

My Brother's Gift by Claudia Haas
Adapted form the memories of Eva Schloss

This play received the 2019 Old Miner Children's Playwriting Contest "Strike it Rich" Prize for plays about the lives of real children. It received a rehearsed reading at Utah Valley University under the direction of Dr. John Newman.

The Old Miner Children's Playwriting Contest is funded through the generous support of the Tom and Mary Norris Foundation. The contest provides opportunities for Utah Valley University students to evaluate and perform new plays by new and established writers of theatre for young audiences.

Utah Valley University Cast

Heinz Geiringer: Zippy Hellewell
Eva Geiringer: Maren Lethbridge
Mutti (Mother): Shelby Markham
Pappy (Father)/Herman: Ian Webb
Sanne/Official/Sound: Sarah Hatch
Mrs. Jansen/Official/Stage Directions: Anna Thulin

My Brother's Gift (all rights reserved)

CAST:

CAST: 5-11 (3f, 2m or 7f, 4m) extras possible

1945 scenes

Eva Geiringer (f) 16; after Auschwitz

Mutti (Fritzi) Geiringer (f); 45; after Auschwitz

Heinz Geiringer (m) 18; (Memory)

Memory Scenes

Eva Geiringer (f) age 11-15; athletic, devoted to family, survivor, rememberer

Heinz Geiringer (m) 14-17; artistic, gifted, thirst for knowledge and life, loving brother, plays guitar and piano, blind in one eye, afraid of dying

Pappy (Erich) Geiringer (m) 43; entrepreneur, life-affirming, father to Heinz and Eva

Mutti (Fritzi) Geiringer (f) 39; practical, loving, determined, mother to Heinz and Eva

Sanne (f) 12, (Given name: Susanne) Eva's friend, joins everything with enthusiasm

Herman (m) 15, Heinz's friend, a little reticent but loyal

Official – Use up to two actors; (m/f) Dutch or German Official

Mrs. Jansen (f) 20's; Landlady at Heinz's and Pappy's Hiding Place; opportunist

Offstage voices: (or may appear) Scene 2: one-two boys (after ghost scene); Scene 3: extra children in ark; Scene 7: Mrs. Vitner; Scene 9: Nazi Official

DOUBLING FOR CAST OF FIVE

Eva – Past/Eva 1945

Heinz in both memory scenes and 1945 scenes

Pappy/Pappy Memory/Herman/offstage men's voices

Mutti Past Mutti 1945

Sanne/Mrs. Jansen/Official/offstage female voices

TIME:

February 1940 – August 1945

PLACES:

Apartment in Amsterdam

Outside courtyard of the Geiringer's apartment

A Boat

An attic where Heinz and Pappy were in hiding

An attic where Eva and Mutti were hiding

A Cattle Car to Auschwitz

A minimalistic set of levels to suggest the areas and projections are all you need.

The soundscape and projections are integral to the play. This was a loving, boisterous family whose home was always filled with music, storytelling and books.

High-resolution photos of the paintings of the Geiringer family and Heinz's paintings. will be provided. Permission from Eva Geiringer Schloss to use them has been granted.

Note about Projections: The play relies on projections to tell the story. They are the focal point of the set and set the tone of the scenes. A few tables and chairs can be rearranged to suggest the rest of the scenes. While I have noted when the projections can go out, you may also choose to leave them in one continuous flow.

Projections: Sent upon request.

SYNOPSIS: Anne Frank's family and Heinz Geiringer's family were neighbors in Amsterdam. After both Heinz and Margot were "called up" to work in a Nazi Labor camp, they went into hiding at roughly the same time. Anne Frank left a diary showing the difficulties of growing up in hiding. Heinz Geiringer left over twenty paintings and a book of poetry which show us both his hope for the future and the terror of the time. Heinz loved the arts. A trained musician, Heinz turned to painting and poetry to utilize his time. He painted on tea towels, pillowcases and any surface that he could find. During the play, we witness his artistic growth through his paintings, poetry and his sister's remembrances. The paintings vary from a nostalgic love of the life he once led to the fears that were now part of his everyday existence. . From the tender age of fifteen to seventeen, Heinz created a body of work that exists to this day. After liberation, Otto Frank formed a close friendship with Fritzi Geiringer and Eva. As the survivors of their respective families, they understood each other. When Otto was given Anne's diary, Fritzi (Mutti) and Eva set out to recover Heinz's (and Pappy's) paintings. The paintings are housed in the Dutch Resistance Museum. Fritzi married Otto Frank and they dedicated their lives to bringing Anne Frank's diary to the world. Today, Eva Schloss travels the world as a speaker of peace and tolerance. She works to bring her brother's artistry to the world and to celebrate her brother's ability to find hope and healing in art. The play celebrates Heinz's life and depicts his journey as an artist and a loving brother.

THEME: Heinz's remarkable paintings show us the power of art under unconscionable circumstances and how art can offer hope and healing.

PROLOGUE

May 1944

Train sounds are heard in the dark. Then voices.
The voices are of HEINZ and EVA.

HEINZ

Eva! I need to tell you about the paintings.

EVA

Breathe, Heinz.

HEINZ

You need to know. They're hidden under the floorboards in the attic – in our last hiding place. When this is over, I want you to retrieve them.

EVA

Together! We shall pick them up together.

HEINZ

Of course. But just in case, I want you to know where they are.

EVA

We'll be free soon. Pappy says peace is near. The four of us will find them together.

HEINZ

I want to believe you/

EVA

/Believe! That's how we will get through this.

HEINZ

Promise me you will get the paintings. I need to know that if I don't make it, my paintings will.

EVA

You'll make it/

HEINZ

/Promise me, Eva!

EVA

I promise.

Scene 1 - August 1945

Lights up in EVA'S and MUTTI'S apartment. EVA (age 16) and MUTTI have just retrieved the paintings by PAPPY and HEINZ. The paintings are on sheets, tea towels, pillowcases – whatever “found” object they could find in hiding. They enter carefully carrying the paintings and papers. The paintings are laid flat with “something” in-between protecting the oils. They put them on the table.

Off to the side, in their attic-hiding place we see HEINZ painting.

PROJECTION 1: Heinz's self-portrait of himself reading.

(EVA holds one up for Mutti to see. MUTTI looks away.)

EVA

Look, Mutti. It's Heinz!

Don't you want to see it?

MUTTI

I can't. Just picking them up from their hiding place was hard enough. I still felt like I needed to hide from the Nazis.

EVA

We had to get them. We promised!

MUTTI

And we kept our promise. They are finally home.

EVA

It's not a home anymore.

Projection of HEINZ out.

MUTTI

It's where we live and care for each other.

EVA

I hate it here! I want my old life back.

MUTTI

We're together and I am trying to move us forward.

EVA

The paintings bring them back to me. I can see Pappy and Heinz painting. They would work so slowly taking care with every stroke.

PROJECTION 2: HEINZ'S drawing of the sitting room in the GEIRINGER'S apartment in Amsterdam.

(HEINZ enters from hiding place. He has a small sketchpad filled with sketches.)

HEINZ

The first thing I drew in hiding was my family in our Amsterdam apartment. I wanted to be able to come back to them again and again with hope that our lives would continue in that place. After fleeing Vienna, we knew that our time in Belgium was temporary and so we tried to not get attached to our life there. But Amsterdam was to be our new home. It was a place that welcomed refugees. A place that gave us a future. A future surrounded by new friendships, tulips, and music.

I was frustrated with my early renderings. As you can see.

(HEINZ skims through pad showing the audience a glimpse of his early sketches.)

"It takes time," said Pappy. And then with that optimistic grin of his he noted, "And luckily, these days, we have a lot of time."

(HEINZ exits.)

(There is a music and a light cue that signal the memory scenes. Piano music is heard.)

MEMORY: Music. The Geiringer apartment, February 1940

We are in the Geiringer's apartment. They are inside the main living area. EVA and MUTTI are at a table going over EVA'S homework. From another room we can hear HEINZ practicing

piano. The music is somewhat somber. But it is clear there is a talented musician at work.)

MUTTI

He's been playing that over and over again since he got home from school. I hope he moves on to something else soon. Something with a bit more cheer. Your vocabulary looks good. We should move on to verbs.

EVA

My head needs to rest.

MUTTI

My head needs a break from that music. HEINZ! Play something else! Something cheery.

(Immediately there is a switch to ragtime. EVA starts to dance to it.)

MUTTI

Eva! Sit!

EVA

I can't!

MUTTI

Now! In Dutch please: "I am."

(EVA sits but cannot stay still. She can be upside down, hanging off the chair at a silly angle but she definitely is not upright.)

MUTTI

How will you ever learn your verbs if you keep moving about like a squirrel?

EVA

I just learned French. Let's go live in France.

MUTTI

The Dutch have given Pappy a job. So we learn Dutch.

EVA

Promise me that we won't move again where I need to learn another language!

MUTTI

We're safe in Amsterdam.

(EVA gets up and moves around to the music.)

MUTTI (cont'd)

Your verbs: "I am!"

EVA (While dancing)

"Ik ben!"

MUTTI

"He is!" (EVA dances.) "He is!" Eva! Sit!

EVA

I can't sit still while that music is playing.

MUTTI

Heinz! Practice time is over. (Music out.) Eva, settle down and write this/

HEINZ (Enters)

/I haven't played in so long. There's so much to go over.

(Sings a few bars from Irving Berlin's
"I Love a Piano" (public domain). It's silly. As he
sings, EVA dances.)

I love a piano, I love a piano,
I love to hear somebody play.
Upon a piano, a grand piano,
It simply carries me away."

MUTTI

Heinz! Eva and I are working.

HEINZ

Sorry, Mutti. I love that Pappy got us a piano! I love Amsterdam! I got carried away!

MUTTI

Why don't you rest your eyes?

HEINZ

One eye is always resting. I need to strengthen my good eye so I never go blind.

MUTTI

Read, then.

HEINZ

I do have a book to finish.

EVA

And then after you are done, you can act out the story for me! A pirate story!

HEINZ

My new book doesn't have pirates. It has ghosts!

MUTTI

Eva! The verbs! "He is!"

EVA

What're you reading now?

HEINZ

I'm reading about Lorelei. A young woman who drowned and seeks revenge. She sings above a high cliff and her voice is so beautiful that sailors want to be near her. They jump ship and try to swim to her but they all drown – just as she did.

EVA

Let's act it out. I want to be "Lorelei the murderer!"

MUTTI

/Heinz, this is not the time for stories. Eva needs to practice her Dutch. Eva, "He is!"

EVA

"Hij is!"

MUTTI

Good. "We are."

EVA

My head is full!

MUTTI

We'll have you fluent in no time. Just like Heinz.

EVA

I'm not perfect Heinz!

HEINZ

I'm not "perfect Heinz!" Where is this "perfect Heinz?" Is there another brother I don't know about?

EVA

Who learns a language in two weeks?

HEINZ

I had a head start. I started practicing when we lived in Belgium.

MUTTI

Can we please finish the homework?

(PAPPY enters and dances over to EVA, takes her hand and they waltz across the floor. HEINZ hums some music.)

PAPPY

It's time for music.

MUTTI

Erich! We're working!

EVA

I am saved by Pappy!

MUTTI

Erich, can we wait a bit? Eva should do a little more work.

(PAPPY dances to MUTTI and sweeps her off her feet. She protests. HEINZ and EVA dance.)

EVA

Dance, Mutti! Dance!

(And they do for a moment.)

PAPPY

Now everyone in your circle.

(PAPPY places the speaker of the gramophone or in the center of the room. He puts on "The Trout Quartet" by Schubert. **MUSIC: Trout Quartet.**)

HEINZ

Someday, I will compose something that makes people as happy as this makes me.

PAPPY

And you will. But first we must make sure you grow up healthy and strong. A good night sleep is essential for your well-being. It's time to let the world float away.

(MUTTI, PAPPY, HEINZ and EVA sit down with their heads near the speaker. Their backs are

touching each other. They are like four spokes in a wheel – evenly spaced in a circle.
EVA does roll about a bit trying to settle down.)

MUTTI

Evi...

EVA

I'm still. See how still I am?

(And she does settle down. For a moment all is calm and quiet with just the sounds of the music playing. They may touch hands. The family is connected to each other as the lights change.

Projection of Apartment out.

Music out.

During the interlude, we switch back to August 1945 in the apartment. It is a few hours later.)

SCENE 2

PROJECTION 3: Heinz's painting of an apple and a jug of wine.

(HEINZ enters – in hiding.)

HEINZ

After a month of intense drawing, I turned my attention to still lifes. The first thing I noticed is that still lifes aren't still! There are textures to capture, movement in the folds of tablecloths. Then you must decide where to focus. Is the red in the apple deep enough? Does it make me want to eat it? Of course, everything made me want to eat. Food was scarce. If I couldn't eat my fill, I could at least try and paint it!

(HEINZ may stay and paint or exit.)

EVA

This is on a pillowcase and look – a painting on a tea towel. It's amazing what they used for painting materials. They could paint on anything. But who brought them the paints and brushes?

MUTTI

Some people were very kind. We must remember that.

EVA

Look at this one – on a scrap of leather. (Beat.) Mutti! Look! Pappy and Heinz started a new movement. Painting on leather! Canvas is so old-fashioned!

MUTTI

This is so hard. Let's stop.

EVA

I need to do this! You should be grateful for them ... grateful we found them/

MUTTI

/I'm not ready for/

EVA

/I am! Two years in hiding and I didn't do anything.

MUTTI

You studied.

EVA

I did nothing to help him. He helped me learn Dutch. He helped me make friends, he was always there for me.

PROJECTION 4: Heinz with his guitar.

MEMORY: April 1940. Friends.

(EVA is outside in the courtyard. She has a bag of marbles and is playing by herself. Nearby, there are sounds of children playing: hopscotch, jump rope, marbles, hoops, and bicycles. SANNE is among EVA smiles and waves at SANNE. No response. HEINZ enters.)

HEINZ

Don't you have the saddest face of anyone I've ever known?

EVA

Nobody will play with me. And I can't speak to them in Dutch. It doesn't matter. I don't care.

HEINZ

Wait here.

(HEINZ exits.)

I have nowhere to go.

EVA

(She continues to play with the marbles by her lonesome. HEINZ returns with his guitar.)

Do you care to dance?

HEINZ

(And HEINZ plays a fast, ragtime tune. The music gets inside EVA and she dances. She leaps and cartwheels and if possible does her gymnast moves. She forgets her loneliness. SANNE comes forward. At first she watches EVA and then joins in the dance. There is a coming-together and the beginnings of friendship. As the lights change EVA is now with a friend.)

Projection of Heinz out.

(The lights change back to EVA'S and MUTTI'S 1945 apartment.)

Remember this?

EVA

MUTTI

Heinz's boat. We tried to sail every lake and river in The Netherlands. We almost succeeded. If only...

EVA

If only we were allowed to keep it. *I hate this!* Heinz should be here. He should be sailing, playing the piano! It's so quiet here. *I hate the quiet!*

(MUTTI takes EVA in her arms.)

MUTTI

Shh, my darling. The memories are hard.

EVA

No! The memories are good. This "afterlife" is hard. That beautiful sailboat! I know he was remembering those sailing days while stuck inside.

PROJECTION 5: The Sailboat.

(HEINZ enters – in hiding.)

HEINZ

Months pass. We were still in hiding. I began to use my art to set myself free. We were hidden in shadow so I painted the sun. Light meant being outside – sailing with friends – free. I wanted to set sail on a blazing blue body of water. But for now, my boat could only sail under a dim, blurred sky.

MUTTI

Remember when he became a captain?

MEMORY: May 1940

(Music underscoring as we set the scene for the “Memory of the Sailboat.” It is almost like a dance. HEINZ is the captain on a boat welcoming EVA, SANNE and HERMAN. He has on a captain’s cap. Music out at start of dialogue.)

HEINZ

Welcome aboard, Miss Geiringer. I am your captain. We will be sailing at 0900 hours. The winds are moderate from the southwest.

EVA

Aye, aye, Captain!

HEINZ

And welcome Sanne and Herman. Are you ready to set sail?

SANNE

I’m so excited. I brought a small picnic to share. With cake.

HERMAN

So did I. We’ll have plenty of food.

HEINZ

Ha! I’ve seen how much you can eat.

HERMAN

I’m growing!

HEINZ

We all are.

SANNE

So we’ll eat everything.

HEINZ

Except for Eva. She's a picky eater.

EVA

I eat cake.

HEINZ

We all eat cake. I am your captain and you are my shipmates.

HERMAN

As first mate/

EVA

/I'm first mate!

HERMAN

As second mate, I propose that we eat.

HEINZ

Before we eat, I think we should go on an adventure. Then we will be hungry.

HERMAN

I'm already hungry.

EVA

I vote for the adventure. What did you have in mind? Pirates? I'll be a pirate.

HEINZ

Sirens! There's a tale that takes place on the Rhine at a place called the Murmuring Cliffs.

SANNE

It's where Lorelei was jilted by her suitor and jumped off the cliff and drowned. Now her spirit sits way on top and she sings. She sings so beautifully that sailors that hear her go mad and jump ship to swim to her. But they drown. No one who has heard her song has survived to tell the tale. (Beat. As all look at her.) We studied it in school. *It's so romantic!* Let's play! I want to be Lorelei!

EVA

No, me!

HEINZ

You, Eva are my savior. For I want to be the sailor that hears Lorelei's song and lives to tell the tale. But that can only happen if you help me.

EVA

I'll always help you.

HERMAN

And me?

HEINZ

A fallen sailor.

HERMAN

Am I – dead? I don't want to be dead.

HEINZ

Nobody wants to be dead. Lorelei was so unhappy about being jilted, she vowed to drown as many sailors as she could.

EVA

She was a murderer!

HEINZ

She was. But sailors came anyway wanting to hear her song.

EVA

That's silly of the sailors. They should sail to a place where nobody wants to murder them.

HEINZ

They wanted to experience her enchantment. Just as I do. Are you game?

HERMAN

As long as I live.

HEINZ

We'll all live. In real life. Sanne, climb up high on these boxes. They are the cliffs. You will be Lorelei and sing.

SANNE

I don't sing.

HEINZ

We will imagine it. Herman and I will be the sailors who want to experience everything. My first mate needs to tie me up so I cannot jump into the water when the music starts. Unfortunately my friend – you will not be so lucky. You will jump in the water/

HERMAN

/I don't want to jump in the water. I don't swim.

HEINZ

You *make-believe* you jump in the water and you *make-believe* you drown. Now, Eva you must wear ear plugs so that you don't hear Lorelei calling. Ready?

ALL

Aye, aye.

HEINZ

Here's some rope to tie me up.

(EVA ties a knot. SANNE climbs to the top "of something." HEINZ gives EVA some makeshift ear plugs. It could be something silly that hangs out of her ears.)

HEINZ

Take this. When I tell you to, put it in your ears. That way you'll be safe. And remember, no matter what I say – do *not* untie me until we're past the cliffs. Is that clear?

EVA

Aye, Aye, Captain!

HEINZ

And now, we sail to the cliffs!

(The sail in the quiet for a moment or two. And then from far away we hear a beautiful voice.)

HEINZ

Listen to the wind. There's music in it. Can you hear it?

(The children listen carefully. They hear it! SANNE mimes the singing and with a dancer's flair, she motions for the sailors to come to her. It's haunting, exquisite and welcoming.)

HEINZ (cont'd)

They're here! How I wish you could also hear them.

(The VOICE is closer. You could use "Die Lorelei.")

SANNE

Come to me, sailors. Follow me into the sea. I have such secrets that mankind will never know. But I will tell them to you.

HEINZ

I must stay the course.

SANNE

Don't you want to know more? Experience more?

HERMAN

I do!

SANNE

Then come closer.

(HERMAN mimes jumping in. He flails about and slowly drowns. He is not a bad actor. It may go on a bit. The singing continues.)

HEINZ

Eva! Untie me. I need to get closer to them. **EVA!**

(EVA stays her course and shakes her head "no." They are playacting and this is playful. We get to see EVA'S stubbornness.)

SANNE

Throw off that human coil. Break away from its chains. I will tell you the future. You can hold everyone's future in your hands. You will know all.

HEINZ

EVA! Unchain me now! That's an order from your captain.

EVA

I *am* following orders from my captain. And my captain said I should ignore my captain. So there!

SANNE

You are strong enough to get loose. Join me. You will know goodness for all of eternity.

HEINZ

Eva? **EVA!**

EVA

Is someone calling me?

HEINZ

Look at me. **EVA!** Read my lips. Remember when I told you to not listen to me? I was wrong. These sirens mean us no harm. Let me go.

EVA

(Beat.) No.

HEINZ

They will show me wonders and in turn, I will give them to you. A life of hope. Wouldn't you like that?

EVA

(Beat.) Yes. But no.

HEINZ

Eva!

SANNE

This is your last chance. To live forever.

HEINZ

Free me now!

EVA

No.

(The singing is heard. HEINZ tries to break free. The music swells and abruptly changes into the sounds of war planes. They increase and are gone. Maybe Gestapo sirens. All "play" stops. EVA immediately goes to protect Heinz.)

EVA

Heinz!

HEINZ

The Germans are here.

(HEINZ envelops EVA in a hug. SANNE and HERMAN move closer together. The sounds are further and further away. HEINZ is shaken but tries to comfort his friends.)

HEINZ

Ahoy, my brave mates, Let's sail home. Where shall we sail to next week?

SANNE

England!

HERMAN

America!

EVA

(Holds out her hand to him.) Anywhere. I'll follow you anywhere.

Projection of sailboat out.

(The lights fade to black. After blackout, the sounds die down.)

SCENE THREE

An "Official" enters and reads the "laws Against the Jews. Alternately, you could use two officials reading every other order.)

OFFICIAL

1. Jews are banned from recreational facilities: hotels, restaurants, movies, ice cream shops.
 2. Jews are banned from management. They may no longer hold jobs that work with the public.
 3. Jews may not own radios. All radios are to be confiscated.
 4. Jews may not own bicycles. All bicycles are to be confiscated.
 5. Jews may not attend public schools.
 6. Jews must wear the Star of David on their clothing at all times. Failure to do so will result in arrest.
 7. Jews must adhere to a strict curfew. They may not be outside from 8 p.m. till 6 a.m.
 8. Jews cannot be citizens of the Reich. They have no right to vote and cannot hold public office.
 9. Jews cannot use public transportation.
 10. Jews may not use air raid shelters.
- Jews cannot ... Jews may not ... cannot ... may not.

The lights come up on the Geiringer's Apartment. It is late October, 1940. The Germans have been occupying The Netherlands for a few months. (HEINZ enters – in hiding.)

HEINZ

More months passed. Pappy kept assuring me the war would be over soon and I continued to paint hope. I thought of my little cousin Tom who was safe in England. Tom was an innocent. I imagined him playing with toy trains. A train ride used to be an adventure. Now, it meant something far more menacing.

(EVA enters with vegetables and chocolates.)

HEINZ (cont'd)

At the beginning of the Nazi invasion, life was bearable. We played, we flirted – or rather I flirted. Friendships with girls was new to me and I welcomed it. Even Herman caught the bug and brought Eva flowers. Eva was so stunned, she ran away and hid in her bedroom until he left! We were just kids figuring out life.

MEMORY: The Unbroken Chain

In memory, We see EVA seated, stuffing her face with chocolates. She is rewrapping a fancy chocolate box where she has replaced all the chocolates with carrots and turnips. She is quite pleased with herself.

EVA

Heinz! HEINZ! I am going to Sanne's. I'll be right back.

(EVA exits with chocolate box. Music stops and HEINZ enters. HEINZ settles into a chair reading. MUTTI and PAPPY enter.)

HEINZ

You're home early.

PAPPY

We were looking for supplies for our moccasin business.

MUTTI

But everything is in short supply. Where's Eva?

HEINZ

I don't know.

MUTTI

Probably outside playing. I'll get the tea on.

HEINZ

We'll be fine, right Pappy? Your business will still work.

PAPPY

Don't worry. I'll take care of everything.

(MUTTI and PAPPY prepare for tea. HEINZ goes back to reading. EVA enters.)

MUTTI

We thought you'd be playing until dinner.

EVA

There's no one to play with. Everyone's at Sanne's birthday party. (Beat.) Except me.

(EVA approaches HEINZ. MUTTI and PAPPY are in the background with their tea.)

EVA

Heinz! You'll never guess what I just did. It was terribly naughty. You know how I wasn't invited to Sanne's birthday party? Well – guess what I did. I bought the prettiest box of chocolates I could find. I unwrapped all of them and ate every single one. They were soooo good. I should have saved you one - but I didn't. Then I worked very hard and cut a carrot and a turnip into the *exact* same-size squares that the chocolates were. And then I carefully rewrapped them to look like the original chocolates. Then, I put the fake chocolates back into the box, retied the bow and presented them to Sanne at her birthday party! I wish I could see her face when she opens them. I probably shouldn't have done that. But she deserved it. Don't you think so?

HEINZ

That's nice.

(EVA punches HEINZ.)

HEINZ (cont'd)

Eva!

EVA

Heinz! You're not listening to me!

HEINZ

I'm reading!

EVA

I'm talking to you!

HEINZ

You're always talking.

EVA

You're always reading!

(HEINZ is still ignoring EVA. She punches him again. HEINZ is not amused.)

HEINZ

Don't punch me! (Beat.) Things are serious. Look at Mutti and Pappy. They're worried. Pappy's trying to start a business at home but times are getting tough again. Like they were in Vienna.

EVA

Do you think Pappy will have to leave the country again to find a job?

HEINZ

Pappy will do whatever he can to support us. And keep us safe. But it's getting harder.

EVA

What if we don't see him for a year? What if he goes so far away that we never see him?

HEINZ

(Beat.) I don't know.

(Pause as EVA absorbs this answer.)

EVA

That's the first time you've ever said, "I don't know" to me.

HEINZ

I wish I had an answer. I don't know if Pappy can keep us safe anymore. First there were the new laws. Then we had to go to separate schools. And now we watch as Jews are arrested for what? For being Jewish. Nobody knows where they go. They just - disappear. (Beat.) I'm scared, Evi. I hear things. Bad things. You know how I always worried about my good eye going bad and being blind? Now, I worry about dying.

(Beat as HEINZ says this really to himself.)

What happens? Is it – just nothing forever?

PROJECTION 6: Heinz's drawing of Pappy

(EVA is stunned for a moment. SHE hugs HEINZ. HEINZ goes to PAPPY and EVA follows. They just stand there and stare at their parents. PAPPY and MUTTI look at them. HEINZ blurts out his fears.)

HEINZ

What happens to us when we die?

MUTTI

Oh, Heinz. You're not going/

PAPPY

/let me talk to them, Fritzi.

PAPPY

Where did that thought come from?

HEINZ

The Nazis – I remember Vienna and then I look around here and they're everywhere.

PAPPY

Heinz, understand that we are part of a long chain of people. You and I are each one of the links. So are Mutti and Eva. We are all links. Each and every link is important. And someday, when you have children, you will live through them.

HEINZ

But what if I don't have any children?

PAPPY

I promise you this: everything you do leaves something behind. Every time you help us, you leave something good behind. And that good stays. All the good you have already done stays forever – never to be forgotten. Everything is connected like a chain that will never be broken.

HEINZ

But I haven't done anything yet to create a chain. I need more time to create these links.

PAPPY

You have your whole life ahead of you.

HEINZ

Do I Pappy?

MUTTI

We need some music. That always calms us. I'll get the gramophone.

HEINZ

No – let *me* play the music. I need to *do* something. Create something. Now.

Projection of Pappy out.

(HEINZ rushes into the other room. Music is heard. The family gathers close and listens as the lights fade to black.)

SCENE FOUR

AT RISE we are back in 1945 in the apartment in Amsterdam. EVA finds a poem. HEINZ is off to the side.

PROJECTION 7: Drawing of Eva Reading

EVA

He drew me. (Beat.) I almost look pretty. Even studios!

MUTTI

You are beautiful, Eviitje. As for studios? (Beat.) Maybe sometimes.

EVA

Those days in Amsterdam when the four of us were together were the most wonderful years of my life. Even when we had curfew and couldn't go anywhere in the evenings, I loved it. Because we were together. If only Hein wasn't called up...

(The lights change. It is July 1942. HEINZ has a letter that he gives to PAPPY. HEINZ is putting on the bravest face possible.)

MEMORY: The Nazis call.

HEINZ

Everyone turning sixteen got one. Herman did. Even Margot. I think it will be fine, don't you? I'll work hard. You know I can do that. And when the war is over, I'll be back here and things will go back to normal.

(EVA and MUTTI enter and MUTTI sees they are upset.)

MUTTI

What?

PAPPY

Heinz got called up. He's to report for work duty on Monday. He's to pack a bag and get ready to go to Germany.

(EVA runs and wraps her arms around HEINZ.)

EVA

No! I won't let them take him.

HEINZ

There isn't a choice. Don't worry, Mutti. The war will end soon.

PAPPY

This is true. With the Americans in it, it can't be much longer. A month or two at best.

MUTTI

Erich! You can't think/

PAPPY

/No! He's not going.

HEINZ

They'll arrest me!

PAPPY

You're not going. (Beat.) I had hoped for more time. Another month to make arrangements. But the time is now – we must disappear.

(Lights fade to black on a stunned family.)

SCENE 5

HEINZ enters from hiding.

HEINZ

In July 1942, just before my sixteenth birthday, we separated. It seemed that we left everything – everything that defined us as a family. I tried to think that what was left were just “things. However, it was our lives that were important. I wanted an invention that would let us all live forever. It was “life” that I yearned for.

MEMORY: Separating

At rise, belongings are packed up or stacked at one end. It is July 1942. MUTTI is serving tea. HEINZ enters weighed down with many books.

EVA

It all looks so empty. As if nobody ever lived here.

MUTTI

Things come and go. We'll be back to brighten it up again.

PAPPY

Heinz! You'll break your back.

HEINZ

I need each one of these if I am to keep up with my studies. Geography, biology, French, World History, German, Italian/

EVA

/We don't need to learn Italian! We know enough languages!

HEINZ

But there are a few books I want to read and they were written in Italian. Everyone knows translations are not as good as the original. Why don't you try to learn Italian?

EVA

I'd rather practice walking on my hands!

PAPPY

We cannot carry all those books. We have enough to carry. We must look like we are visiting a relative. We cannot be seen carrying so many things. People will get suspicious.

EVA

I gave up my Monopoly game!

HEINZ

I gave up my guitar!

MUTTI

Look at it this way; we are each giving up things we love in order to save what's truly important to us – each other. We can get things back later. First, we save ourselves.

HEINZ

Sorry, Mutti. I was being selfish.

EVA

Me, too. I'd rather be with all of you instead of being surrounded by stuff.

PAPPY

Pick three books. (Beat.) We'll try to get the Jansens to bring some more over later.

MUTTI

Sit. This is our last tea together for a few months.

EVA

Months!

PAPPY

Two at most. We won't be in hiding that long.

EVA

Two whole months!

HEINZ

Just think – in two months we will be able to go to the cinema again.

EVA

Now, *that's* fun.

PAPPY

Tell me what you will take to think about while we are in hiding. Instead of taking things, we will take memories. What will you remember about our time in this flat?

EVA

Heinz's music!

HEINZ

Evi dancing.

PAPPY

I will remember all the fine meals your mother cooked and how she never cooked a thing until she came to Amsterdam.

MUTTI

I was spoiled – but I didn't too badly, did I? And I will remember my remarkable husband who was banned from working and so created his own business from home. (To PAPPY.) Nothing stops you. You are still as wonderful as the day I met you.

(A very quiet beat.)

PAPPY

It's time to separate. People are waiting for us. Good people.

EVA

Why can't we be in hiding together?

MUTTI

It's – dangerous. And hard for one family to hide four people.

EVA

What did we do to deserve this?

PAPPY

Nothing. You did nothing wrong. For now and in the future, know that you are all innocents caught up in madness. I won't let them find us. We have a better chance of surviving if we separate.

HEINZ

Surviving? Does that mean there's a chance one of us might die?

MUTTI

It means – it's safer to hide separately. It's time. MRS. VITNER is expecting us.

(There are long hugs. Finally, PAPPY and HEINZ put on a coat and pick up some tiny belongings and exit. AFTER they leave, MUTTI and EVA do the same. The lights fade.)

SCENE 6 – Hiding

AT RISE, the stage is split into two hiding places. MUTTI and EVA are on one side. MUTTI is piling up books for EVA.

In PAPPY'S and HEINZ'S hiding place, there's a small, unseen painting on a desk or a floor. PAPPY is putting the finishing touches on a painting. Again, it is on a small desk or table.

MUTTI

Come on! Mathematics and Literature are waiting.

EVA

I wish I were in school. At least there was recess!

MUTTI

Shh! Quiet time has begun.

(Very quietly, we see MUTTI show EVA the pages she needs to read. Then, MUTTI takes out a paper with a list of questions and gives them to EVA. EVA goes to work. MUTTI opens a book.

On the other side of the stage, PAPPY stands quietly, checking his painting. HEINZ moves away from where he is studying and goes to his painting. He puts some finishing touches on it.

EVA cannot sit still. She soon loops her legs around the chair. She reads. She changes position. Soon she is upside down reading. MUTTI is amused but tries to put her best "scolding face" on and gets EVA to sit up straight. EVA does and then goes into an impossible slump. MUTTI stands to admonish her and the doorbell rings. EVA and MUTTI freeze.

The doorbell rings again. EVA and MUTTI aren't breathing. We hear someone leave. MUTTI and EVA breathe. MUTTI and EVA try to go back to reading. EVA lays her head down on the desk.

On the other side of the stage, PAPPY gestures to HEINZ who quietly comes over. PAPPY shows HEINZ his painting.

PROJECTION 8: PAPPY'S (ERICH'S) painting of MUTTI (FRITZI).

HEINZ stares at it and shows PAPPY his painting. (It is also of MUTTI.)

PROJECTION 9: HEINZ'S painting of MUTTI.

(If possible, have them side-by-side.)

HEINZ (As loudly and quietly as he dares.)

I miss them so much.

(HEINZ sits. PAPPY comes and over wraps his arms around him. They freeze.

Then, MUTTI approaches EVA who still has her head down. MUTTI goes to hold her and EVA lets her defenses down and grabs her mother as if it will save her life.

ALL are frozen for a moment as the lights slowly fade to black. **PROJECTIONS** out.)

SCENE 7

HEINZ enters from hiding.

PROJECTION 10: HEINZ reading by fireplace.

HEINZ

For months, I pored over the one art book that Pappy managed to get me. Rembrandt faced the darkness. Monet bathed his paintings in light. Van Gogh was all emotion. I started to paint to please myself. I stopped trying to paint correctly. Correctness was for mathematics.

MEMORY: Visiting Heinz and Erich

AT RISE we are in an attic – one of HEINZ’S and PAPPY’S hiding places. It is December 1942. The GEIRINGER’S have been separated and in hiding for six months. PAPPY is tidying up the small attic space. He finds a pillow and looks at it.

PAPPY

Heinz! *HEINZ!* Where is my last pillowcase?

HEINZ

I – used it. For the still life. You don’t need a pillowcase. You still have the pillow.

PAPPY

I like pillowcases on my pillows. It is one of the few niceties left to me in hiding.

HEINZ

Sorry, Pappy. I am trying to learn how to practice light and dark with my painting. Like Rembrandt.

PAPPY

Well Rembrandt, please stick to practicing your art on tea towels. And stay away from our sheets!

HEINZ

The paintings are my lifeline.

PAPPY

And the paintings are good. I couldn’t be prouder of how you have handled all of this the last six months. (Beat.) How does everything look?

HEINZ

Almost like a home.

(A noise is heard in the hallway and then there is a knock at the door.)

MUTTI’S VOICE

Erich? Heinz?

(PAPPY opens the door. EVA just about falls in. MUTTI runs to PAPPY. She is wearing some sort of elegant coat – very likely a fur coat. The trip was frightening and EVA can finally give in to her emotion. There are endearments and hugs and kisses that go on just a bit longer than would be

normal in other circumstances. MRS. JANSEN is at the door – watching. She wears a worn coat.)

PAPPY

Thank-you, Mrs. Jansen. We are very appreciative.

(MRS. JANSEN nods and just stands there. There is an awkward moment.)

MUTTI

I'm sorry, is there something we can do for you?

MRS. JANSEN

I was admiring your coat.

MUTTI

It is lovely, isn't it? One of the few things I have left from our life in Vienna.

MRS. JANSEN

You don't need it. You barely go outside.

MUTTI

True. But I am hopeful when the war ends, it will be put to good use again.

MRS. JANSEN

You don't need it.

(MUTTI realizes what is happening and takes off her coat and hands it to MRS. JANSEN. In turn, she gives MUTTI her coat. MRS. JANSEN nods and exits. The family just looks at each other noting what has passed and then relieved to be alone together again. Hugs again between brother and sister, MUTTI and PAPPY.)

PAPPY

Fritzi, I'm so sorry.

MUTTI

It's a small price to pay to be able to spend some time with you. Six long months!

PAPPY

So, should we play catch-up with each other? Heinz, show Eva what you have been doing. Mutti and I ... will be right back.

(MUTTI and PAPPY exit to another room.)

EVA

They're going to start kissing.

HEINZ

Probably. Come here. I have something to show you.

(HEINZ goes to a desk or a table and shows EVA a painting.)

**PROJECTION 10 turns to PROJECTION 11:
Painting of Discarded Items**

EVA

It's looks like a collection...of old stuff.

HEINZ

Of things lost or discarded. (Beat.) Like us.

EVA

This reminds me of your music. As if the colors were different notes. And those shadows... sad and spooky like that one Chopin you always played. I don't understand how you manage to do all of this. I can barely keep up with my studies.

HEINZ

Painting helps me. When I am frightened, I paint my fears so that I can look them in the face. And other times, I paint happy memories of our old life. It helps to remember that those times will come back. Maybe hiding is a gift. If I was at a labor camp, I would not be allowed to do anything but work. But here – I have the time to learn new languages, paint, write poetry...what do you think? I just wrote this.

HEINZ

I walked slowly through the streets
Thinking by the waterfront.
And the waters softly spoke to me
And swirled around my heart.

Looking at the sleeping city,
My mind flew to old desires,
To a path that now is gone.

This life that once brought joy,
This life that once I led,
When all was good, when all was fine,
Oh I am remembering
How that was a time.

EVA

It was a wonderful time.

**PROJECTION of Discarded Items out.
Lights fade to black.**

SCENE 8

(HEINZ enters in hiding.)

HEINZ

We were in hiding for two years. We moved seven times. We would hear people getting dragged into the streets and hauled away. The pressure for our hosts would build until finally they would say, "I am sorry. But can you find a new place to live?" Each time we left a lot of our belongings. But we always carefully rolled up the paintings and my book of poetry and moved them to our new hiding place. It was our record of our time in the shadows. It defined us.

MEMORY: Last day in hiding

Lights up on MUTTI and EVA in the present in their apartment. EVA uncovers another painting.

PROJECTION 12: Young man studying.

MUTTI

He painted himself studying. Look at the calendar date on the wall.

EVA

May 11. My birthday! I remember him saying he considered that his lucky day.

MUTTI

Heinz's birthday on July 12 and yours on May 11 will always be my lucky days.

EVA

May 11 will never be lucky again. It was on my birthday/

(The lights dim and change. We are in EVA'S and MUTTI'S place of hiding. Music underscores as MUTTI sets a table for breakfast. There are tulips and a gaily-wrapped present. As the lights return to full, EVA enters. It is May 11, 1944.)

Memory: Betrayal

MUTTI

Happy Birthday, Evertje. Fifteen! Why, you are now a grown-up!

EVA

I feel like a little kid.

MUTTI

That's about right. Fifteen is part adult and part child. I first met your father when I was fifteen...

EVA

You know what would make today perfect? If Pappy and Heinz were here. This will be the year. Right, Mutti? Pappy said that this will be the year that peace will come.

MUTTI

Yes, this will be the year.

EVA

And then I will do handstands and dance and Heinz will play his music and Pappy will play the gramophone and it'll be the four of us again. Just the way it should be.

(EVA hums the Sleeping Beauty Waltz to herself and dances a few steps. It's delicate. It's private. Abruptly, we hear some very hard knocking.)

OFFSTAGE MALE VOICE (or VOICES)

Juden! Juden! We know there are filthy Jews living here!