

# Courage Untold



**Susan B. Katz**

Based on the true story of a women's resistance movement  
at the Auschwitz II-Birkenau concentration camp.

Cover photo: Female prisoners at Auschwitz II-Birkenau, May 1944

Background photo: Interior wall of an Auschwitz gas chamber

Back cover photo: Ruins of Crematorium IV at Auschwitz II-Birkenau

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**BIG DOG PUBLISHING**

**P.O. Box 1401**

**Rapid City, SD 57709**

***Courage Untold** is dedicated to the memory  
of the 1.1 million men, women, and children who perished  
in the Auschwitz II-Birkenau Concentration Camp.*

*It is also dedicated to the Holocaust Survivors of that camp  
who either were involved with the story I depict  
and/or supported my endeavors in researching and writing  
the play and helping to bring it to the stage.*

*With gratitude to the following Holocaust Survivors:*

*Hanka (Wajcblum) Heilman*

*Herta Fuchs*

*Noah Zabłudowicz*

*Erna Gans*

*Fritzy Fritzhall*

*Joe Neuman*

*Eric Kulka*

*Mark Weinberg*

*Sam and Ethyl Seltzer*

*Helen and Irwin Ernst*

*Judy Lochman*

*Israel Gutman*

## Notes of Gratitude

I am especially grateful to the Holocaust Memorial Foundation of Illinois. The Foundation financially supported the Chicago 1990 world premiere of the play at the Avenue Theatre and helped to publicize it in the Chicago-metro area.

I want to acknowledge my appreciation to my two directors, Mr. Doug Binkley, who directed the Chicago world premier, and Mr. Darwin Apel, who directed the play for a six-week run in 1991 at the Avenue Theatre. Both of these professionals provided excellent ideas that helped me strengthen the script. Their talents as directors bore fruit with each performance.

I wish to recognize Big Dog Publishing and their excellent professional work in producing this book and helping to support *Courage Untold* reach a wider audience. It has been a rewarding experience to work with their staff.

Through the years, my dear sister, Dr. Linda Katz, and long-term friends, Linda Whittaker and Bernadette McBride, are the special women in my life who gifted me with their editorial skills, encouragement, and support of this play.

I wish to extend appreciation and gratitude to Sharon Drache for providing me with information, articles, and her wisdom that helped me to create the final draft of this play.

Lastly, I am grateful to my best friend, my beloved husband, Dr. Richard White, who traveled this long journey with me as I searched the globe finding Survivors of the story I depict in this play. He has been by my side every step of the way, including being the first reader of my earlier drafts. His dedication to this project included being part of the stage crew, working tirelessly through the night to build the sets for the Chicago world premier. He always reassured me that one day *Courage Untold* would be published. Thank you for believing so strongly in the work. It's been a delight to share my life with you and raise our family together. I would be lost without you, Richard.

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*Courage Untold* was first performed at the Avenue Theatre, Chicago, IL, for a six-week run beginning Jan. 13, 1990; Douglas Binkley, director.

**ROZA ROBOTA:** Laura Novak Mead  
**ROZA'S MOTHER:** Helen Flanigan  
**HANKA WAJCBLUM:** Heather Graff  
**ESTUSIA WAJCBLUM:** Eileen Niccolai  
**ALA GERTNER:** Laura Goltz  
**REGINA:** Margaret L. MacLeod  
**SARAH:** Sandee Greene  
**ETHYL:** Sandee Greene  
**LUCIA:** Margaret L. MacLeod  
**NOAH ZABLUDOWICZ:** F. David Roth  
**KAMINSKY:** Curtis Osmun  
**KAPO WOMAN:** Susan Wishnetsky  
**SS GUARD:** Chris Kulovitz  
**JOSEPH:** Chris Cole  
**FOREMAN SCHULTZ:** Susan Wishnetsky  
**YAKOV:** Chris Cole  
**COMMANDANT:** Ian Nevers  
**FOREMAN CLAUSEN:** Ian Nevers

*"The tale of the women of Auschwitz who managed to revolt in the most horrible conditions imaginable, where humans were reduced to skeletons barely able to function, is perhaps the most amazing event in the Holocaust. 'Courage Untold' is a testament to their courage and a memorial to audiences to remind us that many of the victims of Nazism did not go to the slaughter like sheep."*

—*Staging Holocaust Resistance*, Gene A. Plunka,  
Palgrave Studies in Theatre and Performance History, 2012.

*"As you can imagine, I read with interest of your work in staging the account of the women's resistance movement that took place in Auschwitz. I heard, and have read about Roza Robota; her story is indeed extraordinary."*

—Elie Wiesel

## Courage Untold

**HISTORICAL DRAMA/THRILLER.** This play is based on the true story of a courageous Jewish woman, Roza Robota, who led a small group of female prisoners in a plot to blow up a crematorium at the Auschwitz II-Birkenau concentration camp in 1944. After Roza Robota's mother is selected to die in the gas chambers, Roza is approached by a member of the Underground, who tells her they are planning to blow up the crematoriums and escape but need gunpowder to make explosives. Roza agrees to help and convinces some female prisoners to risk their lives smuggling gunpowder out of the munitions factory. After hearing that one of Roza's Underground contacts has been murdered, the women are disheartened and think the revolt may fail. But when one of the crematoriums is blown up by the Underground, the women are overjoyed despite having been unable to escape. Knowing the gunpowder came from the munitions factory, the Commandant sends a spy to uncover the identity of the saboteurs. This riveting thriller will captivate and inspire audiences with its story of the brave women who risked their lives to confront and defy evil. Features a strong ensemble cast with female leads and limited set requirements.

**Performance Time:** Approximately 90-120 minutes.

## Author's Note

*Courage Untold* is inspired by a true story; however, fiction was used for dramatic effect and to fill in gaps of the storyline. It is not the author's intent to recreate the actual conditions of Auschwitz but rather a representation of camp life. Many of the characters in the play are based on actual Auschwitz prisoners.



Crowded women's barracks at Auschwitz.

## About the Story

*Courage Untold* depicts the role female prisoners played in a prisoner revolt at Auschwitz II-Birkenau in 1944. It is based on Susan B. Katz's careful research and the oral testimonies of more than 20 Holocaust survivors in Chicago, Israel, and Canada. Katz was inspired to write this play after she read a single paragraph in the book, *The Auschwitz Album*, which mentioned Roza Robota, a Jewish woman who led a small group of female prisoners at Auschwitz in a plot to blow up a crematorium. Determined to find out more about Robota and the uprising, Katz traveled to Jerusalem in 1985 to interview Erich Kulka, a Czechoslovakian-born Jewish historian, and other Auschwitz survivors. After her interviews in Jerusalem, Katz learned that the sister of Estusia Wajcblum, a member of the uprising who had been caught and hanged, was alive and residing in Canada. Katz then traveled to Canada, where she interviewed Hanka Heilman, who was 14 years old at the time of the revolt. With her help, Katz was finally able to piece together the events of the lost history of the prisoners' uprising in 1944.



Left to right: Roza Robota in high school; Ala Gertner, circa 1943; Regina Safirsztajn, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy J.L. Murawiec.

**Roza Robota (1921-1945)** was the leader of a group of female Holocaust resisters who participated in the Auschwitz prisoner revolt of October 7, 1944. Robota was born in Ciechanów, Poland, and she and her family were transported by train to Auschwitz in 1942. Robota lost her family during the Nazi selection process and was assigned to the Auschwitz II-Birkenau concentration camp. There, Robota worked sorting the personal belongings of the dead in the clothing department, which was located near Crematorium III where the bodies of gas chamber victims were burned. For her role in the uprising, Robota was one of four women publically hanged at Auschwitz on January 6, 1945. Robota was memorialized in Sydney, Australia, with the naming of the Roza Robota Gates at Montefiore Randwick.

**Ala Gertner (1912-1945)** was born in Będzin, Poland, and was one of three children. She married Bernhard Holtz in 1943, and they lived in the Bedzin Ghetto until they were transported to Auschwitz in 1943. At Auschwitz II-Birkenau, Gertner worked with Roza Robota in the clothing department. She was later assigned to the munitions factory, where she smuggled gunpowder for the revolt. Gertner was one of four women publically hanged at Auschwitz on January 6, 1945.

**Regina Safirsztajn (1915-1945)** was born in Będzin, Poland, and had six older siblings and one younger brother. Her mother, Roza Gold Safirsztajn, and father, Josef Safirsztajn, ran a restaurant and died before the war. Regina was deported to Auschwitz with her sister, sisters-in-law and their children. Regina worked in the munitions factory and smuggled gunpowder to Roza Robota. Regina was publically hanged at Auschwitz on January 6, 1945.



Left to right: Anna "Hanka" Wajcblum Heilman, 1949, and Ester "Estusia" Wajcblum, 1937, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Anna and Joshua Heilman.

**Anna "Hanka" Wajcblum Heilman (1928-2011)** was born in Warsaw, Poland, the youngest of three daughters. In 1943, her family was sent to the Majdanek concentration camp, where her deaf, mute parents were killed. Hanka and her sister, **Ester "Estusia" Wajcblum (1927-1945)**, were transferred to Auschwitz II-Birkenau, where they both worked in the munitions plant. Ala Gertner recruited the sisters to assist in smuggling gunpowder from the plant and transferring it to Roza Robota, who passed it to members of the Underground. Estusia was one of four women arrested for participating in the revolt and was publicly hanged at Auschwitz II-Birkenau on January 6, 1945. Hanka survived and immigrated to Palestine, where she married Joshua Heilman in March 1947. Hanka, before passing, wrote her memoir, *Never Far Away: The Auschwitz Chronicles of Anna (Hanka Wajcblum) Heilman*, which was published in 2001 by University of Calgary Press and received the prestigious Ottawa Book Award for best regional non-fiction book. Hanka was awarded the Medal of Valor in 2002 by The Wiesenthal Museum of Tolerance for helping to destroy an Auschwitz crematorium. Rabbi Marvin Heir, founder and director of the Simon Wiesenthal Center stated, "I am humbled to present this Medal of Valor to Anne Heilman for helping to blow up one of the crematoria at Auschwitz-Birkenau, for saving thousands of Jews, and for upholding the principles of human dignity and freedom." In 2003, Hanka was featured as an unlikely Auschwitz saboteur in the film *Unlikely Heroes*, produced by Moriah Films.



Noah Zabłudowicz (1919-2004),  
courtesy Yad Vashem, World Holocaust Remembrance Center, Jerusalem

**Noah Zabłudowicz (1919-2004)** was born October 18, 1919 and lived in Ciechanów, Poland. In 1942, the Germans transported Jews of the Ciechanów Ghetto to the Auschwitz II-Birkenau concentration camp. While in Auschwitz, Noah was active in the Jewish Underground. Its mission was to destroy the death factories and to help themselves and other prisoners escape the daily atrocities. Noah worked as an electrician while imprisoned in Auschwitz, allowing him more mobility than the other prisoners. He survived his experience in Auschwitz, and soon after World War II, August 12, 1945, he, along with his two brothers, emigrated to Palestine, before Israel became an independent country in 1948. After arriving in his new homeland, Noah became an active member of the first society from Ciechanów to help survivors of the Holocaust adjust socially and economically to their new home. He married Shoashana Goldstein in Tel Aviv in 1946. Together, they raised their family and enjoyed becoming grandparents. He died in Israel at the age of 84 on May 16, 2004.



Ruins of Crematorium IV at Auschwitz II-Birkenau.

## Sonderkommando Revolt of 1944

Roza Robota was the leader of a group of female prisoners who smuggled gunpowder for months from a munitions factory to Sonderkommandos so that they could make explosives to blow up gas chambers and crematoriums and launch a prisoner uprising. On October 7, 1944, the Sonderkommandos—prisoners forced to dispose of gas chamber victims—rebelled and blew up Crematorium IV at Auschwitz II-Birkenau. The Nazis quashed the revolt and killed hundreds of Sonderkommandos. Robota and three other Jewish female prisoners were arrested and tortured. On January 6, 1945, Estusia Wajcblum, Roza Robota, Ala Gertner, and Regina Safirsztajn were hanged at Auschwitz for their role in the uprising. A monument was erected at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem to honor Robota, Gertner, Wajcblum and Safirsztajn.



Block XI and the "death wall" at Auschwitz I.

## About Auschwitz

After Germany sparked World War II by invading Poland in 1939, Auschwitz I was converted from a former WWI army barracks into a prisoner-of-war camp, where inmates were tortured, beaten, and killed. In 1941, Auschwitz II-Birkenau was built as a concentration and extermination camp with several gas chambers. Auschwitz eventually grew to consist of more than 40 Nazi concentration camps located in Poland. The first gassings took place in Block XI in 1941. An estimated 1.3 million people were sent to Auschwitz from 1940-1945 and at least 1.1 million died. Those who were killed included Jews, ethnic Poles, Roma, Sinti, Soviet prisoners of war, homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, Europeans, and others. It is estimated that one in six Jews killed in the Holocaust died at Auschwitz. Some prisoners were gassed while others died of starvation, disease, beatings, torture, medical experiments, and executions. Soviet troops liberated Auschwitz on January 27, 1945, which has been commemorated as International Holocaust Remembrance Day.

## Characters

(7 M, 12 F, extras)

(With doubling: 5 M, 11 F)

**ROZA ROBOTA:** 24, Jewish prisoner who organizes the smuggling of gunpowder to Underground members; strong and courageous but suffers emotional pain and suffering from enduring the brutal conditions at Auschwitz; came from Ciechanów, Poland, where she lived with her parents, sister, and brother, who all died at Auschwitz; medium height, thin, short dark hair; female.

**ROZA'S MOTHER:** Roza's brave, loving mother who has been selected to die in the gas chambers; female.

**HANKA WAJCBLUM:** 16, Jewish inmate with a vibrant, love-of-life personality; she inspires others to survive the camp and participate in the Underground; she is from the Warsaw Ghetto and participated in the Zionist cause and in underground anti-Nazi activities; female.

**ESTUSIA WAJCBLUM:** 20, Hanka's older sister who shares a strong emotional attachment to her sister; unlike Hanka, she did not participate in anti-Nazi activities before arriving at Auschwitz so she is more hesitant to join the Underground; taller than Hanka; female.

**ALA GERTNER:** 22, Jewish inmate who desperately wants to escape Auschwitz and reunite with her husband; hates the Nazis and is excited by participating in the Underground; though thin and haggard, her beauty is still apparent; female.

**REGINA SAFIRSZTAJN:** Early 20s, Jewish inmate who draws strength from her friendship with Sarah and her involvement in the Underground; works in the Gunpowder Room at the Union Munitions Factory and helps to smuggle gunpowder; her sense of humor helps ease the tension for other inmates; female.

**SARAH:** Early 20s, Jewish inmate who shares a close friendship with Regina and helps to smuggle gunpowder; her father works in “Kanada” and helps supply her with needed items; comes from a religious family and performs Jewish rituals; female.

**ETHYL:** Early 20s, Jewish prisoner who works in the Clothing Supply Department with Roza and the Union Munitions Factory; she has lost her entire family and tries to make friends with Lucia to ease her loneliness; female.

**LUCIA:** Early 20s, female prisoner who works with Roza in the Clothing Supply Department and with the other female inmates in the Union Munitions Factory; she is Aryan, but a twist of fate has brought her to Auschwitz; hates Jews and blames them for her fate; has a yellow triangle on her dress; female.

**BLOCK SENIOR:** Prisoner responsible for preparing the female inmates for work and for maintaining the barracks; since she has been given authority over the female prisoners by the SS, she identifies with her captors and hounds and abuses the other prisoners; she is better fed and dressed than the other prisoners; female.

**KAPO WOMAN:** Criminal sent to Auschwitz who is in charge of female prisoners working in the Clothing Supply Department and other work units; enjoys her position of authority; wears a prison uniform with a green triangle and her Auschwitz identification number on white cloth above her right breast, signifying she came to Auschwitz as a criminal; female.

**FOREMAN SCHULTZ:** Early 30s, German woman in charge of the Control Department at the Union Munitions Factory; a nervous woman who lacks self-confidence and constantly checks and rechecks the inmates’ work; dresses attractively at the factory, hoping to gain the attention of the SS Guard; female.

**NOAH ZABLUDOWICZ:** Early 20s, Eastern European Jew; a high-strung, intense member of the Underground who

desperately wants to do his part; wears typical prison garb, which consists of a shirt, trousers, and a skull cap with a vertical zebra-like pattern.

**KAMINSKY:** Jewish inmate who works in the gas chambers and crematoriums at Auschwitz and is deeply tormented by witnessing the daily atrocities; member of the Underground; male.

**JOSEPH:** Early 30s, a German spy posing as a Jewish inmate who succeeds at infiltrating the Underground by manipulating Ala; male.

**YAKOV:** Late 20s, a Jewish kapo in charge of Block XI and a friend of the Underground; knows his captors well and knows how to get what he wants; male.

**FOREMAN CLAUSEN:** 50s, a Polish civilian working at the Union Munitions Factory in charge of the Gunpowder Room; male.

**SS GUARD:** Sadistic guard assigned to various work units and Block XI; male.

**COMMANDANT:** Malicious, sadistic Nazi commandant of the camp; performs his duties with zeal and enjoys his authority over others; male.

**EXTRAS:** As Male Inmate 1, 2 and additional Female Prisoners.

## Options for Doubling

**KAPO WOMAN/FOREMAN SCHULTZ** (female)

**FOREMAN CLAUSEN/COMMANDANT/MALE INMATE 1**  
(male)

**JOSEPH/YAKOV/MALE INMATE 2** (male)

## Costumes

Female prisoners wear grey loose-fitting dresses, often with a cloth bandanna tied around their heads. The dresses have a red triangle and a yellow band showing the inmate's identification number above their right breast. Male prisoners wear typical prison garb that consists of a shirt, trousers, and prison skull cap designed in a vertical zebra-like pattern. All prisoners have tattooed numbers on their wrists.

## Notes on Language

German characters may speak with a German accent. For historical accuracy, a limited use of mild profanity is included in the dialogue (e.g. "slut," "whore," "bitch," "bastard," "damn," "hell"). However, profanity may be omitted, if desired.

## Setting

Auschwitz II-Birkenau concentration camp in German-occupied Poland during World War II. The action of the play occurs during a one-year period from January 1944 to January 6, 1945, only three weeks before advancing Russian allies take control of the camp.

## Sets

Sets are barren, gray, and stark.

**Women's Barracks:** At CS, there are two wooden bunk beds (3 tiers high) that can be locked into place for safety and rolled off for scene changes. The bunk beds may be made with  $\frac{3}{4}$ " plywood 4' x 8'. The frame can be made with 2 x 4s with 2' x 4' braces in each corner for safety/stability. The legs (which must bear the weight of 3 or more people) should be made with two 2 x 4s fastened together for each leg. The bunk bed frames should have corner braces for adequate strength and stabilization. There is a 4' space between the first and third bunk for the second bunk. The entire bunk is approximately 8'-9' high. Bunk beds should be placed several feet apart and parallel to one another. A single hanging light is seen between the bunk beds. At USR, there is a barbwire fence that leads to the crematorium. The barbwire fence may be projected on a wall or curtain, if desired. The courtyard of Women's Barracks is at USR and CS and is representational. For the final scene, a gallows or representation of a gallows appears in the courtyard.

**Clothing Supply Department:** At DSR, there are tables with piles of clothing and baskets of clothes (circa 1939-43). Sheets hang from clotheslines. There is an electrical circuit box/switch on the wall DSL.

**Note:** For the following, the Control Room and Gunpowder Room of the Union Munitions Factory must be staged in close proximity so the audience can clearly see how the gunpowder is smuggled.

**Union Munitions Factory, Control Department:** At CSR, two wooden worktables and benches face the audience. The worktables may be positioned one behind the other or next to the other but must allow for the actors to be seen clearly. There are cigar-sized, black metal boxes on the wooden tables.

**Union Munitions Factory, Gunpowder Room:** At CSL, there is a sign that reads, "Gunpowder Room." The room is delineated with a room outline, but the walls are invisible to the audience. There is a simple wooden room outline with an open door frame. A square or rectangular wooden table is in the middle of the room with benches on each side for the prisoners to sit on and perform their work tasks. On the table, there are tin bowls. Behind the wooden table is another wooden table used for dispensing gunpowder to female prisoners. On the top of this table, there is a metal scale and a metal ladle. Near this table are several bags of "gunpowder" with "Explosive Material" written on them. This table is farthest from the door, allowing the prisoners to smuggle the gunpowder undetected.

**Interrogation Block XI:** At USL, representational.

**Interrogation Block XI's Outer Room:** At DSC, a representational prison administration room outline is used. In the middle of the room is a rectangular table with three wooden chairs placed on three sides.

**Roza's Prison Cell:** At USR, there is a representational prison cell with a wooden bench/bed slab.

## Synopsis of Scenes

### ACT I

**Scene 1:** Women's barracks, early morning.

**Scene 2:** Women's barracks.

### ACT II

**Scene 1:** Union Munitions Factory.

**Scene 2:** Clothing Supply Department, early morning.

**Scene 3:** Women's barracks, Sunday.

**Scene 4:** Courtyard of the women's barracks, months later.

### ACT III

**Scene 1:** Interrogation Block XI.

**Scene 2:** Women's barracks, evening.

**Scene 3:** Women's barracks.

**Scene 4:** Interrogation Block XI, late evening.

**Scene 5:** Courtyard of the women's barracks.

## Props

9 Worn wooden bowls, for female prisoners	Materials" printed on them
Several worn/torn blankets, for female prisoners	Bags of "gunpowder"
Chunks of bread	Scale to weigh "gunpowder"
Truncheon, for Block Senior	Metal ladle for scooping "gunpowder"
Toolbox with assorted tools, for Noah	Notebook and pencil, for Foreman Clausen
Riding crop, for Commandant	Kerchief with a gold necklace wrapped in it for a bribe
Basket with clothes	Fresh bread
Clothes (circa 1939-1943) for sorting	2 Large bags filled with clothing
Sheets on clothesline	8 Cleaning rags
Notebook and pencil, for Kapo Woman	Candle and matches
Wet pair of pants	Notebook and pencil, for Foreman Schultz
Forged work pass	"Gunpowder" in handkerchief
Old wooden vat with a wooden ladle	Wrapped box with a blue bow
Gold coin	Gloves
Gold ring for bribe	Wool scarf
Black metal ammunition boxes for shell casings (cigar size)	Salami
3 Tin bowls for "gunpowder"	Broom, for Yakov
"Gunpowder" (dyed black sand)	Rifle, for SS Guard
Empty gun cartridges	Tin cup
Several bags that have "Dangerous Explosive	Locket
	Notebook and pencil, for SS Guard
	Diamond ring for a bribe

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Medicine bottles	Letter from Joseph
Bandages	Helmet, for SS Guard
Blanket	Dollar bills
"Pills" (candy)	Watch, for SS Guard
Ala's letter to husband	Bottle of "whiskey"
Letter to Hanka	Jail keys
Playing cards	Gallows (or representation
3 Whiskey glasses	of gallows)

## Special Effects

Factory noises (the sounds of a large press and clanking, spraying noises)

Factory whistle (to signal the end of the workday)

Dogs barking in the distance

Sound of a large explosion

Alarms

Death march

Last phrase of "A Plea to God" from *Jan Peerce Sings Hebrew Melodies*

**“So, today,  
we live and die in Auschwitz,  
but tell me...  
where will Auschwitz  
be built tomorrow?”**

—Estusia

## Act I

### Scene 1

*(AT RISE: Women's barracks, early morning. Female Inmates Roza, Roza's Mother, Estusia, Hanka, Regina, Sarah, Ethyl, Lucia, and Ala are drinking black coffee from wooden bowls and eating bread.)*

LUCIA: *(Trying to grab bread from Ethyl.)* Gimme that!

ETHYL: It's mine!

*(Lucia and Ethyl continue to fight over the bread. Roza tries to break up the fight.)*

ROZA: *(Trying to pull them apart.)* Stop!

LUCIA: Roza, she stole my bread!

ROZA: Shhh! The Block Senior will come. *(Tears the bread in half.)* Here... *(Gives Lucia and Ethyl each a portion.)* ...be satisfied!

*(Lucia and Ethyl go to a different corner of the barracks and ravenously eat their bread.)*

BLOCK SENIOR: *(Offstage, shouts.)* Roll call in one minute!

ROZA: *(Trying to help her mother out of the bunk.)* Come, Mama. We must go!

ROZA'S MOTHER: *(Weakly.)* Roza, I've always been so proud of you.

ROZA: *(In a rush.)* Yes, Mama...I know.

ROZA'S MOTHER: Always...remember, my love.

ROZA: *(Pulling her Mother up from the bunk.)* It's roll call, Mama! We must go!

ROZA'S MOTHER: I've been selected.

ROZA: No!

ROZA'S MOTHER: Mengele came to my workplace yesterday.

ROZA: Oh, my God!

ROZA'S MOTHER: I saw him write down my number.

ROZA: It can't be!

ROZA'S MOTHER: I'm too weak...I can't work.

ROZA: I'll hide you!

ROZA'S MOTHER: They'll find me. *(Pause.)* I want to rest.

ROZA: I can't live without you. We'll go together!

ROZA'S MOTHER: No, [mein kind]! You're the only one left.

You must survive! [*Pronounced "mine kint." Yiddish for "my child."*]

BLOCK SENIOR: *(Offstage, shouts.)* Roll call! Line up, bitches!

*(Female Inmates line up in roll call formation, except for Roza and her Mother, who is still on her bunk. Roza is weeping in her Mother's lap.)*

ROZA'S MOTHER: *(Trying to comfort Roza.)* When you were a little girl and frightened of the dark, what did I tell you?

ROZA: *(Crying.)* No, Mama, not now.

ROZA'S MOTHER:

When you're afraid of the dark,  
Think about a candle's glow,  
Its special aura surrounding you so,  
Then think...think about that sacred place from within,  
And draw strength and grow.

ROZA: *(Crying.)* Mama...don't leave me!

ROZA'S MOTHER: *(Kisses her.)* You've been my most precious gift. *(Pause.)* Now...help me to the roll call—

*(Block Senior abruptly enters, banging her truncheon on the wooden bunks.)*

BLOCK SENIOR: *(To Female Inmates, shouts.)* Up! Rise, you sluts! Up! Up, you lazy Jews!

*(Roza helps her Mother up. They join the other Female Inmates for roll call outside in front of the barracks. Block Senior barks out orders. Female Inmates line up. Commandant enters.)*

COMMANDANT: Block Senior, count the inmates in barracks  
20!

*(Block Senior counts the Female Inmates out loud.)*

BLOCK SENIOR: All women present and ready to work!

COMMANDANT: [Gut]...[gut]. But one of you Jews is too old to work. Number 79680, step forward! *(Roza's Mother steps forward. Roza grabs her hand.)* But the rest of you will work! The minute you Jewess bitches can't...is the moment of your execution! Understood? [*Pronounced "goot." "Good" in German.*]

INMATES: Yes, Commandant.

*(Roza's Mother steps forward to the edge of the stage. The Commandant maliciously stares at her. Roza helplessly looks at her mother for the last time.)*

BLOCK SENIOR: *(To Female Inmates, shouts.)* March! To work!

*(Roza hesitates, but Ala pushes Roza into the line and the Female Inmates march off to work. Lights fade. The Commandant and Roza's Mother are alone onstage. Noah enters with his toolbox. Noah stands outside the barbwire fence that leads to the crematorium. Looking nervous as he waits for Kaminsky, Noah overhears the following.)*

SS GUARD: *(Offstage. To those about to be gassed.)* On behalf of the camp administration, I bid you welcome. This is not a holiday resort, but a labor camp. We shall offer you well-paid work and look after your health. After the war, we

shall assess everyone according to his merits and treat him accordingly.

*(Kaminsky enters and approaches Noah. They speak in hushed tones.)*

NOAH: *(Nervously.)* Kaminsky, I've been waiting.

KAMINSKY: Noah, did you get the gunpowder?

NOAH: We can't.

KAMINSKY: There isn't much time!

NOAH: We've tried! Only women work in the Gunpowder Room.

KAMINSKY: There must be a way to get it from them.

NOAH: Our contacts tried. SS are always on guard.

KAMINSKY: Talk with the women.

NOAH: Me? I can't. I can't even get near the place!

KAMINSKY: But the SS send you to repair things in the women's barracks.

NOAH: Yes, but it's almost impossible to talk. The Block Seniors –

KAMINSKY: You must find a way!

NOAH: Yes. But...how? I...don't...

*(Kaminsky and Noah overhear the following.)*

SS GUARD: *(Offstage. To those about to be gassed.)* We know you are tired and thirsty from your long train journey and want to eat, rest, and take baths. We will attend to all of your needs, but now I ask you to prepare for your bath.

NOAH: *(To Kaminsky.)* Are they going to the gas?

KAMINSKY: As we speak.

NOAH: Oh, God. *(Pause.)* Maybe...maybe...there's a way!

KAMINSKY: How?

NOAH: I've a friend here from home...a woman.

KAMINSKY: You think she'd help?

NOAH: In [Ciechanów,] she was involved with the Underground. I'll talk to her. [*Pronounced "Chekanaf."*]

KAMINSKY: Good. Quick, go! SS!

*(Kaminsky and Noah exit. Blackout. Lights up on Kapo Woman, Roza, Lucia, and Ethyl in the Clothing Supply Department, where there are piles of clothes circa 1939-43 and sheets hanging on clotheslines. Roza is carrying a basket of clothes.)*

ROZA: *(Facing the audience.)* Mama, I couldn't save you, forgive me!

*(Kapo Woman shoves Roza, and the basket of clothes that she is holding falls to the ground.)*

KAPO WOMAN: *(To Lucia, shouts.)* Work! Did you hear me, Jew?

*(Lucia and Ethyl start sorting clothes.)*

LUCIA: Where should we put the shirts?

KAPO WOMAN: I want all the shirts piled here! *(Indicates.)*

And the pants here! *(Indicates.)*

ETHYL: But these are wet. *(Holds up a wet pair of pants.)*

KAPO WOMAN: Fool, I told you to hang the wet clothes on the line!

ETHYL: Yes, Madame Kapo.

*(Kapo Woman is seen checking off items in her notebook as she supervises their work. Noah enters with his toolbox and approaches Kapo Woman.)*

NOAH: Fraulein Kapo, I've been sent by my work detail to check the electrical wires.

KAPO WOMAN: *(Haughtily.)* I was not informed of this!

*(Note: For the following, as Roza works, she listens intently to Noah and Kapo Woman and realizes something is afoot.)*

NOAH: *(Emphatically.)* I'm only following what I've been assigned to do.

*(Noah hands Kapo Woman a forged work pass.)*

KAPO WOMAN: No one comes into this department without my permission. *(Reads the note. Satisfied that it's authentic, she signs it.)* All right, Jew, do what you have to do, but be quick about it.

*(Noah approaches Roza, where the electrical circuit box is located. He removes some tools from his toolbox to check the wires. For the following, Noah and Roza speak in hushed tones.)*

NOAH: Roza... *(Roza continues sorting clothes.)* What's wrong? The Underground needs your help.

ROZA: Underground? Here?

NOAH: We're planning an uprising.

ROZA: An uprising?

NOAH: Yes. You know the women working in the Munitions Factory?

ROZA: Some are in my barracks.

NOAH: We need gunpowder. You must convince them to smuggle it.

ROZA: But how?

NOAH: We tried getting it. It's impossible. Only women working in the Gunpowder Room can get it. You must talk with them...convince them!

ROZA: But even if they get the gunpowder...?

NOAH: With it, the Sondas can destroy the death factories!

ROZA: How will they get it?

NOAH: From you.

ROZA: Me?

NOAH: The women must smuggle it to you, and the Sondos will pick it up here when they drop off the clothes. And our other contacts...they'll get it from the women in the factory.

ROZA: I don't know...how can I convince them?

NOAH: I don't know, but you must try!

ROZA: But we live like animals...willing to tear each other apart for a piece of bread.

NOAH: We're counting on you! Don't you want to try and end the madness? *(Pause.)* Roza, answer me!

ROZA: My mother was selected this morning. I could do nothing for her...nothing! I hate these bastards! I wish I could kill them!

NOAH: I'm sorry for your loss...but through the uprising, we can gain back some of our dignity. *(Pause.)* Help our people.

ROZA: I want to end this nightmare, too! If I could believe there was a way...that it would work.

NOAH: We must make it happen! There is no more *time!* The gassing goes on and on! You can talk with the other women. They'll listen to you.

ROZA: I'll try, but—

NOAH: There's no more time for trying! You must convince them!

ROZA: I'll talk with them.

NOAH: When?

ROZA: Tonight. I'll do my best to convince them.

NOAH: You must!

*(Blackout.)*

## Scene 2

*(AT RISE: Women's barracks. The lighting is less somber and more hopeful. All Female Inmates are present. Estusia and Hanka are sitting on their bunk beds lost in thought. Regina and Sarah, women from the Union Munitions Factory, are performing routine tasks. Ethyl and Lucia are sitting in their bunks looking withdrawn and exhausted. Ala approaches Roza.)*

ALA: Roza, I'm sorry about your mother.

ROZA: I loved her so much.

ALA: I've never seen such a bond between mother and daughter.

ROZA: *(Crying.)* They killed my mother! Oh God, why? Why?!

ALA: *(Embracing Roza.)* As long as you remember her, she'll be with you. *(Pause.)* Tell me about her.

ROZA: *(Regains composure.)* I remember when I was a schoolgirl...I'd run home to show her what I'd made, and she'd be making dinner but always she took the time to say, "Roza, you did well, my child. I'm so very proud of you."

*(Pause. Silence.)*

ALA: *(More to herself, indicating she never had a good relationship with her own mother.)* I never knew mothers could say such nice things.

ROZA: In my senior year, I failed a mathematics test, and I was so worried I'd fail the next. The night before the test, my mother came to me and said, "I missed you this week. You haven't come to talk with me." I told her nothing was happening in school and that it was just rather boring. She looked down at my desk and said, "Story problems...they can get pretty confusing. Let me see if I can solve one." I was amazed to see my mother solve all the problems! *(Pause.)* I told her how I failed the last test and how

frightened I was about tomorrow's test. She put her arms around me and said,  
"Be without fear,  
Because what is fear?  
Except the lack of understanding of the unknown.  
And in time,  
All secrets of the Universe  
Will be revealed."

ALA: Your mother was very wise.

ROZA: Now, I must do something I know she would want me to do. Will you help me?

ALA: What is it, Roza?

ROZA: (*Lowers her voice.*) Come over here. You work in the Control Room in the factory. But do you know who works in the Gunpowder Room?

ALA: They're in my tier.

ROZA: Good. I must talk with them right away. It's important.

ALA: What is it?

ROZA: Ala, we have a chance to escape! Come, I'll explain!

*(Roza and Ala exit. Lights dim. Lights up on Estusia and Hanka. Note: Lighting creates a dreamlike atmosphere. Hanka chuckles to herself.)*

ESTUSIA: (*Endearingly.*) Hanka, what's so funny?

HANKA: Some of the things we used to do.

ESTUSIA: Well, aren't you going to tell me?

HANKA: Remember all the fun we had before the ghetto?

ESTUSIA: Don't think about those times.

HANKA: It was only four years ago.

ESTUSIA: It's too painful.

HANKA: No, for me, it helps. Remember when Mama would make you take care of me on Sundays so she could do her housework?

ESTUSIA: (*Sarcastically.*) How can I forget. She'd only give me money if I took my baby sister to the children's matinee.

HANKA: What a team we made! You gave me my half of the money so I could run around buying what I wanted.

ESTUSIA: You mean I was clever enough to get rid of you, so I could go watch my more sophisticated movies.

HANKA: You loved your Clark Gable movies.

ESTUSIA: Absolutely the most handsome man who ever walked the face of the earth!

HANKA: You always went to movies where men and women were falling in love

ESTUSIA: (*Dreamily.*) Yes.

HANKA: Have you ever been in love?

ESTUSIA: Once.

HANKA: I'm 16 now, and I've never been in love. Do you ever think I will?

ESTUSIA: Of course, you will.

HANKA: You loved Herschel.

ESTUSIA: We only dated. I could never fall in love with him.

HANKA: Well, you could have fooled me...the way I saw you two kissing on the couch!

ESTUSIA: I was just practicing.

HANKA: Well, then who did you fall in love with?

ESTUSIA: Brent.

HANKA: Brent? He isn't Jewish.

ESTUSIA: It was a secret. No one knew about us.

HANKA: You never even told me!

ESTUSIA: (*Affectionately teasing.*) Especially not you!

HANKA: Mama and Papa would have been so angry!

ESTUSIA: I can't bear to think that Mama and Papa are gone forever. I wish I could go to sleep and wake up tomorrow and all of this would be a dream.

(*Estusia breaks down crying in Hanka's arms.*)

HANKA: We have each other. Now we must be mother and father to one another...be strong...live for each other. We must survive Auschwitz!

*(Hanka hugs Estusia and wipes her tears away. Roza approaches, and Hanka and Estusia break their embrace.)*

ROZA: *(Urgently.)* Ala told me you both work at the Munitions Factory.

HANKA: Estusia works in the Gunpowder Room, and I check the ammunition pieces in control. Why?

ROZA: We need your help!

ESTUSIA: "We"?

ROZA: The Underground.

ESTUSIA: *(Hesitant.)* I didn't know...

ROZA: Shh! *(Looking around to make sure the others aren't listening.)* One member approached me today. They're planning an uprising, including members of the Sonderkommando, the men forced to work in the crematoriums.

HANKA: *(Excited.)* When?

ROZA: Soon...maybe in the next four or five months.

HANKA: What can we...how can we help?

ROZA: *(Passionately.)* Explosive materials—

HANKA: For bombs.

ROZA: Yes! To fight the bastards, destroy the gas chambers and crematoriums. Estusia, only you and the others in the Gunpowder Room can get it.

ESTUSIA: Impossible.

HANKA: No, it isn't!

ESTUSIA: How would you know? Do you work there?

ROZA: Help us...please!

ESTUSIA: But the risks!

ROZA: I know. *(Pause.)* We've lost so much...our loved ones...homes...but we can't let them take our souls.

HANKA: *(To Estusia.)* We must help!

ESTUSIA: Why should we risk our lives?

HANKA: Because it'll be better than living moment to moment...day to day...wondering if our numbers will be selected. (*Holding out her wrist, revealing her tattooed number.*)

ESTUSIA: This is just like you. Even when we were in the ghetto...take risks...don't worry about the consequences!

HANKA: You're wrong! When a friend approached me in the ghetto to join the Zionist youth group I hesitated.

ESTUSIA: (*Angry.*) You? I've never known you to hesitate for anything!

HANKA: I was afraid to join them! I knew their activities were against Nazi law. I knew Mama and Papa would have forbidden it.

ESTUSIA: But you did what you wanted to do anyway!

HANKA: What I wanted? I felt in my heart it was right. Just like you felt loving Brent was right.

ESTUSIA: That's different!

HANKA: No. By loving Brent, you felt complete, just like I did when I helped to start orphanages and taught Polish to the children who only knew Yiddish. I showed them that I cared.

ESTUSIA: And what about just caring for me? It's easier if we just care for each other.

HANKA: Because if we get involved with the Underground, it will give us hope...more of a reason to live through this hell.

ESTUSIA: (*To Roza.*) It just seems so impossible.

ROZA: No one else will help us. We must help ourselves.

HANKA: (*To Estusia, kindly.*) I know this is difficult.

ESTUSIA: And is it really so easy for you? The SS have never been outsmarted. Why now?

HANKA: During our last days in the Warsaw Ghetto, I had a difficult decision—to fight with my comrades against the Nazis, or join you, Mama, and Papa on the deportation trains.

ESTUSIA: But you chose to be with us. Why fight now?

HANKA: I made a mistake.

ESTUSIA: We have easy work...the best chance for surviving.

HANKA: The Hashomer knew. I was warned about the death camps.

ESTUSIA: You knew?

HANKA: Yes, but I couldn't believe that the SS would put thousands of us in cattle cars and bring us here to die. But when the doors opened...I felt an evil I'd never known before...and then those voices, those loud voices, yelling for us to get off the trains...and, suddenly, I knew my friends were right! The Nazis want to kill us...all of us! I should have stayed fighting the bastards! *(Pause.)* Estusia, don't you see we have no real choice? Either we fight for our freedom *now* or we slowly die in Auschwitz.

*(Long pause.)*

ESTUSIA: You have such courage. Maybe you're right...we are dying. *(Pause.)* Roza, what can I do?

ROZA: How many women work with you?

ESTUSIA: Two others.

ROZA: Can they be trusted to help?

ESTUSIA: I'll ask. They're in these barracks.

ROZA: Good. Somehow, you'll have to take bits of gunpowder and hide it on you.

ESTUSIA: No, not on me. We're searched every night.

HANKA: But the other women and I aren't.

ROZA: Then can you meet Estusia without attracting the SS?

HANKA: I think so because I often bring the parts to another department in black boxes. The SS won't suspect me. I'll just carry two boxes: one filled with ammunition parts, and the bottom box will be empty. I'll walk over to Estusia when the guard isn't watching.

ESTUSIA: *(Caught up in the plan, excited.)* Yes, perfect! We use the same black metal boxes. I'll fill mine with gunpowder and exchange mine with yours at the door.

ROZA: Excellent!

HANKA: It should work!

ROZA: Bring half the gunpowder to me and the other half to Ala.

HANKA: Ala?

ROZA: She'll give it to other women, who will give it to the Underground men in the factory so they can make bombs, too!

ESTUSIA: (*Worried.*) It seems the more people involved—

ROZA: By using this chain method, no one will know all the contacts, in case one of us gets caught. (*Pause.*) Estusia, talk with the other women...see if they'll join us.

ESTUSIA: I'll go now.

HANKA: I'll go, too.

ESTUSIA: No, it's best if I talk with them myself.

ROZA: Hanka, let's tell Ala the plan.

(*Estusia goes to speak with Regina and Sarah. Roza and Hanka go to Ala's bunk.*)

ESTUSIA: Regina, Sarah...you'll never believe what is about to happen here!

SARAH: (*Jokingly.*) They're flying in a French chef to prepare our meals?

(*Regina and Estusia laugh.*)

REGINA: (*To Estusia.*) Sarah has a vivid imagination!

ESTUSIA: There's an Underground here. A member approached Roza. They need some of the gunpowder that we work with. With it, the Sondos can destroy the death factories, and the men in camp can destroy the watchtowers. We could all escape and be free again!

SARAH: We're the only ones who can get it for them?

ESTUSIA: Yes.

SARAH: No...no! It's too dangerous!

ESTUSIA: But now we can fight them!

SARAH: But it's so risky!

REGINA: Sarah, we'll die doing nothing!

ESTUSIA: *(To Sarah.)* We have a good plan. It'll work.

SARAH: I'm scared. I...I don't know.

ESTUSIA: Sarah, I'm scared too, but we can't get enough  
gunpowder without your help.

REGINA: Come on, Sarah, let's help!

SARAH: Let me think...

ESTUSIA: We need to know, now.

REGINA: Sarah, let's help!

SARAH: All right...all right, I'll do it. *(Pause.)* Perhaps there  
will be some justice.

ESTUSIA: Here's the plan...

*(Lights dim on Estusia, Regina, and Sarah. Lights up on Roza, Ala,  
and Hanka.)*

ROZA: Ala, Hanka and Estusia have agreed!

ALA: Good!

ROZA: If Estusia convinces the others, we'll be able to  
smuggle enough gunpowder for the uprising.

ALA: But how will I get my share?

HANKA: From where you work, you'll be able to see me  
walking to the Gunpowder Room.

ALA: But the guard is always so close.

HANKA: We'll do it in the afternoon. He always talks to  
Foreman Schultz.

ALA: But just for a minute.

HANKA: That's all we need. You'll have to watch for me. It  
must happen quickly. After I exchange boxes with Estusia,  
I'll go directly to the bathroom. I'll give you your portion  
there.

ALA: We'll be safe there.

*(Lights dim on Roza, Ala, and Hanka. Lights up Estusia, Regina, and Sarah.)*

ESTUSIA: *(To Regina and Sarah.)* Come, we'll tell the others you want to join us. *(Estusia, Regina, and Sarah join Roza, Ala, and Hanka. Lights up on the group. To Roza and Hanka.)* They were a lot easier to convince than me!

REGINA: *(To Roza, Ala, and Hanka.)* We know it's dangerous...but we want to do something against these murderers.

SARAH: *(To Roza, Ala, and Hanka.)* When can we start?

ROZA: Estusia explained the plan?

SARAH: Yes.

ROZA: Then we'll start tomorrow!

BLOCK SENIOR: *(From a corner of the barracks or offstage, shouts.)* Lights out! All talking must cease! *(Lights fade to black as the Female Inmates get into their bunks for the night. Long pause to denote passing of time. Lights slowly rise. Shouts.)* Up! Rise, you stupid bitches. Line up at the vat!

*(Male Inmates 1, 2 enter, carrying a vat. As the Female Inmates line up to get their coffee, the Block Senior shouts out commands. Male Inmate 1 ladles black coffee into the women's wooden bowls. Male Inmate 2 hands the bowls back to the Female Inmates. Female Inmates return to their bunks with their wooden bowls of coffee. Some gulp down their coffee while others use some of it to wash their faces. Male Inmate 1, 2 exit with the vat.)*

SARAH: *(Drinks some coffee and spits it out.)* This coffee tastes like mud!

REGINA: *(Sarcastically.)* Well, maybe tonight your French chef will prepare dinner.

SARAH: Regina, the world is filled with possibilities.

REGINA: But you better drink that. It's all you'll get for a while.

BLOCK SENIOR: *(To Regina, shouts.)* Silence! *(Female Inmates continue to drink their coffee. Banging her truncheon on the*

*bunks, shouts.) That's enough! Time to work! Line up for the count! Come on, move! Move! (Female Inmates line up for roll call. Block Senior counts the Female Inmates and enters the count in her notebook. Shouts.) March! To work! It's time to work for the Fatherland! March, you bitches!*

*(Following the Block Senior, the Female Inmates march off. Lights dim. Lights up inside the Clothing Department. Roza, Lucia, and Ethyl are working. Kapo Woman is supervising them.)*

KAPO WOMAN: Good, the clothes are here to be sorted!  
*(Female Inmates begin to sort the clothes.) No...wait! (Quickly looks through the clothes.) Damn! We only get the crap from the crematoriums! All right, bitches, don't just stand there...sort the crap! I want shirts here... (Indicates.) ...pants here. (Indicates. To Roza.) As for you...*

*(Ethyl finds a gold coin in the pocket of one of the pants. Lucia sees the coin and tries to grab it from Ethyl.)*

ETHYL: *(To Lucia.) Get away! (Pushes Lucia's hand away.)*

KAPO WOMAN: Stop! What's going on?

LUCIA: Nothing.

KAPO WOMAN: You're hiding something! *(Searches Lucia. Noah enters and clears his throat to get the Kapo Woman's attention. She stops searching Lucia. To Noah.)* What the hell do you want?

NOAH: I wanted to make sure the lights were working.

*(Noah hands Kapo Woman a gold ring as a bribe.)*

KAPO WOMAN: *(Upon seeing the ring, she quickly changes her tone.)* Sure, check the lighting. *(To Lucia as she escorts her off to beat her, shouts.)* Don't cry out!

*(Kapo Woman and Lucia exit. Noah goes to the electrical box, where Roza is working. For the following they speak in hushed tones.)*

ROZA: The women agreed.

NOAH: I knew we could depend on you!

ROZA: We know the risks. But, Noah, is it really possible?

NOAH: Men have escaped through the Underground.

ROZA: Then it can be done!

NOAH: Most who've tried were caught and killed. But several months ago, the two we helped made it.

ROZA: How?

NOAH: I can't tell you now, but you should know that these men escaped with pictures of the atrocities to show the free world.

ROZA: Then certainly the Allies will come!

NOAH: Three months have gone by...nothing. We've heard nothing!

ROZA: But perhaps soon.

NOAH: I'm not so sure that even if they believed what they saw they would come.

ROZA: How can you say that? If they *knew*, they would bomb the tracks to Auschwitz!

NOAH: We can't depend on that.

ROZA: Then we'll destroy the crematoriums! We must!

*(Blackout.)*

**ACT II****Scene 1**

*(AT RISE: Union Munitions Factory. Various factory noises are heard including a large press and clanking and spraying noises. Facing the audience, Hanka and Ethyl are sitting assembly-line fashion behind a wooden worktable next to the Gunpowder Room. Ala and Lucia are at their worktable behind Hanka and Ethyl. This represents two of the control departments in Union Factory, where the ammunition parts are checked for specifications such as weight, proper groove indentations, correct roundness, smoothness, etc. Pieces that do not meet exact specifications are thrown away. The Female Inmates are checking the parts and passing them to the next. Hanka is checking pieces and then putting them into black metal boxes, which are on the table in front of her workspace. Foreman Schultz repeatedly checks on the Female Inmates to make certain they are performing their tasks. The SS Guard is standing near the control departments. At CSL, there is a sign that reads, "Gunpowder Room." The department is delineated with a room outline, but the walls are invisible to the audience. After a few minutes of various factory activities, the lights dim on the entire stage, except on the Gunpowder Room. All factory noises cease, except what is heard from the Gunpowder Room. There is a square worktable in the middle of the Gunpowder Room. Estusia, Sarah, and Regina are sitting around it, performing their work tasks. Their work consists of taking gunpowder from tin bowls, filling cartridges, and putting the cartridges into the black metal ammunition boxes in front of them. Estusia takes one of the filled ammunition boxes to the storage table located near the door of the Gunpowder Room. Foreman Clausen is standing behind a worktable opposite the door. On this table, there are several bags that have "Dangerous-Explosive Materials" printed on them. He weighs the gunpowder on a scale and writes the amount in his notebook. Estusia takes two metal ammunition boxes from the storage table to the worktable. Note: It is important that the audience can clearly see the Female Inmates smuggle the gunpowder.)*

ESTUSIA: *(To Regina, stage whisper.)* Get more gunpowder.

FOREMAN CLAUSEN: *(To Estusia, angrily.)* No talking! You're here to work, not gossip! *(Regina, carrying her tin bowl, approaches Foreman Clausen, who refills the bowl with more gunpowder. Regina returns to her worktable. Sarah, carrying her tin bowl, approaches Foreman Clausen, who refills her bowl with more gunpowder. Sarah returns to her worktable. After Regina returns to her seat, Estusia signals Regina and passes one of the empty metal boxes to her underneath the table. Regina cautiously takes some of the gunpowder and puts it into the metal box. Note: All the sabotage is performed under the table and must be clearly seen by the audience. Sarah sits and Regina passes the box to her. Sarah takes some of her gunpowder and places it into the box. Estusia approaches Foreman Clausen to refill her bowl with gunpowder. As Foreman Clausen is measuring the gunpowder into her bowl, Estusia knocks the table, causing Foreman Clausen to spill some of the gunpowder. Angrily.)* You stupid Jewess! Look what you've done! None of this gunpowder can be wasted, not a single speck! Because of this, you'll go without lunch! Now, take this gunpowder and be careful with it!

*(Guard hears the commotion in the Gunpowder Room, looks in, sees that everything is under control, and continues walking around the factory. When Estusia sits, Sarah passes the box to her. Estusia puts some gunpowder into the box. Lights up on the rest of the stage. SS Guard starts to approach Foreman Schultz.)*

HANKA: Foreman Schultz, you've checked these. May I take them to the next department?

FOREMAN SCHULTZ: Yes, go, go.

HANKA: Yes, Foreman Schultz, right away.

*(Hanka takes two metal boxes. The one on the bottom is empty, and the one on top is filled with ammunition pieces. Hanka heads to the*

*Gunpowder Room. Ala notices the Guard is too close, but Hanka is unaware.)*

ALA: *(To Hanka, stage whisper.)* The Guard! *(SS Guard officiously approaches Hanka to check the boxes. There is heightened tension at this moment. Seeing that the box on top is filled with ammunition pieces and everything looks fine, SS Guard doesn't look into the empty bottom box and lets Hanka continue on. Hanka walks more quickly to the Gunpowder Room. Estusia sees Hanka near the doorway. Making certain the Foreman is not watching, Estusia quickly exchanges boxes with Hanka. Estusia takes the empty box and sits at the worktable. Hanka exits to the offstage bathroom.)* Ala, *seeing that the SS Guard and Foreman Schultz are still talking, signals to Hanka that it is safe for her to go to the bathroom.)* Foreman Schultz, may I go the bathroom?

FOREMAN SCHULTZ: *(Annoyed, snaps.)* Yes, but be quick! We are behind schedule!

*(Ala goes offstage to meet Hanka.)*

SS GUARD: *(Mockingly.)* "Foreman Schultz, may I go to the bathroom?" These Jewish girls are always trying to get out of work.

FOREMAN SCHULTZ: They've been used to having other people sweat for them. *(Hanka enters and goes back to her workstation. To Hanka, shouts.)* We've work to do!

HANKA: Yes, Foreman Schultz!

SS GUARD: *(To Ala, who is still offstage in the bathroom, shouts.)* Out of there! You're wasting time!

*(Ala enters and quickly sits at her workstation. Hanka and Ala exchange nervous glances. A factory whistle is heard, signaling the end of the workday.)*

FOREMAN CLAUSEN: *(To Female Inmates, shouts.)* Stop work! All extra gunpowder must be brought to the table!

Now! (*Female Inmates in the Gunpowder Room hurry to bring their bowls to the table.*) Careful...careful with the gunpowder!

(*As the Female Inmates head out the door, the SS Guard conducts body searches on each one to make sure no gunpowder has been taken. As the SS Guard conducts the body searches, the Female Inmates look humiliated. Regina, Sarah, and Estusia pass through the doorway and line up to be marched back to their barracks.*)

SS GUARD: (*To female Inmates, shouts.*) Straight lines! Quickly! Now, march! (*Female Inmates march behind the SS Guard to the barracks.*) Roll call! (*Counts the Female Inmates out loud and is satisfied.*) Dismissed to the barracks!

(*SS Guard exits. Female Inmates enter the barracks. Estusia, Hanka, Ala, Regina, Roza, and Sarah look relieved.*)

ESTUSIA: Hanka, I'm nervous. What if we're caught?

HANKA: We won't be. Ala got her part. Now I must give mine to Roza.

ESTUSIA: But what if we are?

HANKA: Don't think that way! It worked today; it'll work tomorrow.

ESTUSIA: But I'm nervous about the guard!

HANKA: I got by him today. Don't worry.

ESTUSIA: I'm afraid.

HANKA: Me, too. But we can't stop now. It'll be all right.

(*Hanka gets up from her bunk to give the gunpowder to Roza.*)

ESTUSIA: (*Distressed.*) Where are you going?

HANKA: To give Roza the gunpowder. Come with me.

ESTUSIA: I just want to rest. (*Lies down on her bunk.*)

(*As Hanka approaches, Ala is seen speaking with Roza.*)

HANKA: *(To Roza.)* Here.

*(Hanka cautiously gives Roza the gunpowder, which is contained in a small knotted cloth or handkerchief. Roza quickly takes it and hides it on her body or in the hemline of her dress. Note: If this exchange proves too cumbersome, it can be performed without props.)*

ROZA: Good work!

HANKA: Estusia is so worried.

ALA: Worried? Let her worry about the selection tomorrow, or the next day, or the day after!

ROZA: *(To Hanka, concerned.)* Does she want to stop?

HANKA: No...she's just scared like the rest of us.

ALA: This is the first day I can be proud that we're doing something to get out of this hell. *(Pause.)* I've learned that my husband is alive in a camp not far from here!

ROZA: How did you find out?

ALA: The factory...a friend from home came from my husband's camp. SS brought him to do some special work, then he'll go back. He's promised to take my husband this letter I've written.

HANKA: You miss him very much.

ALA: You can't imagine. You have Estusia; I've no one! *(Pause.)* I'm so lonely. I long for a man to hold me...like it was...before Auschwitz when I was happy and in love. Roza, don't you remember these feelings?

ROZA: *(Sadly.)* I...remember. But all that has been taken from me. Now I live for the uprising.

ALA: Me, too. And now knowing my husband is alive...I have such hope!

ROZA: Ala, it could be dangerous if you send the letter and the SS get ahold of it.

ALA: But he must know I'm alive!

ROZA: Your friend will tell him.

ALA: No, it must come through my letter so he can read it every day!

ROZA: Then you were careful in what you said?

ALA: Of course.

*(Ala returns to her bunk. Pause.)*

ROZA: *(To Hanka.)* I envy Ala.

HANKA: Why?

ROZA: Because...even *here* she can still feel love. And I can only feel hate for the SS...for what they did to my family and what they're doing to my soul. But now...the uprising...smuggling the gunpowder...this gives me hope! Finally, I can feel some hope!

*(Lights fade to black. A soft romantic blue light on Ala. Note: All action freezes in the barracks as Ala reads her letter out loud from her bunk.)*

ALA: *(Reads.)* "My dearest husband, I've just heard from our engineer friend that you're alive and in a camp not far from me. What a great joy to hear this news! Here, in Auschwitz, life is sheer misery. We're used as slave laborers, working 12 to 14 hours a day. Death and disease are everywhere. I'm lucky, though, because I have easy work inside the Munitions Factory. But it is our love—and now knowing you're still alive—that sustains me. Now, more than ever, I need to feel love, so I desperately hang on to those memories of love and the pleasures of our intimate moments, hoping and praying they'll come again! I can't share many details, but inmates here are working together to gain our freedom! I pray for your safety. Until we embrace again, all my love, Ala."

*(Lights fade to black.)*

## Scene 2

*(AT RISE: Clothing Supply Department, early morning. Roza, Lucia and Ethyl are sorting clothes from the crematorium so they can be used in camp. Kapo Woman is busy officiously keeping track of the inventory and writing it down in a notebook. Noah enters. Roza immediately sees him. Noah approaches Kapo Woman, and before he speaks to her, she starts to laugh.)*

KAPO WOMAN: *(Viciously, mockingly.)* I know why you've come back. More electrical work to do? There's no work for you here. You want to see your girlfriend. It's going to cost you, Jew! *(Noah pulls out a kerchief and quickly hands it to her. Kapo Woman unwraps the cloth, holds up a gold necklace, and bites it to make sure it's gold.)* You must have good friends. Go on, go talk to your lover. *(Laughs. Viciously.)* If you want more than talk with her, next time bring more trinkets. Who knows what might be arranged?

NOAH: Thank you, Fraulein.

KAPO WOMAN: *(Mockingly.)* And he's polite, too!

*(Noah approaches Roza and they speak in hushed tones.)*

ROZA: *(To Noah.)* It's working! Close to 20 women are helping.

NOAH: Good! It's going well. Our other contacts have gotten gunpowder from the women in the factory.

ROZA: I've mine here...

*(Roza hands the gunpowder to Noah.)*

NOAH: Not now! The Sonderkommando must get yours!

ROZA: But how? To whom?

NOAH: A man by the name of Kaminsky. I'll go to him and let him know he can come for the gunpowder.

ROZA: Can't you give it to him?

NOAH: No. It'll be less risky for everyone if you give it directly to Kaminsky when he drops off the clothes.

ROZA: Are you sure?

NOAH: We've thought this through...it'll work. *(Roza looks worried.)* Listen, when we're out of this hell, I'm going to take you to the finest restaurant in Warsaw!

ROZA: You promise?

NOAH: You bet! But, for now, this will have to do.

*(Noah pulls out some fresh bread from his toolbox and hands it to Roza, who quickly hides it on her body.)*

ROZA: Fresh bread! It's so needed!

NOAH: I'll do what I can to bring more. *(Roza resumes her work. Noah exits the barracks, goes outside the barbed wire fence of the crematorium, and looks about nervously. When Noah reaches the fence, the Female Inmates in the Clothing Department freeze. Seeing Noah, Kaminsky enters and approaches him. They speak in hushed tones. To Kaminsky.)* Roza has it.

KAMINSKY: Finally! Finally, we can do the work... *(Raising his hands to the heavens.)* ...He hasn't!

NOAH: There are only three in the department. She's medium height and wears a brown scarf.

KAMINSKY: I'll go now.

*(Noah looks around to make sure no one is listening.)*

NOAH: You have everything else to make the bombs?

KAMINSKY: We've just been waiting for the gunpowder.

*(Female Inmates in the Clothing Supply Department unfreeze and resume sorting clothes. Noah and Kaminsky exit. Kaminsky re-enters, carrying two large bags filled with clothes. Kaminsky looks for Roza and spots her.)*

KAPO WOMAN: *(To Kaminsky, respectfully.)* Oh, it's you. I see you've brought more supplies. Good!

*(Kaminsky takes a deep breath and puts one of the bags down. The other bag is still on his shoulder.)*

ETHYL: Madam Kapo, I'll start sorting this one. *(Starts sorting through the bag.)*

KAPO WOMAN: Stop, swine! *(Pushes Ethyl out of the way.)* Only when I say!

*(Kaminsky picks up the bag.)*

KAMINSKY: No, I want this woman... *(Indicating Roza.)* ...to do it.

*(Roza starts sorting the bag of clothing.)*

KAPO WOMAN: Fine. *(To Ethyl.)* But you, 65789... *(“Slaps” Ethyl.)* ...never take the clothes until I give the order!

ETHYL: But I was just—

KAPO WOMAN: Silence! Do as I say! Get back to work!

*(For the following, Kaminsky and Roza speak in hushed tones.)*

KAMINSKY: Roza?

ROZA: Yes.

KAMINSKY: I know you're the one who organized the smuggling.

ROZA: What? I don't know what you mean.

KAMINSKY: It's me...Kaminsky. *(Roza passes the small knotted cloth containing gunpowder to Kaminsky. He takes it and hides it in his clothes. The other Women in the department freeze.)* We're forever grateful for the risk you're taking.

ROZA: It's risky...but it's for our freedom!

KAMINSKY: And for those who have perished and the souls who will die today. I work in the gas chambers. I see the madness...the daily transports being led to their deaths.

ROZA: But why don't they fight?

KAMINSKY: Because they don't suspect they're going to die. The SS have created a brilliant charade down to the smallest detail. The bastards are convincing! They tell them that they must shower for delousing and hang their clothes on the numbered posts and not forget their numbers so they can quickly get their clothes after they shower.

ROZA: They are bastards!

KAMINSKY: (*Anguished.*) They speak kindly to keep the people calm. Those who suspect and start acting up are quickly pulled out of sight and killed with a silencer. But there is a point when the ominous threat of death is felt by everyone and the charade is finally over. Family members yell out to each other! Children cry for their mothers! Only this morning, I saw a husband and wife search wildly among the masses of faces until they found one another and embraced passionately for the last time...comforting one another. (*Pause.*) I wanted to help them...run to them...save them...but I could do nothing. (*Pause.*) Finally, when the screams stopped, the SS made me open the doors...their bodies fell out like slabs of stone, but they were still embracing.

ROZA: Stop! I can't hear any more!

KAMINSKY: You must hear! You must know! The world must know! The gunpowder you are smuggling is vital to destroy –

ROZA: I *know*.

KAMINSKY: Only *we* can stop it.

ROZA: I'll bring gunpowder every day!

KAMINSKY: Good! (*Pause.*) The date is next month.

ROZA: So soon?

KAMINSKY: We had to move it up. We can't wait any longer! Can you bring extra?

ROZA: I'll try. (*Kaminsky starts to exit.*) Wait! There is a chance we can win?

KAMINSKY: We will *win!*

(*Blackout.*)

### Scene 3

(AT RISE: *Women's barracks, Sunday. Roza, Ala, Hanka, Estusia, Lucia, Ethyl, Regina, and Sarah are lying on their bunks. Regina approaches Sarah.*)

REGINA: *(To Sarah.)* It's Sunday! Our day off! Let's go to the courtyard and get some fresh air.

SARAH: Good idea.

*(Sarah gets out of her bunk and falls to the ground. Regina rushes to her side.)*

REGINA: What's wrong?

SARAH: I think...I need to rest.

*(Regina helps Sarah onto her bunk.)*

REGINA: I'm worried about you. You look like you're wasting away.

SARAH: *(Weakly.)* Last night...the soup.

REGINA: *(Sarcastically.)* Wasn't that good!

SARAH: I found a rat's head in my bowl. I couldn't eat.

REGINA: *(Angry.)* You know how many times I've found things in my soup? Sarah, you must eat. Do you want to become one of the living dead?

SARAH: But...it was awful...

REGINA: When are you going to realize your French chef is never coming? This is reality.

SARAH: *(Weakly.)* I know...I know...but when I'm this hungry, I think about my mama's Shabbos meal...her challah...fresh-made chicken soup and—

REGINA: *(Jokingly.)* So in Auschwitz they don't know how to make a good chicken soup. *(Sarah weakly laughs.)* I remember when you could at least laugh at my jokes.

SARAH: (*Gathering strength.*) You know, Regina, even if they had my mama's recipe...they'd still manage to spoil it.

REGINA: That's my girl!

SARAH: Tonight, it's rat's head and all!

REGINA: That's the spirit! Now, just rest.

(*Lucia grabs Ethyl's blanket.*)

ETHYL: Lucia, I'm cold!

LUCIA: Who cares? I'm cold, too.

ETHYL: I'm tired and...and....fed up with you always grabbing...taking what's mine.

LUCIA: (*Laughs.*) What's yours?

ETHYL: Yes, this blanket is mine! (*Tries to take the blanket.*) Before Racheal died, she told me I could have it.

LUCIA: Ethyl, you're an idiot! You newcomers take time to catch on. Here, it's yours when you take it, and then you have to fight to keep it.

ETHYL: It seems we only talk when we fight.

LUCIA: Fighting is the only way to forget about the dying.

ETHYL: But can't we be friends? I've lost everyone.

LUCIA: I don't want any Jew for a friend!

ETHYL: But *you're* Jewish.

LUCIA: No, I'm an Aryan! We lived as good Christians.

ETHYL: But you're here.

LUCIA: The Gestapo came. They told my mother she had Jewish blood in her, and now I'm here with you Jews. I hate you filthy Jews! Just leave me alone!

(*Block Senior enters.*)

BLOCK SENIOR: No work today, bitches! Even animals need a day off! But before you rest, I want this place spotless! (*Throws cleaning rags at the Female Inmates. Female Inmates slowly get up and start cleaning the barracks except for Sarah, who is too weak to get out of bed. Block Senior sees Sarah, becomes*

*furious, stomps over to Sarah, and pulls her out of her bunk. To Sarah.) Did you hear me, slut?*

*(Regina steps between the Block Senior and Sarah.)*

REGINA: She must rest!

BLOCK SENIOR: I said, the slut has to clean!

*(Block Senior "kicks" Sarah. Sarah tries to get up and clean. She takes a rag and starts scrubbing the floor but is too weak and falls on her face.)*

REGINA: But she's weak! *(Realizes she may have been too outspoken. Softer tone.)* Please, let her rest.

BLOCK SENIOR: Your friend is too weak? Then I'll send her to the hospital, where she can rest. Dr. Mengele can take a look at her.

REGINA: No...no! How did you become like this? You're a prisoner like the rest of us.

BLOCK SENIOR: No, I'm not like you. *(Pushes her truncheon under Regina's chin.)* I'm in charge here! *(Shoves the truncheon into Regina's stomach. To Sarah.)* 87778 you start cleaning, bitch, or you're going to the hospital! *(Regina helps Sarah up so she can resume cleaning. Block Senior watches them for a moment.)* 87778, clean my boots.

SARAH: Yes, Block Senior.

*(Sarah gets on her hands and knees and starts to clean the Block Senior's boots.)*

BLOCK SENIOR: Just like a good dog!

*(Block Senior inspects her boots, looks satisfied, and exits. Lucia goes to her top bunk to rest. Roza approaches Regina.)*

ROZA: *(To Regina, indicating Sarah.)* What's wrong?

REGINA: *(Indicating Sarah.)* She hasn't eaten. She's weak.

*(Roza goes to her bunk, where she has hidden some bread. She brings the bread to Sarah.)*

ROZA: *(To Sarah.)* This will help...fresh bread!

*(Roza breaks off a piece of bread for Sarah and gives it to her. Regina approaches.)*

REGINA: *(Indicating bread.)* How did you—?

ROZA: My contacts. Here, Regina, you take some, too.  
They'll try to get more for us.

SARAH: Thank you!

ROZA: Soon, you'll feel stronger. I'm going to give some to the others.

SARAH: Good.

*(Roza approaches Hanka and Estusia, who are still cleaning the barracks. They stop cleaning when Roza approaches.)*

ROZA: *(To Hanka.)* Here.

*(Roza gives Hanka and Estusia some bread.)*

HANKA: Fresh bread!

*(For the following, they speak in hushed tones.)*

ROZA: I wanted to let you know first...the date has been moved up.

HANKA: Good.

ROZA: But more risky for us.

ESTUSIA: You mean the Sondos need more...sooner?

ROZA: Can you manage?

ESTUSIA: *(Without hesitation.)* We'll have to.

HANKA: Are you sure the Foreman won't notice?

ESTUSIA: I hope not.

HANKA: This could be so much more dangerous.

ROZA: But the Sondos need all the gunpowder they can get.

ESTUSIA: *(To Hanka.)* We're getting good at this. Don't worry. I've an idea.

ROZA: Then let's tell the others. *(Roza, Hanka, and Estusia approach Regina, Sarah, and Ala. To Regina, Sarah, and Ala.)*  
We must talk. I've news.

REGINA: Have you heard the date?

ROZA: It's been moved up to next month...June 7th.

REGINA: So soon?

ALA: *(To Roza.)* Wonderful!

ROZA: But now the Sondos need more gunpowder to make the bombs.

REGINA: Impossible!

ESTUSIA: I know, Regina, it's a little more risky, but there is a way.

REGINA: How?

ESTUSIA: We'll put less gunpowder in the casings and then add the extra to the box.

SARAH: But the Foreman checks them.

ESTUSIA: Not always.

SARAH: Estusia's right. Not in the late afternoon.

ESTUSIA: Then we agree?

REGINA/SARAH: Yes.

ESTUSIA: Tomorrow...let's try it.

REGINA: If the revolt is to come next month, then we must do our part.

ALA: I've heard that the Russian front is approaching.

ROZA: My contacts told me the Nazis are losing the war on all fronts.

REGINA: Then it can't be long before the Third Reich crumbles!

SARAH: But have you heard the rumors? Thousands of Hungarian Jews have been gassed. Transports are now

coming day and night. The crematoriums are working constantly.

ROZA: (*Sadly.*) It's true. (*Deeply affected by this news, the Women exchange looks of despair.*) With everything that's happening, I want to review the plans again. We must be perfectly clear in our roles if we are to succeed. Hanka, you begin.

HANKA: When the men destroy the watchtowers, Regina and I are to come out of the barracks to make sure the way is clear and the guards are dead. When it's clear, I'll signal. Then we'll immediately cut the barbwire.

ESTUSIA: I'm to take the other two wire cutters hidden under the bed planks and give one to Ala.

ALA: Estusia and I will help Hanka and Regina cut the fence wide enough so all the women can escape into the woods, where the Partisan Underground will be waiting to help.

SARAH: I'm to alert the rest of the women that they must flee into the woods.

ROZA: Then I'll create more confusion for the SS by using benzene to set the barracks on fire. (*Pause.*) I know we're afraid, but...we must be strong!

(*Sarah pulls out a candle and some matches.*)

REGINA: Look, Sarah has matches and a candle to help you start the fire.

SARAH: No! No! It's a Shabbos candle. My father got this and other things to me when he was working in "Kanada," where all the personal possessions of the dead are stored. In "Kanada," he told me every possession imaginable can be found before it's sent back to the Third Reich. The new arrivals from the transports bring everything...gold, jewelry –

ROZA: Then he can get you food and warmer clothing...and maybe for us, too!

SARAH: He could if he was still alive. Roza, my father was selected two weeks before your mother.

ROZA: I'm sorry. I didn't know.

SARAH: He was a very pious man...that's why this candle means so much to me. Can't we use it on our day off for our Shabbos – our Sabbath – just this once?

*(Estusia angrily returns to her bunk.)*

ROZA: *(To Sarah, sensing the others want to perform the ritual.)*  
Why not? God will understand.

HANKA: Come, Estusia.

*(Estusia gestures that she will not join them.)*

ALA: It was always the most wonderful day of the week for us.

REGINA: My mother worked all week cooking and cleaning to make sure the Sabbath was special.

*(Regina gestures for Ethyl to join them.)*

SARAH: We were poor, but on the Sabbath, we lived and ate as if we were royalty.

ROZA: After my mother lit the candles, she would put her hands over our heads and bless each of her children...and for that moment I felt safe...and at peace. *(Pause.)* We don't know how much time we have, but we have this moment.

*(Sarah gives the candle to Regina in order to light the candle. After the candle is lit, the Women proceed with the traditional ritual of covering their eyes with their hands three times and in unison recite the Hebrew Sabbath blessing.)*

SARAH: "Baruch Ataw Adoshem, Elokanu melech haw-olom, asher kidshawnu b'mits-vosov, v'tsivawnu l'hadlik neyr

shel Shabbos." [The Hebrew Sabbath blessing in English: "Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has hallowed us through His commandments, and has commanded us to kindle the lights of the holy Sabbath."]

*(Lucia, from her top bunk, has been watching the others. When it's complete, Lucia makes the sign of the cross, and as she is about to complete the cross, she grabs her yellow triangle in despair. Immediately following the blessing, the Women embrace one another.)*

SARAH/ROZA/HANKA/REGINA/ALA: Good Shabbos.

SARAH: *(To Roza.)* Should we keep it lit?

ROZA: Only for a little while.

SARAH: He'll understand.

*(Sarah goes to set the candle down on her bunk. Regina accompanies her. Ala and Roza return to their bunks. Ala discovers a box with a blue bow and unwraps it. Inside, there are gloves and a wool scarf.)*

HANKA: *(To Ala.)* What beautiful gifts!

ALA: Here, Hanka, you take the gloves. Share them with Estusia. The wool scarf is enough for me.

ROZA: Ala, what a beautiful scarf. Who gave it to you?

ALA: Joseph, a friend working in the factory. He knows people working in "Kanada." He said he can get me anything I want.

SARAH: And the gifts were in a box wrapped with a beautiful blue bow.

ALA: His wife was chosen for selection soon after they arrived. He grieves for her.

ROZA: And your husband?

ALA: I still love him very much, but Joseph has been so kind to me. He makes me feel like a woman again, and I can help ease his loss.

ROZA: I understand, but don't tell him about your Underground activities.

ALA: Of course, I won't!

*(Lights dim on all the Female Inmates, except Hanka and Estusia. Hanka sees that Estusia is brooding.)*

HANKA: *(To Estusia.)* What's wrong?

ESTUSIA: *(Angrily.)* Nothing.

HANKA: You didn't join us when we were saying the blessing. *(Pause.)* Still worried about the smuggling?

ESTUSIA: *(Bursts out.)* The world has gone mad! You and I are living in a world capable of creating this: Planet Auschwitz. How incredibly human it all is!

HANKA: Incredibly *human*?

ESTUSIA: Yes, Hanka, incredibly human! It wasn't God or the devil who created Auschwitz. It was men, simply men—men who want power and will stop at nothing until they get it. So, today, we live and die in Auschwitz, but tell me...where will Auschwitz be built tomorrow?

HANKA: But we're trying to stop them! The uprising will be soon! Look how we've managed to get the gunpowder, and the ammunition specialists have made bombs out of it.

ESTUSIA: I know what we're doing is very important. *(Pause.)* At first, I was so frightened that we would be caught and killed. But now I see how important our struggle is. The outcome far outweighs any of the risks.

HANKA: It's good to hear you say that.

BLOCK SENIOR: *(Shouts.)* Quiet down over there!

ESTUSIA: *(To Hanka.)* I finally feel there is some purpose in my being here.

*(Estusia and Hanka return to their bunks and fall asleep. Lights dim. Pause. Ala gets up from her bunk, steps out into the courtyard, and carefully looks around. Joseph enters opposite and approaches Ala, surprising her. Sound of dogs barking in the*

*distance is heard, which scares Ala. Ala and Joseph speak in hushed tones.)*

JOSEPH: *(To Ala.)* It's all right. I've bribed the guards. *(Ala and Joseph embrace passionately. Indicating scarf.)* I see you got the present I sent you. It looks beautiful on you.

ALA: Thank you. The gifts are beautiful and needed. *(Embraces him.)* I was surprised when your note asked me to meet you outside the barracks tonight.

JOSEPH: I wanted to see you, so I bribed my Block Senior and the guards. But I only have a few minutes. I wanted to give you this. *(Pulls a salami out of his shirt.)*

ALA: A salami! *(Starts eating it ravenously.)*

JOSEPH: I've got to put some meat on you. *(Teasingly.)* When I put my arms around a woman, I want to feel something besides ribs.

ALA: *(Laughs.)* In Auschwitz, this is a great challenge. You look so well for being here for over a year.

JOSEPH: I've many friends working in "Kanada." I told you, I can get anything I want and for you, too. What else do you need?

ALA: Food! Food! Food!

JOSEPH: At the factory when I come to check the machines, I'll hide food for you.

*(Ala kisses and/or embraces Joseph.)*

ALA: You're so wonderful! It's amazing all the things you can do here.

JOSEPH: It gets a little easier here when you know the ropes. I studied engineering before the war; the Germans need me.

ALA: Don't talk...just hold me.

JOSEPH: You're worth all the risk!

*(Ala goes to kiss Joseph but stops at the sound of dogs barking in the distance.)*

ALA: I better go.

JOSEPH: Goodnight. Sleep well. I'll see you at the factory tomorrow.

*(Blackout.)*

## Scene 4

*(AT RISE: Courtyard of the women's barracks, months later. SS Guards are offstage. Ala, Estusia, Hanka, Sarah, and Regina are sitting on the ground, talking. Roza is sitting with them but seems lost in thought. Looking withdrawn and depressed, Ethyl and Lucia are standing near the barracks, staring out toward the audience.)*

HANKA: Estusia, when we're free, you know what I want to do?

ESTUSIA: What?

HANKA: Travel!

ESTUSIA: To where?

HANKA: Everywhere and anywhere where the sky is blue and the air smells sweet.

ESTUSIA: *(Tenderly.)* That sounds nice. Can I join you?

HANKA: Sure, we'll travel together. How about Switzerland? I've always wanted to see the Swiss Alps.

REGINA: They're supposed to be magnificent!

ESTUSIA: I'll go anywhere, as long as it's far from here.

HANKA: What about you, Estusia? What's the first thing you want to do when you're free?

ESTUSIA: I'll settle for a hot, hot bath.

SARAH: Oh, what a wonderful thought...taking a hot bath!

ESTUSIA: *(Laughs.)* Can you imagine looking and smelling clean again?

SARAH: To think we could be free of the damn lice, too!

REGINA: *(In jest.)* Well, freedom does have its drawbacks.

*(All laugh, except Roza.)*

ALA: What about you, Roza?

ROZA: I'll just settle for a good meal. *(Looking disturbed, she leaves the other Women and starts pacing up and down in the courtyard.)*

SARAH: The first thing I'll do is get this damn number off!

REGINA: I'm leaving mine on.

SARAH: Why?

REGINA: I never want to forget.

SARAH: I do!

HANKA: *(To Estusia, looking over at Roza.)* What's wrong with Roza?

ESTUSIA: She seems upset.

ALA: I'll go see. *(Ala approaches Roza.)* Roza, what's wrong? Was it something we said?

ROZA: I'm anxious for the uprising.

ALA: Your contact told you it was only delayed. It will happen soon.

ROZA: Yes, it'll be soon.

ALA: What's bothering you?

ROZA: Nothing.

ALA: Something is wrong. Tell me, Roza.

ROZA: My contact was... *(Pause.)* ...killed by the SS.

ALA: Oh, no!

ROZA: *(Nods.)* I went to give him gunpowder several weeks ago and—

ALA: *(Surprised.)* You've known for weeks?

ROZA: I've known.

ALA: You should have told us!

ROZA: I didn't want everyone to worry.

ALA: You can't carry everything on your shoulders.

ROZA: He was one of their leaders.

ALA: And you are ours.

ROZA: *(Sadly.)* All these months that I've been giving him the gunpowder, he made me believe it could happen.

ALA: Well, can't it still?

*(Immediately after Ala completes her line, a huge explosion is heard offstage. Alarmed, the Women run to the barbed wire fence to see what exploded.)*

HANKA: (*Indicating offstage, excited.*) Look! A crematorium is on fire!

ESTUSIA: The Sondos must have blown it up!

REGINA: (*Jubilant.*) With *our* gunpowder! I can't believe it! The crematorium is burning! We did it!

SARAH: But they didn't warn us!

ALA: Now we must cut the fence!

ESTUSIA: I'll get the tools!

ROZA: We must hurry!

(*Alarms sound. SS Guard runs to the fence where the Women are standing.*)

SS GUARD: (*Shouts.*) Inside! Everyone inside the barracks! [Schnell! Schnell!] Inside! Everyone, inside! [Schnell! Schnell!] [*German for "quickly."*]

**[END OF FREEVIEW]**