

**SILENCE NOT,
A Love Story**

by Cynthia L. Cooper

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Characters, Time & Place

The characters in *Silence Not, A Love Story* can be performed by seven actors: 4 women and 3 men. (See Cast Breakdown for 7 actors.) Without doubling, as many as 31 actors may be used.

CHARACTERS

GISA PEIPER -- Born in 1910, Gisa, a young Jewish woman, moves from Berlin to Hamburg in 1929 at age 19 to join the liberal ISK, a labor and political organization founded by Leonard Nelson and made up of young idealists who wish to create a more fair and equitable society in the new German democracy created after World War I, despite combustible economic and political circumstances. Based on a real person, Gisa comes from modest circumstances. Her parents, MENDEL and BRONIA, operate a bakery and store in Berlin, but are not happy with their daughter's freethinking path and youthful political exuberance. She ranges from 19-28.

ADRIANA KUEHN -- Seen throughout the entire play, Adriana is the same person as GISA, above. She is 28 years old and using false papers as she sits in the Munich train station awaiting a transfer from Vienna to Paris. All of her dialogue is her inner thinking. Other than two words, she never speaks in real-time. Although only 28, she has aged greatly in nine years.

PAUL KONOPKA -- A labor and resistance activist and member of the ISK, Paul who grew up in Hamburg. Based on a real person, he is 23 in 1929 when he meets GISA Peiper and they become companions. Paul comes from a working class Catholic family living in harsh circumstances and in an especially volatile economic and political time. A craftsman who works with his hands, he has clear and direct political instincts and a penchant for argument.

HILDE HOCH -- A member of the ISK and liberal labor movement in Hamburg, she grew up as close friends with PAUL and becomes a confidante of GISA. She is 22 in 1929.

FRANZ HABERMAN -- A printer's apprentice, Franz is a Jewish man in Hamburg who works with the ISK as a labor activist and resistance worker. He is approximately 24 in 1929.

THE WOMAN in MUNICH STATION -- Weaving throughout the station while Adriana waits for a train on the day of Austria's capitulation to German rule, or Anschluss, she entertains soldiers and keeps a present and watchful eye on ADRIANA. SHE ultimately has a critical role in the play.

FRIEDA-- GISA's landlady in Hamburg, she is 30 years old in 1929 and a mother of one.

MENDEL PEIPER -- A deeply religious Jewish man, Mendel is GISA's father. He owns a small bakery in Berlin, living in the room next door. After fleeing from Poland as a child, he is married to BRONIA and has two other daughters: Ruth (younger than Gisa) and Hanna (older than GISA). After fighting in World War I for Germany, he is embittered and cynical.

BRONIA PEIPER -- GISA's mother, she works alongside her husband, MENDEL.

WILLIE EICHLER -- Leader, along with Minna Specht, of the ISK or International Socialist Combat League, a small liberal pacifist political group founded originally by Leonard Nelson.

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PROF. KALTENBACH -- A professor at Hamburg University.

GESTAPO MAN -- A person assigned to question prisoners.

OLD MAN GUARD -- A longtime worker at the Fuhlsbuttel prison.

UNDERGROUND WORKER -- A person who assists people fleeing Germany.

MINOR CHARACTERS (appearing and explained in text):

SOLDIER I & 2 at MUNICH STATION

FACTORY WORKER

OFF-STAGE TRAIN STATION ANNOUNCER

MADDALEN

MADDALEN's BOYFRIEND

PASSERSBY

WOMAN PASSENGER

TWO SS HAMBURG

TWO SS MUNICH

GUARD

WOMAN PRISON TRUSTEE

CZECH DOCTOR

AUSTRIAN MAN (MR. KUEHN).

Cast breakdown for 7 actors (speaking & nonspeaking):

1 (W) - GISA , age 18-28

2 (W) - ADRIANA, age 28 (but looking older)

3 (W) - HILDE (age 22-29) (multiple scenes), FACTORY WORKER (I-5), HAMBURG WOMAN (II-9), PASSENGER (II-13), UNDERGROUND WORKER (II-19)

4 (W) - FRIEDA (age 30-37) (multiple scenes), WOMAN IN MUNICH STATION (multiple scenes), MADDALEN (I-6), BRONIA (II-4, II-19), MUNICH SS II (II-15), PRISON TRUSTEE (II-17)

5 (M) - PAUL (age 23-30) (multiple scenes), SS I HAMBURG (II-15), GESTAPO (II-16), CZECH DOCTOR (II-19),

6 (M) - FRANZ (age 24-31) (multiple scenes), SOLDIER 2 (multiple scenes), MADDALEN BOYFRIEND (I-6), SS II HAMBURG (II-15), GUARD (II-16), YOUNG SS GUARD (II-18)

7 (M) - MENDEL (age 55) (I-13, II-4), SOLDIER 1 (multiple scenes), WILLIE EICHLER (I-3, I-8) O.S. ANNOUNCER (I-6, II-18), PROF. KALTENBACH (II-7), MUNICH SS I (II-15), OLD MAN GUARD (II-16), MR. KUEHN (II-19)

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TIME AND PLACE

The time of the play is the exciting but volatile political and economic landscape of Germany from 1929 to 1938, when a new generation is discovering the realities of a harsh future and idealists mount resistance to a growing right wing.

The play opens in a train station in Munich in March, 1938. The Munich train station is a constant and continuous presence throughout the entirety of the play. Other scenes in the play take place in Hamburg, and, briefly, in Berlin and Czechoslovakia. Settings in Hamburg include the Hamburg train station, the ISK headquarters, a room in an apartment, the Alster lake, a park, a cemetery and the Fuhsbüttel prison. The author anticipates a set that is evocative as much as realistic.

AUTHOR'S NOTES:

All of the characters in this play are German, although of varying backgrounds. If this were real life, the characters would be speaking fluent German. In the text of the play, all of the language is in English, and interpretation of the degree of Germanness is left to the actors and director.

This play is based on real incidents and drawn in part from stories and experiences described in "*Courage and Love*," a memoir by Dr. Gisa Konopka, and used with permission from her literary executor, Dr. Marilyn Frost.

Poetry used in the play by others than the author or Gisa Peiper Konopka is: by Charles Theodore Henri de Coster ("Life I wrote on my banner"); Georg Heym ("White clouds grow"); Else Lasker-Schuler ("I have a blue piano"); Ruth Peiper ("And by a lonely fireside" "They have made us into aged beings" "And when they grinned and spat"); Ranier Maria Rilke ("When dogs are sleeping"); Avestan Zarathushtra ("When will it start.")

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Synopsis:

During an economic crisis in Germany in the early 1930s, an idealistic young Jewish woman involved in the labor movement in Hamburg joins with a rebellious artisan to resist the rise of Nazism, at the same time deepening their love for humanity and each other. Drawn from the true stories of Gisa Peiper and Paul Konopka, this is a story of courage and love that thrive despite the dangers, telling of the hope and art of speaking out for the highest human values in the most pressing of times.

*I want to convey a basic conviction about human beings: They carry in them the seeds of destruction as well as great love and giving. It will depend on us, each person within each generation at all times, what we help to bring forth.
This is an unending task.*

~~GISA PEIPER KONOPKA

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ACT ONE

Scene 1: Munich Train Station, March 1938

(The blowing of the wind turns into the blow of a whistle. People rush to the window. A flurry of activity occurs when the train stops. German soldiers rush in, a band begins to play lively cabaret music. Women and men begin to hug and twirl one another about as if it were a dance. There is a great rush and ebullience and full-fisted joy. Several German soldiers celebrate with THE WOMAN, who passes out steins of beer.)

SOLDIER 1

To Austria!

THE WOMAN

From all of us in Munich! Austrians ... we welcome you to the Fatherland!

(ADRIANA enters, looks around, takes a seat on a bench, as if trying to be invisible. THE SOLDIERS pay no attention to her, but carry on with their celebration. THE WOMAN watches ADRIANA closely. She takes stock of ADRIANA, walks up to her and broadly holds out a stein.)

THE WOMAN

A toast on me! Drink up! A two-hour layover between Vienna and Paris is no good on your own. Celebrate! To Anschluss!

(ADRIANA says nothing, but waves 'no' and moves on. THE WOMAN continues to observe her.)

SOLDIER 2

To Anschluss! The Union!

SOLDIER 1

Austria: ours without a single shot! Remember this date: March 12, 1938! Austria and Germany in union!

(ADRIANA looks around, as if to note the date.)

SOLDIERS & THE WOMAN

To the Third Reich!

SOLDIERS

To a thousand years!

(ADRIANA sits on a bench. She nods and smiles slightly. She tries to look much older than she is. She pulls a scarf around her head, and coughs as if she is sick, although she is not. A SOLDIER offers her a stein again, she coughs and waves it off. SHE sits. She sits. SHE sits.

A woman dressed identically – GISA -- comes up and stands behind ADRIANA. They are the same person, but GISA is an inner vision, a person in a different time, a different place, nine years earlier. GISA puts her hands on ADRIANA's shoulders.

ADRIANA's text is inner monologue. Except for two words in the play, she never speaks in a normal realistic conversation. But the words of her text feels intimate to the audience, her thoughts climbing inside their heads, as if coming through headphones and projecting mind to mind. (I-pod projection would be ideal.) ADRIANA never leaves the Munich Station, and the station is a presence throughout the play. Her voice is mesmerizingly real.)

ADRIANA & GISA

(Simultaneous.)

Don't!
Hold steady!
Remember the name on the visa.
Don't say a word!

ADRIANA

(Speaking alone.)

Don't laugh.
Don't cry.
Don't smile.
Don't sing.

Don't.

Don't joke.
Don't wink.
Don't wince.
Don't blink.

Don't.

Don't, Gisa.

(GISA swings around and shakes ADRIANA momentarily.)

GISA

No.

ADRIANA

No.

No ... that's not your name! Your new name. Think only of your new name. The name on your visa. The Austrian name they've given you. Adriana. Yes. Adriana.

Think 'Adriana.'

Don't, Adriana.

Don't forget.

Don't forget.

Don't forget.

Scene Two: Hamburg Train Station, October 1929

(GISA peels away from ADRIANA and rushes into a different light. It's 9 years earlier in 1929 at a different train station in Hamburg, Germany. GISA carts a suitcase and another bag, large enough for art prints. HILDE, a young German woman, stands, fingering a scrap of paper.)

(ADRIANA stays seated on the train bench in Munich throughout the scene. ADRIANA watches. Occasionally ADRIANA moves slightly, to take out a handkerchief or to eat a nut, carefully pulled out of her pocket, as we enter the world of GISA.)

(GISA approaches HILDE tentatively.)

GISA

A clock? Do you know where I can find one?

HILDE

(SHE points to a clock above.

12:50 already. I've been waiting nearly two hours for the train from Berlin. Still no sign.

(She shows a piece of paper she holds.)

See: October 29, 1929 arriving 11:02, Berlin to Hamburg.

ADRIANA

(Speaking from the Munich Station, across time and space to GISA.)

1929? Barely nine years ago?

GISA

(Speaks to ADRIANA.)

Yes, yes.

Now shhh.

They must not hear your accent.

Say nothing.

ADRIANA

Nothing at all.

I'm swimming.

Diving down to touch the rocks.

GISA

Dive deep.

GISA

(Turns to HILDE.)

I was on the 11:02. We stalled. A man in my compartment opened the window and looked up and down. "They're working. Sixty kilometers down the track," he said. Then he closed the window, put on his hat, and in five minutes, repeated the whole thing, as if it were an art performance. "They're working. Sixty kilometers down the track."

I was to meet someone near the clock. From a club. A political club.

HILDE

(Now interested.)

You look entirely too young for a political club.

GISA

I'm not. I finished my high school examinations last week.

HILDE

(Begins to look around again.)

The person I'm waiting for wouldn't have a degree, not like that. We're working people.

GISA

I'm a working person. I deliver the morning bread rolls for my father's bakery.

HILDE

(Suddenly, with renewed interest.)

Did you eat one on the journey?

GISA

Only half. If you're hungry ...?

(Looking in her bag, SHE pulls out gloves.)

Oh! I forgot! My gloves!

HILDE

Is it a sausage roll?

GISA

No. I'm a vegetarian. It's part of my ...

HILDE

But you washed in down with a hearty ale ...?

GISA

"Drinking workers don't think and thinking workers don't drink." Part of my membership ...

HILDE

... in the ISK! Then you're Gisa Peiper?

GISA

Yes! That's what I'm trying to say.

HILDE

You're supposed to be wearing white gloves.

GISA

It's not cold. I couldn't pretend.

HILDE

This is how I'm to recognize you. Security measures! My leg is still purple from the labor rally last week--smashed. Didn't they warn you about that right-winger and his goons in brown shirts?

GISA

"In Munich," they said.

HILDE

His "biography" is at every bookstall. "*My Struggle*" by Adolph Hitler." Imagine this: A man came to our ISK offices in Hamburg, thinking that we -- in the International Socialist Combat League -- are somehow connected to the National Socialists!

GISA

As if the ISK and the Nazis ...

HILDE

... have anything in common!

GISA

Not to know the left from the right!

HILDE

Exactly my point. The instructions said: “She will wear white gloves, stand by the clock and say the words ‘bread roll.’”

GISA

I’ll do better in the future. I promise.

HILDE

Very well.

Hello! I’m Hilde Hoch, the official greeting committee.

(As this scene takes place, ADRIANA, sitting in Munich station, is approached by SOLDIER 2, who offers a cigarette.)

SOLDIER

Smoke?

GISA

(GISA calls across time and space to ADRIANA.)

Careful! CAREful. Don’t forget.

(ADRIANA waves ‘no’ to the soldier, coughs, points to her throat, coughs mildly. The SOLDIER moves on.)

ADRIANA

I can’t breathe.

I’ll drown.

Why Munich?

GISA (Speaks to ADRIANA.)

Sit. Stay. Swim.

It’s only two hours.

Follow the instructions.

Sit, wait, say nothing.

ADRIANA

Words are choking in my throat.

My heartbeat is racing.

My eyes ...

GISA

Don’t cry.

No emotion.

Pretend.

Float! You can float!

ADRIANA

Yes, yes. You're right.
Yes.

GISA

(Turns back to HILDE.)

What if we hadn't found each other? I can hear my father. "What kind of foolish daughter did I raise to put her faith in some left-wing political group!"

HILDE

"Hard work and prayer."

GISA

Yes, that's him.

HILDE

Then, parents in Berlin and Hamburg are all the same!

GISA

Does your father also quote Abraham, Moses and the Rebbe?

HILDE

My father has pious Lutherans. "Young lady, I expect you to be a model for the younger children ... so you must not sleep during the sermon!"

GISA

(She laughs with HILDE.)

They should be reading Freud instead. Or Adler.

HILDE

Only the young people have a clue! Only freethinkers like us!

(HILDE pulls out literature, speaks confidentially.)

The Hamburg ISK is my family! We have discussions on Monday, committees on Wednesday, tutors on Friday. Workdays on Saturday. And on Sundays, we go ... to church!

GISA

(Alarmed.)

To church? But ...

HILDE

I'm teasing! On Sundays, we inhale the outdoors. As set out by Minna Specht and Willie Eichler. A long, glorious hike up the Elbe. Or a swim.

ADRIANA

Float.
I want to float.

GISA

But ... does the ISK know of any jobs?

HILDE

In the morning, I'll show you the bottle factory. But say goodbye to your pretty hands.

GISA

A factory is perfect. I can learn more about labor rights from the inside out.

HILDE

Very well. But at the moment, we're late.

(SHE reaches for GISA's folder.)

GISA

Oh, no. I'll carry that. They're prints, art prints; special. From a friend. Rudy. In Berlin.

HILDE

(SHE takes a different bag.)

So Gisa Peiper has her degree AND a 'friend' in Berlin.

GISA

Oh no. Rudy's a ... platonic friend. He's different. We go to museums. We love art together. But life would be so lonely without friends, don't you agree?

(In the Munich Train Station, 1938, SOLDIER 1 crosses and nods.)

ADRIANA

Remember. Remember.
 There is always some good.
 Remember Gisa.
 Remember Adriana.
 Remember.
 Remember, remember.
 Don't dwell.
 Don't frown.
 Don't scowl.
 Don't pout.
 Don't dwell.
 Don't dwell.
 Don't dwell.
 Remember the good.

There is always
 Some
 Good.

Scene 3: ISK Office, Hamburg, 1929

(HILDE and GISA join a small group in the basement office of the ISK near the Reeperbahn, a bawdy district.)

(PAUL is leaning over a table, working. HE is pleasant but has a dark air. He's stocky and not a pretty boy; strong, but not athletic. Although young, his face shows the hard edges of life. HILDE addresses everyone.)

HILDE

Two new hands to help! Everyone, say hello to our new member!

(PAUL does not look up and turns his back.)

GISA

Hello.

HILDE

We're making a banner: "FAIR WAGES."

(HILDE sits GISA at the table, then taps PAUL and pulls him aside.)

Paul -- may I have a moment, please?

(HILDE and PAUL talk privately, aside. GISA studies the banner. PAUL swirls away from HILDE and walks over to GISA. HE holds out his hand, palm up.)

GISA

A needle? Thank you. I can join right in on the banner.

(PAUL joins in cutting, measuring, sewing the banner.)

PAUL

Hilde tells me I must speak to you.

GISA

And do you always do what Hilde tells you?

PAUL

I never do what Hilde tells me. That's why I offered the needle. You spoke to me. I didn't speak.

GISA

But what if I were not the type who is nimble with a needle?

PAUL

Then you would learn. Hilde says you came to Hamburg to study 'labor.' Although we generally labor just fine without some Berlin girl coming to poke and probe.

GISA

I see. Let me ask, how can children get an education if they can't eat a decent meal? And how can they eat a decent meal if their parents can't earn a decent wage? I've seen children on the street so hungry that they don't even have the energy for stickball. The ISK said this was the place to study the trade union movement.

PAUL

Those are your reasons?

GISA

I see now that it may have been a mistake.

FRANZ

(FRANZ, another member of the ISK, bursts in, carrying a machine aloft, excited.)

Look! A Gestetner! For printing! My boss was throwing it out because it leaves little blobs on the paper! But it still works!

HILDE

(Hugging FRANZ.)

Our own machine! Franz -- it's a dream come true!

FRANZ

We can print flyers, notices. A newsletter! Let's dance! Dance the Gestetner with me!

(In a surprising move, PAUL does a sudden dance step.)

PAUL

I'm ready. I have a stack of write-ups!

HILDE

And I'll bet our new member can write a sentence from beginning to end without losing the thought. Gisa -- has a degree!

(HILDE points to GISA. FRANZ goes and gives her a hearty handshake.)

FRANZ

Hello Gisa!

GISA

Only a high school degree.

HILDE

What did I say! She can write

GISA

Mostly poetry. In my journal. Privately.

FRANZ

It's settled! Gisa will be the editor of our new newsletter! Which will have poetry AND stories. And we will print it on the Gestetner!

HILDE

A spark of genius. Ohh! "The Spark!" For the masthead! You'll do it, won't you, Gisa?

GISA

"The Spark" sounds like a fine name. (SHE pauses) Very well. I ... accept.

FRANZ

It's agreed. First edition, next month: "The Spark. Dateline, November 1929. Hamburg ISK."

(FRANZ and HILDE toy with each other and the machine.)

PAUL (To GISA)

Now that you are the Editor in charge of verses and paragraphs, I suppose you no longer wish to sew a mere letter.

GISA

Tell me, is it because I'm from Berlin, or want better conditions for workers, or am female, that upsets you most? Or are you this contemptuous of everyone you meet?

PAUL

What kind of question is that?

GISA

I'm wondering what you are good at. Other than arguing

PAUL

I AM very good at arguing.

GISA

I understand that -- sir.

PAUL

Konopka. Gerhardt. You may call me Paul.

GISA

And, tell me, Paul, what else do you do?

PAUL

I can make almost anything that can be made with the hands. Banner, woodcut, painting. If I weren't a poor boy from Hamburg with a gloomy view of the world, I might be a famous artist.

GISA

An artist can have a gloomy view.

PAUL

Only an artist who doesn't do art.

GISA

And what about Käthe Kollwitz?

PAUL

Ahh. Käthe Kollwitz. She doesn't have a gloomy view. She's an idealist who shows gloom to the world in order to effect change.

GISA
(Beat.)

I met her.

PAUL

Who?

GISA

Käthe Kollwitz. At a protest against fascism in Italy. I was handing out leaflets. And there she was in the crowd. So I went up to her and spoke.

PAUL

You're a bold one.

GISA

First, I put the literature in her hand. (She demonstrates) And then I burst out, "Excuse me, Miss Kollwitz -- I must tell you how much your art means to me."

PAUL

And?

GISA

She turned her head up from the leaflet and looked at me from under her eyelids, heavy and wide. Like this. (GISA imitates.) Then she said: "You are young and full of ideals. Promise me you will remember this also when you are old."

PAUL

That's good. "Remember this also when you are old."

ADRIANA
Promise me.

GISA
 (SHE talks to ADRIANA now.)
 ‘When you are old.’

ADRIANA
 I’m not old.

GISA
 Promise me.

ADRIANA
 28 is NOT old.

GISA
 Promise me to GET old.

ADRIANA:
 They left a knife on the table.
 Spare us the trouble,
 they said.
 You can end your pathetic woes.
 We’ve left something for you.
 On the table.

And now.
 This.
 You must wait for the layover.
 Only two hours.

Two hours is too long.

GISA
 Promise.

GISA
 (To PAUL)

And I said: “I promise, Miss Kollwitz. I WILL remember.”

And then my friend Rudy gave me her prints for my graduation. There –

(GISA points to the folder carried from the train station.
 PAUL steps in that direction as if he’s going to open the
 folder.)

PAUL

Let’s see

GISA

(GISA suddenly blocks his path.)

I'm afraid I don't know you well enough, Mr. Konopka.

PAUL

My manners are bad.

GISA

No ...

PAUL

(Changing course.)

No matter. I'm not afraid to show you my art, Miss Peiper.

(HE takes a pin and twists it.)

One piece only. The rest of my artwork is reserved for my tutor.

GISA

And who is your tutor?

PAUL

My tutor teaches me advanced German, composition and poetry. I'll add manners. Except -- I only have an application for a tutor, not a real live tutor.

GISA

No doubt, your turn will come. You mustn't have a gloomy view.

PAUL

The young woman from Berlin twists my words.

(Opens his hand to a figurine twisted with the pin.)

For you, a private viewing of the latest work from that Hamburg artist, Gerhardt Paul Konopka!

HILDE

(SHE breaks away from FRANZ.)

Hello! Willie Eichler is coming. Look busy.

(HILDE and FRANZ start working on the banner.)

PAUL

Miss Peiper and I have been busy!

HILDE

Shh.

WILLIE

(Enters. HE is the national leader of the ISK.)

Everyone's so busy! Good, good.

HILDE

Stitching a new banner.

WILLIE

I'm visiting every chapter.

(HE pulls out a newspaper.)

Look. "STOCK MARKET CRASH IN AMERICA SETS OFF NEW WORLD FEARS."

HILDE

More trouble headed our way!

FRANZ

And it's always the workers who get it in the teeth.

PAUL

You can count on us to get out there right away with the truth. Even if I have to stay here all night. "NO LAYOFFS. NO CUTBACKS. WORKERS HAVE RIGHTS."

WILLIE

I knew I could depend on the chapter in Hamburg.

(WILLIE nods in gratitude, exits. PAUL steps up work.)

GISA

You're true to your word, Mr. Konopka: your hands have many talents.

PAUL

Even a poor boy from Hamburg can have assets. There is good everywhere.

(PAUL twirls away. GISA picks up her packages and follows FRIEDA, below.)

ADRIANA: (Sitting in the Munich Station.)

And by a lonely fireside let gleam
your fairy castle built of ruby and of jade
and it will never die and never fade.

There is always
Some
Good.

Scene 4: Hamburg, 1929

(FRIEDA, a Hamburg woman, leads GISA through a mid-sized apartment, arriving at a single room.)

FRIEDA

I have no choice but to rent out my second room. Everyone's money is tight. (*Points.*) Here it is.

GISA

My own room! I can build a library.

FRIEDA

I don't want to know. You pay your rent. You don't put any holes in the walls with plaques and pictures and the like. You mind your business.

GISA

Of course.

FRIEDA

By that, I mean, you mind yours, I mind mine.

GISA

Yes.

ADRIANA (Still at Munich Station.)

It's the same year?

GISA

(To ADRIANA.)

Of course.

ADRIANA

It seems so much longer ago.
They have made us into aged beings,
We, who dreamed,
and hunted simple truths,
we, who thirsted,
and sought droplets of justice,
now touch in our hair the light grey
of an autumn day
that begins with the mist
and ends with the rain.
Everything's changed.

GISA

Please; hush.

FRIEDA

I'll tell you right off. I have a daughter, ten years old. Lilla. Born on the same exact day as the Versailles Treaty ... she was the only light in that horrid end to that horrid War. Her father was killed before he saw her. My brother, too. You lose anyone?

GISA

My father fought. (Beat) Then he returned. (Beat) I used to take bread to the wounded.

FREIDA

Then you don't know what it's like. This used to be my daughter's room. With the way things are, I'm forced to make concessions. She sleeps in my room.

GISA

I see.

FRIEDA

Do you have a boyfriend?

GISA

Oh no, nothing like that. I only recently moved here from Berlin and ...

FRIEDA

You're one of those "very serious" young girls that my cousin Hilde knows.

GISA

I have employment: the bottle factory. And I enjoy things. Books. Art. Hikes! Swimming. I love to swim.

FRIEDA

I have a boyfriend. He comes around on Tuesday and Thursday. Saturday nights we go dancing, and come back here. Sunday he spends the day.

GISA

Very well.

FRIEDA

We're right in the next room. It's only a tiny apartment. Do you understand?

GISA

I think so.

FRIEDA

I need the rent.

GISA

I can pay one week in advance.

FRIEDA

I don't have anywhere for my daughter to be when Hans comes over.

GISA

I see.

FRIEDA

So?

GISA

She can come to my room. She can sleep on a pillow on the floor.

ADRIANA (VOICE)

You do this for her. But what about the men with boots?
“Empty silence of endless soldiers’ steps...”
~Kandinsky. Remember?

GISA (To ADRIANA)

Stop. You’re confusing me.

ADRIANA

Yes. And when they come banging on the door?
Late at night. With spit in their craw.

GISA

She’s easily frightened.

ADRIANA

She’s out for ...

GISA

I’m ignoring you.

FRIEDA

We have an understanding, then.

GISA

Good.

FRIEDA

Mind you, I don’t want you handing my daughter a lot of nonsense. Hilde’s mixed up with some crazy political group. Whatever it is, I don’t want to know. I need to rent the room. I want to listen to music at the beer hall on Saturday nights. Am I clear?

GISA

Very clear.

ADRIANA

Far away the twilight of something new,
moves slowly at first ... miraculous.
Spirit alone cannot be action.

Action needs body and hand.
A form, a place, a motion.
There is song.
There is poetry.
There is art.
There is hope.

Scene 5: Bottle factory, Hamburg, 1930

GISA

(Sits with another FACTORY WORKER, as they twist wire caps onto bottles, speaking quietly.)

I went to the union hall last night, talked to the rep.

FACTORY WORKER

Yes? Can he help keep the same wages for each bottle cap?

GISA

He said they're blaming the crash. But it's only an excuse to squeeze us and cut the pay-per-cap. He said we should be getting a penny *more* for each bottle cap. He gave me a petition to pass.

FACTORY WORKER

I didn't bring my glasses.

GISA

It says that we are mothers and daughters who work long hours without breaks or adequate sanitary facilities, and that we are still not making enough to meet our daily needs.

FACTORY WORKER

It's true.

GISA

It says we're not seeking handouts, but we need a fair wage for our labor.

FACTORY WORKER

I'll sign.

(SHE signs. Soon, a whistle blows loudly. GISA and FACTORY WORKER, startled, stand abruptly.)

Scene 6: Gisa's bedroom, Hamburg, 1930

(PAUL strides into GISA's room and takes in books and little sculptures that dot the room. GISA enters.)

PAUL

Tell the truth: there's no hope for an illiterate like me.

GISA

You do very well. A little advanced language, and you'll be scribbling away like a famous philosopher, like Kant

PAUL

So you agree there's no hope.

GISA

There's always hope.

PAUL

Then you agree that I'm an illiterate?

GISA

I agree that you're a contrarian, but you're not illiterate. It's an excuse for not doing your assignment. What did you bring?

PAUL

A pear. (Pulls a pear out, cuts it, gives half to her.)
How can I engage in advanced study when my tutor looks like she hasn't eaten in days?

GISA

You need glasses. Your eyes are playing tricks on you.

PAUL

Are you sending your bottle-factory earnings to some 'fellow'? Some 'Rudy'?

GISA

Rudy's a friend, not my 'fellow.' And, you're changing the topic.

PAUL

This is the problem. I'm burning to put certain facts in a certain order. Critical information from Munich. But my writing of it did not go well. I'm afraid my writing didn't get written.

GISA

Then it's impossible to help you improve it. We'll review grammar instead.

PAUL

I think something happened at your job that you're not telling me.

GISA

We can look at the conjugation of the verb. And then reflexive, impersonal, separable, inseparable and variable verbs.

PAUL

I did BRING something written.

(Dramatically, grandiosely.)

“Life I Wrote on My Banner.”

“Life I wrote on my banner

To live in the light

My first skin is made out of leather

But my second is made out of steel.”

GISA

(Overlapping, simultaneous.)

“... is made out of steel.” Folk poem: Till Eulenspiegel.

PAUL

Yes.

GISA

You read remarkably well.

PAUL

I memorized it.

GISA

Then you memorize remarkably well.

PAUL

My first skin is made of leather. You can talk to me and it won't hurt.

GISA

Tell me what you're burning to write.

PAUL

You tell me what's happened first.

GISA

You're impossible. Here it is: you were right to make fun of me. I was a fool to think that I could organize workers.

ADRIANA

So many scars now.

Don't touch the scars.

Stay away from the scars.

PAUL

They let you go?

GISA

Me. Women with children. Women with elderly parents. We spend our days together at the unemployment office.

PAUL

Let me guess ... you asked for an air vent.

GISA

They announced that the pay-per-piece was reduced. I can't even bring myself to look them in the eye at unemployment.

PAUL

Why not! You helped them stand up for themselves, probably for the first time in their lives. That's an act of courage. I'm proud to have you as my tutor.

GISA

They trusted me, and I failed them.

PAUL

You don't get to take the blame! What choice did you have? Justice demands action.
(Leaning forward.)
Honestly, I didn't come for tutoring. I need your help with an article for 'The Spark.'

GISA

The stories for this edition are all done.

PAUL

This is a matter of urgency. I went to Munich, undercover.

ADRIANA (Munich train station.)

What can be so urgent?

ANNOUNCER (INTERCOM, OS)

On Track 7, leaving Munich station in 10 minutes,
Departure to points north: Nuremberg, Dresden, Dessau.

ADRIANA

I'm alone and you are far away
Yet I feel your nearness so strongly
that it is as if you stood close to me
And the wind's breath caressed us softly.
It's urgent to say nothing.
The urgency is in the wait.

(ADRIANA cont'd)

It cannot be helped if the wait is in Munich,
The waiting is the urgency.

PAUL

The Nazis are creating a private militia.

GISA

The brown shirts? They're not news. Every person in the Metalworkers union knows someone who's been roughed up.

PAUL

This is new. "Schutzstaffel" – that's what it's called. "SS" for short. They're conducting militia exercises in secret. Studying torture. A man named Himmler is the head. Heinrich Himmler.

GISA

The have no power. The whole Nazi party barely holds a handful of seats in the Reichstag.

PAUL

In 1928, they had no parliamentary seats. Now, two years later, they've a handful of seats. And when the September election comes, they'll have more. They're on the march. To eradicate the trade unions. To eradicate the Communists. To "rid" Europe of the Jewish "race." That's you. And of the Catholics. That's me.

GISA

Of course, I know what they say. But we have other articles in 'The Spark.' It's about mothers who can't buy milk and the big industrialists who won't implement a fair economic plan.

PAUL

And what about the Nazi plan? Where do you think the Nazis get their money? I went to their rally. 100,000 people. Flags waving. March tunes. Speeches about the righteous place of Germans. Using *our* words of "freedom and bread." And they'll march where they're told and attack any who stand in their way. And it's getting worse every day.

GISA

Of course, we all have eyes and ears.

PAUL

So there's something more that you're not telling me. You can't keep it inside. Or you'll burst.

ADRIANA

Or you will burst.
These voices, these people.
The peril, the plot.
The sideways glances.
The smiles that disappear.

GISA

(GISA describes and enters the scene, as if she is re-living it; Maddalen enters.)

There was a woman at the bottle plant. Maddalen. Maddalen does the work of a man, loading and unloading our carts. I thank her when she unloads my cart and she always looks surprised. One day, she slips me a note with an address. It says "Dinner." I admit I'm pleased to make a friend at the factory. After work, I meet her at the door and we walk along. She says her boyfriend wants to meet the woman who says thank you and is talking about the union. We go to a dismal little building and a tiny apartment. The boyfriend is already there.

(MADDALEN'S BOYFRIEND joins her.)

MADDALEN'S BOYFRIEND

So this is the friend to my Maddalen?

GISA

He points me to a stuffed chair, although most of the stuffing has fallen out. I relax, but perhaps I shouldn't. Things first go badly when he holds up a bottle to pour a glass. I shake my head, but I don't want to explain the ISK rule about drink. Maddalen is at the stove and he calls to her:

MADDALEN'S BOYFRIEND

She doesn't want our wine.

GISA

Maddalen says nothing, so I believe she understands. Soon Maddalen puts a dish on the table -- carefully made, stewed, beans, pears -- and bacon. I know it has a taste of meat, but this time, I break the rules and eat, heartily.

MADDALEN

At least we know she isn't a Jew. A Jew wouldn't eat the bacon!

GISA

This is a joke and they both laugh. Should I let the moment pass? I can still remember the day when my sister Ruthie came home, crying because the teacher made her bow her head to see if she had horns. Finally, I say: "My family is Jewish, although my father will tell anyone who listens that I fail miserably in living up to religious standards." Maddalen yanks away my bowl.

MADDALEN

Judin! No wonder she wouldn't drink our wine."

MADDALEN'S BOYFRIEND

You see what they mean, Maddalen. You see?

GISA

It's a fog, but I gather myself and find my way to the alley. The next day when Maddalen unloads my cart, I say "Thank you" as usual. But now I only see blazes behind her eyes.

(Maddalen and boyfriend exit.)

PAUL
(Gently.)

The atmosphere is poisoned. Now the Nazis are stocking real munitions. That's what I found out. And buying them with help from industrialists. What will it say about *us* if we do nothing? I'm not too proud to admit I need help. When we finish, I'll show you how we wash over our troubles with a swim in the Alster. No disputations.

GISA
Promise you won't remind me that I played the fool?

PAUL
You have my word.

ADRIANA
Scars.
So many scars.
"To live in the light
My first skin is made out of leather
But my second is made out of steel."
(ADRIANA stands, turns around.)

GISA (*TO ADRIANA*)
Wait.
You must wait.
DO you HEAR me!
Please.

ADRIANA
We must wait. We must wait.
My first of leather. My second of steel.
(ADRIANA sits back down.)

-
Scene 7: Alster Lake, Hamburg 1930
(GISA and PAUL are swimming.)

PAUL
Dive down. Like this.

GISA
You can dive. I prefer to float on my back and study the sky.

PAUL
The water never holds me up. But, diving down ...

GISA
Paul!

PAUL

I'm sorry -- no disputations. You float; I'll dive.

(PAUL watches her, as she gently swings her arms.)

You're beautiful, Gisa Peiper. Beautiful when you float.

GISA

At school, they all laughed at me when it came to sports.

PAUL

They were wrong.

(HE moves to kiss her; SHE lets him and then shies away.)

GISA

You were going to dive, as I recall.

Scene 8: ISK Office, Hamburg, 1930

(HILDE is at the ISK headquarters, pulling papers off the Gestetner. WILLIE EICHLER, coat on, stands nearby, reading a copy. HE points to something, reads on.)

WILLIE

Excellent work. You need to double the run. Our numbers are growing.

(HE takes some copies and puts them under his coat and exits as GISA enters.)

GISA

Hello.

(WILLIE nods, exits.)

HILDE

Willie read the entire newsletter.

GISA

(Picks one up from the Gestetner.)

There's a big blob of ink on the front.

HILDE

He's taking some to Berlin. And we're distributing them to dockworkers walking through the Elbe Tunnel, first thing in the morning.

GISA

Did he say anything about this blob of ink?

HILDE

Start folding, Gisa. (Imitates WILLIE.) “Instead of ending operations when the Nazi party was banned for a year in 1924, the brown shirts continued in ocret.... ‘Ocret?’ Ahh it’s a blob of ink from your machine! “Continued in *secret*.”

GISA

(Now folding copies)

Did he complain that I left out the part about the Nazis trying to stage a coup in Bavaria? When Hitler ran to the front and started screaming ‘Silence.’

HILDE

(As WILLIE) “Good. Skips all that Bavaria mess and gets straight to the point. Excellent work. Our numbers are growing. You’ll need to double the run.”

(To GISA)

Fold them into thirds so you can stuff them up your sleeve.

GISA

You and Paul are handling distribution, right?

HILDE

All hands on deck. And you need to use precautions when we go to the Elbe Tunnel. You never know where a brown shirt is lurking.

GISA

I’m to be at my new job at the nail factory before the bell to collect union pledges.

HILDE

Franz was followed by two goons the other day until he slipped into a market and ducked behind the potato bins. My cousin’s boyfriend says brown shirts are secretly everywhere -- even in the police.

GISA

That’s criminal.

HILDE

If they knock on your door, it’s a warning, even if they say nothing. They’re watching you! So stuff them up your sleeve. Pretend you’re looking for a friend. Then pull a newsletter out when a dockworker signals that he’s interested with a nod of his head.

(HILDE demonstrates.)

GISA

I’m not good at pretending.

(Tries stuffing newsletters up her sleeve, but gets stuck.)

HILDE

Try it.

ADRIANA (Munich Station)

There is time, and yet there is time.
 When the world lies ahead
 When the world lets us dream.
 Make haste, make haste.
 For these times are not ours to keep.

HILDE

Now I'm Max, the dockworker, and when I nod -- you slip one out ... And don't gawk at the dockworker like he's Paul.

(Walks along, in imitation of a dockworker.)

GISA

It's tangled. (beat) I don't gawk at Paul. And anyhow, who 'gawks' at Franz?

HILDE

Franz and I work together on committees. Maybe I like him. A little.

GISA

Everything with Paul is an argument.

HILDE

I'm sure you win.

GISA

Not always.

HILDE

I've known Paul all my life. He'd argue with a toad, if the toad gave him a chance. But when Paul is leading hikes, I see a dimple on your cheek.

GISA

I'm sure I'm studying bird life. (Fixing her sleeve.) My sleeve isn't big enough.

HILDE

Well, don't gawk at the stevedore like you gawk at the birds.

(Grabbing a newsletter, HILDE imitates a dockworker.)

"Ach, Nazis, Nazis. You come and live with me and I'll protect you from those big bad wolves."

(THEY laugh. HILDE studies newsletter.)

Willie was very impressed. Thinks you should take up teaching.

GISA

Tutoring is enough for me.

HILDE

Hamburg University is starting free courses.

GISA

And I'm getting much better at organizing workers, did I tell you? I think we have a good chance of winning an hourly raise.

ADRIANA (VOICE, Munich Station)

Follow the steps.
Listen to what they tell you.
Say nothing. Pretend.
You'll soon be on your way.
Follow the steps.

HILDE

Don't you think the workers want good teachers for their children?

PAUL

(Rushes in.)

Sorry. My bicycle had a flat tire.

HILDE

We're finished now. All folded, ready to go.

PAUL

Then you and I will meet early. You can do the walkway inside the tunnel, I'll do the outside.

GISA

And me.

PAUL

It's not the kind of thing you want to do. After all, you're the editor.

GISA

What? You think I can't play the part? All hands on deck.

(Demonstrates pulling out a newsletter, hands it to PAUL.)

One, two ... your newsletter, and I walk on.

PAUL

"The Nazis are arming! This has to end! How can I help?"

HILDE

'You're right, sir! We must stop them!'

PAUL

We will!

We shall.

GISA
(THEY exit.)

ADRIANA (MUNICH Train Station)
Learn and tell.
Study and teach.
Make truth the shelter you seek.
Learn and study. Study and teach.

PAUL (VOICE OVER/OFF STAGE)
“Life I wrote on my banner.”

ADRIANA
Where are you? Paul?
I’ll find you, in Paris. I promise.
Paul?
(beat.)
My skin, of leather. My skin, of steel. My skin.

Scene 9: ISK Headquarters, Hamburg

(Next morning; GISA and HILDE enter the ISK quarters.)

HILDE
The door’s not closed properly.
(As the door opens, THEY see PAUL, sprawled on the floor. GISA starts to run over; HILDE stops her.)

GISA
Paul! (To HILDE.) He’s hurt! (To PAUL.) They attacked you?

PAUL
Leave me alone.

GISA
Are you bleeding?

PAUL
I’m not bleeding.

HILDE
Why are you lying on the floor? Aren’t you going to work?

PAUL
So I can make a fancy car interior for some rich person? Carve his initials on the dashboard?
Why? (beat) Those dockworkers don’t care. “*The Spark.*” You must mean that redhead in the

(PAUL cont'd)

beer hall! Ha ha, ha.” Two of them actually sneered. One said: “We’ll take the Nazis over the likes of you.”

GISA

That’s one person.

PAUL

TWO.

HILDE

One dockworker thanked me.

PAUL

And then what? Into the dustbin?

HILDE

You’re drunk, aren’t you?

PAUL

What if I am?

HILDE

You know it’s against the rules.

PAUL

I don’t care about the rules. Or Willie Eichler or Minna Specht, or what they think of me.

GISA

Well, I’m glad you asked me to help write your article. If you’re too blind to understand that we’re doing what we can, then you should stop going around saying that you have a skin of leather and a skin of steel. You have a skin of gooseberries and glass. It’s a waste.

PAUL

And what about you ... won’t apply to the university! Hilde told me!

GISA

I’m going to work. He can sulk on his own.

(GISA leaves.)

HILDE

I won’t tell, Paul. You’re my oldest friend. But if you aren’t part of the ISK, I don’t want to be part of it, either.

(As HILDE exits, GISA returns.)

GISA

And another thing, don't forget your tutoring lesson. Your appearance is expected, Friday, promptly on time, and with all assignments complete.

(SHE exits again, leaving PAUL. She returns again.)

Be early.

ADRIANA (Munich Station)

“In us lives a will, good and clear.
We do not cry any more – yet we stroke
softly the brow and hair of another who was hurt.”

A poem. Put it in a poem.
In a sculpture. In an etching.

Mend the broken.
Touch the scars.
Stroke the hurt.

Scene 10: Hamburg, Gisa's Room, 1930

GISA

(PAUL is waiting for GISA. SHE rushes in.)

The lesson plan has changed.

PAUL

Oh?

GISA

From now on, I need to manage my time very carefully. Especially since I'm starting classes.

PAUL

Classes? At the university?

GISA

I happened to apply. And they responded. First line: “Admission granted.” Second line: Classes begin next week.

PAUL

That's good news.

GISA

I barely have time to adjust.

PAUL

You don't have to worry about tutoring me.

(GISA cont'd)

I don't know why I bothered. I thought you'd understand what it means to be true to what you believe.

PAUL

(Stops her from packing away the prints.)

I can give you a frame.

GISA

I don't want "a frame." I want a sturdy frame.

PAUL

I can give you a sturdy frame. A frame worthy of Kollwitz.

GISA

(Puts her hand on his heart.)

I need a frame that can stand the test of time, one that will hold up against bumps and tears.

PAUL

You have my word. I promise.

(beat)

But don't expect that there will be "no disputations." I am a man with disputations.

GISA

Don't expect that you'll win your disputations. You'll have to learn to live with losing them.

PAUL

No. I don't think so. I don't plan to lose them. You're wrong on that one.

GISA

Then, I'll agree to lose -- occasionally. (beat) To life, Paul, to life.

(THEY sink into one another.)

Scene 11: Munich Train Station, 1938

ADRIANA (Munich station.)

White clouds grow into the air
Like mountains rising baseless from blue lakes.
Banks, wooded, dissolve in light,
Their dusky shadows sunk in fragrant blue.

Sun, Light, Strength.
Life. Life and youth.
The strength we feel in us to fight
against everything dark and weak.

(ADRIANA cont'd)

Mend the broken.
Stroke the hurt.

There is poetry,
There is art.

There are disputations to be had.

Scene 12: Hamburg, Gisa's Bedroom, 1932

FRIEDA

(FRIEDA knocks on the door of GISA's room.)

Gisa, answer! You remember, we're dancing tonight? It's bad enough that you pay the rent in pennies, but not to show up as promised? I don't want to leave Lilla alone.

(GISA walks in behind FRIEDA.)

GISA

Here I am.

ADRIANA (Munich station)

Where are we?

GISA (To ADRIANA)

At the landlady's. At Frieda's. You know that.

ADRIANA

But when?

GISA

Why must you ask?
You know the answer.
(beat)

1932.

ADRIANA (VOICE)

1932?
There's time, then.
There is still time.

(A SOLDIER in the train station walks by ADRIANA. SHE acknowledges him, then closes her eyes as if sleeping.)

ADRIANA

Life I wrote on my banner.

FRIEDA

I was about to give up.

GISA

I had lessons with the neighborhood children.

FRIEDA

And you were in the library, no doubt. With the stack of books you've piled up here, maybe you plan to start a library in my apartment.

GISA

You're welcome to borrow them.

FRIEDA

And what? Have them banging on my door every day?

ADRIANA

Is this the beginning?
Is this the end of time?

GISA

Who?

FRIEDA

Who? Who? Do you think I know who they are? Men! (Whispers.) How do you think it looks to my neighbors to have police at my door?

GISA

The police?

FRIEDA

They didn't have uniforms. Only badges.

GISA

Did you let them in?

FRIEDA

I don't know what these books are. Suppose they're ... dangerous.

GISA

A book ... is a book. A book can't be dangerous.

FRIEDA

They insisted on looking.

GISA

At my papers? At what?

FRIEDA

The room. They looked at the room and made notes. On a list. I said you weren't available because you promised to sit and this is the big dance competition. After that, they left.

GISA

I see.

(Looks around the room, distracted.)

Very well, then. Tell Lilla to come over.

(FRIEDA exits. As soon as she exits, GISA frantically begins going through her books, and looking to see if anything is missing. SHE checks a framed Kollwitz, looks behind it, under it.)

ADRIANA

Did she call them?

Why did they come?

Is she the one?

Did she tell them some thing?

GISA

(GISA closes the door, pulls a piece of paper from under her dress, and then puts the paper in her mouth and eats it.)
(FRIEDA knocks again.)

GISA

One minute.

(SHE swallows, drinks water, then opens the door.)

FRIEDA

Do you like my dress?

GISA

Fringes? Very cosmopolitan.

FRIEDA

(Quietly)

They had Hilde's name on the list, too. I saw it.

GISA

What did they want?

FRIEDA

You can't ask too many questions. I'm only me. Don't make it so difficult.

(FRIEDA Cont'd)
(Then twirling around.)

Wish me luck.

GISA

Yes, I do.

ADRIANA
Don't make it so difficult.

Scene 13: Hamburg, ISK Headquarters, 1932

(PAUL is carving a woodblock for a poster. An older man, MENDEL, in mild disarray, comes to the entry.)

MENDEL

This is what left wing political clubs look like? Right in the Reeperbahn? With sex shops all around?

PAUL

It's what this one looks like.

MENDEL
(Cynically.)

Where are all the big banners and flags? "Fair wages for all!" Rah rah rah.

ADRIANA
(Speaking to GISA, who stands to the side and watches this scene as well.)
I don't want to remember.
Stop now.

GISA (Speaks to ADRIANA)
I can't stop it.

ADRIANA
You weren't there.

GISA
I heard the story; I know the story.

ADRIANA
Let's find something else.
I don't want to remember. Stop.

PAUL

I don't want any trouble, right?

MENDEL

As I suspected. Nothing to say for yourself.

(MENDEL picks up a sample from the woodcut.)

Simple-minded, if you ask me,

PAUL

It makes a point about the upcoming election. We can turn the tide.

MENDEL

Fools. Watch them march and scream for the "fatherland," and throw rocks under the wheel of your wagon, and laugh when it breaks. You can't stop them.

PAUL

We can change the direction. We're going to every beer hall in Hamburg before the election to speak to the people.

MENDEL

Who can even count the number of elections in the last year? One crook goes, and another is put in. Two months later, another election, another group of crooks. People would be happy for a job, people would be happy for customers to come to their bakery. This is what makes a nice girl leave her family in Berlin and come to work in some sleazy place with whorehouses all around?

ADRIANA

(To MENDEL in the other scene; he doesn't hear.)

Stop now.

Stop.

You're going too far.

(To GISA, who says nothing.)

Tell the old man to STOP.

PAUL

So you are Mr. Peiper? Gisa's father? I'm Gerhardt -- Gerhardt Paul Konopka.

MENDEL

I don't want to know who you are. Three daughters. And one in this ... dump in Hamburg.

PAUL

I can get on my bicycle and find Gisa for you. It would be an honor, sir.

MENDEL

Save your voice, Konopka. We Jews have enough misery.

PAUL

My mother's very fond of Gisa. We have plans ...

MENDEL

Misery. And why not? *Der Sturmer*, every week, with another story about the Jewish "infestation" of Europe. I'd be pleased to die. But they destroyed headstones at the Jewish cemetery. You can't even die in peace anymore. Doesn't that amuse you, Konopka?

PAUL

No sir. I must dispute you on that. Three daughters, sir: Ruth into nursing; Hanna to Palestine. Gisa will be a certified teacher in less than a year. If your customers had a decent wage for their labor, they'd be buying your bread.

MENDEL

Maybe he'll make things better. Maybe he'll get a majority in the election and get rid of the criminal element and the terrorists and Communists. Bring back law and order. Maybe that's what we need.

PAUL

You can't believe that? That we should capitulate? Kant said each one of us must act as if we are legislating for the world. (As if freedom fell on your deeds.)

MENDEL

Kant? I don't care about Kant. I came to see my daughter, and I want to make sure you understand this, Konopka: I do not approve of my daughter spending her time with a Catholic. That's all there is to it, Konopka.

PAUL

I'd like to change your mind, sir.

MENDEL

You won't.

Scene 14: Munich Station 1938

ADRIANA

(Her head is down as if she is asleep.)

Too much sorrow.

Too much pain.

SOLDIER 1

(Comes over and shakes her.)

Hey!

(ADRIANA Sits up, frightened.)

ADRIANA

Remember your name.
Remember the name you have
Remember the name to travel:
Adriana.

Sit.
Don't speak. Don't talk.

SOLDIER 1

(HE seats himself next to her.)
You'll miss your train!

ADRIANA

(Waves her hand in thanks.)

SOLDIER 1

You bet your buttons you can thank me.
I'll bet you're getting cold. (Puts his arm around her.)
To Anschluss!

ADRIANA (VOICE)

(Nods her head, as if weary.)

Sit.
Don't cry. Don't laugh.
Sit.
Float.
Float.
Float.

Scene 15: Hamburg, Hilde's Apartment, Late 1932

GISA

(Knocks on a door and walks in.)

Hilde! Time to get to the docks.

HILDE

(Still in nightclothes.)

It's dark out.

GISA

I'll turn my back so you can get dressed.

HILDE

(Dressing.)

Sometimes I wonder if people in other political clubs are getting up while it's still dark. Why is it only the ISK?

GISA

We have first-hand accounts from Dessau. People will get a taste of what the Nazis have in store for the whole country when they hear what's happened there.

ADRIANA

Information!

Information!

What year?

GISA (To ADRIANA)

(Walks over to ADRIANA and sits between SOLDIER 1 and ADRIANA. SHE speaks to ADRIANA.)

Hold on. You must hold on.

You'll be out of Germany again

and on your way. Soon.

You know the year. 1932. October 1932.

The eve of 1933.

(THE WOMAN from the first scene, boozy, sits on the SOLDIER'S lap, pushing GISA and ADRIANA aside.

GISA goes back to the prior scene with HILDE.

SOLDIER 1 and THE WOMAN eventually leave together.)

GISA

(To HILDE, still with her back to her.)

Are you dressing?

HILDE

When will it end? It's already been – what? More than two years since we published the article about the SS. You know what the Communists say?

GISA

You wouldn't trust the Communists if you heard my mother's stories from Poland.

HILDE

I met a very nice Communist at a club last night.

GISA

At a club? And he 'danced' his way into your thoughts? Did he tell you there was no danger of the Nazis gaining ground?

HILDE

He said that it might be best if the Nazis took over and then everyone would see that a revolution is necessary.

GISA

You must find someone else to dance with you, Hilde.

HILDE

He wasn't ridiculous and wild.

GISA

Of course, they aren't all like that. My friend Rudy in Berlin is a Communist. He always wears a hat, cocked to the side. (Demonstrates.) He used to say: "Art and friendship is all you need to survive."

(GISA is inexplicably rattled, as if seeing something. SHE suddenly straightens.)

But this Communist dancer will lead you to danger, Hilde.

HILDE

The ISK has already led me to danger. What is going to the Elbe Tunnel at five in the morning, other than danger?

GISA

Yes, but you are the first to say that we need to keep the dockworkers informed. And they definitely should know what's happened in Dessau. The Nazis shut down the Bauhaus design school and banned their chair. They're making all the children join Nazi youth groups, and a chair is called Degenerate! Käthe Kollwitz issued a call to action! When we go to the Tunnel, we're saying it's not too late.

HILDE

The police let me know they're watching. Men came to my mother's house.

GISA

(Overlapping. Now facing HILDE)

We'll follow all of the precautions.

HILDE

(Overlapping.)

My mother's been sick.

GISA

The Nazis recruit every day. Do you know what a girl told me at school last week? "I can always smell a Jew and, when I do, I get up and walk as far as I can in the other direction." So I said, "It's a surprise, then, that you're sitting next to me." (SHE laughs.) This is what that Communist dancer says is not a problem.

HILDE

That's not it, Gisa. I'm not brave. I can't swim. I don't do well under pressure.

GISA

What are you telling me? Someone said you're better off not to be seen by the Tunnel with a Jew at five in the morning?

HILDE

I'm saying ... my mother isn't well. Spitting up blood. I have three brothers, one sister: all younger. Someone must look after them, mustn't someone?

GISA

You don't have to say any more, Hilde. I can meet the dockworkers on my own.

(SHE starts to leave, then turns back.)

I understand, dear Hilde. You're very much in my heart. I understand.

(GISA exits.)

ADRIANA

Once we held each other in a close circle.
 Stood linked.
 Friends.
 Allies.
 Family.
 Once we held each other close.
 The world was outside.
 The world was outside and we had to let go.
 We had to let go.
 Now breathe.
 Breathe.
 Breathe.
 Once again the dark pressure will lift.
 The streets will be beautiful.
 Breathe
 Breathe.
 The sky will open wide.
 The nightmare will lift from the soul.
 Breathe.
 Breathe.
 Now breathe.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

Scene 1: Munich Station, 1938

(SOLDIER 1 and SOLDIER 2 in the MUNICH station become boisterous. THE WOMAN pours more beers and when they grab her, SHE goes along with them. THE WOMAN watches ADRIANA all the while.)

ADRIANA

Softly stands the night before my heart
I am not afraid
and nothing hurts.
Over all the dark suffering
lies calm
like a deep sea.

SOLDIERS

(Singing)

“The flag high! The ranks tightly closed!
Clear the street for the brown battalions ...

ADRIANA

(Overlapping the soldiers.)

Over all the dark suffering
Over all the dark suffering
I am not afraid.

SOLDIERS & THE WOMAN

... Clear the street for the SA man!”

ADRIANA (VOICE)

Art and friendship.
We will always
Have that.

Scene 2: Cemetery, Hamburg, 1933

(FRANZ stands in a winter coat before a gravestone in a cemetery. PAUL and GISA walk up.)

GISA

(Reads the stone and puts a pebble on top of it.)

K-o-h-l. Kohl. Is it someone we know? Died in 1929 -- that's 4 years ago. Why did you want to meet at the cemetery?

ADRIANA

Oh. I remember.
February. Cold February.
Bone chilling February.
1933 February.
The February to end February.

PAUL

The message said “urgent.” Gisa’s exams are coming up in a matter of hours.

GISA

Don’t worry about me. Let’s hurry before we freeze to death and end up in one of these holes.
Why torture ourselves?

ADRIANA

Why torture ourselves?
Why do this?

GISA (To ADRIANA)

I didn’t mean torture, torture;
It was a turn of the tongue.

ADRIANA

Torture is not a turn of the tongue.

GISA

You mustn’t think about these things.
Just sit.

ADRIANA

Just sit.
I am sitting.
Just sit.

FRANZ

Right. So here it is: Our headquarters are gone. Vandalized. Ransacked. One of the “ladies” next door saved the Gestetner and this.

(HE pulls out one of PAUL’s woodcuts.)

PAUL

Bastards!

GISA

We’ll rebuild. That won’t stop us.

PAUL

They do whatever they want! Ignore the law. Or change the law so that the law isn't the law, but a perversion of the law, and the things that decent people do are illegal. What did the stupid old fool in office think would happen when he invited Hitler to be part of his government? Before we were fighting one party. Now, three days later, they're in power. And -- this.

GISA

Willie and Minna will help.

FRANZ

I'm not so sure about the ISK anymore. Pacifism isn't getting us anywhere. Maybe we should be arming.

PAUL

Stop! We'll manage. People in Hamburg won't stand for this. This is a labor town.

FRANZ

I suppose. (beat) There's more. Willie and Minna are going to Paris. They'll set up safe houses for anti-Nazi exiles; work to get other nations to intervene and bring this to a fast end.

GISA

They're leaving?

ADRIANA

Some people are leaving.
Do you remember?
In February.
The days after. The weeks after.
Why didn't you think about leaving?

GISA

I'm not prepared to leave.

ADRIANA

Some people are leaving.
You could have left then.
Some people are leaving.

GISA

I have my mother.
I have children to tutor.
I have school.
I'll be working in a classroom soon.
Education can change everything.

ADRIANA

You're a foolish girl.
You'll end up in prison.
You'll end up in a camp.
You'll end up ...

GISA

Quiet. I'm not prepared to leave.
We can do things.

FRANZ

And all political rallies are banned. Except the Nazis.

PAUL

We'll go underground. We're prepared for this. We beat them back in the last election; we can beat them back again. It'll be better being underground.

GISA

It won't be better.

PAUL

We can do things. We'll learn to be more clever than they are.

FRANZ

The word from Berlin is that they've already set up barracks out in the country where they take people.

GISA

People? What people?

FRANZ

People. I don't know. Dissidents. People they don't like. Communists, I guess.

GISA

Who's been taken? On what grounds? We need to get a list.

PAUL

I'm sure it's all whispers and rumors. That's how these people think. It builds up fear, and that's what they want.

GISA

We need to start publishing the names of people who are missing.

FRANZ

Forget the names. Especially if the police come, you must forget all the names you know. Practice forgetting so that the only thing you remember is that you remember nothing, and if you

(FRANZ cont'd)

do remember something, you must pretend not to know, you must remember only to lie about it.

ADRIANA

You must remember nothing.

You must remember to lie about it.

GISA

“Remember to lie.” We’ve spent years getting out the truth. And now, we must lie?

PAUL

You’re not questioning that, are you?

GISA

Only you can question things?

PAUL

That kind of questioning will open a fissure and can’t be mended. We’ll tell as much of the truth as we can. As long as it hurts to lie, you’re safe.

GISA

Then I’ll be very safe. (Beat.) I’d like to go now.

FRANZ

Wait. There’s more. Anyone who’s stopped by the Gestapo must be cut off. We’ll assume that they’re being used as bait and followed. There will be no new ISK members.

GISA

And what of former members?

FRANZ

No communications. No conversations. No encounters.

PAUL

Except ...

FRANZ

No exceptions. Including Hilde.

PAUL

We’re neighbors ... we grew up together ...

FRANZ

Now she must be a stranger. If arrested, she’ll be pressed for names.

PAUL

But Hilde's mother and my mother ...

FRANZ

Then you must make your mother a stranger.

PAUL

I take care of my mother!

GISA

Surely, there can be an exception for his mother, Franz. Can't we agree on that?

FRANZ

Times have changed. My parents put in to the Jewish board for visas. I told them -- if something comes through, I'm not going. We'll all be sorry if we don't extricate ourselves from entanglements.

PAUL

My mother is not an entanglement! And if you want to talk about entanglements, you and Hilde are not exactly strangers!

FRANZ

Anything between us is over.

GISA

Very well, then. None of us will be in contact with Hilde.

PAUL

(Tosses down woodcut.)

I'm through with the ISK! Make your own damn posters!

(PAUL starts to leave. GISA blocks his path.)

GISA

You will not leave like that, Gerhardt Paul Konopka.

FRANZ

Listen, Paul: Take care of your mother. DON'T TALK to her about the ISK!

GISA

That's fair.

PAUL

Don't speak for me, Gisa. (beat.) No one has a right to monitor how I talk to my mother!

FRANZ

Your honor is our insurance. (FRANZ picks woodcut, hands it back to PAUL.)
Please ... my head is splitting.

(FRANZ starts to leave.)

PAUL

(To FRANZ, grabbing him, clasping his hand.)

Wish Gisa well on her exams.

FRANZ

Yes. I do.

(beat) We're in the middle of an era, of something we don't even know.

(FRANZ leaves; PAUL kneels, he and GISA depart.)

ADRIANA (Munich Station)

That won't stop us.

No.

They won't stop us.

No.

Won't stop us.

Scene 3: Gisa's Bedroom, Hamburg 1933

(GISA enters her room. Everything is in disarray. SHE searches frantically for books and papers.)

GISA

My books! My notes for the exam! Who's been in here? Lilla? Frieda? Who let them in? My books are not dangerous!

(GISA collapses, astonished. And then sees her framed Käthe Kollwitz print. SHE picks it up and grasps it to her chest, clearly shaken and emotional.)

Art and friendship.

Remember this also when you are old.

ADRIANA

Remember a poem.

Else Lasker-Schule.

'I have a blue piano at home
yet I don't know a single tune.'

Scene 4: Gisa's Parents' Home/Store, Berlin, 1933

(GISA enters her father's home/bakery, where she finds BRONIA sitting. GISA opens cupboards and boxes.)

Gisela!
BRONIA

Mother! Why isn't there any bread?
GISA

Your father's taking a rest. We decided not to bake today.
BRONIA
(SHE points to the other room.)

Where are the leftovers?
GISA

We rested yesterday, as well.
BRONIA

How long has this been going on?
GISA

ADRIANA
You must remember nothing.
Don't think.
Don't smile.
Don't laugh.

Passover will be here soon, and people will want matzoh instead of bread.
BRONIA

Passover's in April -- over a month away.
GISA

Talk to him, Gisela.
BRONIA
(MENDEL enters as BRONIA leaves.)

Papa?
GISA

Oh, she's descended from the throne to come and visit. I hope you didn't waste all your money to travel here.
MENDEL

(SOLDIER 2 walks up to ADRIANA in the MUNICH station.)

SOLDIER 2

(Slightly drunk.)

Hey lady. Are you where you're supposed to be?

ADRIANA

(Nods)

SOLDIER 2

Good, then. Good for you, lady!

(HE sits by her.)

Time moves so fast. The trains are moving faster than ever.

Trains are moving faster than time. Like a riddle! Five years ago,

I was in the Youth Corps. But I knew it wouldn't be long!

Oh, I see you have a wedding ring. I hope I'm not intruding.

(Takes her hand.)

ADRIANA

(Shakes her head, tries easing her hand away.)

GISA

(To MENDEL)

I finished my exams last month. I'll be a teacher soon. Have you seen a doctor?

MENDEL

Did you bring that Catholic with you?

GISA

Then you haven't seen a doctor?

SOLDIER 2

(Talking to ADRIANA at the MUNICH station.)

Here's a game I play with the new men: Where were you on

February 27, 1933? Then I tell them: On February 27 when

I heard that Communists lit fire to our Reichstag building, I traded

in my short pants. And in only five years: union with Austria!

ADRIANA

(Shakes her head; the SOLDIER puts her hand down.)

SOLDIER 2

You must have come off the train from Vienna ... waiting for the

Paris connection. Before today, an Austrian can be forgiven for not remembering

February 27, 1933. But after today, you'll have me to thank.

(Semi-oblivious to ADRIANA, THE SOLDIER hums a bit of the Horst Wessel song, sleepily gets up and walks away.)

MENDEL

I don't need a doctor. I can end this quickly. Served in the Great War; what thanks do I get? If I had my gun, I could put a gravestone at my head. Are you still part of that group of agitators?

GISA

Group? No. I'm not in any group.

MENDEL

Don't lie to me, Gisela. A daughter who lies is good for nothing.

GISA

I don't want to argue.

MENDEL

You're with some left-wing group that has an office in the sex quarter and tells you to lie to your father! (Calling) Bronia! Mother!

GISA

I'd like to say the evening prayer with you.

MENDEL

Another lie. The Rebbe should hear the way you burn my ears! When did you last observe Shabbes? Not in years.

GISA

And then we can think about a place where you can take a mineral bath and get a cure.

MENDEL

I don't need that nonsense. Hah. Bronia! Where is the note? After Mother informs you about your friend, we can talk mineral baths and cures and other lies.

BRONIA

(Enters.)

Shhh. You will never get better.

GISA

What friend?

MENDEL

Show her the note! That Communist boy!

GISA

Rudy? I'm planning to visit him.

BRONIA

Oh no, you can't do that.

MENDEL

Rich boy and a Communist, too. A boy who likes boys and a Communist, too. Ha ha. What a joke. He's the one who gave her the prints of that fanatical artist.

GISA

Käthe Kollwitz. You can't talk about her like that.

MENDEL

Oh yes I can! University let her go! Ha ha. Now she's a victim, too. That's what we Jews do best: suffer. Show her the note, Bronia!

BRONIA

I'm not sure what happened to it.

GISA

No one mentioned it.

BRONIA

I was packing the deliveries when some fellow brought it by. I put it away.

GISA

It must be in your apron.

(GISA goes to a drawer, begins whipping out aprons.)

BRONIA

(BRONIA follows GISA, closing drawers GISA opens.)

I may have lost it. With your sisters gone, it's too hard to keep everything together.

(Takes GISA by arm.)

Come, Gisa, say the evening prayers with your father.

GISA

(Resisting BRONIA, searching.)

I don't want to.

BRONIA

The note was nothing. A birthday greeting, possibly.

GISA

You read it?

BRONIA

Of course not.

GISA

Then how do you know what it said?

BRONIA

Stop interrogating me, Gisela!

GISA

I'll go to their house and find out.

BRONIA

(Confidentially so MENDEL does not hear.)

We hear things. We hear stories. We hear rumors. People are not always where they are supposed to be.

GISA

What are you saying?

BRONIA

Shops closing, people packing in the night. Doors kicked open. The fire -- the Reichstag fire. We hear stories.

GISA

We can stop them. It's not too late.

BRONIA

They're saying it was Communists who started the fire.

(Whispering.)

But if you ask me, the SS lit the match so they could bang on doors and bully people and ship them off to God-knows where.

GISA

Are you saying that's what happened to Rudy? Mother?

BRONIA

Please, Gisa, don't bring danger. You know what your father has? Melancholy, that's what. Can't you be a good girl?

ADRIANA (to GISA)

Be a good girl.

Come sit with me.

I won't look so alone if you sit with me.

I won't have to lie if you sit with me.

GISA

You're going crazy.

Gather your senses.

ADRIANA
 I remember.
 This much, I remember.

Scene 5: Hamburg Train Station, 1933

(GISA enters a train station in HAMBURG and looks around. HILDE rushes in, grabs her and swirls her around.)

HILDE
 Gisa! Hello! What a wonderful surprise to see you here! Are you in from Berlin?

GISA
 (Pulling away.)
 I'm not feeling well. You probably shouldn't get too close.

HILDE
 But I must tell you my news! I'm engaged! His name is Renne ... from Belgium.

GISA
 Yes-very well--congratulations--I really must go. Nauseous.

PAUL
 (Enters without seeing HILDE.)
 At last! Three weeks seemed like ...

HILDE
 (Turns to PAUL.)
 Paul, there you are. You've been such a stranger.

PAUL
 Hiking a lot. In the woods. Up in Blankensee.

HILDE
 Renne and I would love to go hiking. My mother must have mentioned Renne ...?

PAUL
 Yes, good news, then. (To GISA. Takes GISA's arm.) We'd best be going, right?

HILDE
 She's not well. (Taking GISA's other arm.) Here, let me accompany you to the latrine. I'm early for meeting Renne's mother

GISA/PAUL (Simultaneous.)
 No, I'll (she'll) be okay. Thank you.

(PAUL moves GISA away and they exit abruptly.)

HILDE

Nice seeing you. Nice seeing old ... friends

Scene 6: Munich Train Station, 1938

ADRIANA

This is a poem
Not a prayer.
This is a promise
Not a song.

This is from me to you,
both in ragged brown.
You, unknown, in the yard.
Me, unseen, peeking through bars.

You, at the butt of guns
'Run boy run.' 'Stand.'
'Sit.' 'Roll over.' 'Jump.'
'Faster, boy.' 'Faster.' 'Faster, boy.' 'Faster.'

I see the blood fill your mouth.
I see red pour from your nose.
I see you stumble and fall.
I see no monument for your crown.

Your last hot breath sears the air,
burnishes steel beneath my gown.
I am your witness
And this is not a prayer.

GISA

When is that?
Where?

ADRIANA

You don't want to know.
It is nothing you want to know.

Scene 7: Hamburg, University Offices, 1933

(GISA knocks again and again at the door of an office at her college. No one answers. PROF. KALTENBACH arrives and pulls her away.)

PROF. KALTENBACH

Come come come, Miss Peiper, to my office.

GISA

I'm looking for Professor Blumenthal. He's the reviewer on my dissertation.

PROF. KALTENBACH

I don't want you to worry-- our prize pupil in the education department! Everything will be fine.

GISA

What do you mean?

PROF. KALTENBACH

I will assess in Blumenthal's place.

GISA

But Professor Blumenthal ...?

PROF. KALTENBACH

... has advised me where I can find all his notes on ... on ...

GISA

... reforming the authoritarian structure of the lower grades.

PROF. KALTENBACH

I'll do my best to pick up. The decision was handed down. New employment rules, new civil service rules.

GISA

Prof. Blumenthal is gone? With the snap of a finger? What jobs will there be for me?

PROF. KALTENBACH

Surely, there's a hole in the system to accommodate you.

GISA

(Sees and picks up a picture of Hitler on his desk.)

You think they'll bend? You add a picture to your desk, a button to your lapel, reshape your views? How can you?

PROF. KALTENBACH

(Fingering and covering a swastika on his lapel.)

One must make a living. One must carry on. One must live within the times.

GISA

Then what must you think of me?

(SHE drops the frame face down and exits.)

PROF. KALTENBACH

(Calling after.)

Miss Peiper, please ... I want to help you.

Scene 8: Hamburg, At the Water, 1933

ADRIANA (Speaking across space from Munich Station.)

Poetry and art.

A dip in clear water.

A sunrise when a window is opened
behind a prison wall.

Remember.

There is some good.

(GISA and PAUL are at the Alster Lake. SHE stands in the water, he lies in it.)

PAUL

See how my floating's improved.

GISA

Your legs are dangling. You need to be flat.

PAUL

You're very tough.

GISA

Float with your head toward the sky while I dive down.

PAUL

No.

GISA

That's how you'll improve.

PAUL

I'm going to watch you dive.

GISA

As if I were a child?

PAUL

As if I knew you filled your cuffs and fists with rocks.

(HE reaches and pulls a rock from her swim clothes.)

What's this?

GISA

It would be better if I could disappear.

PAUL

(Fiercely, pulling out and tossing rocks.)

Do you think you're fighting this alone? Am I any less attacked because I'm not Jewish? We're all in this together! If you and I don't have the courage to resist, then who will?

GISA

I'm ... tired.

PAUL

Then listen to the ripples in the lake. Then write a poem. Then sing a song. You can't solve your problems by running away. I demand that you renounce this intention!

GISA

I'm sorry.

PAUL

Promise me. Now and forever.

GISA

I promise. I do.

(PAUL and GISA float together, holding each other.)

ADRIANA (Overlapping)

I promise, I do.

I promise.

I do.

Remember: there is always some good.

She came into the box of walls
that formed the cell

A young woman,
under guard herself,
watched as she watches.

A dry piece of bread.
Something black called coffee.
Evening, a bowl of soup.
She came into the cell.
She did her deeds, efficient, lean.

The walls give no response.
To reverie; to rage; to silence itself.
She came into the cell.

(ADRIANA cont'd)
 Silently, unseen, formed words.
 'Chin.' 'Up.'

She came into the cell.
 She did her deeds.
 Inside the empty walls.
 Remember, said her lips,
 There is some good.

Scene 9: Streets, Hamburg, 1933-35

(In a montage, GISA and PAUL distribute newsletters.
 People and SS officers walk by.)

GISA/PAUL
 (Whispering)

Information you should have ... information you should have ... information you should have.

FRANZ
 (HE joins them.)

Information you should have.

(THEN to GISA, PAUL, quietly.)

Officers are putting notices around. About a new law.

PAUL

Another one?

FRANZ
 (Shows a flyer to GISA.)

Took effect yesterday. See -- "Sept. 15, 1935."

GISA
 "Protection of German Honor and Blood."
 (SHE reads it quickly.)

PAUL

What is it ...?

FRANZ

It says that mixed Aryan and Jewish ...

GISA
 (Upset. SHE folds the flyer up, cuts off FRANZ.)

It's nothing.

Let me see!

PAUL
(Grabs it and reads.)

I'll put it in an article.

GISA

PAUL
Who are they to tell us who can marry! I reject this! I REJECT THIS!
(Tears up flyer.)

GISA
(Turns away, and hands out literature again.)

Information you should have!

FRANZ
(Begins leafletting with GISA.)

Come on, Paul ... Information ...
(Touches PAUL.)

I'm sorry.

Scene 10: Park, Hamburg, 1936

(Walking outdoors, GISA speaks to herself.)

GISA
So let me understand for myself. Did we forget something? 'April 1933: 'Playwright Bertolt Brecht is in exile.' 'SS enforces a boycott of Jewish businesses.' 'Ten thousand homosexuals arrested.'

PAUL
(Enters, hauling an object. HE circles GISA and then walks up to her, face to face.)
How fortunate that we're both enjoying the same sunshine in the same way.
(Whispers)
I checked: no one is near! Let's keep walking and talking: friends meeting for a stroll. I have a new invention to show you.

GISA
Did you hear the radio today? Quoting an American by the name of Brundage -- Avery Brundage. From the U.S. Olympics. "I'm very glad to have visited Mr. Himmler. I can tell you, from my meetings in Berlin: the Jews are content."

GISA

“There’s no reason why the U.S. should decline to participate in the Olympics in Berlin.”

So I’m asking myself: why doesn’t he know?

PAUL

He wants sports, he doesn’t care about the rest. But my invention will cheer you!

GISA

(SHE mimes a demonstration.)

At this moment, I’m reviewing every *Spark* headline from the past three years since 1933 so I may be able to understand this Mr. Brundage.

PAUL

There’s nothing to understand.

ADRIANA (In Munich station.)

We are in 1936, then?

GISA

Yes, right, right.

ADRIANA

1936.

Two years ago.

GISA

This is important. ‘May 1933: Tens of thousands of books are declared ‘unGerman’ and burned in a public fires.’ You remember that one?

PAUL

Of course. If you will allow me to show you this, I think it’ll improve your mood.

(HE holds up a piece of luggage.)

GISA

I’m not finished.

PAUL

Please take a look!

GISA

It’s a piece of luggage.

PAUL

When you’re determined, nothing will stop you.

ADRIANA

Nothing will stop you.

GISA

We report event after event, one after another -- horizontally. Individually, each can be overlooked. But pile them on top of each other and they become mountains of evidence that no civilized person can ignore. Not even Avery Brundage. 'April 1934: New courts send 'enemies of the state' to prison. 'November 1935: Jews are disqualified from German citizenship.' '1936: Hitler plans an elaborate Olympics display.' And, three years after he disappeared, I still don't know what happened to my friend Rudy!

PAUL

You skipped one. 'September 15, 1935.'

GISA

I don't care to mention it.

PAUL

'Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor.' We should've married when we had a chance. But then your father wouldn't have approved.

GISA

I think he had a change of heart before he died.

PAUL

What does it say for you to avoid even mentioning September 15?

GISA

We feel the same about one another whether or not we're married.

PAUL

Except my feelings are illegal: I'm 'too Aryan' for you. How do you think that makes me feel?

GISA

But why can't Avery Brundage see what's happening?

PAUL

This is my invention. People will be coming to Germany for the Olympics from all over. Franz and I will walk with them, carrying our luggage, every bit the spectator.

(HE demonstrates with his luggage.)

'But, oh, I'm tired and must put down my bag.'

(HE feigns being tired, puts the luggage down.)

GISA

(Watches)

Yes?

PAUL
 Keep watching.
 (HE picks his luggage up and points to the ground.)
 See!

GISA
 There's an imprint on the ground where your luggage sat! From some mechanism inside?

PAUL
 Exactly.

GISA
 (Leans to ground, reading.)
 'All ... is ... not ... well. Germany's calm ... is the calm ... of a ... graveyard.'

PAUL
 But while you read, I'm walking away.

GISA
 Mr. Konopka: I think Avery Brundage has met his match.

Scene 11: Munich Station, 1938

ADRIANA
 Her hands put coffee on the table
 The guard watches from the door
 Her eyes look at me,
 shift up
 Her eyes shift up.
 No words. A shift. Up.

Eventually, I lift the cup.
 A gift.
 A gift only someone who has been
 inside the cell can understand.
 The gift of a needle.
 The gift of a purpose.
 The gift of my hands.
 Shift.
 Up.

Scene 12: Street, Hamburg, 1936

(GISA buttons a coat, leaving a shop. HILDE rushes up, her face covered by the scarf.)

HILDE

Hello! (Then whispering.) Gisa! It's me, Hilde.

GISA

You're mistaken. I don't know you.

HILDE

I need to tell you something.

GISA

(Turns her back, deliberately changing subject.)

I'm sorry. I don't know that address.

HILDE

I took soup to Paul's apartment for his mother. They're waiting for him.

GISA

(Deliberately evasive.)

I'm not very good with directions, I'm afraid.

HILDE

(Whispers) Gestapo.

GISA

But perhaps a delivery truck can point you in the right direction.

HILDE

They wanted to know where he was during the Olympics.

GISA

Or perhaps a map from the bookstall will help. It's there. I do hope you find your way.

(HILDE scoots away. GISA moves quickly and with determination.)

ADRIANA

One skin is made of leather.

The other is made of steel.

Scene 13: Street, Hamburg, 1936

(PAUL, on his usual path, walks by GISA. He carries laundry and walks his bicycle. SHE steps with him.)

GISA

Don't.

ADRIANA

Don't.
Don't smile.
Don't laugh.
Don't cry.
Don't.

PAUL

I'm only carrying my laundry home.

GISA

Don't. Don't go. Don't walk. Don't return.

PAUL

What are you saying?

GISA

Ride. Into the woods. Into the country. Into the distance. Up to Blankensee.
I'll meet you there in two days.
(beat)
Your apartment is compromised.

ADRIANA (Munich Station)

Softly stands the night before my heart
I am not afraid
and nothing hurts.

(In the Munich train station a PASSENGER walks across the platform with a newspaper and reads the headline to ADRIANA.)

PASSENGER

'Germany Adds Seven Million Austrians!' Anschluss!

(THE WOMAN who has been keeping an eye on ADRIANA walks over.)

THE WOMAN

Show me. I'd like to see a piece of history!

PASSENGER

Fürher Declared 'Man of the Year.'

Scene 14: Woods, Outside Hamburg, 1936

(PAUL & GISA lie in the woods.)

PAUL

Touch my face. So I can memorize it. (SHE does.)

GISA

I've tucked a poem in your jacket. They say once you get to Holland, the underground will get you to Paris.

PAUL

I'll ride to the border in two days, I think. A single one, if it isn't rainy. I could even carry a passenger on my bike.

GISA

There's much more work to do here.

PAUL

I could stay.

GISA

Don't be a fool.

PAUL

Now I'm a fool?

GISA

You'll be arrested and who knows what will happen next. No one will benefit.

PAUL

Come with me.

GISA

The committee collected the documents for you. I have Franz.

PAUL

(PAUL gets up, gets dressed.)

And they didn't tell you that no one has seen Franz for a week?

GISA

That can't be.

PAUL

(Seeing her distress.)

You must remember, Gisa, there is always some good.

(HE kisses her and begins to exit, but returns abruptly.)

Newsletter ... I need to take one ...

GISA

No. I'm not giving it to you.

PAUL

So you wish to argue with me? Now?

GISA

It's too dangerous to carry anti-Nazi literature.

PAUL

Europe is obsessing about a playboy king in Britain and the 'tragedy' of his giving up the throne to marry an American divorcee? While our lives are torn apart and our newsletter reports that Nazi factories are making poison gas and this is our last goodbye. If I want a newsletter to tell the world, don't you think that's for me to decide?

GISA

(GISA finds the newsletters rolled in a stocking and straps one inside the leg of PAUL's pants.)

Be careful the bicycle chain doesn't catch your pants.

PAUL

(Hugs her again.)

Bon courage. That's from Rilke, isn't it?

GISA

Rilke -- yes.

PAUL

Eat, Gisa. That's from me. Remember to eat.

GISA

Just get to Paris safely. I will find you. I promise.

(PAUL exits. GISA sits alone, and then doubles over, as if about to throw up.)

God!

ADRIANA (Munich station)

And when they grinned and spat
and left us weeping
and left us all alone, and left no love

GISA

They will not see me cry.

ADRIANA (Munich station)

You, who then must have seen us from above
bear testimony, that we were not sleeping.
If you are there at all, bear witness, God!

GISA

(Standing, walking out, whispering, then louder with confidence.)

Information you should have. Information you should have ...

(Walking off, continues.)

Scene 15: Gisa's Bedroom, Hamburg, 1936

(GISA is asleep in her room. Darkness and quiet are slowly interrupted by growing sounds: voices, footsteps, a key. GISA, in a nightgown, sits up, moves some papers, swallows some items, returns to bed. Lights. Two HAMBURG SS MEN stand with FRIEDA.)

FRIEDA

(To the HAMBURG SS MEN, in a rush of words.)

I'd tell you more. But I only rent the room. My husband was a soldier, killed, so naturally I need the money. She doesn't have any friends. Doesn't do anything but read and ride her bicycle. Doesn't even eat.

HAMBURG SS MAN 1

Doesn't eat?

FRIEDA

Hardly.

HAMBURG SS MAN 1

No sausages?

FRIEDA

Never. No sausages. No wurst. No eel.

HAMBURG SS MAN 1

Thank you, ma'am. You may leave now.

(FRIEDA exits. HAMBURG SS MAN 1 bangs the floor, throws back Gisa's covers. HAMBURG SS MAN 2 starts throwing papers everywhere, searching.)

Get up!

(GISA sits.)

Get dressed.

(HAMBURG SS MAN 1 grabs GISA, stands her up.)

I said: Get dressed.

(HAMBURG SS MAN 1 pulls off GISA's nightgown. GISA stands, naked. GISA finds some clothes, and begins to put them on. When SHE starts to turn her back, HE swivels her around.)

Garbage.

HAMBURG SS MAN 2
(HAMBURG SS MAN 2 finds Kollwitz prints, shows them to HAMBURG SS MAN 1, tosses them back.)

She's a Jew.

HAMBURG SS MAN 1

Did she think she could hide it?

HAMBURG SS MAN 2

Pig.

HAMBURG SS MAN 1
(To GISA.)

She'll have plenty of names to give.

HAMBURG SS MAN 2
(HAMBURG SS MAN 2 exits.)

ADRIANA (Munich Station.)
Remember
To forget.
Pretend.
Lie if you must.
Remember
To forget.

(In simultaneous action to HAMBURG, TWO MUNICH SS approach ADRIANA. One holds out a hand, seeking papers, while the other watches. ADRIANA hands up a passport to MUNICH SS 1, who scrutinizes it.)

MUNICH SS 1
A Jew?

MUNICH SS 2
No. French father, Austrian mother.
(HE passes the papers back to ADRIANA; THEY walk off.)

HAMBURG SS MAN 2
(Returns to GISA's room, towing HILDE, whose hands are tied in front of her. HILDE is crying. SS MAN 2 speaks to HILDE, pointing at GISA.)

Know this one?

HILDE

I HAVE THREE BROTHERS AND A SISTER TO CARE FOR! PLEASE!

HAMBURG SS MAN 2

We'll put them in the wagon together.

HAMBURG SS MAN 1

(Ties GISA's hands.)

Oink.

(HAMBURG SS MAN 1 suddenly spits at GISA. HILDE watches. SS I ties their hands together, marches them out.)

ADRIANA

We go, we go,
the difficult steep and long way.
In us lives a will, good and clear
We do not cry any more.

Scene 16: Fuhlsbüttel Prison, Outside Hamburg, 1936

(GISA sits in a plain brown dress. GESTAPO MAN enters.)

GESTAPO MAN

(HE lights up, offers GISA a cigarette.)

Cigarette?

(GISA declines with a gesture.)

Don't smoke?

(GISA says nothing.)

I hear some anti-patriot groups tell their members to stop smoking so they won't be tempted by our offers of cigarettes. True?

GISA

I don't know.

GESTAPO MAN

I see. It was a bit of humor. We just need the answers to a few questions.

(GISA says nothing.)

ADRIANA

Where are you?

GISA

I don't know.

ADRIANA

Oh. Bon courage. Bon courage.
Bon courage.
Keep your wits about you.
Remember to forget.

GESTAPO MAN

Who wrote this newsletter?

GISA

I never saw it before.

GESTAPO MAN

Who wrote the article that claims the Führer is making poison gas in Hamburg? Nicely written.

GISA

I don't know anything about it.

GESTAPO MAN

What do you know about poison gas?

GISA

I don't know anything about it.

GESTAPO MAN

Who are your closest friends?

GISA

I stick to myself.

GESTAPO MAN

How old are you?

GISA

Twenty-six.

GESTAPO MAN

You're young to be so friendless. Who is Willie Eichler?

GISA

I don't know.

GESTAPO MAN

Did he leave the Homeland so an innocent girl could hold the bag for him?

GISA

I'm not aware of the situation you're describing.

GESTAPO MAN

Who is Franz Haberman?

GISA

I don't know.

GESTAPO MAN

Used to work for a printer in Hamburg? He's your friend, isn't he?

GISA

No.

GESTAPO MAN

Odd. He remembers you as a friend. Remembered you.

ADRIANA

Remember the traps.

Remember the lies.

Remember to keep your wits.

GISA

I don't know him.

GESTAPO MAN

Who is Hilde Hoch?

GISA

I don't know.

GESTAPO MAN

Who is Gerhardt Konopka?

GISA

I don't know.

GESTAPO MAN

Paul Konopka, perhaps, to you?

ADRIANA

Remember this also when you grow old.

Remember there is art, there is poetry.

Remember a skin of leather and steel.

Remember to grow old.

GISA

It's not a name I'm familiar with.

GESTAPO MAN

Have you ever worked for a labor union?

GISA

No.

GESTAPO MAN

Did you pass out labor 'newsletters' at the Elbe Tunnel?

GISA

No.

GESTAPO MAN

Did you ever try to unionize a factory?

GISA

No.

GESTAPO MAN

Did you meet often with other members of the ISK?

GISA

I don't know what it is.

GESTAPO MAN

(Puts his face into hers.)

You should learn to smoke.

(HE blows smoke at her.)

You're a nasty traitor. A stubborn streak. But we have time. Perhaps your memory will improve in solitary. This is a thousand year Reich. I'll ask the guards to leave a knife on the table, so you can spare us the trouble.

ADRIANA

You can't let him say that!

Say something back!

Say, you're a hateful bastard!

Say, I know all about your terror tactics!

Say. I'm not going to give into your lies and deceits!

Spit. SPIT NOW.

GISA

(Pointedly ignoring ADRIANA; calmly.)

I've told you all that I know.

GESTAPO MAN

Now that I think about it, solitary can wait. First, perhaps, you will enjoy the box. Guard! This prisoner wishes to stand in the box. And don't bother with dinner -- it's too late for all that.

(HE blows smoke in the air and exits. THE GUARD puts GISA in a standing coffin. THEY exit. Stage lights are dark or dim.)

ADRIANA

Use your imagination.
Remember song.

GISA (VOICE only.)

I hate THEM. I HATE them. I HATE them.

ADRIANA

Remember art.
Remember poetry.
Remember Rilke.

“When dogs are sleeping, and when stones are lying
Woe, a sad night, woe, just any night
which waits until the morning should return....”

GISA (VOICE)

“...until the morning should return.
For angels do not come to such in prayer
and nights do not become great for their sake.”

ADRIANA

Dive deep.
Swim.
Swim the Alster. Swim the Elbe.
Dive.

(The next morning. LIGHTS come up. An OLD MAN, a guard but not dressed in an SS uniform, opens the box. GISA practically falls out.)

OLD MAN

My goodness, young woman, here, stand, lean on me.

(GISA does.)

There, there. These crazy men from Munich. It's criminal. How long have you been in there?

GISA

I don't know.

OLD MAN

Do you know where you are?

GISA

No.

OLD MAN

Our fine old Hamburg prison, look what they've done to it.

ADRIANA

Fuhlsbüttel.

There are so many rumors about Fuhlsbüttel.

People go in; people don't come out.

OLD MAN

They've turned our fine old Fuhlsbüttel prison into a chamber of horrors. We've run the prison very well for 60 years without them. Look at these boxes ... coffins. Who thought that up? Some lunatic, that's who. Do you know your name?

GISA

Gisa Peiper.

OLD MAN

Then you haven't lost your senses. Not like the one screaming in the night: 'Let me out. Yes, I did listen to the French radio. Let me go!'

GISA

(Woozy, she turns and sees a knife on a table, picks it up.)

They left a knife for me.

OLD MAN

(Tries to pry it from her hands.)

No, no. I'll take that. Hand it to me. I have a better place for that.

(beat)

Have you eaten?

GISA

Eaten?

OLD MAN

You must eat. Now, you give me this knife, and I'll get you some hot soup. And none of their grovel. Soup my wife packed for lunch.

(HE takes the knife, and puts it in his boot.)

GISA

You look like an angel.

OLD MAN

Now, don't say things like that or I'll think you've lost your mind. Like the Jehovah's Witness girl (whispering): they broke both her hands because she won't swear allegiance. You remember who you are.

GISA

(Whispers.)

Thank you.

Scene 17: Prison cell, Fuhlsbüttel, Outside Hamburg, 1936

(GISA, in a cell, marches three steps forward, touches the cell wall, marches three steps back.)

Today I am walking the path to Blankensee. 3,600 times back and forth in the cell. Imagination will keep me alive.

(Singing)

“Who wants to hike in joy
Must rise early, meeting the sun ...”

Keep busy. But what to do with the hands? And with the eyes? And ears?

ADRIANA

Don't look. Don't look out the window.
Don't see who is barking orders. Don't see who is wincing.
Do not see with your own eyes
the images that will not
go away.
Don't look.

(As ADRIANA talks, GISA climbs on a chair and looks out the bars of a window.)

GISA

(Looking out, SHE rubs her hands rapidly on her dress.)

Who are the men who do this? Yelling 'roll over?' And who are you ... forced on all fours?
What thing of courage did you do? To bring you here?

(Quietly, to herself.)

You, out the window, this is from me to you. 'I see the blood fill your mouth, I see red pour from your nose, I see you stumble and fall.' YOU have renewed my fury and fury will keep me alive.

(GISA returns to walking, furiously, stretching her hands open and closed.)

ADRIANA

This is a poem

Not a prayer.

(ADRIANA cont'd)

This is a promise
Not a song.
Your last hot breath sears the air,
burnishes steel beneath my gown.
I am your witness
And this is not a prayer.

GISA

(The doors open. A PRISON TRUSTEE, a woman, enters with a cup of coffee, and looks all around. The TRUSTEE mouths words to GISA and points to the bottom of the cup, and then to a place on the wall. The TRUSTEE exits.)

ADRIANA

Chin.
Up.
Chin up. Chin up.

GISA

(GISA walks to the wall and running her hand over it, finds words scratched into the stone.)

‘You who come after us, do not despair. The sun will also shine for us.’

(GISA looks under the cup. SHE finds a needle, and walks back to the wall and scratches into it.)

‘For, amid darkness, angels still dwell; it is for each of us, each day to decide.’

(GISA finds a thread in the hem of her dress, unravels it, and threads the needle.)

Scene 18: Prison cell, Fuhlsbüttel, Outside Hamburg, 1937

ANNOUNCER (INTERCOM, Munich Station, 1938)

In 30 minutes, the train for Paris will arrive on track eight.
Passengers, have your documents ready for inspection.

ADRIANA

(Straightens herself, but doesn't move.)

(GISA is in the prison. In a lapse of time, her sewing project is more extensive and she hides it under her dress as the door opens. A young SS Guard enters. GISA stands.)

YOUNG SS GUARD

Ready for questioning?

GISA

If you wish.

YOUNG SS GUARD

A cooperative one! (HE laughs.) And we don't even need you anymore. We know all about you, your 'leaders.'

GISA

I see.

YOUNG SS GUARD

(HE pushes up against her with his body.)

They said I can let you go. We're running short of space. What do you think? You want to go? Just you and me here and it's been a long night of cold air in Fuhlsbüttel.

ADRIANA

Don't be tricked.
Every minute could bring a trick.
Keep your wits about you.

GISA

(Slips from under him.)

Of course you must know I'm not as young as you might think.

YOUNG SS GUARD

You don't think I'd touch a traitor, do you? (GISA says nothing.) You didn't answer.

GISA

All of the guards have been true to their oath.

YOUNG SS GUARD

Just know -- once you leave, we'll be following you everywhere. Nothing escapes us. You are hereby ordered not tell anyone what happened to you or anything that you've seen. Understood?
(GISA nods.)

Because you can be invited for a return visit. I'll keep my eye out! (He laughs.)
(HE menaces as if he's going to grab HER sexually, but pushes HER in front instead. THEY exit.)

ADRIANA

And when they grinned and spat
And left us weeping
And left us all alone, and left no love,
You, who then must have seen us from above
Bear testimony, we were not sleeping.

Scene 19: Munich Station 1938/Cemetery, Hamburg, 1937

(GISA stands outside the prison, in street clothes. SHE shivers and trembles.)

ADRIANA (Munich train station.)
Don't look back.

(GISA looks up, listens, and runs.)

ADRIANA
Don't smile.
Don't stop.
Don't laugh.
Don't cry.

GISA
(To ADRIANA.)

HOW can you tell me not to cry!

(Stops, pulls out the cloth handkerchief stuffed in her dress. SHE clings to it and fingers its corners.)

Look at this stitching. My sanity, in every plunge of the needle!

HILDE
(HILDE, aged, calls, also exiting prison.)

Gisa! Wait. Gisa! Gisa ... my leg ... I can't run.

GISA
(Clutches the handkerchief, and runs.)

(In the Munich station, THE WOMAN from the first scene brushes by ADRIANA and taps her on the knee.)

THE WOMAN
The Paris train is coming, honey.

ADRIANA
(Looks up, confused, says nothing.)

THE WOMAN
You're waiting for the Paris train, aren't you?
It won't be long.
(Speaking now as if GISA might be deaf.)
You're going to need to get to the platform.
(SHE points.)

The train won't stop for you here, and it won't stop long before it's gone again.

ADRIANA

(Takes out a handkerchief, coughs, nods as if to say she understands and 'thank you,' but I'm sick. THE WOMAN moves on.)

GISA

(GISA, breathless, running, enters the cemetery. SHE falls down, clutching herself. A VOICE calls - it is FRANZ, not visible at first.)

FRANZ

We meet again.

GISA

(Listens, hears.)

You're alive!

FRANZ

(Stepping out. He speaks lightly, with humor.)

Half-alive. Parts of me are alive.

(HE limps; his face is bandaged, arm mangled.)

GISA

My God! What have they done!

FRANZ

Doesn't hurt much anymore. Except when I'm awake. Or when I'm asleep.

GISA

Fuhlsbüttel?

FRANZ

Jailhouse, back of a wagon: they can always find a place. And a person. Which, I guess, was -- me! My family found a boat. Thankfully.

GISA

Who did this to us? Who turned us in?

ADRIANA

Don't.

Don't think.

Don't dwell.

FRANZ

Don't, Gisa. You can hear boats ripple along the Elbe -- that's enough.

GISA

They burned scars into my memory. At any moment, they could re-arrest us. My legs -- they're trembling, like they're not even a part of my body. Next time, I won't come out alive. Truth is, some days, I didn't want to come out alive. I stayed alive to spite them.

FRANZ

One thing I know about you, Gisa Peiper -- you have a stubborn streak!
(beat)
But now, we need to make plans to get you to safety.

GISA

And you, too.

FRANZ

And not 'me, too.' Of course, we're both bait. No one can take a chance on being seen with us. But I'm a heavy piece of luggage. Can't be inconspicuous. Can't be conspicuous. Things are different for you.

GISA

They stamped my passport: 'stateless.' Closes all the doors. If I leave illegally, it'll mean trouble for everyone. I've seen how they harass Paul's mother. My mother won't budge from Berlin, even though my sister sent her papers for Palestine.

FRANZ

I see that there's one deed left for me. I'll get word to the underground that you're alive and where you'll be. And here's what you must do:

(As FRANZ talks, GISA rises and goes to her room. She gets dressed and packs her suitcase and prints.)

Go back to your room, quietly gather your things. Take only the essentials. Act as if you're going on an overnight stay.

FRANZ

When your landlady inquires, say nothing.

(FRIEDA enters and gesticulates, points, throws her hands up, but GISA quietly keeps packing.)

Go straightaway to Berlin.

(GISA enters her mother's home, finds her MOTHER sitting alone.)

Pack your mother up to be resettled. You must tell her you're a freedom fighter, and the Gestapo shows no mercy. Board her on a boat.

(GISA sweeps the room; fixes her mother's hair, puts a coat on her. GISA sticks the handkerchief from the prison in her mother's pocket, kisses her.)

Next, find a doctor at the Czechoslovakian Embassy. White hair. Slender build. Round glasses. Tell him you need to go to Karlsbad Springs immediately for health reasons. A “stateless” person

(FRANZ cont'd)

can leave for medical care. Say that you're feeling very tired. Severe arthritis. And your kidneys bother you.

(GISA enters a doctor's office, lies on exam table. The DOCTOR says nothing to her. GISA coughs, points .)

He'll write a note that says you need to travel to Czechoslovakia for treatment.

(The DOCTOR takes out a pad, and writes quickly.)

GISA

(To FRANZ.)

Inside the Czech embassy, there's a man who helps the resistance?

FRANZ

Underground workers will meet you in Karlsbad. Wear white gloves so that they may identify you. They'll relocate you to a country where you can be useful. They'll have a key word - ISK - and the person meeting you will use Morse code to tap it in your hand.

(GISA puts on gloves. An UNDERGROUND WORKER approaches and, with a two-handed shake to her one hand, taps a message into her palm. GISA acknowledges it.)

They'll find an Austrian citizen to marry you. Or a Dane.

(The UNDERGROUND WORKER introduces an older Austrian man, MR. KUEHN, who nods.)

As a spouse, you'll be allowed to travel to your husband's native land.

GISA

(To FRANZ.)

What about Paul? He'll be devastated.

FRANZ

This is an anti-Nazi movement, Gisa. This isn't about Paul.

GISA (to FRANZ)

But ...

FRANZ

We swore to put the movement first. We made a COMMITMENT.

ADRIANA

You should be with me and so softly
Touch me as a good, far away dream.
I want to lie near you – oh, so quietly ...
your arm should be around me
and all this that the day demands

should sink away, and rest.

(GISA speaks to the UNDERGROUND WORKER.)

GISA

I realize you have the best of intentions. But I should have made it plain that I have someone already. In Paris. Part of the movement. I'll be joining him -- I can't marry.

UNDERGROUND WORKER

(Pointedly ignoring her.)

The ceremony shall be at a lawyer's office this afternoon. None of this was easy to arrange, but the instructions came from Willie Eichler and Minna Specht. They said you're a good, hard worker, one to be trusted. We need good workers in Austria.

ADRIANA (To GISA.)

When is this?

GISA (Turning from her conversation with WORKER.)

You know the answer.

ADRIANA

I need to hear it.

GISA

Last year. 1937.

ADRIANA

One year ago?

GISA

One year -- is long enough.

UNDERGROUND WORKER

After the ceremony, we shall give you new papers. You shall take the name of Mr. Kuehn. Your first name shall be Adriana. Remember it. French father, Austrian mother. You must forget otherwise who you are, forget your name, forget your father, forget your mother, forget your past, forget the someone in Paris. Together, you and your new husband shall travel to Vienna, where the movement is working to stop the Nazi spread.

ADRIANA

(As this sequence continues and through to the end of the scene, ADRIANA looks at a clock, checks her ticket, stands, collects items around her and begins to move away from the bench on which she has been sitting.)

GISA

They'll detect my accent. Prussian German is very different from Austrian German. I could be a danger to everyone, including Mr. Kuehn.

UNDERGROUND WORKER

This is true. All of us could end up in prison! Or dead. Probably will. That doesn't mean we shall be silenced!

GISA

Austria could be overtaken within a year. The Nazis are on the move ...

UNDERGROUND WORKER

All the more reason to put our best people there. If Austria becomes unsafe, we shall move the workers to Paris. (beat) If you're uncertain, or ambivalent, tell me now.

GISA

I can't swear allegiance to Mr. Kuehn. I can't pretend. It would be a lie.

UNDERGROUND WORKER

Don't be foolish, and especially don't be a foolish romantic. Gather your courage, my dear. Our movement is a thin reed standing up to big lies. Of course, there are dangers --

GISA

You don't have to lecture me. I KNOW THE DANGERS! I've been a witness to the dangers!

UNDERGROUND WORKER

Very well, then; there's nothing more to say.

GISA

(To Mr. KUEHN.)

Mr. Kuehn, understand that I will be a wife in name only. (beat) Love is ... a stubborn streak.
(MR. KUEHN, somewhat baffled, nods.)

ADRIANA

(Begins to move from her perch at the station.)

Behind us lies the burden of long years
behind us all the sorrow we have suffered ...

When wild the wind blows over darkened fields
We only feel the clear wide space.
When darkened clouds press full of threat
In us now grows a calm, strong as a tree.

(GISA looks over to ADRIANA.)

UNDERGROUND WORKER

(Reaches for GISA's things.)

Now give me these and follow.

GISA

(GISA grabs her bag and struggles for control of it.)

I'll carry these. Art prints. Käthe Kollwitz. Perfect for a newlywed in Austria.

UNDERGROUND WORKER

(Yanks away the prints.)

Then we shall find a lovely home for them, Adriana. The past ... is past.

(UNDERGROUND WORKER takes packages, exits.

KUEHN holds out his arm; GISA does not take it. SHE exits.)

FRANZ (Offstage)

We'll get word to Paul. He'll want to know that you're safe.

ADRIANA

One skin of leather.

the other of steel

Bon courage.

Scene 20: Munich Train Station, 1938

ADRIANA

(Walks toward the platform, fingering her ticket, visa, other papers.)

GISA

(Speaks from an unspecified location, near where ADRIANA had been sitting at the Munich station. SHE is talking to ADRIANA.)

There is the goal --

yet one hesitates.

So far the way

And everywhere are stones.

Behind us lies the burden of long years

behind us all the sorrow we have suffered.

ADRIANA

Why am I in Munich? Of all places, Munich!

Who agreed to return me to Germany?

GISA

(Calmly, to ADRIANA)

Dive deep.
Swim.
Don't.

(GISA cont'd)

Don't laugh.
Don't smile.
Don't cry.
Don't.

ADRIANA

No! Tell me! I want to know. The escape was a year ago! You said so. The Czech doctor, the Karlsbad meeting, the underground, Mr. Kuehn. Why the Munich station, with the SS crawling in every corner?

GISA

Bon courage.

ADRIANA

No! TELL ME WHY!

GISA

Tell you? What, Adriana? WHAT! Didn't you say the Nazi advance was on? Didn't you spend the year aiding resistance in Austria? A country, like a person, must have courage! Austria did not. What more is there, Adriana!

ADRIANA

But Munich...?

GISA

Hold on.
Please.
It's only one layover.
To Paris.
The worker told you.
Out of Austria, through Munich,
then the train to Paris.
The worker told you.
Please.

ADRIANA

They left a knife on the table:
'Why not save us the trouble?'

GISA

Don't think.

Dive deep.
Dive. Dive deep.

SOLDIER 2

(In the MUNICH Station, SOLDIER 1 calls out as ADRIANA approaches his area.)

Before you step to the platform for the Munich train to Paris, line up to the right. Have your passport and identification open.

(THE WOMAN from scene ONE lingers nearby, hanging from time to time on the arm of SOLDIER 1.)
(SOLDIER 1 takes ADRIANA's identification.)

GISA

One skin of leather, the other of steel. Underneath, a stubborn streak.

(SOLDIER 1 shows ADRIANA's papers to SOLDIER 2. THEY scrutinize the documents.)

SOLDIER 1 (Speaking to ADRIANA.)

Tell me your place of birth; your mother; your father.

ADRIANA

(Coughs into a handkerchief, points to her throat.)

SOLDIER 1

Speak! I want to HEAR your voice! I want to HEAR your accent.
(beat) I can't let you on the Paris train until I hear: place of birth, mother, father. Say, 'My mother is ... My father is ...' Do YOU WANT TO GET ON THE TRAIN OR NOT!

ADRIANA

(SHE speaks to SOLDIER 1. NOTE: this is not an interior voice.)
My mother ...

...

THE WOMAN

(Suddenly, cutting off ADRIANA, overlapping, to SOLDIER 1.)
It's Anschluss! You silly goose! I was just celebrating with her up in the waiting room. She's sick as a dog and still hoisting away in joy!
(As if drunk.)

I know everything there is to know about her, pet. Ask me.

(THE WOMAN grabs ADRIANA's hand with both her hands for a moment. THE WOMAN quickly writes a code into ADRIANA'S hand. ADRIANA sees that THE WOMAN is wearing gloves, stands motionless.)

Ask me the questions. What do you want to know!
 (THE WOMAN smacks a kiss on SOLDIER 1.)
 Ask me, pet. Come on, ask me what we'll do tonight.
 It's Anschluss! Once in a lifetime.

SOLDIER 1
 (Laughing.)
 It's Anschluss! We'll celebrate, that's what.

(As SOLDIER 1 kisses THE WOMAN, HE hands
 back the papers and waves ADRIANA through.)

SOLDIER 2
 Spread the good news in Paris, eh?

(ADRIANA nods, takes her papers, moves on.)

GISA
 (To ADRIANA)

When will it start
 the dawn of the day
 when humanity
 turns to the light
 Yet it may be, whenever it will be.
 I will work hard
 as if the time has come today.

Remember ...

ADRIANA
 Remember ...

GISA
 ... remember this also when you are old.

-- End of Play --