

Kafka and the Doll
60-70 minutes
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*The play was developed by The Growing Stage in New Jersey and through the Old Miner's Children's Playwriting Contest in Utah. It was first produced by Somerville High School for the Massachusetts Thespian Festival, directed by Charles Jabour. Original cast can be provided.

RUNNING TIME: 75-80 minutes

SYNOPSIS: The play is about love and kindness. Love within families, friends and a touch of the romantic. Some people come into your lives at exactly the right time and so it was for Sofie and Kafka. Franz Kafka is noted for mixing realism with the fantastical. But there was another side to him. A side that delighted in playing with his young nieces and nephews. A side that yearned to be loved by his distant parents. And a side that knew that kindness was a good force. The world can be a treacherous place. Finding your way in it takes courage. Diversity in casting is encouraged.

There is a short note from Dora Diamont that Kafka found a young girl weeping in a park. The story was found among Dora's memories of Kafka. Kafka tried to console her, but she was bereft. She had lost her doll and would never get over it. Kafka announces that he has a letter that he found and he wonders if it could be from her doll. And so began a three-week correspondence where Kafka wrote letters for the girl from her travelling doll. Nothing remains from this story – it was never found. But it might have gone something like this...

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CAST: 14 (6 female, 4 male, 4 any gender)*

With doubling: 7 (Suggestions below)

If you want to add to the cast, you could assign a magical character to change the signs and set up the various locales. Think: Harlequin, a magician, a wizard.

SOFIE SCHWARZ (female) age 11-12; mourning a loss

ANYA MEYER (female) 20-25? Sofia's young aunt who is caring for Sofia

FRANZ KAFKA (male) 40, a writer who is losing his battle with life

DORA DIAMONT (female) (25), Kafka's friend, encourager, helper

LISETTE (female) age 16-20): Lisette can be any color or nationality but she must be a doll old enough "to fall in love." She is more Madame Alexander than American Doll.

FREDERICK (male) 16-25 toy soldier, kind

CARUSO (male) an insecure vaudeville porpoise

ROMEO (male) an alley cat; kind of a wise guy

JULIET (female) a long-haired alley cat whose beauty may be fading

FIFI LA CUTE (female) French Poodle with the heart of a St. Bernard

GARGOYLE (male or female) your everyday menacing gargoyle

STARGOYLE (male or female) a slightly sweeter gargoyle

PARBOIL (male or female) simmers

MONSEIUR/MADAME COCTEAU Toymaker (ageless, heart of gold)

ANNOUNCER VOICE (offstage)

BOY'S VOICE (offstage)

EXTRAS welcome! Have fun with extras – have them twirling, playing games, handstands, rolling hula hoops, playing chess, etc. in the various parks.)

CAST WITH DOUBLING: 7 (4 female, 3 male)

SOFIE

ANYA

FRANZ

DORA

FREDERICK/GARGOYLE

CARUSO/ROMEO/STARGOYLE

JULIET/FIFI/PARBOIL/COCTEAU

Setting

The play is a story told with stories. You do not need to clutter it up with a lot of settings. Steglitz Park in Berlin (really, just a park bench is fine). SOFIE'S room (all you need is a desk and a chair); FRANZ'S room (again – just a desk and a chair); For the travelling doll sequences, we are always in a park. Change a flag, hang a sign, or use a set piece that evokes the particular country. You could go all out and do projections – the designs can be as simple or as complicated as you wish.

Time

July, August, 1924

Kafka and the Doll

Scene 1, Friday, July 25, 1924

AT RISE we are in Steglitz Park in Berlin. It is a small, leafy park with ponds, gardens, children's playgrounds, and hills. But all you need is a park bench. SOFIE and ANYA are having a picnic of pastries. SOFIE is holding an exquisite doll. Think: Madame Alexander type – not American Girl.

SOFIE

These are so good. Your kolaches are better than the ones from the bakery. Are there any more?

ANYA

You wolfed down three of them! I can't believe you finished the last one.

SOFIE

It was raspberry – my favorite!

ANYA

I thought the one with the cherry filling was your favorite. *And* the strawberry one. They can't all be favorites.

SOFIE

Grown-ups are so silly. You can have lots of favorites. You know what time it is, don't you? It's "rolling down the hill" time.

ANYA

We cannot roll down hills with our tummies filled with pastries!

SOFIE

Pretty *please!* With cherries and strawberries and kolaches on top!

ANYA

No more kolaches! Let me push you in a swing.

SOFIE

The hill!

ANYA

The swing!

SOFIE

The hill is more fun. Plus, I get to be dirty.

ANYA

I like being clean.

SOFIE

I never get to do anything ... ever ... ever ... ever.

ANYA

Don't give me those puppy-dog eyes. You know I spoil you. We just had lemonade and kolaches. Wasn't that enough?

SOFIE

It was enough for my tummy. Now my arms and legs want to have fun, too. Please, Auntie Anya! I'll rub your sore neck for ten whole minutes when we get home.

ANYA

Fifteen minutes.

SOFIE

Fifteen. But you have to roll down the hill two times.

ANYA

It's a deal. Shake?

(They shake their bodies.)

SOFIE

I'd better leave Lisette here. I don't want her to get messed up.

ANYA

Isn't that a punch in the arm? Lisette cannot get dirty but your aunt can!

SOFIE

Race you!

(ANYA and SOFIE run off. LISETTE is seated on the bench. We hear music. "The Blue Danube?"

FRANZ and DORA enter dancing – probably a waltz but you decide.

They only have eyes for each other and they are clearly enjoying the dance. DORA curtsies and FRANZ bows. FRANZ and DORA freeze.

The lights change. Maybe the music changes – think of the “Christmas tree growing” sequence in “The Nutcracker.” A brief blackout and as the lights start to return, LISETTE-the-doll is gone. In her place is LISETTE-played by a human actor. LISETTE is amazed and thrilled that she can move. She stands. It is awkward. She stretches her limbs – which is also awkward but becomes smooth. She looks around and sees DORA and FRANZ who now dance towards the bench. She moves aside and watches – captivated. She then makes the impulsive decision to “seize the day” and runs off.

FRANZ and DORA sit on the bench. FRANZ is wearing a light jacket and carries a notebook. DORA fusses over him. DORA takes out a scarf from her large handbag and wraps it around FRANZ.)

DORA

Are you warm enough? We could go to the café for a warm drink.

FRANZ

Stop fussing. It’s July not December! I think more clearly in the air.

(FRANZ takes out a letter. A very long letter. Very, very long.)

DORA

Stop writing your family! They never answer your letters And then you get upset..

FRANZ

I need to keep trying. I love the idea of a real family. And my sweet Ottla always answers.

DORA

Keep your sister. Get rid of your parents.

FRANZ

I write all of them. There are some difficult Kafkas, but they are mine to figure out.

(DORA takes out a kolache wrapped in paper from her purse.)

DORA

Kolache? It’s raspberry – your favorite.

FRANZ

I marvel at how you managed to find a Czech bakery in Berlin. But I can't eat right now. The swallowing is proving difficult.

(SOFIE runs on followed by ANYA who is sort of running. They are disheveled.)

SOFIE

That was so much fun. Thank-you. *(Beat. SOFIE looks around.)* Excuse me, sir. Can you get up? I think you are sitting on my doll!

FRANZ

I hope not!

(FRANZ and DORA leap up. SOFIE checks every inch of the bench.)

SOFIE

Oh no, oh no, oh no – *LISETTE!*

(SOFIE lets out a wail that would break the heart of every bird and human in the park.)

SOFIE

Noooooooo!

FRANZ

What sounds! May I help you?

SOFIE

Nobody can ever help me again!

(FRANZ offers her a handkerchief. SOFIE wipes her face and then commences to blow her nose. She tries to hand it back to FRANZ who refuses.)

FRANZ

Please. Keep it.

SOFIE

Oh no. I shouldn't, Herr.....

FRANZ

Kafka. Franz Kafka. This is my friend, Dora Diamont. And the handkerchief is yours. Consider it a gift.

(SOFIE abruptly stops crying and becomes the obedient, polite child.)

SOFIE

Thank-you Herr Kafka. I am Sofie Schwarz and this is my aunt, Anya Meyer.

(With the introduction done, SOFIE returns to her pathetic tears.)

SOFIE (cont'd)

My poor, beautiful, perfect Lisette! Someone stole her!

DORA

Who is this Lisette? A poodle?

SOFIE

A doll! The most perfect doll ever made!

DORA

Then, she cannot have gone far. She is a doll after all.

SOFIE

My father brought her home from France. It was the last thing he ever gave me.

DORA

I am sorry.

ANYA

He died over the New Year. It's been ... a difficult time.

FRANZ

We must find her then. I wonder - maybe a bird picked her up.

DORA

Or a wild animal.

SOFIE

A wild animal?

DORA

No! Not a wild animal.... a duck, yes. A silly duck. *(Beat.)* Quack.

FRANZ

Let's start a search party. Why don't you cover the area by the pond and Dora and I will check the woods. Is she small?

ANYA

About half a meter long.

FRANZ

Then she can't have gotten far with those little legs. Please, split up. There's no time to waste.

SOFIE

Thank-you, thank-you -

FRANZ

- Go!

(They split up. As soon as ANYA and SOFIE are out of sight, FRANZ sits down to write. He tears the paper in half.)

FRANZ

This paper is too big for a doll.

DORA

Whatever are you doing?

FRANZ

Go. Search for the doll. Maybe she's tangled in a tree further up in the woods?

DORA

You want me to go through the brush while you sit here comfortably on a bench?

FRANZ

Yes.

(HE writes for a second or two. His pencil breaks.)

FRANZ (cont'd)

Do you have an extra pencil? This one broke.

(DORA reaches into her cavernous purse and hands FRANZ a pencil.)

FRANZ (cont'd)

Wonderful! I don't suppose you also have an envelope?

DORA

I don't usually carry envelopes for a walk in the park.

FRANZ

You carry everything else. Never mind. I shall make one.

(FRANZ makes an envelope from a piece of paper and sticks a short letter in it. He sticks it into a slot on the bench.)

FRANZ (cont'd)

Perfect! Be on the lookout for Anya and Sofie. As they approach, I shall make my big discovery.

(Meanwhile, FRANZ musses up his hair and takes off his jacket.)

FRANZ (cont'd)

Come on, get yourself mussed up. We need to look like we searched the woods.

(They mess each other up a bit.)

DORA

I don't know what you're up to....

FRANZ

But you know it will be interesting.

(ANYA and SOFIE approach.)

DORA

They're coming!

SOFIE

She isn't anywhere!

ANYA

Have you had any luck?

FRANZ

The woods were empty, I'm afraid... nothing but ... oh my ... look here! I didn't notice that before. It's a letter. It's addressed to Miss Sofie. It's addressed to a Miss Sofie.

SOFIE

That's me! Open it!

FRANZ

“Dear Miss Sofie,
I hope you will forgive me but I suddenly decided I needed an adventure. I want to see where I was made. My clothes all say “Made in France” so that will be my first stop. I want to see something of the world before I look scruffy. I hope you understand. You will grow up. Dolls don’t. They just get worn out. I shall write you of my adventures. I hope you will like that. You have been very kind to me and I love you very much.
Warmest wishes,
Lisette”

SOFIE

How will she write me? I never gave her my address. I don’t think letters get delivered to a park bench.

(Beat.)

FRANZ

But ... Dora runs a Kindergarten and in her room there is a doll house and ... and a doll café and ...

(FRANZ looks at Dora. “Play with me here.”)

DORA

And ... a doll school... and a doll bakery...

(FRANZ gives her a hard stare.)

DORA

And a doll post office! That’s it! I do indeed have a doll post office. Of course, school is not in session right now...

FRANZ

But the mail still gets delivered.

DORA

Yes, it does.

SOFIE

I never heard of a doll post office.

ANYA

I have!

FRANZ

Oh good! Most people don't know about it. I would think ... that Lisette will need time to get to ... wherever she is going ... and so ... there probably won't be a letter every day.

DORA

Maybe ... once a week...

FRANZ

Or – every other day. That's it! I think there will be a letter every other day.

DORA

Franz! The doctor appointment. We're going to be late.

FRANZ

I'm sorry I do need to go. Shall we meet here in two days at the same time?

ANYA

Sofie does have her piano lessons, and is trying to advance in her language study/

SOFIE

/We'll be here. I am Lisette's mother and I would never leave her like my mother left me.

ANYA

- Sofie! Enough! Wednesday morning it is.

(As FRANZ and DORA start to exit, ANYA approaches them.)

ANYA

Tread gently, Herr Kafka. After Sofie's father passed, her mother was so grief-stricken that she went to visit her family in Italy. She still hasn't returned. She writes Sofie but Sofie won't read the letters. She's a little stubborn one. So Lisette is Sofie's bridge to a happier time. And now she's gone, too.

FRANZ

Let's see if we can bring her back then, shall we?

(DORA and FRANZ exit. SOFIE joins ANYA.)

SOFIE

Do you think what he says is true? Will Lisette write me?

ANYA

I am certain of it.

(Lights fade. Music.)

SCENE BRIDGE: LISETTE enters and looks out into the audience.)

VOICE

WELCOME TO COPENHAGEN!

(LISETTE is thrilled to be – somewhere. With a big smile she runs off to start her adventure. Blackout.)

Scene 2 - Sunday, July 27, 1924

(We are in Berlin where SOFIA and ANYA anxiously await FRANZ and – hopefully a letter from Lisette. FRANZ and DORA enter.)

SOFIE

Herr Kafka! Is there news? Do you have a letter?

FRANZ

I do! Now settle yourself so you can read it carefully.

SOFIE

“My Dear Sofie,
The most amazing thing happened. After I left you, I saw a gentleman wearing a beret and reading a French newspaper. As I am clever, I decided he must be French. The man had a train ticket. I thought, he must be going back to France! So I sneaked into his suitcase. I am off to visit the land of my birth.”

(We transition to LISETTE’S voice or we see LISETTE at another side of the stage in Copenhagen. She could face us. There might be a tiny scene adjustment – a sign, a Ferris wheel, A bench by the harbor.)

LISETTE

“First: I was on a train. I was so excited. And then, I was bobbing up and down – so I knew I was on a boat! But why was I on a boat? Uh oh.”

VOICE

MALMO PORT! PORT OF COPENHAGEN!

LISETTE

“I had gone north instead! I was in Copenhagen. I scrambled out of the suitcase and found myself in a park in the harbor. Many, long legs passed me by, I looked around and standing at attention next to me was a handsome soldier.”

*(We see FREDERICK standing next to LISETTE.
He is a toy soldier.)*

FREDERICK

Hello.

LISETTE

Hello.

FREDERICK

Pretty, isn't it.

LISETTE

Yes.

(A beat or two. Awkward. FREDERICK clears his throat.)

LISETTE (cont'd)

Did you say something?

FREDERICK

No. Did you?

LISETTE

No.

FREDERICK

Are you ... from around here?

LISETTE

No. Are ... you?

FREDERICK

No.

LISETTE

Oh. We have something in common then. We're both not from here.

FREDERICK

No. Yes.

LISETTE and FREDERICK

Where...

LISETTE

Sorry, you first.

FREDERICK

No, Ladies always go first.

LISETTE

I insist.

LISETTE
Berlin.

FREDERICK
Vienna.

FREDERICK

Lovely city.

LISETTE

Vienna?

FREDERICK

Berlin.

LISETTE

Yes.

FREDERICK

I am going to Tivoli Gardens. Are you?

LISETTE

No. Yes! I could ... maybe... I don't know.

FREDERICK

Are you lost?

LISETTE

I don't know. Since I don't know where I should be, I could be anywhere. I am starting an adventure and adventures are everywhere so anywhere I am is where I should be.

FREDERICK

Are you – alone?

LISETTE

... why do you ask?

FREDERICK

Dolls usually travel with their humans.

LISETTE

Are you with a human?

FREDERICK

Yes. Or rather, I was. He dropped me. He drops me a lot. He's very young. Were you dropped by your human?

LISETTE

Not exactly. One could say I dropped her. I left her in a park in Berlin. I want to have an adventure.

FREDERICK

I'm going to ride the Ferris Wheel in Tivoli Gardens. Would you like that?

LISETTE

No.

FREDERICK

Oh.

LISETTE

I'm afraid of heights.

FREDERICK

What will you do on your adventure?

LISETTE

I don't know. I didn't think this through.

FREDERICK

Please be careful. Adventures can be amazing but they can be dangerous. Especially if you are alone. And pretty. Which you are.

LISETTE

Oh.... Thank-you.

FREDERICK

You're welcome.

LISETTE

So are you. Pretty... handsome! Yes, you are very handsome.

FREDERICK

Awww shucks.

BOY'S VOICE

Frederick? Where did you go?

FREDERICK

It was nice meeting you. My human is calling. I must go. He's always losing me.

LISETTE

You're Frederick?

FREDERICK

Yes.

LISETTE

I'm/

(FREDERICK runs off.)

LISETTE

Lisette.

(LIGHTS change to BERLIN.)

SOFIE (Reading.)

“That's my adventure so far. I am going to watch the harbor lights. It's so pretty. I love you, Lisette”

SOFIE

I wish I was with her.

ANYA

But you're with me! Isn't that lucky?

SOFIE

I do love you even if you're a stick-in-the-mud.

ANYA

I roll down hills!

SOFIE

Maybe someday you could take me on a Ferris wheel in Copenhagen.

ANYA

I'm like Lisette. I don't like heights.

DORA

Maybe someday, your mother will take you.

SOFIE

She's in Italy so I don't think she's taking me anywhere.

ANYA

It's getting late and your piano teacher will be at our home shortly.

FRANZ

And I have work to do.

SOFIE

But you'll be back on Friday, right?

FRANZ

Of course.

(ALL exit as the lights fade to black.)

SCENE BRIDGE: LISETTE is still in a park by the harbor. Maybe we hear waves and gulls flying. LISETTE sits. She starts writing a letter with paper from her handbag. But soon she falls asleep.

Scene 3

*LISETTE MEETS CARUSO, AN ITALIAN
PORPOISE AND LEARNS TO SING*

*It is Tuesday, July 29 at Steglitz Park.
SOFIE and ANYA enter from one side as DORA
and FRANZ enter from elsewhere. SOFIE runs to
FRANZ.*

SOFIE

HERR KAFKA! Is there a letter?

FRANZ

There is. Now where did I put it? Here? Or there? I couldn't have dropped it.

(DORA hands it to him from her purse.)

FRANZ

For you.

(SOFIE just about tears it open.)

SOFIE

“Dear Sofie,
I have had a new adventure! I fell asleep and missed the last ferry out of Copenhagen and was very upset. I collapsed on the pier and cried and cried when suddenly...”

*(We are back at the Harbor. Lisette is sobbing.
We hear singing. It will be CARUSO.)*

LISETTE'S VOICE

“... I heard singing. I looked around but no one was there. Then I looked out to the sea and the voice came closer. What is it? Oh my goodness-gracious-gosh! It's a singing porpoise!”

CARUSO

“By the Beautiful Sea”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kq3kxtDJxR0>

(CARUSO is clearly trying to make LISETTE stop crying. He is as silly as a porpoise can be.)

CARUSO

“By the sea, by the sea, by the beautiful sea,
You and I you and I, oh! How happy we'll be,

When each wave comes a rolling in,
We will duck or swim, and we'll float and fool around the water...

Did I cheer you up? I'm a cheery porpoise!

CARUSO (cont'd)

(To the tune of “I Want to be Happy”)

“I want to be happy, but I won't be happy
Till I make you happy, too!”

CARUSO (cont'd)

Signorina, are you – happy?

LISETTE

(She's trying to be happy but still caught up in crying. It happens.)

Very happy.

(One more gasp of a sob.)

CARUSO

I think you told a little fib. You don't look happy! Look at the moon – it's a-shining! Look at the stars – they're a-sparkling! Nobody can cry on a night like this!

LISETTE

It's hard to be happy when you decide to run away from home and you do it all wrong and now I am all alone –

CARUSO

What am I, chopped spaghetti? You are here with me!

LISETTE

Grazie. I appreciate the company.

CARUSO

But of course! What the world needs are more porpoises! Why? Because we give you a purpose in life? Get it? Porpoise? Purpose?

LISETTE

That's terrible.

CARUSO

I know. I never get a laugh from that one. Signorina, what has brought you to this pier in the middle of the night?

LISETTE

I was in a park in Berlin and I saw a couple dancing and I thought – that's what I want – to dance in a park like they did – and look at someone with love – just like they did and – so I ran away from the park.

CARUSO

You want to dance in a park so you left a park to sit on a pier far away from the park so that you could dance in a park. Do I have this right?

LISETTE

Yes. Do you understand?

CARUSO

No. Signorina, are you up for a real adventure? I could take you across the sea to Hamburg. They have beautiful parks and it's a perfect night for a ride across the sea.

LISETTE

I don't know if I can trust you. Suppose you want to eat me? I read "Little Red Riding Hood." I am a cultured doll.

CARUSO

Do I look like a wolf in a porpoise's clothing?

LISETTE

Not exactly.

CARUSO

I am much better looking. And as you a cultured doll, surely you know I only eat fish. Are you a fish in disguise as a doll?

LISETTE

Don't be silly.

CARUSO

I have to be silly. It's my porpoise in life.

(Maybe a groan from Lisette.)

CARUSO (cont'd)

Climb aboard. It's a perfect night for a moonlight cruise.

LISETTE

It is! But... I am not sure I want to get all wet. That would make me shabby.

CARUSO

Adventures don't make you shabby. Adventures make you glow.

LISETTE

I don't swim.

CARUSO

I have the perfetto solution.

(CARUSO dives under and comes back with possibly a saddle on its back and definitely with a

pretty umbrella. It could be wet. Feel free to use sillier props.)

CARUSO

The umbrella will protect you from the sea spray.

LISETTE

Really?

CARUSO

Don't-a worry. I haven't lost a doll yet.

LISETTE

You've done this before?

CARUSO

Never.

(LISETTE manages to get on CARUSO.)

CARUSO

And now – I shall sing you across the sea. Hold on!

(Sings By the Light of the Silvery Moon.)

“By the light” – now you –

LISETTE

What? No! I – can't sing.

CARUSO

Just sing what I sing. Again.

“By the light”

LISETTE

“By the light”

CARUSO

“Of the silvery moon...”

LISETTE

“Of the silvery moon”

CARUSO

“I want to spoon...”

LISETTE

“I want to spoon”

CARUSO

“For my honey I’ll croon loves tune.
Honey moon....”

LISETTE

“Honey moon, honey moon”

CARUSO

“Keep a shinin’ in June...”

LISETTE

“Or July”

CARUSO

“Your silver beans will bring love’s dream
We’ll be cuddlin’ soon.

LISETTE

Oh no! No cuddles!

CARUSO

No, No, of course not. It’s just a song.

LISETTE and CARUSO

“By the silvery moon.”

(They swim off as the lights change to Berlin.)

SOFIE

“Caruso got me safe and dry to Hamburg and I must say I am exhausted so I’ll
close for now. I will write more later.
Yours with love,
Lisette”

I want to ride on a porpoise! Would you ride with me, Auntie?

ANYA

Not on purpose.

(FRANZ has a bit of a coughing fit.)

DORA

I need to get you home. You must rest.

ANYA

You should see a doctor.

FRANZ

A doctor. Yes. I see doctors. Too many doctors. It's nothing.

SOFIE

Thank-you for bringing the letter. You will be back soon?

FRANZ

On Thursday. Until then – as Caruso would say - arrivederci.

(FRANZ and DORA exit.)

SOFIE

I hope Herr Kafka feels better.

ANYA

I hope so, too. Come. It's time for your lessons.

(SOFIA and ANYA exit as lights fade to black.)

SCENE 4

AT RISE KAFKA is in his sitting room. There is a package that he has opened containing a letter that is at least fifty pages long! DORA enters.

DORA

I brought you some tea. Good news?

FRANZ

My father returned the letter I sent him. All fifty pages.

DORA

You wrote a fifty-page letter to your father?

FRANZ

There was a lot I wanted to say. Maybe I should cut it down to thirty pages...

DORA

One page is enough.

FRANZ

One! I want to map out the heartbeats of our difficult relationship.

DORA

Is it not enough that my heart beats for you?

FRANZ

What did I do to deserve you?

DORA

It's your huge heart. Your huge beating heart.

FRANZ

Thank-you, Dora. You are giving me a good life. Better than I had at home.

DORA

And we'll make it even better when you are well.

(The lights fade to black.)

SCENE 5 – Lisette Meets Frederick (again)

*AT RISE, it is early Thursday, July 31 in the park.
SOFIE is in a bad mood... waiting.*

SOFIE

Waiting is boring. We've been here forever!

ANYA

It's hardly been forever. We got here early. Would you like more apple strudel?

SOFIE

I'm full. I can't have any more sweets.

ANYA

Sofie's full! I didn't think that was possible. My mission in life is complete. I know! I'll read you the letter from your mother.

SOFIE

I'm not that bored.

ANYA

Your mother misses you.

SOFIE

Then she should come home.

ANYA

She wants you to go there. The memories are sad for her here.

SOFIE

I have sad memories, too.

(DORA and FRANZ enter.)

SOFIE

Herr Kafka! Finally!

ANYA

Manners, Sofie! How are you feeling, Herr Kafka?

FRANZ

Better, thank-you.

SOFIE

Is there a letter?

ANYA

Sofie! And how are you today, Dora?

DORA

Well, thank-you.

SOFIE

Is there a letter?

ANYA

She's usually not this rude, isn't that right Sofie?

SOFIE

I'm sorry. I'm glad you are feeling better. (Beat.) Is there a letter?

FRANZ

Of course.

(FRANZ gives the letter to SOFIE.)

SOFIE

“Dear Sofie,
I saw Frederick!”

(The lights switch to the harbor in Hamburg. A sign may change. It is morning. LISETTE is where she was dropped off by CARUSO. SHE is fiddling with her dress and her hair – trying to put herself back together. She stands and suddenly sees FREDERICK who is laying down a few feet away. We hear gulls swooping down and LISETTE chases them away.)

LISETTE

Scoot! There's nothing for you here! Fly away you noisy gulls!

(FREDERICK opens his eyes and sees LISETTE. HE smiles. LISETTE smiles.)

FREDERICK

Thank-you for chasing the gulls away. I thought they might peck at me.

LISETTE

You're welcome.

(FREDERICK gets up.)

LISETTE

How did you wind up here?

FREDERICK

The boy dropped me when we were getting off the ferry.

LISETTE

Again? You should run away from him.

FREDERIK

He's a good sort of chap. Even though he waves me around until I am dizzy and then he drops me. I just stay put until he comes looking for me. I didn't see you on the ferry.

LISETTE

No. I came ... on a smaller boat. The Porpoise.

FREDERICK

It's good to see you again.

LISETTE

And you. I have a question.

(THEY grow closer.)

FREDERICK

Yes?

LISETTE

Do you dance?

FREDERICK

I ... don't know.

LISETTE

I don't know either. I shouldn't have said anything. It's just, I saw a couple dancing in Berlin and it looked like fun and/

(Suddenly we hear the same boy's voice that we heard in Copenhagen.)

BOY'S VOICE

/Frederick! There you are! I thought I'd never find you. Come on! The train for Paris leaves soon. Won't that be fun?

(FREDERICK runs off calling to LISETTE.)

FREDERICK

I have to go! We're going to Paris! I think we're visiting the Eiffel Tower. Please come! I hope he doesn't drop me from the tower! And - I'm Frederick!

(And he is gone.)

LISETTE

I know! And I'm .. Lisette and I ... think I want to go to Paris, too!

“So now, dear Sofie. I don't know what to do. Do I try to meet Frederick in Paris?
Your loving doll,
Lisette”

SOFIE

I think she should go to the Eiffel Tower, don't you?

DORA

Absolutely! Franz has told me wonderful things about Paris.

FRANZ

The gardens! The Seine! The lights! I could write long letters from Paris...

DORA

You can write long letters from anywhere.

ANYA

I think she should go to Italy. Her mother writes her lovely letters about its charm.

FRANZ

So, you do receive letters from your mother.

ANYA

Yes, she does.

FRANZ

And do you answer them?

ANYA

No, she does not.

DORA

I work in an orphanage with children who would give the world to get a letter from their mother.

SOFIE

Maybe they would feel differently if their mother just left them one day.

ANYA

Sofie! That's not entirely true.

FRANZ

I would give anything for a letter from my mother. I write her and write her and I get no response.

SOFIE

Mothers are a mystery, aren't they?

KAFKA

Indeed, they are. But remember, you do have her letters. Letters are special. They are forever. You can reread a letter again and again.

ANYA

I keep all the letters side-by-side in a box together with the ones from her father.

FRANZ

I would give anything for such a box. I continue to write my family. They continue to send them back – unopened. (*Beat.*) It's time to leave. I'll see you on Tuesday. I may be a little late. I have an early appointment that day.

(FRANZ and DORA exit.)

SOFIE

I wish I could write Lisette. I would tell her how much I miss her.

ANYA

You could write your mother.

SOFIE

No. She should come home.

ANYA

We could ... roll down a hill...

SOFIE

It's even too hot for that. But I love you for asking.

ANYA

I love you, too. Now about your mother/

SOFIE

/No!

SCENE 6

(The lights fade to black. Lights up on FRANZ'S flat. He is, of course, writing. And coughing just a bit. DORA enters with tea.)

DORA

I brought you some tea. I thought it might ease your cough.

FRANZ

Ahh More tea. I shall turn into a proper English woman with all the tea I have had lately. I suddenly can't write anything. Not to Sofie. Not to my father.

DORA

Forget your father, Franz. My sweet Romeo.

“Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou, Romeo?
Deny they father and refuse thy name.”

FRANZ

I can't. I am a Kafka. Just as he is.

DORA

“And for that, name which is no part of thee, take all myself.”

FRANZ

“I take thee at thy word. Call me but love and I’ll be new baptized.
Henceforth, I never will be Kafka.”

DORA

But you will always be my Romeo.

(SHE holds out her hand and stretches it – it’s a motion similar to a cat.)

FRANZ

Freeze! Don’t move. That’s perfect. Can you purr?

DORA

I’m not a cat.

FRANZ

But you are, my dear. A sweet, affectionate, protective feline. You hiss when someone wrongs me and purr when you are content. Thank-you! You just helped me figure out my next letter from Lisette. You will be in it!

DORA

Just don’t turn me into a singing porpoise.

FRANZ

No. You are my Juliet to my Romeo.

DORA

I like that.

FRANZ

Only we are alley cats! Raggedy, rough-and-tumble cats! Eating mice, Struggling to survive on the streets. Star-crossed lovers who are going through hard times.

DORA

Maybe I would have been better off as a porpoise.

Lights fade to black.

SCENE 7

LISETTE meets alley-cats and tries to be tough.

AT RISE we are in the park. It is Tuesday morning, August 2, 1924.

SOFIE is in the park reading. ANYA is next to her – reading. They periodically peer over their books and look to see if FRANZ and DORA are coming. After the “second peer,” ANYA finally speaks.

ANYA

He did say he’d be late.

SOFIE

I’m not nagging. Do you hear me nagging? Not a word. I’m not saying anything.

(They read. They look again.)

ANYA

Have some Apple Kuchen.

SOFIE

We’re supposed to share it with them.

ANYA

You are turning down my Apple Kuchen? My specialty!

SOFIE

I already swiped one.

(As SOFIE speaks, FRANZ and DORA sneak up on them.)

FRANZ and DORA

Surprise!

ANYA

Goodness! I just aged ten years!

DORA

Look! Balloons!

SOFIE

Is it someone’s birthday?

FRANZ

I had a very good check-up at the doctor's office...

DORA

So, we thought why not celebrate?

SOFIE

This is perfect! We brought Apple Kuchen! Our hearts knew something happy would happen.

FRANZ

I love Apple Kuchen.

SOFIE

Auntie Anya's are the best in the country.

ANYA

Sofie...

SOFIE

That's what Mother always said.

FRANZ

So, first, we will go on an adventure with Lisette and then- we feast!

(FRANZ hands SOFIE a letter. She tears it open.)

SOFIE

I hope she made it to Paris. And found Frederick because it sounds like she might be in love with him and people in love should be together.

"Dear Sofie,

I need to tell you about Romeo and Juliet. What an adventure that was!"

(LIGHTS change and we are back at the docks in Hamburg. We hear some "meows." Two cats, ROMEO and JULIET sneak up on LISETTE. They circle her. They hiss. A paw goes in and out. LISETTE does not know what to make of them.)

LISETTE

... here kitty, kitty?

ROMEO

Meow!

Mew. Mew.

JULIET

(THEY circle LISETTE again. More hisses. LISETTE is at first frightened trying to shoo them. And then she gets mad! Using her cloak or satchel, she twirls in a circle with her arms outstretched trying to smack the cats away. She gets dizzy and faints.)

You killed her!

JULIET

ROMEO

Me? I wouldn't hurt a fly. It was you and your pointy claws. You need to stop sharpening them.

(ROMEO bends over LISETTE.)

ROMEO

Dollface? Cat got your tongue?

(He paws at her.)

LISETTE

My name's Lisette! Not Dollface!

JULIET

She lives!

ROMEO

I brought her back from the dead. I am an amazing cat!

LISETTE

What do you want from me?

ROMEO

A rat?

LISETTE

Sorry, don't have one.

JULIET

A mouse?

I'm all out.

LISETTE

Not even a grouse?

ROMEO

Not even a louse.

LISETTE

What good are you?

JULIET

I'm told I'm ... pretty?

LISETTE

You're not exactly the cat's pajamas.

ROMEO

I used to be pretty! I used to be the cat's meow! Me-ow!

JULIET

My sweet Juliet Cat-ulet, you still put the "me" in "meow!"

ROMEO

Do you think so, Romeo O Romeo? Am I still beautiful even though my tail doesn't fluff and my whiskers are twisted!

JULIET

Julie, you are still the salt in my rat stew, I am lost without you.

ROMEO

That's so sweet!

LISETTE

Sweet? Don't make me spit up a hairball! I don't wanna be sweet! I want to be a god!

ROMEO

Romeo is one cool cat. I'm Juliet by the way.

JULIET

I'm Lisette.

LISETTE

So what's your story, Morning Glory?

ROMEO

LISETTE

You are nosy. Curiosity killed the cat, you know.

ROMEO

But satisfaction brought it back. Come on, let the cat out of the bag.

LISETTE

If you must know – I am on an adventure.

JULIET

I love adventures! You must have a cat-ologue of cool stories.

LISETTE

It's different than I thought it would be. Right now, I need to find the train station. Can you show me the way?

ROMEO

What'll you give us if we do?

LISETTE

I don't have anything. Sorry.

ROMEO

Time for a cat-nap. Sorry. Not sorry.

LISETTE

Wait! I can ... comb your fur?

ROMEO

I like my matted fur. It makes me look like a tough cookie-cat.

JULIET

But Romes... I don't wanna be tough. I wanna be queenly. Like a goddess. Without fleas.

ROMEO

/Got it, Jules. You wanna look nice.

LISETTE

If I clean you up and get you all fluffy, would you show me to the train station?

JULIET

Meow!

LISETTE

It's a deal.

LISETTE

You mean, I've been right by it all along and you two couldn't tell me that?

JULIET

Sometimes cats just wanna have fun.

ROMEO

You're a good sort of cat, you know? We'll walk you there – to keep you safe. You never know who you will meet on the streets! Where you going?

LISETTE

Paris.

JULIET

Paris is always a good idea.

ANNOUNCER VOICE

ALL ABOARD! Train to Paris on Track 11. Train to Rome on Track 12. Mach schnell! Quickly! Quickly!

(We return to the park.)

SOFIE

“And so dear Sofie, I made it to the train on time. I wonder if Frederick is on the train. It's hard to say. All I see are legs. But I found a baggage compartment where I fit quite nicely and will rest until we get to Paris.
With affection, Lisette”

She's on her way! This is so exciting. I wish I could hop on a train and join her! I miss her.

FRANZ

You love her?

SOFIE

Of course.

FRANZ

And you believe people who love each other should be together.

SOFIE

Yes.

FRANZ

So do I. Let's make a sweet toast with our Apple Kuchen, shall we? To people who love each other being together!

To love!
ALL

And to the best Apple Kuchen in Berlin!
FRANZ

Hear! Hear!
ALL

(The lights dim as they hand out the pastries, maybe feed each other and happily partake in the pastries.) There's a short montage of French music and Lisette dancing in the Paris streets.)

SCENE 8 – SOFIE'S Home and FRANZ'S home.

LIGHTS UP on SOFIE finishing a language assignment and FRANZ opening a letter. ANYA enters.

ANYA
Your French is improving. I think you need a break. Look what just came. A letter from your mother.

I'm not going to read it.
SOFIE

Suit yourself. I'll just leave it here. (Beat.) With the others.
ANYA

(ANYA exits. SOFIE stares at the letter. We switch to FRANZ and DORA. SOFIE takes the letter and it looks as if she is listening to DORA'S and FRANZ'S conversation. She is definitely remembering what FRANZ said to her in the park.)

FRANZ
The letter's from my sister Ottla. She has invited me to stay with her while I recuperate.

Are you thinking of going?
DORA

FRANZ
Answer me this. Do you think people that love each other should be together?

(SOFIE looks at her letter.)

DORA

Yes.

(With that answer, SOFIE takes out the letter.)

FRANZ

Yes. I am thinking of going.

(SOFIE starts to read her mother's letter.)

SOFIE

“My darling daughter We are too long apart...”

(The lights fade.)

OPTIONAL INTERMISSION””””

SCENE 9 – LISETTE meets FIFI LA CUTE.

Lights up on the Berlin park. It is Thursday, August 4, 1924. ANYA and SOFIA are waiting. DORA and FRANZ enter. FRANZ is in some distress.

SOFIE

Can I ... do something? Rub your back? What can I do?

FRANZ

Just let me sit for a minute. *(SOFIE and FRANZ sit.)* Yes, that's very helpful.

(SOFIE twiddles her thumbs. ANYA gives her “the stare.” SOFIE stops fidgeting and whistles – even if she cannot. SOFIE avoids ANYA'S glare.)

FRANZ

We should begin.

(FRANZ takes out LISETTE'S newest letter.)

“Dear Sofie:

“I arrived safely in Paris. I am going to the Eiffel Tower. It is a long walk from the train station on my little doll legs. So I took a short break...”

LISETTE'S VOICE

“Suddenly, I was bowled over by an unusual poodle!”

(We are in Paris. A French Poodle who has just left the “Pet Beauty Shop” comes barreling through. SHE knocks over LISETTE and proceeds to pull bows out of her fur. Then she rolls around in the dirt – and if there is no dirt, she finds some way to get herself dirty – perhaps with a “dirt sponge?”)

FIFI LA CUTE

Save me!

(And FIFI LA CUTE gets the zoomies around LISETTE.)

LISETTE

From what?

FIFI LA CUTE

From being beautiful. How do I look?

LISETTE

Horrible.

FIFI LA CUTE

Thank goodness. I hate the beauty shop! My mistress is kind but truly – every time she takes me to the groomer, I come out looking – like you! No dignity in that at all!

LISETTE

I ... think I look fine.

FIFI LA CUTE

That’s because you’re not a dog. Dogs are supposed to look tough! Be protectors! They should have names like “Slugger” and “Brutus.” What does my mistress call me? “Fifi La Cute!”

LISETTE

Oh! I like that name. I am Lisette.

FIFI LA CUTE

Nice name.

LISETTE

Thank-you.

FIFI LA CUTE

Look at me, Lisette! Should I have bows in my fur and jewels in my collar? *Should I be all gussied up like a doll!* No! I'm supposed to save people in the mountains! Haul carts of food to mankind and be their savior! Don't you agree?

(LISETTE tries to answer.)

FIFI LA CUTE (cont'd)

I'm not even allowed to roll around in dead fish! Which at least would make me smell good. Instead, I am made to prance through the park as if my only talent was having curly fur. I am more than just a head full of curly fur, don't you agree?

LISETTE

Well ... you are a poodle.

FIFI LA CUTE

But my heart is one of a St. Bernard's. Put a keg around my neck! Let me guide you through rocky mountains! There is no task I will not undertake! No mission is too large for me!

LISETTE

Could I ride you to the Eiffel Tower. I am very tired.

FIFI LA CUTE

What do I look like? A Great Dane? I'm a poodle!

LISETTE

Well, accompany me then. So I don't get lost.

FIFI LA CUTE

Of course! I'll be your guide.

(They take a few steps.)

FIFI LA CUTE

You don't happen to have a dog bone with you, do you? I usually get a bone to chew on this time of day.

LISETTE

No, I am all out of dog bones.

(They take a few steps. Very few.)

FIFI LA CUTE

Or – some cooked chicken? Sometimes my mistress likes to cook chicken slowly in a broth with vegetables and gives it to me as a midday snack. It’s very healthy.

LISETTE

I am sorry. I did not bring my cooking pot.

FIFI LA CUTE

I’m hungry!

LISETTE

Fifi, I don’t know how to tell you this... but I think you really are a poodle. And you should accept that.

FIFI LA CUTE

But – the bows? The jewels? It’s just not me.

LISETTE

But the bones, the chicken stewed in broth, the pampering – that *is* you.

FIFI LA CUTE

I do like my downy bed. And my treats... and the bicycle basket my mistress puts me in when my legs are tired... you’re right! I am a poodle! Just not a “poodley-poodle!”

LISETTE

Definitely not a poodley-poodle!

FIFI LA CUTE

I need to return to my mistress! I need to get her to understand that I am a poodle but “not a poodley-poodle.” If she can understand what I understand we can come to an understanding. But first - I need to - get clean! Otherwise, my human will be disappointed in me.

LISETTE

Jump in the river!

FIFI LA CUTE

Too dirty. I’ll find a fountain. Merci, Lisette. You have been a great help. Even if you don’t carry dog bones.

LISETTE

You’re welcome!

FIFI LA CUTE

(Running away.) I hope you make it to the Eiffel Tower!

LISETTE

I hope so, too! Even if I have to do it ... alone. I'm alone. Again.

(The lights dim.)

And it's dusk. It will be dark soon. Uh oh.

(We switch back to the Berlin park.)

LISETTE'S VOICE

“and so dear Sofie, I will close. Keep your fingers crossed that I make it to the Eiffel Tower. I miss you Sofie. I wanted an adventure. But I think it would be much more fun if I did this with you.

With love or as they say in France “avec amour,”
Lisette”

SOFIE

Will we ever find out if she makes to the Eiffel Tower and finds Frederick?

FRANZ

Why, I can't say...

DORA

Of course, you can't. You must rest.

FRANZ

Yes. I wish I could spend the morning with you.

SOFIE

But – you were getting better!

FRANZ

I'm up and down. Today – I'm down.

SOFIE

I'm sorry. I wish I could help.

FRANZ

Rest will help me. I will see you soon.

(DORA and FRANZ start to exit. SOFIE runs to him.)

SOFIE

Herr Kafka, I know something that might make you feel better. I read a letter from my mother.

And...

FRANZ

She misses me.

SOFIE

And ...

FRANZ

That's all. For now.

SOFIE

FRANZ

It's amazing, Sofie. That does make me feel better. I still need to rest but yes, your news has definitely helped me.

(There's a smile between friends. FRANZ and DORA exit. The lights fade to black.)

SCENE 10

Lights up on LISETTE in Paris. It is sunset. LISETTE walks. She hears footsteps. She walks some more and stops. The footsteps walk and stop. LISETTE turns around. GARGOYLE, STARGOYLE and PARBOIL are behind her and suddenly they surround her!

GARGOYLE

Well, well, well, what have we here?

STARGOYLE

It looks like a doll, Gargoyle.

GARGOYLE

I have eyes, Stargoye. And what is a doll doing walking the streets of Paris alone?

PARBOIL

Just ask her.

GARGOYLE

I am about to do that! But first, I wanted to do a menacing introduction. Bon soir, Mademoiselle.

LISETTE

Uhh ... Bon soir?

GARGOYLE

Shouldn't you be with your human?

STARGOYLE

Dolls shouldn't be left alone to walk the streets of Paris.

LISETTE

I uhh... ran away from my human.

GARGOYLE

Now why would a perfectly respectable doll run away from her human? Any thoughts, Parboil?

PARBOIL

Just ask her.

GARGOYLE

What a good idea. Why did you run away?

LISETTE

I wanted ... an adventure?

STARGOYLE

That's always a good idea. Should we join her in her adventuring?

GARGOYLE

Maybe she doesn't want company. What do you think?

PARBOIL

Just ask her.

GARGOYLE

Doll, do you want company?

LISETTE

I... don't think so.

GARGOYLE

She doesn't want company.

STARGOYLE

I have ears. So maybe we should leave her alone.

GARGOYLE

I think she needs an escort. Do you think she needs an escort?

PARBOIL

Ask her.

GARGOYLE

You are filled with good ideas tonight. I think you need an escort.

LISETTE

No!

STARGOYLE

Whoa! The doll asserts herself!

LISETTE

Excuse me!

(LISETTE tries to walk away but the GARGOYLES block her.)

GARGOYLE

We would be happy to see you to your final destination. Wherever that would be. Where do you think she is going?

PARBOIL

Ask her!

GARGOYLE

Where are you going?

LISETTE

... somewhere.

STARGOYLE

That's a better answer than "nowhere."

PARBOIL

But not definitive!

GARGOYLE

Parboil speaks the truth. We need a more specific answer.

LISETTE

Why?

PARBOIL

Good question. Do any of you have an answer?

(The GARGOYLES confer in a huddle. Arms flailing, disagreements about what they are doing and how night is coming. They all have thoughts And while they are arguing, LISETTE discreetly sneaks away.)

GARGOYLE

Hey! The doll left!

STARGOYLE

It doesn't matter. We can't go anywhere. The sun is setting.

PARBOIL

Time to guard the buildings.

(And the GARGOYLES retreat to do just that.)

Lights change to the park. It is Saturday, August 6, 1924. DORA and FRANZ are on the bench. FRANZ is scribbling away.)

DORA

I thought you finished the letter.

FRANZ

I did! But I had a new idea. There's always a new idea!

DORA

Stop pushing yourself!

FRANZ

I cannot buy time. I must make use of what time I have.

(ANYA and SOPHIE enter.)

DORA

They're coming!

(FRANZ hastily puts the letter in the envelope.)

FRANZ

I'm ready!

SOFIE

Herr Kafka, how are you feeling?

FRANZ

Strong enough to spend some time with you. For you.

SOFIE

“Dear Sofie,

I have so much to tell you. I made it to the Eiffel Tower! It is 17 thousand and ten steps to the top! There is a lift but it is so crowded. I worried about being squished. Plus, I don’t like heights, So as the sun was setting, I stayed in the park below.

LISETTE’S VOICE

“And *then* all these tourists came out from the Tower and I was afraid they would step on me so I ran and ran and then tripped – over Frederick!”

FREDERICK

Owwww!

LISETTE

I’m sorry! I’m a bit jumpy tonight! Wait! Frederick? Is that you? The boy didn’t drop you from the Tower, did he?

(FREDERICK gets up. HE is a bit dusty. LISETTE helps brush him off.)

FREDERICK

Oh no, thank goodness. He dropped me when we were on the ticket line. There were so many legs, I was in danger of being squished so I ran into the park.

LISETTE

It’s hard being a doll.

(LISETTE sees the label on his jacket.)

Made in Paris, France! Were you made here or just the clothes?

FREDERICK

Both.

LISETTE

Monsieur (Madame) Cocteau created me.

FREDERICK

And me! Why, we are old friends!

LISETTE

I wasn't there long. I was bought right away.

FREDERICK

So was I.

LISETTE

Nice to meet you – “old friend.” How are you?

LISETTE

A bit wobbly. Adventures can be scary.

FREDERICK

May I – hold your hand? Would that help?

LISETTE

Maybe. I think ... yes.

(And very slowly, LISETTE and FREDERICK'S hands reach for each other. At the moment of contact, there is a huge thunderclap. They jump apart.)

FREDERICK

Rain is coming.

LISETTE

We're going to get soaked.

FREDERICK

Do you care?

LISETTE

No.

(And they reach for each other again. And they make contact.)

LISETTE

This is ...

FREDERICK

Nice.

Yes.
LISETTE

(Music starts. It's the music that FRANZ and DORA were dancing to in the park. LISETTE and FREDERICK smile at each other.)

Where is that coming from?
LISETTE (cont'd)

Does it matter?
FREDERICK

(They dance. THEY look at each other and are so very content for a moment. Suddenly we hear the BOY'S (Charles) voice.)

Frederick! Frederick! Where arrrrre you?
BOY'S VOICE

I have to go.
FREDERICK

(But he takes her other hand.)

Come away with me! We can see the world together!
LISETTE

Frederick!
BOY'S VOICE

But the boy/
FREDERICK

He doesn't care for you!
LISETTE

He needs me.
FREDERICK

I care for you! Oh my, that was forward of me.
LISETTE

Lisette. I care for you, too. But.
FREDERICK

LISETTE

The boy.

FREDERICK

His father died in the Great War. His mother died of the flu. He lives with his uncle and I am all that is left from his early life. Don't you have someone who needs you?

LISETTE

I did. But I ran away.

FREDERICK

Why?

LISETTE

I thought ... to dance in the moonlight... to have an adventure.

BOY'S VOICE

Oh Frederick. Are you gone forever? Please don't leave me.

FREDERICK

Lisette/

LISETTE

/I know. Go to him. Let him find you. You are a very kind, doll. I see that now.

(FREDERICK goes to her and lifts her hand up.)

FREDERICK

May I?

LISETTE

Yes.

(FREDERICK goes to kiss LISETTE's hand.)

BOY'S VOICE

There you are!

(LISETTE and FREDERICK may have a giggle.)

LISETTE

Well, this is awkward.

FREDERICK

In other time... in other place...

LISETTE

No. this place was perfect.

FREDERICK

We'll always have Paris.

(FREDERICK exits.)

BOY'S VOICE

I was so worried that I lost you forever.

FREDERICK'S VOICE

It was wonderful meeting up with you again!

LISETTE

It was, wasn't it?

(Thunderclap. Frederick is gone.)

Now what do I do?

(Lights change to the park.)

SOFIE

“That was my Paris adventure. I don't know what comes next. I do know that I miss you. I have a lot of thinking to do.
Love, Lisette”

SOFIE (cont'd)

I wonder what she will do.

FRANZ

What do you want her to do?

SOFIE

Come home. I think everyone should come home.

FRANZ

Wise words. And about going home ... I should tell you...

SOFIE

Tell me?

FRANZ

Later. Some things are best told at the correct time.

DORA

Franz ... you look tired.

FRANZ

Don't I always? I just love it here. These moments together. They make me happy. This bench has been a home for me. Think about it, the four of us have created a home right here in the park. We're a family – bound together by letters. Now, I do need to rest.

SOFIE

But we'll see you soon? On Monday.

FRANZ

I'll be here. Who knows what Lisette will be up to?

(THEY separate as the lights fade to black.)

SCENE 11

LIGHTS up outside a toy shop in Paris. It is night. MONSIEUR/MADAME COCTEAU is putting the finishing touches on a doll. A table with two chairs would be nice. LISETTE enters.

LISETTE

Monsieur? Monsieur Cocteau? Do you remember me?

(COCTEAU peers. THEY puts the doll down and inspects LISETTE.)

COCTEAU

Lisette? Is that you? You were one of my finest creations. How long has it been? Two years? Oh my! You look – a bit – worn. Has the world been unkind to you?

LISETTE

Au contraire! The world has been very kind. I have been on an adventure. And now, I need your help.

COCTEAU

I'll fix some cafe and do whatever I can to help.

(AS LISETTE and COCTEAU exit, the lights come on in the park. SOFIE and ANYA are in there. DORA enters.)

SOFIE

Is Herr Kafka coming?

DORA

I am sorry but not today. The doctor wants him to stay inside for a week. Then he will ... re-evaluate.

SOFIE

Is – there a letter?

DORA

Yes. Herr Kafka is sorry he cannot be with you to hear it.

SOFIE

I understand. I – have something for Herr Kafka. I was going to give it to him today.

(SOFIE hands DORA a letter.)

I wrote him a letter. About a letter my mother wrote me. And a letter that I wrote back.

DORA

A letter about a letter about a letter?

SOFIE

Yes.

DORA

Herr Kafka will be pleased.

ANYA

She worked hard on it.

SOFIE

Herr Kafka was right. Letters are forever.

DORA

Yes, Herr Kafka is right about so many things.

(DORA exits. SOFIE and ANYA sit to read the letter from LISETTE.)

SOFIE

“My Dear Sofie,

SOFIE (cont'd)

I made it to Paris. That's where your father bought me. I always thought of Paris as my "real home" and Monsieur (Madame) Cocteau as my "real family." But now I know that home is wherever you are loved."

(The lights switch to Paris where COCTEAU and LISETTE are having coffee. COCTEAU is listening and LISETTE is talking a-mile-a-minute. COCTEAU tries to get a word in.)

LISETTE

But nothing was like I thought it would be. I met Frederick - a toy soldier who was very handsome. Do you remember Frederick? You created him?

COCTEAU

Why, I –

LISETTE

- Handsome is fine. But that's not what made him special. He was kind. You made him kind. I also met a porpoise who told terrible jokes and taught me to sing –

COCTEAU

A singing porpoise –

LISETTE

- And then in Hamburg I met these harbor cats and well – Juliet just wanted to be clean and Romeo wanted to have fun. They are cats after all – and I had to accept that they were cats and I should not judge a cat by its fur. **And then** in Paris I met a poodle who thought she was a Saint Bernard and she wasn't who she thought she was. But that's all good – because I'm not who I thought I was. I thought I had to stay pretty and not get worn. But if all you do is stay pretty and not get worn – you won't experience anything. I stood my own with some peculiar gargoyles and I danced under the Eiffel Tower and my dancing partner was awkward and it was - all - wonderful!

(Beat.)

LISETTE (cont'd)

Thank-you for your advice, Monsieur (Madame) Cocteau. You have been very helpful.

COCTEAU

De rien. *(Beat.)* Are you ready to return home?

LISETTE

I am.

COCTEAU

I think I have a nice travelling dress that is perfect for you. We could spruce you up a bit. Would you like that?

LISETTE

Merci.

(The lights return to the park.)

ANYA

Does Lisette mention anything about returning to you?

SOFIE

Not a word.

LIGHTS OUT

SCENE 12

We are in FRANZ'S room. He is coughing a little. And reading.

FRANZ

“Dear Herr Kafka,

“ I wrote my mother. I told her that I missed her. But only because she told me that she missed me first! I still think mothers are a mystery. We should be detectives and try to solve the mystery. Would you like to be a detective? That could be exciting.

Your friend, Sofie

P.S. I love reading letters.

P.P.S. Someday, I want to go on an adventure like Lisette.

P.P.P.S. Nevermind. I will tell you later.

(DORA enters with a package.)

FRANZ

Did you find it? The exact one I wanted?

DORA

With your very detailed description of the clothes, yes, of course I found it.

FRANZ

May I see it?

DORA

In a minute. Do you want tea? Did you take your temperature? Did you write Ottla?

FRANZ

Yes, yes, and yes. I also wrote my father.

DORA

Why do you bother with such a man? A man who throws his seven-year-old son on the balcony in the winter to shiver all night in his bed clothes! A man who thinks reading and writing is not “manly” and has discounted all your worth! I’d really like to understand why his approval is so important to you!

FRANZ

I don’t know how much time I have. And when I leave this life, I want to leave without any regrets.

DORA

The regrets should come from him.

FRANZ

Perhaps. But I need to be secure in my mind that I tried every earthly way to understand him.

DORA

Take a break from family affairs. Do you want to see the doll?

(Beat.)

FRANZ

Dora ... I need to go home.

DORA

I know.

FRANZ

I love you.

DORA

You had better!

FRANZ

Come with me.

DORA

Ottla doesn’t need another house guest.

FRANZ

Prague is beautiful in the summer. You should come. (Beat.) Now, may I see what you bought?

(As DORA brings the package over, the lights fade to black.)

SCENE 13

LIGHTS up in the park. ANYA and SOFIE are at attention. Waiting.

SOFIE

The note said today, right?

ANYA

Correct.

SOFIE

At 11 a.m.

ANYA

Correct.

SOFIE

What time is it?

ANYA

Not yet 11 a.m.

(FRANZ and DORA enter. FRANZ has a gift-wrapped package.)

SOFIE

Herr Kafka!

ANYA

Sofie!

SOFIE

It's been two whole weeks and I missed you!

FRANZ

Did you miss me or the letters?

SOFIE

Both.

FRANZ

I have something to tell you. I've been wanting to tell you for weeks. I am leaving Berlin. I am going home to Prague. What do you think?

SOFIE

I am learning that there are times when people need to leave.

FRANZ

It's my health. In Prague, I have a sister who will care for me and I won't have to worry about the bills piling up because it is hard for me to work when I am ill.

SOFIE

But ... won't Dora miss you?

DORA

Well...

FRANZ

She's coming, too.

DORA

I have to tidy up some loose ends. But yes, I will be going with Franz. His sister sent me the most welcoming letter. She kept mentioning all these empty rooms she had and how she loves a house filled with people.

SOFIE

Will you see your mother?

FRANZ

I don't know. I shall have to wait and see if she wishes to see me.

DORA

But he will be with his sister and his nieces and he will finish his novel/

ANYA

/You're a writer!

FRANZ

Yes. Didn't I mention that?

ANYA

No. It somehow slipped your mind.

FRANZ

We are getting off track. Look what showed up at the doll post office!

SOFIE

A letter from Lisette!

FRANZ

Yes! And something else! Look!

(SOFIE unwraps the gift. It is a doll. Of course, it is not Lisette. SOFIE just stares at it every which way.)

FRANZ (cont'd)

Read the letter.

SOFIE

“Dear Sofie,
I know I look different from when you last saw me. I wrote you all about my adventures and they changed me. I had to go away to come back. But I promise to never go away again if you will promise to love me the way I am now - in the same way you loved me before.”

(SOFIE hugs and whispers to LISETTE.)

SOFIE (cont'd)

I promise. Thank-you Herr Kafka, for bringing her back to me.

FRANZ

My pleasure.

(Pause.)

SOFIE

Will I ever see you again?

FRANZ

Life's funny, isn't it? You never can know what will happen next.

SOFIE

That's what my mother said. In her letter. She's coming home. But not to stay. She wants to bring Anya and me to Italy.

DORA

You two will love Italy!

ANYA

Actually ... I am not going.

SOFIE

Auntie Anya's going to be a baker!

ANYA

I got a job at a bakery right here in Berlin. It turns out my mothers' recipes for kolaches and strudel are the best they ever tasted. I brought you some as a parting gift. I leave next week.

DORA

We shall savor each one! Thank-you.

FRANZ

Everyone is starting a new adventure!

SOFIE

I'm ready. Especially now that I can share it with Lisette.

(Music. Maybe it's a street musician. Maybe it's a carousel. Again, it's the same music that they've danced to earlier.)

FRANZ

No good-byes. Shall we dance? Until we meet again?

(And there is a dance. With each other. With LISETTE. They change partners and continue the dance as the lights fade to black.)

END OF PLAY

NOTES:

1. **Steglitz Park** – a small, cozy, leafy park in Berlin. It contains ponds, a children's playground, a rose garden, trails and a restaurant. Established in 1914.
2. Kolache – Czech pastries made up of yeast dough and filled with fruit. Occasionally filled with sweetened farmer's cheese.
3. Tivoli Gardens – Copenhagen – a huge sprawling amusement park in central Copenhagen.
4. Strudel – Usually puff pastry and it is filled with sweets – and sometimes a savory (ham and cheese) for lunch. German.
5. Kuchen – it's mainly a cake but also a mash-up of cake and pie as it is usually filled with fruit. There's also usually a layer of custard inside. German.

A few French phrases:

Tres jolie: very pretty

Au contraire – to the contrary

De rien – it's nothing (a form of you're welcome)

