

HANNAH (*with a desperate glance at Ibi*): I was unaware that this was allowed, *Hauptsturmführer*.

IBI: I meant – I meant away from the other nurses.

METZGER (*smiling, suddenly unbending*): Of course.

(A pause that grows longer. Finally)

HANNAH: Is it about the transfer?

METZGER: Transfer?

HANNAH: She'd like to get a transfer. To the pregnancy block. She'd like to work with the children.

METZGER: And you?

HANNAH (*carefully*): I'm happy where I am.

METZGER: This is true, nurse? You wish to transfer?

IBI: Yes, *Hauptsturmführer*.

METZGER: You think she would be...useful?

HANNAH: Very. I can promise for her as if she were me.

METZGER: You and she are close colleagues?

HANNAH: As close as is permitted.

METZGER: You can be trusted?

IBI: Of course, *Hauptsturmführer*.

METZGER: I shall order the transfer. Nurse Blech has put in a good word for you. Do not fail her.

IBI: No, *Hauptsturmführer*.

METZGER: Yes...I think I can find a use for you. (*With a sidelong look at Hannah*) Not, of course, as useful as Nurse Blech...but still, useful. She is my woman, and so are you now. Never forget it.

IBI: No, *Hauptsturmführer*.

(*Beat*)

Nurse Blech is fortunate to have your favour.

HANNAH: I never forget it. (*A warning*)

METZGER: I do not forget those who work well for me. You may go.

(*Ibi goes to leave*)

Nurse...this stays...private.

IBI: Of course, *Hauptsturmführer*.

(*She exits. Pause*)

METZGER: She *can* be trusted?

HANNAH: I promised for her.

METZGER: It won't be held against you.

HANNAH: She can keep her secrets.

METZGER (*mildly disgusted*): She likes women.

HANNAH: So do you.

(Beat. Metzger laughs and grasps Hannah gently by the scruff of the neck, shaking her gently like a mother cat with a kitten)

METZGER: I should know better.

HANNAH: She listens to me. You can trust her as much as me.

METZGER: Then I shall. *(Kisses her forehead)* Blankets...anything else?

HANNAH: Well...

METZGER: I'm listening.

HANNAH: Shoes. These are worn through.

METZGER: They won't be pretty.

HANNAH: Just as long as they don't leak.

METZGER: Blankets and shoes.

HANNAH: Thank you.

METZGER: Shall I add it to your account?

(Beat)

HANNAH: Yes.

METZGER: You haven't forgotten?

HANNAH: Never.

(He bows and leaves)

I asked her afterwards...she said she thought she'd seen Daniel and was coming to get me. Poor, sweet, stupid girl.

EBEN: Account?

HANNAH: Don't ask. You'll find out soon enough.

Scene 3

(The infirmary. Early evening. Several bunks are occupied with hastily covered corpses, and one by a Male Patient who writhes and mutters in the grip of illness)

HANNAH: Metzger put the order through for Ibi's transfer. The night before she was due

to go across, Albert was brought in.

(Albert is half-dragged, half-carried in by a Male Prisoner. Albert is suffering from typhus and diarrhoea, and is in severe pain. His body and clothes are streaked with dirt and faeces. He alternately writhes, contorts and cries out. The Prisoner awkwardly hefts him on to an empty bunk and leaves hurriedly. Hannah ties a strip of grubby cloth around her face for a mask and begins to examine him. Out of habit, Hannah and Ibi speak in low voices. The scene flows fairly quickly – there is very much a sense that Metzger could appear at any moment)

ALBERT (*writhing*): Help me...help me...

HANNAH: Keep still. *Keep still.* (*Calling*) Ibi? I need a blanket. Wear a mask!

(She turns back to her patient and continues to examine him – temperature, pulse, etc)

ALBERT: Who are you?

HANNAH: Nurse Blech.

(Beat)

What's your name?

ALBERT: Albert. Albert Cassel. *(He pretends to raise a hat and smiles faintly)* At your service.

(Ibi enters with a blanket and some strips of cloth, wearing one around her face)

HANNAH: Typhus. Tell the others. No chance of keeping him separate?

IBI: Only with the other typhuses, and God knows they're everywhere now.

HANNAH: Bring me some water, would you?

IBI (*leaving*): Rather you than me.

(Hannah begins to strip his clothes. His trousers are heavily soiled and she gags back vomit at the smell. The Male Patient moans)

ALBERT: It hurts.

HANNAH: It will do.

ALBERT: It is typhus...I heard you say, it is typhus...

(Ibi comes back with a bowl of cleanish water. She reacts to the smell and leaves hastily. Hannah covers Albert's lower body with the blanket and begins to wash him. Albert speaks through pain)

Nurse?

HANNAH: Yes?

ALBERT: Please...please may I have some water?

(Hannah fetches a cup from nearby. She holds it to his lips; he chokes. She ministers to him. The fit passes)

Talk to me. About anything. Talk to me.

(Pause. Hannah wipes his face)

Tell me why you are here. In this place.

(She talks to him in the manner of a mother telling a story to a sick child)

HANNAH: My family moved to Amsterdam after *Kristallnacht*. My parents had sent my older brother to England so he would be safe. I wouldn't go, no matter what they said, and they took me to Amsterdam with them. When the Nazis invaded, we went into hiding...but someone betrayed us. So we were sent here. My parents died the day we arrived. And my brother...I don't know where he is.

(Beat)

I don't even know if he's still alive.

ALBERT: You are a nurse...even here, even here you still look after people. You are an angel.

(A fit of pain washes over Albert and he contorts. It passes. Hannah reacts to a new, more terrible stench)

ALBERT: I am sorry.

HANNAH: It's...all right. *(Going to the door)* Ibi? Have we got any more sheets?

IBI *(off)*: We used the last of them yesterday. If you want clean ones you'll have to scrub them out.

(Taking a gulp of air, Hannah approaches the bed. She rolls Albert on to his side and starts stripping the sheet)

ALBERT: I am sorry to hear about your family. *(Pitifully)* Would you like to talk about it? You can, you can talk to me about anything...

(She turns him back, gingerly rolls up the heavily soiled sheet into a bundle and places it on the floor at arm's length)

HANNAH: It's all right, Mr. Cassel. Just try and keep still for me.

(She rolls him on to his side again and washes his backside. The smell is powerful. Ibi enters with a small bottle and a syringe)

IBI: It's all we've got left.

(A pause before Hannah carefully draws up a syringe of pale liquid and injects him with it)

HANNAH: You should sleep now.

(The two women watch as he closes his eyes and lays back, pain easing slightly. Hannah hands back the syringe. Ibi exits. Hannah turns back to Albert's bed, heavy-hearted)

I'm so tired...all of it. You'll probably be dead by morning. Another number that won't add up right. More food for the fires. And then tomorrow...all again. *(She presses her hands against her eyes)* What's to stop me? What's to stop me going to the wire? Why shouldn't I? *(She reaches out and grasps an imaginary electric fence)* A hum and a flash...then all over. No more of anything...no more of *him*. Nothing. Just...quiet. Just an eternity of quiet.

(She turns and begins to walk towards the door. Albert opens his eyes)

ALBERT: For you, yes...but what of the rest of us?

(Hannah whirls to face him, face streaked with tears)

I have seen them when it happens. They dance on the fence. It is like watching a spider dancing in its web. It is gruesome. A terrible way to die.

(Beat)

What is it?

HANNAH: It's...it's...they...we...

ALBERT: Hush, hush...it is all right.

(Hannah tries to take deep breaths)

What is your first name?

HANNAH: H-Hannah.

ALBERT: That is a pretty name.

(Beat)

You remind me of my daughter. She would cry and try and talk...I used to have to sit her on my knee and rub her back. You look a bit big for that, I

think.

*(He smiles kindly. **Hannah** has calmed herself a little)*

I do not have a handkerchief or sweets...they usually help in these situations.
Now, what is wrong?

HANNAH: I can't...can't...

ALBERT: You cannot say?

*(**Hannah** shakes her head)*

I used to tell myself I could not make it through another day here, and here I
am still, two years later.

HANNAH: You've been here two years?

ALBERT: Two years, one month and fifteen days. But who is counting?

*(**Hannah** smiles faintly)*

What is wrong, Hannah? Why do you look so sad? *(He makes a gesture)* In a
place like this, I ask why you look so sad...

HANNAH: I can't say.

(Beat)

ALBERT: Some things are better left unsaid.

(Pause)

You must make me a promise. You must promise me never to touch the wire.
No matter how bad things get. It is *them* – it is them who have tried to turn us
against God, against ourselves, each other...God sees, Hannah. He will punish
them as they deserve. Do not let them make you throw *your* soul away, too.

*(A moment. **Hannah** nods)*

Will you do something for me?

HANNAH: What?

ALBERT: Will you call me Papa?

HANNAH: I already have a papa.

ALBERT: I am sorry...I did not, perhaps, explain myself. My daughter, Sophie...she and
my wife were both brought here with me. My wife...she was beautiful – so

beautiful! – but she did not look strong. And Sophie...

(Beat)

I have a daughter in the same way that you have a papa. They are with us but they are not...*here*.

HANNAH: I'm sorry.

ALBERT: You see, I am a father. It is what I am. It is me. I was *meant* to be a father. I need to be a father. It is what sees me through.

(Beat)

Maybe not Papa...but will you look to me as a father?

HANNAH: Not Papa...although you do look a little like him.

ALBERT: You are the very image of Sophie.

(Beat)

Not Papa...but Albert.

HANNAH: Not Hannah, but *lieverd*.

ALBERT: *Lieverd?*

HANNAH: It was my father's nickname for me.

ALBERT: Then *lieverd* you shall be.

(Beat)

You look so tired...

HANNAH: Yes. I am.

ALBERT: Will you not sleep?

HANNAH: I can try.

ALBERT: Pray for me tonight, Hannah. You will be in mine.

HANNAH: Thank you.

(*Her eyes fill. He gestures. She leans down and he puts a hand on her head, blessing her*)

ALBERT: Goodnight, *lieverd*.

(She leans in and softly kisses his forehead)

HANNAH: Goodnight.

*(He raises his pretend hat and she smiles before leaving. **Albert** lays back and stares up at the ceiling. Blackout)*

Scene 4

*(The infirmary. Early morning. **Albert** and the **Male Patient** are asleep. A moment, then **Hannah** enters at a run. She halts, looks around and flies to **Albert's** bed, shaking him)*

HANNAH: Albert...*Albert*...wake up, you've got to wake up. Come on...

ALBERT (*groggy*): What? What is it?

*(**Hannah** is rummaging by the bed, trying to find his clothes)*

HANNAH: It's a selection, they're coming to do a selection...here, put these on...*hurry*...

*(She tries to help him with his trousers and hurries to the door, peering out before turning back. The **Male Patient** is roused)*

M.P. (*groggy*): What is it? Nurse?

HANNAH: Nothing. Go back to sleep.

M.P. (*awake now*): Nurse? Why's he putting his clothes on?

HANNAH (*torn*): I said...it's...it's a selection. They're coming now. Can you walk?

M.P.: I don't know.

(He tries to rise and falls back)

HANNAH: Look, wait. Wait a moment. Let me just...

*(She helps **Albert** to his feet and hands him his uniform jacket, then moves towards the **Male Patient**. Before she can get much further **Metzger** appears in the doorway, followed by two **Guards**. **Hannah** snaps to attention)*

METZGER: Nurse.

HANNAH: *Hauptsturmführer*.

METZGER: What seems to be going on?

HANNAH: My patients and I were preparing for your inspection.

METZGER: I would not have deemed any preparation necessary.

HANNAH: I apologise, *Hauptsturmführer*.

(Metzger looks around the room. The Male Patient is struggling to put on his uniform jacket)

METZGER: What is he doing?

HANNAH: I believe...he's preparing to return to work.

(Metzger walks up to him, puts on a glove and takes him deliberately by the hair, pulling his head back to look at him)

METZGER: I know your barracks.

M.P. (*gasping*): Yes, *Hauptsturmführer*.

METZGER: You wish to return to your barracks?

M.P.: Very much so, *Hauptsturmführer*.

METZGER: How long have you been in here?

M.P.: Four days, *Hauptsturmführer*.

METZGER: An abominable waste of time! He is recovered?

HANNAH: I – he seems –

METZGER: A pity that there are no barracks left for him to return to. It appears that one of the men there contracted typhus a few days ago. I have had no choice but to quarantine it with immediate effect.²³

M.P. (*with rising panic*): No, no...I have to go back...I can go back, look, I can walk – I can work –

(He tries to rise and cannot. Metzger watches in amusement before motioning to the Guards. They come forward and take the Male Patient by the arms, dragging him out, but he grabs hold of Hannah's skirt, screaming)

No! Don't let them – stop them! Stop them! *They're going to kill me! Stop them! For the love of God! Don't let them kill me!*

(He is hauled away, still screaming)

²³ In Auschwitz, blocks were indeed quarantined for a couple of days following an outbreak of disease. All of the occupants were then sent to the gas chamber.

METZGER (*about Albert*): What about that? He has the symptoms?

HANNAH: No, *Hauptsturmführer*, he does not. He never has. He was admitted for exhaustion and has now recovered and can be returned to work in another barracks.

(**Metzger** regards her. She pleads with her eyes)

METZGER: Very well.

(**Metzger** indicates the door. **Albert** moves painfully towards it)

HANNAH: Albert...

(He takes her hand and kisses it. **Metzger** bridles)

ALBERT: You are a good girl.

(He puts his cap on his head and leaves)

METZGER (*to the Guards*): Leave the nurses. (*Nods towards the bunks*) Take them all.

(He turns and leaves)

Scene 5

(The infirmary. Early morning, 24 hours later. **Hannah** is scrubbing out ragged bandages with the zeal of a woman desperately trying to take her mind from something. A few moments, then **Ibi** enters. She is pale and quiet)

IBI: There'll be more holes than bandages if you keep that up.

HANNAH: Ibi! What are you doing here?

IBI: I...

(Beat)

I wanted to come and see you.

HANNAH: Are you allowed?

IBI: Yes.

(Beat)

The *Hauptsturmführer* certainly does remember those who work for him.

HANNAH: So soon?

IBI: Not two days and already I'm in his good graces.

(She sits on the floor nearby, arms wrapped around her knees like an Indian. Hannah resumes scrubbing)

What's wrong?

HANNAH: Albert.

IBI: The one with a beard? Typhus?

HANNAH: Metzger came in for a selection yesterday. I managed to...he went back to his block.

(Beat)

He's not well. He shouldn't have gone back out at all.

IBI: Given the choices I think it was the only thing he could do.

(Beat)

He'll be all right. You said yourself he's lasted two years already. He'll be fine.

(A moment. Hannah continues to scrub and Ibi watches. Suddenly a Prisoner staggers in, holding Albert up. Albert has a sign around his neck that states, "I steal food")

HANNAH: Albert! Quickly – over here –

(Albert is lifted into a bed. The Prisoner quickly exchanges whispered words with Ibi and leaves. The following conversation is carried out in urgent whispers)

HANNAH: What happened?

ALBERT: They saw me eating some peelings...

IBI: They tied his hands and made him stand at the fence. He passed out.

HANNAH: Who did it?

(Beat)

ALBERT: Metzger.

HANNAH: He came in here earlier and blew out the lantern. Gave us that slow maddening

smile while he did it. *Miststück*.²⁴

ALBERT (*reproachful*): Hannah...

HANNAH: He is. For someone so against the Jews he seems to know an awful lot about them. He knows it's Hanukkah...why else put out the light?

ALBERT: Look out there. Towards the fence. Over there.

(*She does*)

See how the further the lampposts are away the closer the lights are together? Squint. Screw your eyes up. There. See? Those are *my* candles.

(*Pause*)

We can use it, Hannah. Everything they use against us we can use to our advantage. The hope is there – you've just got to look for it.

(**Hannah** strokes his forehead and tries to smile)

HANNAH: Thank you for the candles.

ALBERT: You are welcome.

HANNAH: Try and go to sleep, now.

(**Albert** obediently closes his eyes. **Hannah** takes a breath. **Ibi** takes her aside)

IBI: I need your help.

HANNAH: What is it?

IBI: Sonya. She's sick.

HANNAH: Is she here?

IBI: They daren't in case there's a selection. They think it might be typhoid.

HANNAH: How am I supposed to treat her? Just pop out and pay a visit? Stop off for tea with the guards on the way?

IBI: You've got to help her, Han. You're the only one with any influence with Metzger –

HANNAH: For extra soup, yes. Not for something like this!

IBI: Then don't tell him. Please, Han. Not just for me. She's a musician, the camp

²⁴ German: "bastard".

needs her.

HANNAH: To play them to their deaths?

(Beat)

Sorry...sorry.

IBI: They got a message to me today saying that she's ill, very ill...Metzger already suspects something, he watches me like a hawk. You'll have to go.

HANNAH: What do you expect me to do, stroll out there like Florence Nightingale? If he sees me, Ibi, or guesses, I'm dead.

(Ibi's face sets)

IBI: We're all dead one way or another. What does it matter?

HANNAH: Where did that come from?

IBI: It's called being realistic.

(She smiles wanly. A moment, then she produces some vials from her pockets)

HANNAH: Where did you –

IBI: Ask no questions and hear no lies.

HANNAH: Morphine...penicillin...we haven't had any over here for weeks!

IBI: Thanks to you, Metzger trusts me. And over there we need to –

(Pause)

They need the supplies and now they have someone who can get them.

HANNAH: You'll be the death of me.

IBI: You'll do it?

HANNAH: Metzger comes off duty at six. It'll be dark. I'll go then.

IBI: Why are you going when it's dark? Won't it make them more suspicious?

HANNAH: It's the safest way. Metzger won't be about. The night guards are all half-soaked from dusk until dawn. Metzger likes it like that, it makes them more trigger-happy.

IBI: For God's sake, be careful. I don't want to lose Sonya...but I don't want to lose you, too.

(Beat)

HANNAH: We're all dead one way or another. Anyway, if I get shot, remember – I'll come back to haunt you.

(It's a grim joke. Ibi rests her hand on her shoulder for a moment and goes to leave)

Is it all right? Over there?

(Ibi hesitates)

IBI: It's...it's nothing like you'd think.

HANNAH: It can't be any worse than here. Although judging by the mortality rates, you've got to wonder.

IBI: Han...did you know what it was like? When you sent me?

HANNAH: Ibi, I didn't even think about it. I had to think of something quick or Metzger would have...why?

IBI: Did you know?

HANNAH: Know what? What are you talking about?

(Metzger enters. The two women snap to attention)

METZGER: Nurses.

HANNAH/IBI: *Hauptsturmführer.*

METZGER: At ease. *(To Ibi)* My new little nurse! How is your new position?

(Beat)

IBI: Challenging, *Hauptsturmführer.*

METZGER: I have heard favourable reports from your superiors. It seems that Nurse Blech was right to place her trust in you.

IBI: Thank you, *Hauptsturmführer.*

METZGER: Yes...I can foresee that bigger things are in store for you, nurse. Things that other women in your position can only dream of. But – why are you here? Surely you should be at the pregnancy block?

IBI: I was coming to thank Nurse Blech for her recommendation.

(Ibi and Hannah exchange quick glances – Ibi too is learning to lie quickly)

I am now going back.

HANNAH: Thank you, Nurse Yanteb. Come back soon and let me know how you're getting on.

(Ibi nods – she understands Hannah's meaning – and exits. Hannah offers Metzger a bland, innocent smile)

METZGER: I don't have time to stay...more rumours. Contraband. The Canada girls are getting out of hand.²⁵

HANNAH: Don't...don't be too harsh with them.

(He looks at her with incredulity. She smiles quickly)

Not everyone's lucky enough to have someone like you. They have to try and take care of themselves somehow.

(She smooths the shoulder of his uniform)

METZGER: I'll try to come and see you before I go off duty.

HANNAH: I look forward to it.

METZGER: Kiss?

(She kisses him. He smiles and exits. Hannah goes through the vials again and sighs. Eben approaches)

EBEN: Did you go?

HANNAH: Of course I went. And then Ibi finally got to talk – straight out of a nightmare.

Scene 6

(Hannah takes on the appearance of someone almost frozen with cold, as if she has just come in from outside. The infirmary. Night. Albert is sleeping. A few moments, then Ibi enters cautiously. She looks around. Unknown to her, Metzger is standing in the shadows, watching. Ibi steps forward, but before she can question Hannah, Metzger steps slowly forwards from behind Hannah and cocks a revolver at her. Hannah freezes)

METZGER: Nurse.

HANNAH: *Hauptsturmführer.*

²⁵ The work section that sorted the belongings of new arrivals at the camp was called Canada, a reference to the believed riches of that country.

METZGER: We really should stop meeting like this. But wait...remind me. Have we met like this before?

HANNAH (*turning slowly to face him*): Not that I recall.

METZGER: I've certainly never held a gun to your face before. Tell me. How does it feel to know that with one twitch of my finger, I can spread your brains out on the ground? Red on brown...or maybe I should wait. The snow is coming. Red on white. Much more patriotic.

HANNAH: Whatever pleases you, *Hauptsturmführer*.

(*He laughs and takes his Nazi armband off*)

METZGER: Here. A present. A *gift*.

HANNAH: Thank you, *Hauptsturmführer*.

METZGER: Put it on, then. Wear it. For me.

(*He holds it out. She makes a motion to take it and he throws it on the ground. A moment. Hannah cautiously bends forward and picks it up*)

Put it on.

(*He motions with the gun. Hannah puts the armband on, garish against the grubby uniform*)

There. A perfect fit. Isn't it?

HANNAH: Yes, *Hauptsturmführer*.

METZGER: You must wear it for me. I *insist*.

(*Pause*)

Where have you been?

HANNAH: Making a medical assessment, *Hauptsturmführer*.

METZGER: A *medical* assessment? And what, may I ask, was the purpose of your assessment?

HANNAH: To identify potential high risk areas of contagion within several barracks in order to prevent the outbreak of disease...*Hauptsturmführer*.

METZGER: After dark?

HANNAH: It is the only time I can be spared from my duties, *Hauptsturmführer*.

(**Metzger** laughs)

METZGER: You have more imagination than I give you credit for. Know this, my dear little nurse. I don't suffer fools gladly. You have more gall than others, but you are still a fool. Your race are all liars and you are no different. I *will* find out where you have been tonight, and I will find out any other little secrets that you have convinced yourself remain well-hidden. Tell me, do you like your armband?

(Beat)

HANNAH: The colours are very bright, *Hauptsturmführer*.

(He watches her, a small smile playing on his lips)

METZGER: It is getting late. I should have been at my dinner table long ago. Stewed mutton and potatoes tonight, I believe. You have already eaten?

HANNAH: Yes, *Hauptsturmführer*.

METZGER: A pity. You would have been a welcome guest at my table...were you not the scum of the earth, of course. Well, I must let you get back to your duties.

(Beat)

Come here.

(**Hannah** slowly approaches until their bodies are almost touching. He holds the gun against her head. With the other hand he parts her lips and runs his fingers over them before licking the tips. **Hannah** steals a look at **Eben**, who watches coldly. **Metzger** closes in for a kiss, then at the last moment draws away. He addresses **Ibi**, eyes remaining on **Hannah**)

METZGER: What do you want?

IBI: I need some supplies, *Hauptsturmführer*. But I can see that you are busy with Nurse Blech. I'll come back another time.

(She boldly exits. **Metzger** turns to watch her go)

METZGER: I'm sorry for that. I had to teach her a lesson.

HANNAH: Why?

METZGER: I don't want her thinking she can wheedle her way into my affections...and she needs to be warned about what will happen if she disobeys.

HANNAH: You frightened me.

(He takes her in his arms)

METZGER: *Have* you eaten tonight?

HANNAH: A little.

METZGER: I'll have them send something over. You like mutton?

HANNAH: Yes.

(He nods and runs his fingers through her hair)

METZGER: You remind me of my wife.

HANNAH: You're married!

(Beat)

METZGER: Was.

(Pause)

Don't forget, Hannah, that one day I will call in my debt.

(She nods. Beat)

Kiss me?

(She does so)

Make sure that you eat it all...I like to be able to feel you. I don't like skinny women.

(He kisses her again)

Goodnight.

*(He exits. **Hannah** turns – straight into **Albert's** horrified stare)*

ALBERT: Hannah?

HANNAH: You saw?

ALBERT: Yes.

*(**Hannah** nods. Beat)*

Hannah...

HANNAH: Don't, Albert. Please. Just don't. Not a word.

(Beat)

He'll be sending food over. Do you want some?

ALBERT: I would be lying if I said I was not hungry...but to accept the charity of one of *them*...!

HANNAH: You get used to it.

ALBERT: Oh Hannah...

HANNAH: Stop it. Just stop. I can bear anything but...

ALBERT: Have you...has he...?

(Before Hannah can answer there is a timid knock on the door)

IBI *(off)*: All clear?

HANNAH: He's just gone.

(Ibi comes in)

You're feeling brave tonight.

IBI: Don't talk to me about being brave. Being brave's got nothing to do with anything.

HANNAH: You're shaking...come here...

IBI: Do you know what happens at the pregnancy block?

HANNAH: Apart from the obvious, no.

IBI: I knew you wouldn't send me there on purpose...not if you knew...

HANNAH: Knew what? Ibi, let's play our old game...let's pretend that you're –

IBI: They kill them. The babies. They kill them.

HANNAH: *What?*

IBI: You know the rule – if the baby lives, then it and its mother go to the gas. But if the baby dies, the mother gets a reprieve...so they kill the babies. How do you think I got the drugs for Sonya? Two children died so she could live...

(Beat)

I might have killed women...there might not be enough left because I took it for Sonya...

HANNAH: Hush, little one. It's all right...it's going to be all right...

IBI: How? How the hell can you say that any of this will be all right? And Metzger knows – he knows what's going on, and he glories in it. If you asked him outright he'd deny it, but I've seen him. I've seen him there and he sees it all. You know what he's like, Hannah, no-one knows him like you...and they're saying that the babies aren't...some of them are *his*...

HANNAH: Nonsense. It goes against everything he believes in.

IBI: Don't be *stupid*, Hannah...you know what the guards do to the pretty ones. They nearly...Metzger stopped one. *He* protected me but he's done it himself...now they're saying that he hasn't done anything for months, because he's got you...

HANNAH (*sharply*): It's a common rumour. And he does *nothing* with me. Kisses and whispers, no more –

IBI: How can you do it? How you can allow him to touch you when you *know*? I've seen the way you smile into his face. I thought it was all right – I thought you were doing what you had to do. But to accept his kisses and welcome his touch and dismiss what they say about him...you're no better than he is!

(**Hannah** *slaps her*)

HANNAH (*hissing*): I *have* to! I smile and laugh and sit on his lap and all the while I can't stand it, but I *have* to!

IBI: You're a liar. I've seen you with him. You don't despise it. You *love* it. The kisses, the whispers...him attending to your every need...and all the while, your fiancé waits on the other side of the fence, praying that you're not dead. If he knew he'd wish you *were*.

HANNAH: Shut your mouth. Remember it's me who got you into Metzger's good books – I can just as easily get you out.

IBI: You bitch –

HANNAH: *But I won't!*

(*Pause*)

Ibi...I didn't choose it. He chose me. And if I'd refused...why do you think I hold him off? I love Daniel, Ibi, but if I want to be with him I have to be alive. If I want to find my brother I have to be alive. This is the only way for me. And if I can help you too –

IBI: Is that what you tell yourself? Before you sleep at night?

(*Pause*)

Maybe I don't want to be 'helped'. Maybe I'd rather be out there with my sisters.

HANNAH: Your precious Sonya is part of the orchestra – they're SS pets, too.

IBI: There are children dying over there, poisoned by us and strangled by their mothers. Remember that next time you look into his pretty blue eyes. Or better yet, look in the mirror.

(A Prisoner appears in the doorway, carrying a covered basin)

Enjoy your meal.

HANNAH: Wait!

(She takes the basin from the Prisoner, who exits. She takes Albert's metal bowl, scoops up a bowlful of food and hands it to Albert, who offers a small prayer before eating it. She scoops up another generous bowlful with her own bowl and holds it out to Ibi)

IBI: I don't want it.

HANNAH: For Sonya. She needs a good meal.

(Ibi hesitates. Hannah proffers the bowl. Ibi takes it)

Tell the guards you're Nurse Blech and that *Hauptsturmführer* Metzger has given you permission.

(Beat. With a shrug)

We're all the same to them.

(Ibi goes to leave and turns back)

IBI: I'm...I...what I said –

HANNAH: Goodnight, nurse.

IBI *(slowly)*: Goodnight.

(She exits. Hannah sinks into a chair. Albert is wolfing down the food)

HANNAH: Do you think she's right?

(Albert looks at her questioningly, still eating)

That I'm no better than he is?

(Pause)

Well I am. I do what I have to do to survive, no more. I don't *like* –

(Pause)

I wonder if she ever thinks we're the same, her and me. We both love –

(Pause)

I'm not strong enough to do it on my own. I can't. That's why I have to. I can't *make* it – I can't *do* it on my own. Do you think Daniel would understand? If I told him?

(Beat)

He was always slim. He looks like a rake now. I wish, I *wish* I could get some of Metzger's food to him...is it wrong to love someone and at the same time wish they didn't rely on you?

ALBERT: You are afraid he will find that his idol has feet of clay.

(Pause)

HANNAH: Yes.

(Beat)

Albert...what do I do?

ALBERT: What is this account that Metzger talks of?

HANNAH: That's another thing – if I can just hold him off long enough –

ALBERT: Hannah.

(Pause)

HANNAH: I've promised him that he...can...if he – (Beat. Unwillingly) I let him kiss me. I let him hold me but never anything more. It took him two months to get that far. Always holding him off and drawing him on. The...*understanding*...that we have is that he looks after me, and that it counts towards him – and I – we'll...

ALBERT: I see.

HANNAH: But I'm engaged. I think Metzger knows, but I think he thinks I've given up hope of Daniel. I think of Daniel when I'm with him, do you know that? I smile up at him and pretend that it's Daniel. When he wants to be told how manly and strong and wonderful he is, I look into his eyes and I pretend I'm talking to Daniel.

(Pause)

I'll marry him.

ALBERT: Hannah...*lieverd*...what are you –

HANNAH: I'll marry him. I'll belong to Daniel and nobody else. No matter what happens.

ALBERT: Oh Hannah, it is not that easy –

HANNAH: What's better? To shame yourself, to give yourself to a man who thinks as much of you as he does his horse or his dog? Or to give yourself in law and before God to the man you promised to marry, and then make sure you both survive?

(Beat)

Daniel will understand. Everything's different to what it was before. He'll understand why I'm doing it...he's depending on me to stay alive. He needs me, and if Metzger is the way for me to stay alive, then I'll do it. I'll do it for Daniel. (*Gestures to Albert's empty bowl*) I can help you now. That's got to be good, hasn't it? It's not just about me now. And Daniel. It's for you as well.

ALBERT: I have lived for over two years –

HANNAH: By the laws of the camp you should have died eighteen months ago, if not at the selection. You can't go on much longer. Your luck's got to run out sometime.

(Pause)

Will you do it? Will you marry us?

ALBERT: Hannah, you cannot marry a man as an act of revenge.

HANNAH: It's not revenge! It's me fulfilling my promise. (*Pleading*) What if they send him to the gas tomorrow? What if I catch typhus?

ALBERT: May God forbid it –

HANNAH: Ibi loves Sonya, and now Sonya's sick...I don't want that to be me. They can't be together, but Daniel and I can. Maybe it *is* revenge, because it's creating what the Nazis would destroy...but for me it's me marrying the man I loved before all this and to whom my father gave his blessing.

(*There is an odd little dignity about her. Albert muses for a moment*)

ALBERT: Can you get a message to him?

HANNAH: Yes.

ALBERT: If you can get him to come here, then I will do it.

HANNAH: Oh Albert! Thank you – thank you so much!

ALBERT: And we will use this...

(He takes out a woman's wedding ring on a length of twine from under his shirt. Hannah takes it reverently)

It belonged to Adelaide. When they told us to leave our belongings on the train she took it off and slipped it to me...I managed to hide it inside my cheek. It would have gone to Sophie...now it is yours. No words. Do not thank me, or refuse it. Just take it.

(Beat)

HANNAH: Thank you.

ALBERT: *Lieverd*...if Metzger finds out...

(Pause)

HANNAH: It doesn't matter. I can get around him somehow.

ALBERT: He is not a man to be crossed, Hannah. He is...formidable.

HANNAH: I can be formidable. If I can stand in front of him without quaking, then I can get around this.

ALBERT: But do you stand in front of him without quaking?

HANNAH: Sometimes. It's enough. But I won't worry about that now. I'll think about it later.

(She kisses him lightly)

After all, what have I got to lose?

ALBERT: Ever the cynic.

HANNAH: Ibi'll tell you – I'm a realist.

ALBERT: I will be ready, Hannah. I will watch and wait...as soon as he comes, you must find me.

HANNAH: I will.

(Beat)

ALBERT: *Lieverd...thank you. For the meal.*

(Beat)

HANNAH: You're welcome. Try...try not to dwell too much on where it comes from. Or it tends to stick going down. Until you get used to it.

(He nods. Pause)

You should get some sleep. You'll feel much better for some food and rest.

(Albert nods and settles back. She sits beside him and holds his hand as he closes his eyes)

EBEN: Is that how you justified it?

HANNAH: A lot of the time, yes. When I bothered to think of it. Most of the time it was best to block it out. That's how we survived day to day.

ALBERT *(murmuring)*: If all else fails, do not think of it.

HANNAH: I won't. *(Semi-defiantly, looking at Eben)* I won't.

(Pause. Albert's grip loosens in sleep. Hannah tenderly puts his hand under the blanket and covers him up. She goes to the desk and begins to eat from the basin. Eben joins her)

EBEN: And the Sonya girl?

HANNAH: Dysentery, not typhus. *(About the food)* It's good.

EBEN: As long as you don't dwell on where it's come from.

HANNAH: Exactly.

EBEN: So?

HANNAH: Albert was ill, ill for a good while. Every time they came for a selection we found a new place to hide him. The linen store – that was a joke. It was where we hid the corpses until there was enough time to count them all. Of course, there never *was* enough time...

EBEN: Hid the corpses?

HANNAH: They always had to know how many were in the infirmary. By the time you'd finished counting, a dozen more had died, or someone had taken themselves off to find a place to die...so you counted again. And again. And again...and the count was never right.

EBEN: That was why he didn't want you to do the paperwork.

HANNAH: Oh yes. He definitely wanted to keep me.

(Eben's eyes blaze. Hannah faces him squarely)

You wanted the truth and so you'll have it. Or would you prefer me to make the rest up?

EBEN: Yes, I think I would.

(Pause. Hannah rests her hand momentarily on his arm)

HANNAH: I think I would, to be honest.

(Pause. She eats)

EBEN *(prompting)*: So?

HANNAH: So?

EBEN: Daniel.

HANNAH: Oh. *(She smiles – a rare, genuine smile)* Yes. *(With relish)* My husband.

Scene 7

(Eben resumes his place to one side. Ibi enters and takes his place at Hannah's desk. She's pale, older-looking and serious; almost nothing is left of the girl we first encountered)

IBI: I don't know how you dared to do it.

HANNAH: It's not a sin to marry, Ibi.

IBI: It is in this place. What if Metzger finds out?

HANNAH: Oh, Metzger, Metzger, Metzger...I spend my life living according to his whims. It's about time he realised he might hold the body prisoner but the spirit's free.

IBI: And just when are you going to tell him that?

(Beat)

HANNAH: Oh, you know what I mean.

(No answering smile from Ibi)

Is it really that bad?

IBI: Better today. Only three

(Pause)

HANNAH: How's Sonya?

(Ibi's face relaxes but she doesn't smile)

IBI: As beautiful as ever.

HANNAH: Still in love?

IBI: Never a question of it.

(Pause)

Hannah...what was it like? The wedding?

(Beat)

HANNAH: Beautiful. A midnight ceremony.

IBI: I wish I could have seen it.

HANNAH: Forgiven me?

IBI: Nothing to forgive. None of this is your fault.

HANNAH: But the children...

IBI: We do what we have to do to survive. First rule of KL Auschwitz-Birkenau.²⁶

(Beat)

HANNAH (to **Eben**): If nothing else, I was sorry for the light that had died in her eyes.

EBEN: Just like yours.

(Hannah looks at him, startled. Brother and sister hold gazes before Hannah switches back to her conversation with Ibi)

HANNAH: I never thought to see the day the realist in you would win through.

IBI: I never thought you'd see your wedding day.

HANNAH: I wish you could have been there, too.

²⁶ KL: the shortened version of the German phrase for "concentration camp".

IBI: What did you use for breaking the glass?

HANNAH: An empty morphine vial. Albert wrapped it in his cap.

(Beat)

It was beautiful. Just Daniel and me...and Albert...

IBI: Witnesses?

HANNAH: One of the patients. I don't think he understood half of what was going on...malnutrition. I managed to be with him when he died. Albert too. I think it was comforting to him to have a rabbi there. Two friendly faces. It was the least I could have done.

IBI: And the canopy?

HANNAH: A blanket.

(Ibi pulls a face)

Don't worry, it was clean. Well, as clean as I could make it. Do you know, it took two weeks for my note to reach him?

IBI: That was quick!

HANNAH: That's what I thought. I was expecting at least a month. The next thing I know he's standing in that doorway. I thought I'd died. It was just... *(In a rush)* To be able to feel kisses that don't have a motive behind them...I'd forgotten what it was like.

(Ibi says nothing)

You're not impressed.

IBI: When am I ever when it comes to that man?

(Pause)

HANNAH: Ibi...about the transfer...

IBI: I don't want to talk about it.

(Beat)

Please.

HANNAH: I didn't know, honestly. I didn't. I had to think of something quick, understand? It was the first thing I –

IBI: Hannah. I don't want to hear about it anymore. What's done is done. (*Smiles wryly*) The mistress and the child-killer. So much for dreams of nursing, eh?

(*Beat*)

He was right when he said he had 'big things' in store for me.

(**Hannah** holds her hand out across the desk. **Ibi** takes it)

HANNAH: Albert always says that God sees, and He understands...

IBI: Well I'm damned if I can understand the killing of children. The whispers have gotten back to Sonya, you know that? I can bear almost anything but to have to look into her eyes and see her trying to work out whether it's true or not.

(*Pause. Hannah has gone white. Ibi squeezes her hand*)

Don't worry, the musicians' block is like a beehive. It's like my mother's parlour, always someone arriving with a new bit of gossip...

HANNAH: Do they talk about me?

(*Pause*)

IBI: It's become a running joke. One of the other girls – one of the mandolin players, I think – was talking about how maybe she could get Metzger away from you. Saying that she had more beauty and talent than some jaded nurse –

HANNAH (*icily*): Oh?

IBI: The conductor soon put her straight. "Take a look at that woman's face. Be grateful you have to sing for your supper and nothing more."

HANNAH: Did you tell them? That we...don't do anything?

(*Pause. Ibi shrugs*)

HANNAH: Sweet God...if it gets back to the SS!

IBI: It won't. They all know better. Metzger might get punished for it but he'd kill them all first.

HANNAH: Remember what happened to Höss...

IBI: That was different. He was *Kommandant* and had a wife. Anyway, he's back now.²⁷ (*Her eyes gleam*) I bet his wife doesn't go near him anymore.

²⁷ Rudolph Höss was perhaps the most infamous of concentration camp commandants. He had an affair with a Jewish prisoner and was transferred out of Auschwitz, only to be returned when the Nazis began the mass murder of the Jews of Hungary.

(Pause)

Han, Daniel won't find out. Not unless you tell him.

(Beat)

Metzger's more likely to tell him than anyone else.

HANNAH: Shush, can't you?

IBI: What does it matter? You've quelled a lot of it by marrying him.

HANNAH: My mother always said that if you had to keep two men from finding out about each other then you were heading for nothing but trouble, and you deserved neither.

IBI: Some of us don't have that problem.

(A moment, then the two of them are in fits of laughter. The more they try to stop, the more they laugh – real schoolgirl giggles)

HANNAH: Ssssh, ssssh...

IBI: Oh, it hurts...ow...

(Finally they manage to calm down, still hiccupping and wiping their eyes)

HANNAH: You're terrible...

IBI: You started it!

(A door slams somewhere nearby. Suddenly both women are sober, exchanging alarmed looks)

Metzger?

HANNAH: It's his dinnertime.

IBI: The wind?

HANNAH: Probably.

IBI *(squinting through the window)*: It's snowing.

HANNAH: The second season of Auschwitz...mud or snow. Be careful.

(Ibi bestows a soft kiss on Hannah's forehead. Hannah squeezes her arm and Ibi huddles into herself, leaving quickly. Hannah draws a pile of papers towards herself and begins to work through them. Metzger steps forward from the door. He's heard everything. Hannah

*carries on working, oblivious, and unconsciously fiddles with her wedding ring – on a piece of twine around her neck. **Metzger** turns and faces **Eben** with mocking politeness. **Eben's** hand goes to his gun. The two men stare at each other in mutual hatred for a long moment before **Metzger** smiles coolly and walks out)*

Scene 8

*(The infirmary. As before. A metal bowl with dregs of soup in it is on the desk. A sound from outside. She jumps up and hides her ring in her uniform. **Metzger** enters. **Hannah** turns to welcome him, smiling, and stops when she sees his face)*

HANNAH: *Hauptsturmführer?*

METZGER: Stand to attention.

(She does)

Paperwork?

HANNAH: I was checking it. *(With pride)* It's all in order. The count's correct.

*(Slowly, **Metzger** picks up the bowl and empties it all over the desk. **Hannah** is horrified)*

METZGER: *Schusselig.*

HANNAH: What are you –

METZGER: Stand to attention!

(He retrieves a sodden paper and holds it up by the corner)

You still write in German.

HANNAH: Because I am.

(Pause)

METZGER: No, you are not. You are not German anymore than I am a Jew. Do not ever imply that we share the same blood.

HANNAH: But I – I was born in Germany – my parents are both –

METZGER: Dead. I remember. I was at that particular selection with Dr. Mengele. I remember them quite clearly. They were the two clinging to each other and snivelling. Your father was shot by one of my men. He refused to let go when ordered. Orders must be followed or the consequences met. Your mother was what we call a “screamer”. Most upsetting. Luckily the mess is generous with its provisions of cognac. I saw that my men were amply supplied after that

particular event.

(Pause)

I do not think I have ever mentioned that to you.

(Hannah is fighting desperately not to cry, her voice barely a whisper)

HANNAH: No, *Hauptsturmführer*.

METZGER: Come here where I can look at you.

(Hannah moves to the spot he indicates. He contemplates her for a long moment)

Hands behind your back. More. Shoulders back. More.

(Each of his movements is slow, drawn-out and deliberate. He approaches her until he is standing behind her. He leans forward and smells her neck. He does the same on the other side. He moves around her, still breathing in her smell, and leans in to her neck as if going to kiss it. He moves down until his face is inches from the top of her breasts. He inhales deeply. The whole sequence is sexual and intimidating. Metzger very slowly straightens until he is eye to eye with her)

You'll do.

(Beat)

Standing there with your chest thrust out does not complete paperwork.

(Hannah hurries back to her desk)

Did I say you could sit?

(She stands. He approaches again and lifts a hand as if to caress her breast. At the last moment he draws away)

As you were.

(He turns away)

HANNAH *(in a whisper)*: What's wrong with you?

(Pause)

Why are you being like this?

(He lights a cigarette, hands trembling slightly)

METZGER: Surely even *your* religion forbids a married woman to consort with another man?

(Pause)

Contrary to your favourite belief, Hannah, I am not stupid. Does he know?
About us?

HANNAH: No. Oh – no – are you –

METZGER: I have many methods at my disposal. Informing him of his wife's infidelity
may or may not become one of them.

HANNAH: Please – it'll kill him –

(Pause)

I – but I haven't done anything. We – you and me – we haven't –

METZGER: You knew long ago that there would be an account to settle, Hannah. I've now
decided to add interest.

HANNAH (*going to him*): *Hauptsturmführer*...please...don't, don't do this...I'm your
woman...

(Beat)

I love you.

METZGER: Then you are worse than an enemy. You are worse than a Jew. You are a liar,
a liar and a false friend. A false wife. Insuring yourself against the end,
whichever way it goes? A German to protect you if we win, a faithful husband
to stand by you if the Allies come?

HANNAH: No! It's not like that – it never has been. I have loved you, I have served you –

METZGER: Had you remained faithful –

HANNAH: Please –

METZGER: You're trying my patience –

HANNAH: I know all the secrets! I know what you've done!

METZGER: And who will believe you?

HANNAH: Ibi knows, too! She'll confirm every word I say!

(Pause)

METZGER: Your account is now closed, Hannah. But rest assured, I will collect my debt.

HANNAH: Please, *Hauptsturmführer*...I have been loyal to you...

METZGER: When it's suited you. You're boring me now, Hannah. I have better things to attend to than the snivellings of a whore.

HANNAH: *I have never given myself to you!*

(Pause)

METZGER: Perhaps I haven't made myself clear. I will collect my debt...*in full*. *Heil Hitler.*

(He leaves. Hannah is left stricken. Eben goes to her)

EBEN: Hannah...? Hannah, what happened?

(Silence)

Hannah?

(She slowly turns to face him, white-faced and shaking)

HANNAH: He kept his word. He started collecting his debt, and Ibi was the first to pay.

Scene 9

(The infirmary. Hannah is feeling Albert's forehead with the back of her hand. From somewhere outside can be heard the sounds of tramping feet and the occasional order shouted in German, although neither Albert nor Hannah pay attention)

HANNAH: Cooler. Much better.

(She turns away to make a note)

You can go back to your block soon. Maybe today. Certainly by tomorrow.

(Albert raises his eyebrows but says nothing)

More and more people are coming here...they seem to be under the impression it's safer.

ALBERT: It may be that they hold me up as an example. And who can blame them?

HANNAH: Well then they're wrong.

(Pause)

ALBERT: Hannah...?

(Pause)

HANNAH: He knows. Metzger. About the marriage.

ALBERT: How?

HANNAH: You're not safe here anymore, Albert. I know him. He'll be looking for ways to get back at me. He's a Nazi, he specialises in destroying families...I don't know how much he knows about you, but I'm not taking any chances. You go back out into the general population – the sooner, the better.

ALBERT: What kind of father would I be if I abandoned my daughter?

HANNAH: And what kind of daughter leads her father into danger and leaves him there?
No, Albert.

ALBERT *(trying to make a joke)*: What happened to you preserving my luck?

HANNAH: I went too far. I won't have you pay for my bloody stupidity.

(Beat)

This is the only time I've ever been glad not to have Eben with me.

(Ibi appears in the doorway, white-faced and tear-streaked)

IBI: Hannah...Hannah...

HANNAH: What's happened?

IBI: It's...he...he –

(Metzger enters. Out of habit, the women snap to attention)

METZGER: It is my regretful duty to inform you that an execution is imminent.

(Hannah manages to keep control. Ibi's face crumples but she stays upright)

HANNAH: May I ask whose, *Hauptsturmführer*?

(A dreadful moment: is it hers?)

METZGER: One of the musicians. I believe that you know her by the name of Sonya. It has been alleged that she was dealing in contraband. Such offences cannot go unpunished. It is the order that all prisoners will be present in order for this...*unfortunate* incident to serve as a warning.

(Pause)

HANNAH: As you wish, *Hauptsturmführer*.

METZGER: Oh, I do. I wish it very much, nurse. In fact, I came here to request that you accompany me.

(Pause)

HANNAH: Very well, *Hauptsturmführer*. But I must request that Nurse Yanteb takes my place in the infirmary during the meantime. I cannot leave patients unattended. It is not...professional.

(Metzger narrows his eyes for a moment, then smiles courteously)

METZGER: But of course. *(Offers his arm)* Shall we?

(Hannah takes it. He presses her fingers firmly into his arm)

There. Much better. I like to be able to *feel* you.

(They exit. Ibi collapses, crying heartbrokenly; the keening of a wild animal. Albert goes to her and she clings to him before trying to run after Hannah. Albert holds her back)

ALBERT: Ibi – no! No, no...

IBI: I've got to go! I've got to be there! Sonya – it's Sonya –

ALBERT: No, Ibi, no...ssssh, ssssh...you must not! For Sonya – you must not!

(Ibi stops struggling. Albert bundles her into his arms)

You must not be there, little one. You must not see it. I have seen enough in my time. You must remember her how she was.

(A chorus of jeers rises distantly from outside, punctuated with calls of "Traitor!" and "Happy now?")

They are calling down on Hannah. Metzger has arranged this. It is a game to him, to lead her out on his arm so they believe she is the favoured one for betraying Sonya...

IBI: But Hannah never...Sonya never...

ALBERT: I know. I know...

(A sudden silence descends. A male voice gives a speech in German, none of which can be made out, then total quiet. The distant sound of hundreds of pairs of feet standing to attention. Ibi sobs harder)

I know.

*(Moments pass. The orchestra can be heard playing a cheerful waltz. **Hannah** is finally brought back in by **Metzger**. She looks vaguely ill. **Metzger** doffs his hat to her)*

METZGER: I think that was long enough for you to bear witness.

(Beat)

Ah...the waltz. Shall we?

*(**Hannah** has no choice. He takes her in his arms and waltzes her twice around the room before releasing her. He is a graceful and accomplished dancer; somehow this makes his dancing on **Ibi's** grave even more of an insult)*

I shall leave you to your duties. *Heil Hitler.*

*(He salutes and leaves. **Hannah** sinks into a chair. **Ibi** goes to her and sinks to her knees, crying into **Hannah's** lap)*

IBI: Why...why did he...Sonya...why would he think that Sonya...

*(**Hannah** is about to tell her when she catches **Albert's** eye. He shakes his head slightly)*

HANNAH: I don't know, darling. *(She strokes **Ibi's** hair)* I really don't know.

IBI: Is it because – because of the rumours?

HANNAH: Ibi...when do they ever need an excuse? Maybe he thought someone was stepping out of line and wanted to...

(She falls silent – it's too close to the truth)

ALBERT: When was it ordered?

IBI: Not two hours ago. Just like that. One minute she was rehearsing – the next – *(She dissolves into tears again)* And I never – I never got to tell her – never got to say how much – how much I loved her...

*(**Hannah** holds her close and murmurs soothingly. Over the top of **Ibi's** head, however, she looks in anguish at **Albert**)*

HANNAH: One day, Ibi...one day he'll get what's coming to him...

IBI: But until then...what'll happen to us? What then, Hannah? What *then*?

(Pause)

HANNAH: It's getting dark. Stay here tonight. I'm on duty. They won't miss you over there.

*(**Ibi** nods)*

Why don't you lay down?

IBI: How can I rest when –

HANNAH: Not to sleep, just...just to lie down. You don't look well in any case.

(A moment. Ibi stumbles to a bunk and lies down. After a moment she turns her face to the wall)

IBI: Sonya...Sonya...

(She begins to weep quietly. Hannah smooths her hair, covers her with a blanket and moves back to her desk. She is white with fury and anguish)

HANNAH: Please, Albert. Go. Go now. It's already started. It's only a matter of time.

(Beat)

Please. For me.

(He bows, raises his cap and kisses her hand before leaving. Hannah sits at her desk again, staring blindly at nothing. Eben makes to come to her, but she raises a hand and turns towards the door)

Scene 10

(The infirmary. Night. Ibi is asleep on the bunk. Metzger enters, wearing a greatcoat. It is snowing outside. Hannah doesn't bother to stand)

METZGER: Nurse.

HANNAH: What do you want?

METZGER: Careful...

HANNAH: I think that we can dispense with the formalities now, don't you? What do you want?

METZGER: Her.

HANNAH: What?

METZGER: Her absence has been noted at the pregnancy block. Her presence is required.

(He goes to wake Ibi but quick as a whippet Hannah blocks his path. She turns and gently rouses Ibi)

HANNAH: Ibi...darling...Ibi, you're needed...

(Ibi wakes. At sight of Metzger her eyes widen in fright)

It's all right...they need you at the pregnancy block...it's all right. Come back when you've finished.

(Ibi creeps out sidelong, keeping an eye on Metzger. Once she's safely gone Hannah shuts the door and whirls to face Metzger)

Why?

METZGER: Why what?

HANNAH: Enough games! Why did you have Sonya killed?

METZGER: I would have thought that even someone of your limited intelligence would know that.

HANNAH: To get back at me.

(Metzger inclines his head with a smile)

Kill Sonya to make Ibi suffer, and make me watch...you're disgusting. All of you. I don't know how I even put up with you being in the same room as me.

(A flash of fury passes over Metzger's face, then is gone)

Why couldn't it just have been me? Why did you have to bring them into this?

METZGER: As you reminded me, Nurse Yanteb knows my 'secrets'...

(A gunshot from outside. Hannah jumps)

Knew my secrets.

HANNAH: What have you – Ibi – no – what have you done! What have you done? *What have you done?*

METZGER: It would appear that your friend was shot trying to escape. For the best. After all, it put her out of her misery. She would have been useless ultimately.

(He goes to the small window and looks out. A small smile spreads on his face)

Just as I thought. Red on white. Very patriotic.

HANNAH *(screaming)*: You bastard!

(She throws herself at him, raking his face with her fingernails, kicking, screaming. He wrestles with her and finally gets her into a choke hold from behind)

Why don't you just kill me! Do it now!

METZGER: Too easy, my dear little nurse...far too easy. I had a mare like you. She had to be broken in...tamed before I could ride her. Some mares aren't worth the trouble...but I pride myself on being a patient teacher. And we must curb this temper of yours. Franz!

FRANZ (off): *Hauptsturmführer?*

METZGER: Escort Nurse Blech to the gate. Her blood is too hot and needs cooling. Stand her in the snow.

(He throws her away from him)

Now get out. Don't come back in until I order otherwise.

HANNAH (with great dignity): *Hauptsturmführer.*

(She bows slightly and leaves. Metzger takes out a handkerchief and wipes his face. Blackout)

Scene 11

(The infirmary. Late at night. Hannah is lying in a bed, pale and asleep. Albert sits beside her, holding her hand in both of his. Eben comes forward)

ALBERT: For three hours he made her stand in the snow. After an hour even the guards gave up jeering and retreated inside their towers.

(Beat)

When they brought her in they tried to warm her up as best they could, but that only made it worse. As the blood started to flow again she could feel her limbs, and she...

(Beat)

Her feet were the worst. They were...one foot they managed to save. But the other...the frost had bitten too deeply. And Metzger knew. He knew what was going to happen because when they went to the stores every medicine, every drug that they needed for her was gone. No morphine. No opiates. No disinfectant. Nothing.

EBEN: And they still went ahead with it?

ALBERT: They had to take that part of her foot off or risk gangrene...and then she would die. For two weeks she lay in a bunk, here, and her face twitched with pain

even in her sleep. She bore it better than others would. Sometimes I saw him – saw him come in here. He would only stay for a few minutes, but I thought that even his conscience had finally pricked him. I did not realise it was because he had other things waiting for her. He wanted her to be well enough for what he had in store.

(Metzger enters; Albert and Eben draw away. Metzger stands over Hannah, who opens her eyes and stares dully at him)

HANNAH: What do you want – *(with heavy emphasis)* – *Hauptsturmführer?*

METZGER: I have come to settle the rest of my debt.

(Hannah laughs softly)

HANNAH: Go to Hell.

(Metzger mercilessly pulls her upright in the bed. Hannah cries out in pain)

METZGER: Where is your husband, eh? Does he come and see you every day? Has he taken care to ensure that his wife cannot be taken from him?

HANNAH: Leave me alone...leave me alone...

METZGER: You are his wife in name, Hannah, nothing more. I told you I would collect my debt and so I shall.

(Beat)

You should be grateful. To look at you now I find it hard to believe any man will ever want you or find you attractive again.

(Beat)

Walk for me. Go on. Walk for me.

(A long moment. Hannah tries to haul herself up but falls heavily to the floor. Metzger laughs in disgust. Hannah pulls herself slowly up again and hobbles towards him. Her walk is ungainly and heavily pronounced)

ALBERT *(to Eben)*: She stuffed her shoe with rags to fill it out...it was the only way she could move. It was that and her pride that kept her upright.

HANNAH: You want me, then? Come to settle your debt, have you?

(With an effort she wrenches her uniform dress off over her head; a rough undershirt is beneath)

Come on then, *Hauptsturmführer*. I'll even let you leave your boots on.

(He slaps her and then pulls her towards him in a crushing kiss. He lifts her up and carries her to the bed, laying her on it and beginning to undress. He turns his back for a moment and she scrambles away, dragging herself along the floor to get away. She is at the door by the time he reaches her. He drags her back to the bed and pins her on to it, his chest bare and belt undone)

METZGER: Remember what I said, Hannah. I always collect...with interest.

(Blackout)

Scene 12

*(The infirmary. **Hannah** is in the bunk, feverish and breathing hoarsely. **Albert** sits on a bed nearby, gazing intently at her face but talking to **Eben**. It looks like an effort. He is pale and ill, breathing slightly laboured. From outside can be heard the distant roar of a fire, soldiers running and shouting, and occasional gunshots)*

ALBERT: And then suddenly it was happening. They were afraid. Burning papers. Dismantling evidence. And then they were rounding people up – the strongest. I was beginning to think we might just...

(Pause)

Most of the SS had already gone. For once the rumours were true. The Allies were coming, and the SS were leaving, taking thousands of people with them. A death march. They left the sick, the weak, the ones they thought would not make it. But I had to. I had to. For Hannah. I had to.

(Beat. He struggles to his feet and goes to the window)

In all the chaos Daniel could not come to see her. He could not come to say goodbye to his wife. But I watched. I looked for him. Then the hour came when he was marched past the block, and I saw him looking. He saw me and shouted something, but I could not hear him...I could not hear him...the same thing, over and over again. And then he passed under the window, and I finally heard it. He was saying, "Tell her what she needs to hear". And then he was gone.

(He raises a hand in a gesture of farewell and acknowledgement, then turns into the room and closes his eyes briefly)

All gone. All gone now. Mother, father, husband, friend...poor girl. Poor girl.

EBEN: Just you.

ALBERT: Just me.

*(**Albert** stretches his hand out and **Eben** clasps it momentarily. **Metzger** enters, carrying his*

revolver. He looks drawn and slightly dishevelled. He motions with the gun)

METZGER: Out. Get out.

ALBERT: Never.

METZGER: *Out.*

ALBERT: I am old, not deaf. I will not leave her. She has nothing left now. You have seen to that. You will not take me from her side.

METZGER: I'll kill you.

ALBERT: Then do so.

(Metzger raises his gun and fires, shooting Albert in the shoulder. Albert falls, clutching his shoulder in agony. But he is laughing)

You missed! Go on...finish the job properly...you, you German...with your German efficiency...finish it...finish it!

(Metzger raises the gun and glances towards Hannah. She is watching him, malevolent eyes blazing from her white face. The arm holding the gun drops. She hauls herself from the bed and falls heavily. She crawls to Albert and shields him with her body. It is painful to watch)

HANNAH (*hoarse*): Finish it. Finish it, you bastard. Finish what you started. I won't beg for my life. I don't want it.

(Metzger slowly approaches and crouches before her. Her face clears)

Daniel?

METZGER: Yes. Yes, *mein kleine frau*...²⁸

(He touches her face. She clutches his sleeve. He picks her up and carries her towards the bed. He sits and holds her gently in his lap. She realises who he really is and fights to get free)

HANNAH: No! No! You! No! Let me go! Let me go!

(He holds her to him and presses her head to his shoulder)

METZGER: Hannah...Hannah...

(Her struggles gradually subside. She is sobbing. Metzger cradles her, oblivious to his own tears. Moments pass. Hannah has fainted. Metzger lays her back on the bed and bends over her, touching her hair and her face as if committing her to memory. He gives her a lingering kiss and abruptly leaves)

²⁸ German: "my little wife..."

ALBERT: All gone...all gone...

(He drags himself to his feet. An explosion. He jumps. A burst of machine gun fire. Albert grows increasingly jumpy, reacting violently to every sound)

You have killed me! All gone...you have killed me!

(Shouts in German from outside. He frantically grabs a pillowcase and presses it against his wound)

Not now...not now...

(Hannah writhes and moans)

God, my God – why have you forsaken us? *(He laughs hysterically)* After all this time...

(Eben comes forward)

EBEN: Albert...

ALBERT: Gone! All gone! *Nothing!* What will we eat? Where is the water? No bandages, no aspirin...nothing! Look at them – look at them! Dying like animals – covered in their own shit and stink – look! Corpses and the living dead as far as you can see!

EBEN: Albert – hush...Albert...it's all over now. It's done. It's all over now.

(Albert stares at him. Recognition slowly dawns)

ALBERT: Yes. It is all done now. It is all over now.

(He goes to Hannah's bed and falls to his knees, taking her hand)

It is all over now. It is all over now.

(He starts to pray but is suddenly overcome with dizziness and tries to stand. He slides to the ground, still clutching Hannah's hand. They both lay motionless. Blackout)

END OF ACT II

Epilogue

(The hut. The first rosy streaks of dawn are starting to light the sky. The table is now strewn with handwritten papers. Hannah, Eben and Albert look exhausted)

HANNAH: I don't really remember what happened after Metzger...it's...hazy. I know Albert was there. I know he sat by me. *(Touches her lips)* Sometimes I remember moisture on my lips, roughness...stale bread. I called out for you.

(Beat)

They'd been told to shoot us once the others had left.

(Beat)

ALBERT: When I woke, it was dark. My shoulder was wet, sticky. I managed to get up and went outside. I went to find food. Each night I went out. Sometimes I took food from women who had just died. I thought one woman was dead and I went to take the black bread from her hand, but she opened her eyes and clutched my wrist. "It is for Hannah," I said. "Hannah needs it." When I went back, she was dead. Maybe one day I will ask for God's forgiveness and hers, too.

(Beat)

One day I will get down on my knees and pray for forgiveness for all the times I turned my face away, wished for death, sang to drown out the screaming....

HANNAH: Albert...

ALBERT: He wants the truth! And so he shall have it.

(Beat)

Those last days were the hardest, for the simple reason that I knew nothing.

(Pause)

HANNAH: The Russians arrived then, didn't they? Just in time.

(Beat)

A soldier carried me outside. Gave me biscuits. Water. His face...he took off his greatcoat and wrapped me in it. Then he went back for Albert. I saw him properly for the first time, Albert next to this beautiful, shining, *whole* piece of humanity...I screamed. They fussed around us. Gave us hot tea, blankets. I couldn't place the expression in their eyes. Then one of them refilled my mug and adjusted my blanket, and I saw it. It was pity. They actually felt sorry for us.

(Pause)

They took us to a hospital, stitched Albert's shoulder, gave us medicine, clean clothes. Food. We were turned into humans again. I still have the shoes they gave me. Sleeping, eating. God, how we ate!

*(She reaches a hand out to **Albert**. He takes it)*

For hours we would hold hands. I watched his tears roll down his cheeks and I knew that he was watching mine.

(Beat)

And Daniel...

(Beat)

You would say "Missing, believed dead." But here we face it. He never came home.

(Beat)

And then they told me about the baby. "It's all right, Mrs. Kowalewski, your baby's fine." And I just lay there and looked at them and thought, "What baby?" And then I remembered. Remembered what *he'd* done...what I had done.

(Beat)

They were told to shoot us once the others had gone...and sometimes I wish they had.

*(A long moment. **Eben** sits forward, head in hands. Finally he raises his head to look at her)*

What will you do?

EBEN: Eh?

HANNAH: The...report. The investigation.

EBEN: Too much of the evidence is hearsay. It's inadmissible.

*(**Hannah** looks at him, hope dawning on her face. **Eben's** face is inscrutable)*

I'll write up the report but I doubt it'll make it any further than my officer. *(A wry smile)* A case of "we find the defendant not guilty but recommend she doesn't do it again".

HANNAH: Oh, Eben...

EBEN: I don't want to hear it, Han. I really don't. *(He goes to the window and looks out. Pause)* I'm leaving.

HANNAH: So soon? But I thought –

EBEN: No. I'm leaving for good. I'm going to Israel.

HANNAH: But – why...I thought –

(Eben's voice is gentle and devastating)

EBEN: I'm going to quit the army and go to Israel. Somebody's got to start redressing the wrongs. Especially when...

(Beat)

I've got military experience and they need men, young men, men to help police the homeland. I think it's what I'm suited for. I need to go. I want to go. The world turned against itself before, against the Jews. Then we turned on ourselves. I couldn't stop it. I wasn't there. But now I will be.

(Hannah is crying without realising it. Eben goes to her and puts his arm around her, giving her the briefest of hugs)

Go outside. Get some fresh air. Sit on the steps for a moment.

(She looks at him)

You'll be all right.

(He gives her stick to her. She takes it and hobbles out. Eben lights a cigarette. He is shaken but managing to stay in control. A moment. Eben offers a cigarette to Albert, who takes it; Eben lights it for him. The two men smoke in silence. At last)

What a mess. What a bloody mess.

(Beat)

ALBERT: She wanted to live. In spite of it all, she just wanted to live. She is hurting every day of her life and always will. Maybe deservedly so. But you will fix it, will you not? You will fix it so that he never hurts anyone again.

(Beat)

No matter what a man has done, you can only hang him once. I regret that. I would hang him for Ibi. For my wife and daughter. For your parents and all the souls who lie out there, lost in the dark...and for us, for the ones who were left behind.

(Beat)

EBEN: He wasn't hanged. He managed to...escape. His body was discovered in woods a few days later. *(Meets Albert's gaze levelly)* Beaten to death. Assailant unknown.

(Eben shrugs. Albert sits back with the ghost of a smile on his face, then stands)

ALBERT: I should go to her. *(He goes to the door and stops)* Every day she will look into the eyes of her child and see *him* staring back. *(He turns and smiles. It is somehow disturbing)* But what better revenge than for a Nazi child to be brought up as a Jew?

(He exits. Eben stays sitting for a few moments. Slowly he retrieves his violin case, opens it and takes out the instrument, laying it on the table. He quietly starts to hum the tune he played earlier, running his fingers over the violin. He stops humming and stares at the violin for a moment before snatching it up and smashing it to pieces)

END OF PLAY

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