

Letters from Lisette
75-85 Minutes
By Claudia I. Haas

Adapted from lore

SYNOPSIS: There is a story that Kafka found a young girl weeping in a park. He 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. It was! And so began a three-week correspondence where Kafka wrote daily letters for the girl from her travelling doll. Her doll was not lost. She was merely travelling to return to her beloved France. The story might have gone something like this...

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Characters

Sofie Schwarz (f) age 8; mourning a loss

Anya Meyer (f) 25-? Sofia's nanny; motherly because Sofia's mother isn't

Franz Kafka (m) 40, a writer who is losing his battle with life

Dora Fischer (f) (25), Kafka's friend, encourager, helper

Lisette (female) a doll/puppet – can interchange with human actress as needed

Lisette (female) as played by a human actress (16-20)

Erik (male), late teens, student, Karla's brother

Karla (female), late teens, student, Erik's younger sister

Frederick (male) 16-25 toy soldier, wants to be brave

Caruso (male) the operatic Porpoise – must sing!

Antonius (male) an alley cat

Kleopatra (female) a long-haired alley cat

Fifi La Cute (female) French Poodle with the heart of a St. Bernard

Monsieur Cocteau (male) Toymaker (ageless, heart of gold)

Boy's Voice (offstage)

Doubling

Sofie Schwarz

Anya Meyer

Franz Kafka

Dora Fischer

Lisette (as played by a human)

Erik/Caruso/Frederick/Antonius/Monsieur Cocteau

Karla/Kleopatra/Fifi La Cute

*NOTE: There are suggestions as to how to interchange LISETTE the human and LISETTE the doll/puppet. All are just suggestions. Directors are free to find other choices. You could make all the fantasy characters puppets or marionettes. And let the human ensemble convey their intents, emotions and needs with their facial expressions.

Setting

Steglitz Park in Berlin and various European locales. For the travelling sequences, have a designated stage area for these scenes and fill them with found objects to become the carriage for the Ferris wheel, etc. Or go all-out and use projections of the European cities.

Time July, August, 1924

Letters from Lisette

Scene 1, Friday, July 25, 1924

AT RISE we are in Steglitz Park in Berlin. It is a sprawling park with ponds, gardens, children's playgrounds, hills and a great place to observe ducks, geese and birds. All you need though is a park bench. SOFIE and ANYA are near it. SOFIE is holding a doll. An exceedingly well-made, exquisite doll.

SOFIE

You promised!

ANYA

I promised to play with you. I was thinking something simple like pushing you on a swing.

SOFIE

We always do that! I want to roll down the big hill.

ANYA

And I'll be right there to catch you at the bottom.

SOFIE

No! Roll with me! Please! (Beat.) I never get to do anything fun anymore.

ANYA

The medium hill.

SOFIE

The big one!

ANYA

Medium!

SOFIE

Medium but two times. I'd better leave Lisette here. I don't want her to get dirty.

ANYA

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

SOFIE

Race you!

(ANYA and SOFIE run off. LISETTE is seated on the bench. Lights dim and change and turn colors. Lights return and LISETTE is gone.

OR: Lisette on bench is now human actress having changed while SOPHIE and ANYA had their discussion. When SOPHIA and ANYA leave, LISETTE stands up and runs away.

OR: ERIK (Gentleman with beret) sits on bench. He rearranges his satchel, checks his newspaper, *Le Monde*, takes out his train ticket and exits. LISETTE is gone having jumped into his satchel.)

OR: LISETTE simply disappears while FRANZ and DORA are on the bench.)

(FRANZ KAFKA and DORA FISCHER enter. They see the empty bench and sit down. FRANZ has a notebook. DORA fusses over him. FRANZ wears a light jacket and scarf.)

DORA

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

FRANZ

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

DORA

Are you still writing that letter to your family? I don't know why you bother.

FRANZ

I want to know that I tried to do everything to stay in contact with them. If they choose to ignore my letters, I can live with that. But the choice is theirs. Not mine. And my sweet sister Ottilia always answers.

DORA

Keep Ottilia. Get rid of the rest.

FRANZ

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

(FRANZ writes for a moment. SOFIE runs on followed by ANYA who is sort of running. They are disheveled.)

SOFIE

You did it! You did look silly – but you did it! (beat; SOFIE looks around) – Excuse me, sir. Can you get up? I think you are sitting on my doll!

FRANZ

I certainly hope not!

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

Oh no, oh no, oh no – *LISETTE!* Where could she have gone?

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

SOFIE

Noooooooo!

FRANZ

Oh dear child. What sounds! Can I help you?

SOFIE

Nobody can ever help me again. Never, ever, ever!

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

FRANZ

Please. Keep it.

SOFIE

Oh no. I couldn't, Mr.....

FRANZ

Kafka. Franz Kafka. This is my friend Dora Fischer. And I insist. Consider the handkerchief a gift.

SOFIE

Thank-you Mr. Kafka. I am Sofie Schwarz and this is my governess Anya Meyer.

(SOFIE returns to her pathetic tears.)

Lisette! My poor Lisette! Someone who does not know how to properly care for her probably stole her.

DORA

This Lisette is a doll?

SOFIE

The most perfect doll ever created! She has giant curls and a grand cloak and is beautiful.

DORA

She cannot have gone far. She is a doll after all.

SOFIE

An extra-special doll. My father brought her home from his travels. It was the last thing he ever gave me.

DORA

The last thing?

ANYA

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

FRANZ

Well, we must find her then. I wonder - maybe a bird picked her up.

DORA

Or a wild animal.

SOFIE

A wild animal? *No! My poor Lisette.*

DORA

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

FRANZ

Let's have a look then, shall we? I shall cover the area by the pond and you check the woods around here. Is she a small doll?

ANYA

About half a meter long.

FRANZ

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

SOFIE

Thank-you, thank-you/

/Go!
FRANZ

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

This paper is too big for a doll.
FRANZ

Whatever are you doing?
DORA

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

You want me to go through bramble and brush while you just sit here as comfortable as can be on the bench? Think of a better plan.
DORA

I don't have to search. I've already found her.
FRANZ

(HE writes for a second or two.)

Do you have an envelope in that great big handbag of yours?

Why would I carry envelopes for a stroll in the park?
DORA

I don't know. You carry everything else. Never mind. I shall fashion one.
FRANZ

(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.)

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.)

Come on, get yourself mussed up. This has to be realistic. We need to look like we searched the woods.
FRANZ (cont'd)

(They mess each other up a bit and then smile.
Maybe there is a kiss.)

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.

SOFIE

Do you see her?

FRANZ

No, but - there's a letter.

(FRANZ picks up the letter and with exaggerated surprise, continues.)

It's addressed to Miss Sofie.

SOFIE

That's me! Open it!

FRANZ

“Dear Miss Sofie,
I hope you will forgive me but I suddenly got itchy feet and I decided I needed an adventure. I would love to see my birth place. I never did get a good look at where I came from.”

SOFIE

She is travelling all the way to France!

FRANZ

She came from France?

ANYA

Yes. Sofie's father had some business there. It is where he bought Lisette.

FRANZ

Interesting.

SOFIE

Is there more?

FRANZ

Just a little.

SOFIE

Let me see!

SOFIE (Reading)

"I would like to use this ...this...

FRANZ

Opportunity.

SOFIE

- opportunity to see something of the world before I become shabby. I hope you understand. You will grow up. Dolls just get worn out. I shall write you of my adventures. I hope you will like that.

When I am done travelling, I shall try to make it back to you. You have been very kind to me and I love you very much. I wish you could also write me but I will be in many different places.

Warmest wishes,
Lisette"

SOFIE

Doesn't she have the prettiest handwriting?

(DORA and FRANZ exchange a glance.)

How will she write me? I don't think letters get delivered to a park bench.

FRANZ

But my friend 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.

ANYA

I've heard about a doll post office!

FRANZ

Oh good!

SOFIE

I never heard of that!

FRANZ

... Most people don't know about it... isn't that true, Dora?

DORA

Oh! Yes. Very true.

FRANZ

I would think ... that Lisette will need time to get to her new place ... 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 will be here. I am Lisette's mother and I am a much more loving mother than my own. We will see you Wednesday morning.

ANYA

Sofie! Wednesday morning it is.

FRANZ

Until Wednesday then....

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

ANYA

Tread gently, Herr Kafka. After Sofie's father passed away this winter, her mother was so saddened with grief that she went to visit her cousins in Italy. She still hasn't returned. Lisette was her bridge to a happier time. And now she, too is gone.

FRANZ

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

(SOFIE approaches and ANYA and FRANZ quickly move apart.)

SOFIE

Herr Kafka! Your handkerchief!

FRANZ

Consider it a present from your new friend.

(DORA and FRANZ exit.)

SOFIE

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

ANYA

I am certain of it.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK

Scene 2 - Sunday, July 27, 1924

LISETTE GOES TO TIVOLI GARDENS

LIGHTS up at the same park bench. SOFIE is pacing. ANYA is seated and fanning herself. It is a warm July morning.

FRANZ and DORA enter.

SOFIE

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

FRANZ

Why it's right here. Now settle yourself so you can read it carefully.

SOFIE

May I see it?

FRANZ

Of course.

(The group gathers.)

SOFIE

“Dear Sofie,
The most amazing thing happened. After I left the bench to go travelling, I saw a young gentleman wearing a beret. He was reading a French newspaper. As I am a very clever doll, I decided he must be French. He had a train ticket. Because I am so smart, I decided he must be going back to France. Isn't that what you would have thought?

(We transition to LISETTE'S voice.)

LISETTE'S VOICE

I jumped into this small satchel he was carrying (which smelled like cheese) and sure enough he left the park with me bouncing about in his bag and went to the train station. I was so excited about how smart and clever I was, I could hardly breathe. But then – there was a surprise.”

(If possible, some fantasy lights would work.)

VOICE

CO-PEN-HAGEN! Last stop Copenhagen.

LISETTE'S VOICE

"I had gone north instead!"

(We are at the Copenhagen train station.
KARLA is there to greet her brother as he steps off
the train.)

KARLA

Erik! Over here!

ERIK

Karla! What a nice surprise. I thought nobody could come to meet me.

KARLA

I thought I'd surprise you. Your trunk arrived yesterday. All of your clothes are safe and sound as are your paintings. Let me look at you! You've filled out a bit. Mom will be pleased.

ERIK

I did take a liking to all those Parisian pastries.

KARLA

You can tell me all about your year in Paris on the way to the Tivoli Gardens. I bought us tickets. I know you missed the amusements here.

ERIK

You are the most wonderful sister ever!

KARLA

Yes, I am. What's in the satchel?

(KARLA garbs it.)

ERIK

Just some bread and cheese/

KARLA

/And a doll!

ERIK

A doll?

KARLA

You remembered my doll collection.

ERIK

... yes. Yes, I did.

KARLA

She's so beautiful. What is this tag? Handcrafted – in France. Why you sly fox, you said you were too poor to buy anything.

ERIK

I ... sold a painting?

KARLA

I am going to name her Marie.

LISETTE'S VOICE

Lisette! My name is Lisette!

KARLA

Let's get a tram to the garden. The Ferris wheel waits.

LISETTE'S VOICE

I don't like heights!

KARLA

You still like Ferris wheels, don't you?

ERIK

The higher the better.

(LISETTE-DOLL is put back into the satchel.)

(Lights change to Berlin.)

SOFIE

Lisette is the luckiest doll in the world. I always wanted to go to the Tivoli Gardens. Father went there in his travels. He said it was magical. And there's a view of the entire world from the top.

FRANZ

I don't think Lisette thought it was magical. Keep reading.

(Fantasy lights.)

(KARLA is in a Ferris wheel carriage. There could be amusement park music. All you need is some

rails or a boxed in area. If possible, an aerial projection of Copenhagen would be fun.)

KARLA

Erik! Get in! It's going to start! Hurry!

(ERIK runs in carrying a newly purchased stuffed animal.)

ERIK

Here. For you. I should do something for my sister who planned this grand welcome home day.

KARLA

But you did do something. You brought me Marie.

ERIK

I did? Oh! That's right. I did.

KARLA

I should take her out of the satchel. I'd hate for to miss the view.

LISETTE'S VOICE

No thank-you! No view!

KARLA

It's starting!

ERIK

Away we go!

(The Ferris wheel is climbing. ERIK and KARLA are enchanted with all. They are pointing out views of the city and maybe rocking the carriage a bit.)

KARLA

You can see the palace from here! I love this ride on a clear day.

(KARLA and ERIK are having the time of their life. All will stop. KARLA and ERIK exit the Ferris Wheel.)

KARLA

That was the most splendid ride ever! Are you game for the roller coaster?

LISETTE'S VOICE

That's it! I'm putting my foot down! No roller coaster.

(You could stage LISETTE leaving the satchel. Or let it be assumed.)

ERIK

You know me so well. I think we have time to do it twice!

(ERIK and KARLA exit. With a projection or a silly staging, we see DOLL-LISETTE running away surrounded by big human legs – everywhere.

OR simply LISETTE-HUMAN running away.
OR let the following narration explain.
We return to Berlin.)

SOFIE (reading letter)

“I had to get away from those rides before my terrified, little doll heart fainted away. I saw a sign for a ferry. I hope it takes me back to Germany. This time I shall pay attention as to which direction I am going! I thought I was so smart before. Now I will carefully read signs and not assume. But right now, all I can see are human legs and feet everywhere! There must be a sign somewhere! Wish me luck!

Your loving doll,
Lisette”

SOFIE (cont'd)

I miss her.

FRANZ

But look at the grand adventure she is having.

SOFIE

I wish I was with her.

ANYA

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

SOFIE

I do love you, Anya. But you're sort of a stick-in-the-mud.

ANYA

Ha! I roll down hills.

SOFIE

Maybe someday you could take me the Tivoli Gardens in Copenhagen.

ANYA

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

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

You can count on it.

(ALL exit as the lights change to Copenhagen. We see a sign for the Ferry. Perhaps LISETTE tries to hop on an ankle for a ride but falls off. We hear the ferry horn blare. LISETTE falls down. Next to her, a toy soldier, FREDERICK falls down. Their eyes meet. There is a moment. Use doll-puppets or humans – your choice.)

FREDERICK

Well, hello.

LISETTE

Hello.

FREDERICK

I'm Frederick.

(As LISETTE is about to introduce herself, a boy snatches FREDERICK away.)

BOY'S VOICE

There you are! I thought I lost you!

(As FREDERICK disappears from sight, LISETTE yells out to him.)

LISETTE

Lisette! I'm ... Lisette.

Lights fade to black.

Scene 3

LISETTE MEETS CARUSO, AN ITALIAN PORPOISE AND LEARNS TO SING

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

SOFIE

Herr Kafka! HERR KAFKA! Is there a letter?

FRANZ

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

SOFIE

Please!

FRANZ

For you.

(SOFIE just about tears it open.)

SOFIE

“Dear Sofie,

I have had a new adventure. I missed the ferry at the Copenhagen Pier and was very upset. I am learning that this adventure is not as easy as I thought it would be. I collapsed on the pier. I watched the ferry leave and glide across the water and suddenly...”

LISETTE'S VOICE

“...suddenly – I heard singing. I looked around on the dock but no one was there. I looked out on the sea and the voice was coming closer and closer. It wasn't a fisherman. I peered and I peered! It looked like a whale! But it was too small. Was it a dolphin? Sort

LISETTE'S VOICE (cont'd)

of. Can you believe it was a porpoise??? A singing porpoise! But I wasn't listening. I was just sobbing because I missed the ferry."

(We are at the Pier with LISETTE She is pathetically weeping. Somewhere in the harbor is Caruso, a wanna-be-opera-singer-porpoise. We hear him singing.)

CARUSO

(To the tune of *Funiculi, Funicula*, Find tune here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HH0TMmgPtjg>

No Pizza Pie

Some eat their weight in plates of bread and pasta.
But not say, I; but not say I. (aye?)
Some eat their fill of meatballs and lasagna.
Eat or die! Eat or die!

But me, I like to feast on calamari.
No pizza pie! No pizza pie!
While gazing at my lady-love, Caramari
Under sea and sky; under sea and sky.

(Refrain)

Herring! Whitefish! Cod and octopi!
Sardines! Mackerel! Squid and fishhead pie!
No pizza pie, no pizza pie,
No pizza pie, no pizza pie!
Unless it has sardines don't feed us cheesy pizza pie!

LISETTE

That was wonderful!

CARUSO

I know. So, Signorina, did I cheer you up?

LISETTE

For a moment. But now I am remembering that I am all alone and I'll never make it to my home. First, I am tortured by a Ferris Wheel and then I missed the last ferry to Germany and well, nothing is going right! And I have no one to blame but myself for starting out on this adventure!

CARUSO

Little Patatina ("Little Potato"), are those real tears?

LISETTE

I don't know.

CARUSO

You know what they say, if you don't cry – your eyes can't be beautiful.

LISETTE

Who says that?

CARUSO

My wife.

LISETTE

Does she cry a lot?

CARUSO

Si, Signorina. The sun comes up – she cries (CARUSO cries in imitation – boo hoo or something similar). The sun goes down – she cries. (CARUSO fake cries.) The moonlight shines above us – she cries. She cries and she cries and her eyes – oh those eyes!

(CARUSO cries now in earnest.)

I miss those rainy eyes! *Caramari!*

LISETTE

Is she in Italy?

CARUSO

Italy? It's too hot in July! She's waiting for me in Hamburg. I must be off!

(He starts to go and then looks back.)

Signorina, would you like me to take you to Hamburg? Otherwise you shall spend the night alone on the pier.

LISETTE

I don't know. I've never ridden on a porpoise.

CARUSO

Never fear! Caruso-the-magnifico-singing-porpoise-with-a-purpose is here! I can get you all the way to Hamburg. Are you up for an adventure?

LISETTE

I am! But... I am not sure I want to get all wet. That would make me shabby before I reach my home.

CARUSO

I have the perfect solution.

(CARUSO dives under and comes back with possibly a saddle on its back and definitely with a pretty umbrella.)

CARUSO

The umbrella will protect you from the sea spray.

LISETTE

If you say so.

CARUSO

What are you waiting for? I have a date in Hamburg. I must be going. Avanti!

LISETTE

It's hard with these shoes and the cloak.

CARUSO

Don't 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!

(CARUSO swims with LISETTE holding on to everything: to Caruso, her umbrella, her cloak.)

LISETTE

Signore, not so fast, please.

(CARUSO slows down and sings.)

CARUSO
(He starts “Beautiful Dreamer”)

Beautiful dreamer, out on the sea
Mermaids are chanting the wild lorelie,

Sing, Signorina, sing!
CARUSO (cont’d)

I don’t know how.
LISETTE

But you must sing! Life is a song!
CARUSO

I never learned.
LISETTE

CARUSO

(Stops swimming.)

Now *that* is a tragedy. Say good-bye to Copenhagen. It’s beautiful at night, is it not?

Magnifique!
LISETTE

I know. Like me. Now let’s get ready for the crossing. Arrivederci, Copenhagen!

(They swim. The lights turn to dusk.)

Soon there will be nothing but moon and stars. Look up. Bella, no?

Very.
LISETTE

CARUSO
(Sings By the Light of the Silvery Moon.)

“By the light” – now you –

What? No!
LISETTE

Just sing what I sing. Again. CARUSO

“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 and CARUSO

“By the silvery moon.”

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

SOFIE

“Caruso got me safely back to Hamburg and I must say I am exhausted so I’ll close for now. I will write more later.

SOFIE (cont'd)

Yours with love,
Lisette”

What an adventure! I want to ride on a porpoise! Wouldn't you, Anya?

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 do see doctors. Too many doctors. It's nothing but a summer cough. It will pass. But I must rest.

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, reading a letter. DORA is with him.

DORA

Good news?

FRANZ

It's the letter I wrote my father – returned by my mother. Unread. I worked for months on that letter. It was forty-five pages! My novels are shorter than that. I thought we could finally start a conversation. I thought we could bridge our differences. I thought - wrong.

DORA

You wrote a forty-five page letter to your father?

FRANZ

Yes. There was a lot I wanted to say.

DORA

Forty-five pages? That's longer than your novels!

FRANZ

Neither parent wants to hear my thoughts.

DORA

Forty-five pages is a lot of thoughts!

FRANZ

I wanted to map out the heartbeats of our relationship. I thought that would bring understanding.

DORA

Is it not enough that my heart beats for you? And that right now it has a pitter-patter that is making me quite dizzy!

(DORA starts to fall and FRANZ catches her. Or she simply falls into his lap.)

FRANZ

What did I do to deserve you know?

DORA

Don't you know? It's your huge heart. Your huge beating heart.

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

Where is he? We've been here forever!

ANYA

It's hardly been forever. We got here early, remember?

SOFIE

Nothing is going right. It's too hot to do anything. I'm bored.

ANYA

I could read you the letter from your mother.

SOFIE

No, thank you. I'd rather hear about Lisette's adventures.

ANYA

Your mother misses you. She wants you to write her a letter.

SOFIE

If she wants to talk to me she can come home.

ANYA

The memories here are hard for her.

SOFIE

I have memories, too.

ANYA

Of course you do. I just meant/

(DORA and FRANZ enter.)

SOFIE

Herr Kafka! Finally! I've been waiting and waiting!

ANYA

Sofie! How are you feeling, Herr Kafka?

FRANZ

Better, thank-you.

SOFIE

Is there a letter?

ANYA

Sofie! And how are you today, Dora?

Very well, thank-you. DORA

Can I pleeeeeease have the letter! SOFIE

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

I'm sorry. I'm glad you are feeling better. Truly. *Now*, may I see the letter? SOFIE

Of course. FRANZ

(FRANZ gives the letter to SOFIE. Who tears it open.)

“Dear Sofie,
I met a soldier! He's terribly good-looking and sweet. He's too shy to say much. But he has the most charming smile... SOFIE

(The lights switch to the harbor in Hamburg. It is morning and the sun is bright. 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. Maybe he's on the ground. Maybe he's on a bench. FREDERICK is in a soldier suit that is way too small for him. 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.)

LISETTE
Hello. (Beat.) Can you speak?

FREDERICK
Yes... hello.

(Beat. They just look at each other.)

FREDERICK (cont'd)

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

LISETTE

You're welcome.

(Beat.)

FREDERICK

My heart is beating/

LISETTE

I feel my heartbeat/

LISETTE and FREDERICK

What?

(FREDERICK gets up and tries to pull his too short jack down – or tries to button it and cannot. He also tries to pull his too short trousers down. He's embarrassed.)

LISETTE

Did you grow over night? Your uniform looks – small.

FREDERICK

Yes... it... umm... well... shrunk you see. Uniforms do that if they get wet and are put in the sun.

LISETTE

Oh. (Beat.) Why then did you put it in the sun?

(Beat.)

FREDERICK

I ... fell in. Clothes and all. That is ... I was dropped. The boy who is my human dropped me just as the ferry was pulling in.

LISETTE

Careless boy! I hope you ran away from him.

FREDERIK

Well... no. He's a good sort of chap. He is fond of waving me around a bit in the air and then sometimes I fall. He cried and made a fuss and a dock worker kindly fished me out of the water. I was put here to dry. It's too bad my body did not shrink with the clothes.

LISETTE

Perhaps they will get you a new uniform.

FREDERICK

Perhaps. (Beat.) I didn't see you on the ferry.

LISETTE

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

FREDERICK

I see.

(Beat. They just stare at each other.)

You're very ... nice ... looking.

LISETTE

Thank-you. (Beat.) I think. And you are ...

(SHE giggles.)

LISETTE (cont'd)

I'm sorry. It's just ... the uniform.

FREDERICK

I know!

(And he laughs.)

FREDERICK

I looked better yesterday!

LISETTE

I know! I mean... yesterday... at the pier...

(THEY grow closer.)

FREDERICK

Yes?

(Even closer.)

LISETTE

I saw you and ...

... and...

FREDERICK

(There might have been a kiss. Or they start to reach or each other's hand. Instead there is the blare of horns on ferries and boats and gulls and finally... an arm appears?

They are dolls again?

OR a giant arm appears. We hear the same boy's voice that we heard in Copenhagen.)

BOY

There you are! I thought I'd never find you. Come on, the train for Paris leaves soon. Tomorrow we will be on the top of the Eiffel Tower! Won't that be fun?

(And as they are separated... we hear FREDERICK call out.)

FREDERICK

We're going to the Eiffel Tower in Paris! Please come! And - I'm Frederick!

(And he is gone.)

LISETTE

I know! And I'm .. Lisette.

(Lights change back to the park where SOFIE is continuing the letter.)

SOFIE

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

Oh! Paris! I think she should go to Paris, don't you?

DORA

Absolutely! Mr. Kafka has told me wonderful things about Paris. Such a lovely setting for an adventure.

FRANZ

The gardens are poetry. I could write loving letters from Paris – *essays! I mean I could write essays* – about Paris.

ANYA

I think she should go to Italy.

SOFIE and FRANZ

What?

ANYA

Sofie's mother writes such lovely letters about her adventures there.

SOFIE

I don't want to hear anything about Italy. Just Paris.

FRANZ

So, you *do* receive letters from your mother.

ANYA

Indeed she does.

FRANZ

And do you answer them?

ANYA

Indeed she does not.

FRANZ

I would give anything for a letter from my mother. I write her and write her and I get nothing.

SOFIE

Maybe she wants you to come home.

FRANZ

I'm afraid not. When I am home, she doesn't make time to see me.

SOFIE

Mothers are a mystery, aren't they?

KAFKA

Indeed they are. But remember, you do have letters. Letters are special. They are forever. Conversations come and go but you can reread a letter again and again. They should be treasured.

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. Perhaps one day, they will read them.

SOFIE

I hope they answer you.

FRANZ

I hope so, too. Unanswered letters are sad. (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.

ANYA

And tell her about Lisette's adventures.

SOFIE

No!

ANYA

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

SOFIE

It's even too hot for that. (Beat.) 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

That's very thoughtful of you. (He takes some tea.) I've been thinking.

DORA

About your new novel?

FRANZ

About you. I should be writing about you! About my Dora who is both sweet and fierce.

DORA

In your novel?

FRANZ

In my letters from Lisette.

DORA

Just don't turn me into a singing porpoise.

FRANZ

What, my love? *You don't see yourself as a porpoise?*

DORA

Nor an orca nor a walrus.

FRANZ

How about a tortoise with a purpose?

DORA

No! Nor a gorgeous chorus of horses!

FRANZ

What happens in Hamburg? The streets will uncover ...

DORA

A shortage of lovers!

FRANZ

But ... two will remain... to feast on chow mein!

DORA

No!

FRANZ
To play with great danes! No...

DORA
To... dance in the rain.

FRANZ
On a plane!

DORA
In a sea lane!

FRANZ
A sea lane. An alley by the sea. I like that. But who should these lovers be?

DORA
Romeo and Juliet!

FRANZ
Or Antonius and Kleopatra!

DORA
I am Kleopatra – Queen of the Nile.

FRANZ
You *are* Cleopatra! But Queen of the alley way!

DORA
What?

FRANZ
Antonius and Kleopatra ruling the world!

DORA
Yes!

FRANZ
Antonius and Kleopatra helping Lisette!

DORA
Yes, yes!

FRANZ
Two alley-cats – Antonius and Kleopatra – conquerors of mice, living on scraps in an alley by the sea ... encounter a doll...

DORA

I was better off as a porpoise with a purpose....

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 know. I’m not nagging.

(They read. They “peer.”)

SOFIE

What is “late?” One hour? Two hours?

ANYA

I don’t know.

(They read. They “peer.” They read. They “peer” again.” As SOFIE and ANYA speak, FRANZ and DORA sneak up on them. They have pastries.)

FRANZ and DORA

Surprise!

ANYA

Goodness! I just aged ten years!

DORA

Look! We have a surprise!

Sweets!
FRANZ

Is it someone's birthday?
SOFIE

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

So we thought why not celebrate?
DORA

I am so pleased your check-up went well. And look at all of these pastries! With all the rations, we never get anything sweet anymore.
ANYA

I wish there was a way to make this last forever.
SOFIE

We can make it last all morning. First, we will go on an adventure with Lisette and then we feast on sweets!
FRANZ

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

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.
SOFIE

“Dear Sofie,

Each day brings a new adventure! Let me tell you about Antonius and Kleopatra.

LIGHTS change and we are back at the docks in Hamburg. We hear some “meows.” Two cats, Antonius and Kleopatra sneak up on LISETTE. They circle her. They hiss. A paw goes in and out.

... here kitty, kitty?
LISETTE

Meow!
ANTONIUS

KLEOPATRA

Mew. Mew.

THEY circle LISETTE again. It's a bit more menacing. Hisses. Claws. LISETTE is first frightened trying to shoo them. And then she gets mad! Using her cloak or satchel or something, she twirls in a circle with her arms outstretched trying to smack the cats away. But. She gets dizzy and faints.

KLEOPATRA

Look what you did! You killed her!

ANTONIUS

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

(ANTONIUS bends over LISETTE.)

ANTONIUS

Dollface? *Dollface?* Cat got your tongue?

(He paws at her.)

LISETTE

Don't do that! And my name's Lisette! Not Dollface!

KLEOPATRA

She lives!

ANTONIUS

No thanks to you. I brought her back from the dead.

LISETTE

I wasn't dead! What do you want from me?

ANTONIUS

You got a rat on you?

LISETTE

No. Sorry.

KLEOPATRA

A mouse?

LISETTE
No.

ANTONIUS
Not even a grouse?

LISETTE
Not even a louse.

KLEOPATRA
What good are you?

LISETTE
I'm ... pretty?

ANTONIUS
You're not exactly the cats pajamas.

KLEOPATRA
I used to be! I miss it. Look at me! I used to be the cat's meow! *Me-ow!*

ANTONIUS
My sweet Kleopatra, you still put the "me" in "meow!"

KLEOPATRA
Do you think so, Antonius? Am I still beautiful even though I am matted-meow? My tail doesn't fluff-meow the way it used to. My whiskers are twisted!

ANTONIUS
Kleo, you are still the salt in my rat stew, the purr in my heart, I am lost without you.

LISETTE
That's so sweet!

ANTONIUS
Sweet? Me-ow! I don't wanna be sweet! I want to be the ruler of the universe! The king of my multi-cat-boxbox castle! I want to go back to the way things used to be. When we were gods!

KLEOPATRA
Those were the days, my friend. We were the "bee's knees" at catching mice. So good, eventually there were no more mice and we were thrown out.

LISETTE
That's terrible!

ANTONIUS

That's life. When I get myself down, I pick myself up. I am one cool cat.

LISETTE

That's so wise.

KLEOPATRA

Antonius has a lot of smarts. I'm Kleopatra by the way. The Former "Beauty Feline" of Hamburg. Who are you?

LISETTE

Lisette.

ANTONIUS

So what's your story, Morning Glory?

LISETTE

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

ANTONIUS

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

LISETTE

If you must know – I am on a grand adventure.

KLEOPATRA

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

LISETTE

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

ANTONIUS

What'll you give us if we do?

LISETTE

I don't have anything. Sorry.

ANTONIUS

Time for a cat-nap. (Beat.) Sorry.

LISETTE

Wait! I can ... comb your fur?

ANTONIUS

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

KLEOPATRA (cont'd)
 (KLEOPATRA runs back to LISETTE and affectionately head-butts her.)

I hardly can believe I'm real!

ANTONIUS

You done good, Dollface.

LISETTE

Lisette.

ANTONIUS

Lisette.

LISETTE

Now will you show me the way to the train station?

KLEOPATRA

Oh that. See it? It's right up the block.

LISETTE

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

KLEOPATRA

Whoops. What can I say? Meow! Sometimes cats just wanna have fun.

ANTONIUS

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.

KLEOPATRA

Paris is always a good idea.

(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. It's been a busy few days.

With affection,
 Lisette”

SOFIE (cont'd)

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 in love should be together.

SOFIE

Yes.

FRANZ

So do I.

(FRANZ holds up a sweet.)

FRANZ

Let's make a sweet toast with our sweets, shall we? To being together? To love?

ALL

To love!

(And with that, the lights dim as they hand out the pastries, maybe feed each other and very happily partake in the pastries.)

OPTIONAL INTERMISSION

If there is no intermission, have a short montage of French music and Lisette dancing in the Paris streets (preferably at sunrise). This can be done with projections or simple cutouts of a few Paris landmarks.

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

LIGHTS UP on SOFIE finishing a school assignment and FRANZ opening a letter. SOFIE is deep in thought with arithmetic. ANYA enters.

ANYA

The spelling is perfect – all correct. How's the arithmetic going?

I hate multiplication.

SOFIE

Everyone goes through that phase. I think you need a break. Look what I found.

ANYA

A letter? From Lisette?

SOFIE

From your mother.

ANYA

Put it with the others.

SOFIE

I'll just leave it here.

ANYA

I'm not going to read it.

SOFIE

Suit yourself.

ANYA

(ANYA exits. SOFIE stares at the letter. We switch to FRANZ and DORA.)

FRANZ

At least it's from Ottla so it won't bite me.

"Dear Franz:
I am sorry to hear of your recent health issues."

(FRANZ coughs and gives the letter to DORA)

Read it. It's very sweet.

DORA

"There is only one solution. You must come home and let me care for you. Forget Father and Mother. Little Vera and Helene would love to spend time with their Uncle Franz. They are growing so fast. Joseph is in agreement with me. We welcome you into our home.

"I await your arrival.
Much love, Ottla"

DORA

Are you thinking of going home?

FRANZ

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

DORA

Yes.

FRANZ

I am thinking of going home.

(The lights switch to SOFIE. She gingerly takes her mother's letter and opens it.)

SOFIE

“Dearest Sofie....”

(The lights fade.)

SCENE 9 – LISETTE meets FIFI LA CUTE.

AT RISE, we hear some “French” music. LISETTE is sitting on a blanket that she mysteriously has. Perhaps she is somewhere along the Seine. There could be a makeshift picnic. It would be swell if there was the Eiffel Tower way in the background. She could dance, write a letter. People could stroll by – on foot, on a bicycle. They could juggle, chase balloons, You know – your average, extraordinary day in the park. It's a brief montage before we return to the park in Berlin. It is Thursday, August 4, 1924. ANYA, DORA, and FRANZ are huddled on and around the bench. FRANZ is in some distress. SOFIE paces.)

SOFIE

Can I ... do something? Rub your back? Fetch you a sandwich from the café? Well, I can't. I don't have any money - but Anya could! Herr Kafka? What can I do?

FRANZ

Just sit for a minute.

(SOFIE sits – all jittery and twittery but she sits.)

Yes, that's very helpful.

(SOFIE jumps up.)

Sofie!
 ANYA

I'm not doing anything.
 SOFIE

ANYA
 Please continue to "not do anything" in a quieter manner.

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

BEAT
 FRANZ
 I suppose we should begin.

(FRANZ takes out LISETTE'S newest letter. SOPHIE leaps up and runs around the bench behind FRANZ to see it.)

Are you ready?

SOFIE
 For ages!

"Dear Sofie:
 "I arrived safely in Paris. I am trying to make my way 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
 "When I was bowled over by an unusual poodle!"

(We return to Paris. Suddenly, 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

Dieu Merci! Thank goodness. I hate the beauty shop! My mistress may be kind but truly – every time she takes me to the groomer, I come out looking – well – 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 be protectors! Guards! 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

(Back to the rant.)

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! Should I?*

(LISETTE tries to answer.)

No! I'm supposed to save people in the mountains! Haul carts of food to mankind and be their savior! Don't you agree?

(LISSETTE 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 better. 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.

(LISSETTE remains quiet.)

I said, don't you agree?

LISSETTE

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 deliver water! Let me guide you through treacherous territory! There is no task I will not undertake! No task is too large or too small for me! Let me be useful!

LISSETTE

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!*

LISSETTE

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

FIFI LA CUTE

Of course! That was what I was bred for!

(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.

LISSETTE

No, I am all out of dog bones.

FIFI LA CUTE

A pity.

(They take a few steps. Very few.)

FIFI LA CUTE (cont'd)

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

LISETTE

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

FIFI LA CUTE

A pity.

(They take a step)

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 paces.)

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 my “not a poodley-poodle” status. If she can understand what I understand we can come to an understanding. But first - I need to - get clean!

LISETTE

Jump in the river!

FIFI LA CUTE

Too dirty. I'll smell like dead fish. 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

(Calling out to her.) **I hope so, too! Even if I have to do it ...** alone. I'm alone. Again.

(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. It is still several kilometers away. I miss you Sofie. I know I wanted an adventure.

But now I think it would be much more fun if I did this with you. I wish we were going to the Eiffel Tower together.

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

Lisette”

SOFIE

Will we never find out if she makes to the Eiffel Tower and finds Frederick?

FRANZ

Why, I can't say...

DORA

Of course you can't. (Beat.) 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 sincerely hope that when we meet again, you will be “up.” 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.

(She takes him aside and whispers.)

I read a letter from my mother.

FRANZ

And...

SOFIE

She misses me.

FRANZ

And ...

SOFIE

That's all. For now.

FRANZ

It's amazing, Sofie. I am feeling better. I still need to rest but yes, your news has definitely helped me.

(A handshake or a small hug. FRANZ and DORA exit as SOFIE watches. The lights fade to black.)

SCENE 10

LIGHTS UP on LISETTE in Paris. It is sunset. There could be a projection of the bottom of the Eiffel Tower in the background where LISETTE looks very small. Very small indeed. LISETTE looks up.

LISETTE

I don't like heights.

Blackout

In blackout we hear FRANZ and SOFIE writing letters.

FRANZ

"Dear Ottla,

FRANZ (cont'd)

I sincerely thank you for the offer of your home as a safe haven. I am looking to take advantage of your hospitality. My health is giving me concern. There are a few things I need to do before I return to Prague, but I hope to be there by mid-August.

Sincerely,
Franz”

SOFIE

“Dear Mother...”

SCENE 11

LIGHTS up on the Berlin 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 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 an hour in the park with you.

SOFIE

Is there a letter?

(FRANZ hands the letter to SOFIE.)

“Dear Sofie,

I have so much to tell you, I don’t know where to begin. I did make it to the Eiffel Tower. It is 17 thousand and ten steps to the top! That’s a lot of steps for a doll with short legs. And a lot of steps for a doll that prefers to stay on the ground. There is a lift but it is hard to get on – it is so crowded. I worried about being stepped on and squished.

(We switch to the EIFFEL Tower and LISETTE.)

LISETTE’S VOICE

“And *then* it started to rain. There were so many people coming down, it seemed impossible that one could go up. Finally I held on to a lady’s umbrella and made it all the way to the top.”

(LISETTE is at the top of the Eiffel Tower. There’s thunder and lightening. LISETTE peers out at Paris – a possible projection. She tries to stand on some rails and winds up standing on FREDERICK!)

LISETTE

Oh! This is so far off the ground!

(FREDERICK moves.)

FREDERICK

Owwww!

(LISETTE jumps off. FREDERICK is no longer in his shrunken soldier clothes but in something incongruous – lederhosen? A baker’s outfit? You decide.)

FREDERICK

Well ... hello!

LISETTE

Frederick! It’s me, Lisette!

FREDERICK

I ... know.

LISETTE

What were you doing on the floor?

FREDERICK

I ... don't know. Charles, the boy I belong to was waving me around. Again. I was worried he would drop me off the Tower. And that would have been the end of me. So I threw myself on the ground.

LISETTE

That was the reasonable thing to do.

FREDERICK

I thought so. Then there was a thunder clap and everyone started running every which way and that way and - well ... here I am!

LISETTE

Here you are! (Beat.) You've changed.

FREDERICK

No, I haven't! Oh! The clothes. Yes. At least they fit.

(Beat.)

FREDERICK

How ... are you?

LISETTE

... fine. I am fine. A bit tired. But fine! No! Not fine. Exhausted. In the last few days, I have been on a train, a Ferris Wheel, a porpoise, another train and then I walked from the train station to here. I have been hanging on to so many human legs that my fingers went numb.

(LISETTE starts to break down.)

LISETTE (cont'd)

I met cats and dogs and now it's raining cats and dogs ... and I am a silly doll!

(LISETTE cries.)

FREDERICK

Don't cry.

LISETTE

All right.

(LISETTE stops crying.)

May I – hold your hand?

FREDERICK

Maybe. I think ... yes.

LISETTE

(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.)

Goodness!

FREDERICK

Oh my!

LISETTE

Shall we try again?

FREDERICK

(And they do. And they make contact.)

This is ... this is ...

LISETTE

Wonderful.

FREDERICK

Yes.

LISETTE

Look out there.

FREDERICK

(They look out at Paris – holding hands of course. Their sight lines are probably blocked a bit because they are short – they are dolls after all.)

Paris is at our feet.

FREDERICK (cont'd)

And my feet are a long way up ... and I don't mind. I don't mind at all.

LISETTE

(THEY look out and are so very content for a moment. Suddenly we hear the BOY'S (Charles) voice.)

BOY'S VOICE

Frederick! *Frederick!* Where arrrrre you?

FREDERICK

I have to go.

(But he takes her other hand.)

LISETTE

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