

Under Spacious Skies
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Based on historical events.

The Playwright offers thanks for inspiration to:
The Scattergoods Hostel run by the Quakers in Iowa.
Historian, Dr. Michael Luick-Thrams

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“Whoever saves one life saves the entire world.” From the Talmud (paraphrased)

RUNNING TIME: 90 minutes approximate

SYNOPSIS: In a small town in Iowa, a Quaker-run hostel provided a safe haven for those escaping the brutal Nazi regime. Sixteen-year-old Lotte has been on the run with her family for three years. She wants to be American – and not Jewish. Her parents never practiced their faith so why should she bother? Her younger brother Hans harbors a protected object he found in a burned-out synagogue after Kristallnacht. A young Iowa citizen hides a secret from her past and things blow up when an antisemitic dissident shows up at the hostel. Families struggle with learning new skills as the refugee children struggle with Americans taunting them as "German spies." But small bridges were formed, holidays were cherished and families come together to try in fit into the great experiment known as "America."

The play was designed for high schools/universities and as such fourteen of the eighteen characters are teens to age twenty-one. Four of the characters are mid-late thirties.

*CAST: 18 (7 female, 6 male; 5 any gender)

*Aside from those listed, other genders can be changed if it fits your needs; ages are approximate

Scattergood Volunteers: (All either grew up on a farm or are college students)

HENRY (male) 21; practical, knows all or everyone thinks he does; the “soul” of the hostel

ROSE (female) 18; idealistic if naïve, the “heart” of the hostel

PENELOPE (female) 17; the youngest volunteer

ABE/ABETHA (any gender) 19; Can do it all – plant the corn, play guitar, good listener

Refugee Families

LEVI ROSENBERG (male) late 30's; former judge; from Berlin; proper, not religious

RACHEL ROSENBERG (female) Mid-thirties; Levi's wife; linguist from Berlin; a bit buttoned-up and keeps to herself; ambiguous as to her faith

LOTTE ROSENBERG (female) age 16; refugee; daughter of Levi and Rachel, embraces America but not her faith

HANS/HANNAH ROSENBERG (any gender) age 12; a combination of being cautious and curious

HELEN GRUNGERG (female) 33; Jewish refugee from Vienna, easygoing, earthy

JOSEF GRUNBERG (male) 35; Jewish refugee from Vienna, husband to Helen, former judge, warm, gregarious

MARIANNA (female) 15; Jewish, daughter of Helen and Josef; easygoing

SUZANNE/ZANNER (any gender) 13; Jewish, daughter of Helen and Josef; accepting

MIKLOS LEDER (male) 21; Jewish refugee from the Netherlands; engineer, misses homeland; would like to go back and be part of the resistance

VERA LEDER (female) 21; MIKLOS'S wife; Jewish refugee from the Netherlands; teacher, embraces America; determined

LORENZO CASTILLE (male) 21; Italian political dissident; antisemitic

Townspeople

GLORIA FRIEBURG (female) 19; well-meaning woman but is a bit of a busybody

HALLIE/HAL GILBERT (any gender) 18; new townsperson with a secret

BUD CARLETON (male) 15-17; curious teen – likes Lotte

COSTUMES: They are on a working farm in 1943. Cuffed jeans, long-sleeve flannel shirts, simple housedresses are all appropriate. Today's wardrobe can easily adapt to those times and second-hand shops can supply you with pieces at a low cost. Photos of the people at Scattergoods can be found on my website.

TIME: August 1942 – March 1943

SETTING: The Scattergood Hostel and outside grounds in West Branch, Iowa

NOTES ON MUSIC: It was common for the guests and volunteers to gather after dinner. Sometimes they discussed current events and many were fond of performing. There was singing, skits, scenes from Shakespeare, poetry readings, etc. You are welcome to replace the music with your own choosing in public domain or write your own skits finding the humor in back-breaking farm life (they did) or do some abbreviated works of Shakespeare and/or poetry. If you choose Shakespeare, it is wise to choose selections that the volunteers and the refugees/guests can relate to in their own situation. No substitutions should last longer than one page.

“Hava Nagila Hava” must stay. If you do not have anyone to play the guitar, the song is easily sung acapella. Words and music are provided at the end. The dance is simple and a video tutorial is shown at the end. It is a joyous song. Suggestions for all the music will be given at the end of the play in the “Notes” section.

Under Spacious Skies

Prologue

(Lights up on the porch of the Scattergood Hostel. HENRY has just finished locking up. ROSE is with him. It is March 1943.)

ROSE

Did you even mention/

HENRY

Yes, yes, and yes.

ROSE

Let me finish.

HENRY

It's over. Our borders have been closed since the Pearl Harbor attack. There are no more refugees to help. Nobody can get out of Europe and even if they could, they couldn't get into America. This is war.

ROSE

Will said there were 200,000 thousand visas filed and all were in proper order.

HENRY

Out of those, only 20,000 were accepted. And that was over a year ago. The government is afraid of letting spies into the country.

ROSE

What about the children? They're innocents. You've heard the stories from Europe. Why aren't we taking the children?

HENRY

The usual – they'll be a drain on the system, we don't have the means, we don't have the funds/

ROSE

/We have the means!

HENRY

Rose – listen to me – it's over.

ROSE

There is still a need for proper homes for people. They already can farm/

HENRY

/Don't you think I talked about the current needs? I've talked myself silly for three days. The answer is "no." The people of West Branch said "no." We have to respect that.

ROSE

They were ready to help the two hundred people who already passed through here.

HENRY

Rose...

ROSE

We had four years of successfully helping families.

HENRY

Dear Rosie-with-her-rose-colored-glasses - it wasn't all sunshine and sugar.

ROSE

Mostly.

HENRY

Yes. More than mostly. I'll grant you that. Let's finish locking up.

ROSE

- In a few minutes. I'd like one more look around. I'm going to miss this place.

HENRY

It was a time. A very good time.

(ROSE and HENRY exit as the lights fade to black.)

SCENE 1

(In black or dim light we hear an adult or children's choir sung acapella by cast members. It is 1942.)

CHOIR

Oh beautiful for spacious skies
 For amber waves of grain.
 For purple mountain's majesty
 Above the fruited plain.
 America! America!
 God shed his grace on thee.
 And crown thy good with brotherhood
 From sea to shining sea.

(Music continues under dialogue. RACHEL, LOTTE, and HANS are seen with a suitcase.)

HANS *(maybe with a German accent)*

What is “Iowa?”

RACHEL

It’s a state in America. It’s just like in Germany and Austria where there are states. But in America there are forty-eight states.

HANS

Forty-eight! America must be very big.

RACHEL

It is. It will take us a few days to reach Iowa.

LOTTE

What does Iowa look like?

RACHEL

I am told it is all farms. And we will be growing our own food. Won’t that be fun?

HANS

Will we be “peasants?”

RACHEL

We will be important workers.

CHOIR

America! America!
God shed his grace on thee.
And crown thy good with brotherhood
From sea to shining sea.

SCENE 2

(Lights up on the porch and grounds of the Scattergood Hostel. There is a bench with a colorful quilt prominently displayed. Maybe one table with some makeshift chairs. The quilt will be there until it is – not. Also, a guitar leans against the bench. There can be other seating areas or simply the steps to the porch. PENELOPE, HELEN, JOSEF, SUZANNE, and MARIANNA are shelling peas.

LEVI, RACHEL, LOTTE, and HANS approach with ROSE. They carry suitcases and are just moving in to Scattergoods. PENELOPE wears a charming, frilly apron.)

ROSE

Good afternoon, all. We have some new guests: Levi Rosenberg, his wife Rachel and their children Lotte and Hans.

JOSEF

Willkommen! Welcome to the land where we scatter goodness! And beans! It's" bean season." It's a pleasure to meet you. I am Josef and this is my wife Helen and my daughters: Suzanne and Marianna. We have been here for two months.

LEVI

Your English is very good.

JOSEF

As is yours.

LEVI

My wife taught English and French in Berlin. It turns out to have been fortunate for all of us.

(Beat as LEVI watches JOSEF shell peas.)

It's kind of you to help with the women's work.

JOSEF

Ha! It's my work for the week. And I am getting good at it. The important part is that little string attached to the beans. Watch! You never know what a little string can do.

(And he demonstrates.)

LEVI

Very good. Everyone is learning. So it is a good day.

HELEN

Indeed. We just need to put Josef into a charming, frilly apron like the one Penelope wears.

JOSEF

That would not be a good idea. I would be – what is the word? Not resistible – in that apron.

ROSE

Irresistible?

JOSEF

Really? That's a word? But true that I would be too much the same as your Cary Grant, don't you think?

PENELOPE

I agree.

HELEN

I also agree. But I have to. I am his wife.

LEVI

I intend to find work that suits me.

RACHEL

In Berlin, my husband was a judge.

JOSEF

And I was a lawyer in Vienna. Those were the days. One evening we should have a discussion about what happens when the law is no longer the law.

LEVI

I have some theories/

ROSE

/And we shall listen to them later. For now, let's get all of you settled. You must be tired. Let me show you to your rooms.

RACHEL

Thank-you. Is there someone here to polish our shoes? They are worn from the journey.

ROSE

I'm afraid not We tend to let those things go. The shoes just get caked with mud.

LEVI

I do like a sheen on my shoes.

RACHEL

If you could spare olive oil.

ROSE

I'll check in the kitchen. We use everything sparingly.

PENELOPE

Banana peels work. That's what my Granny always said.

SUZANNE

But then you'd smell like a banana.

ROSE

Bananas are hard to come by in Iowa. Come. We'll figure something out. I heard vinegar can be helpful.

(ROSE leads the ROSENBERGS off. HANS lingers.)

SUZANNE

Would you like to try shelling one?

HANS

I'm like my parents. I don't do kitchen work.

(HANS exits.)

MARIANNA

He does have the air of ... how do you say ... floating above us all?

PENELOPE

I think you're looking for "uppity." Yes, "uppity would be correct.

MARIANNA

(Taking out a notebook.)
Spell?

PENELOPE

U-P-P-I-T-Y.

MARIANNA

Uppity. I like that word. Do Americans have "uppity" people?

PENELOPE

Indeed we do.

(And right on cue, GLORIA approaches.)

GLORIA

Good afternoon, all. Hard at work I see. Very good. Very good indeed. Is Abe around? I have a proposition for him. Oh goodness. That doesn't sound right. A plan. Or rather – a proposal.

SUZANNE

Do you find English hard as we do?

GLORIA

Honey, everyone finds English hard.

PENELOPE

Abe's out in the fields. He should be coming for lunch soon. Would you care to wait?

GLORIA

Oh. I'm busy, busy. We're canning peaches. I just thought I'd walk over and have a look around.

PENELOPE

And talk to Abe.

GLORIA

Right! That's why I am here. Well, ta ta, lovely foreigners/

PENELOPE

/guests.

GLORIA

Yes. Have fun with those peas.

(GLORIA exits.)

PENELOPE

She's a nosy little gossip. Oh my. You did not hear me say that.

HELEN

It's nothing new for us. We have those in Vienna, too.

PENELOPE

She means well. I think.

HELEN

Don't they all? This looks good. Let's get them in the kitchen.

(Lights fade to black as everyone exits - with the beans!.)

SCENE 3

(It is evening after dinner. All the guests are gathered outside. (LEVI, RACHEL, LOTTE, HANS, JOSEF, HELEN, MARIANNA, SUZANNE, as well as MIKLOS and VERA., The volunteers – ABE, HENRY, ROSE and PENELOPE are with them.

Abe has a guitar. ABE may strum during dialogue – or tune the strings.)

ROSE

My favorite part of the day. The sun is just starting to rest, the work is done and we gather in friendship.

HENRY

I would have thought everyone would be too tired to be awake tonight. It was a hard day and more to come tomorrow. The corn doesn't pick itself. The deer are already having a feast day.

MIKLOS

We gather because our rooms are too hot.

PENELOPE

Enjoy the warmth. The cold comes soon enough.

MIKLOS

Don't mind me. I like to kvetch.

PENELOPE

Kvetch?

ROSE

I know that word! Complain!

HENRY

So, they are learning English and we are learning – German?

VERA

Yiddish. Something many Jews have in common. Interestingly, it was originally a German dialect that developed into a language by the Jews.

HELEN

We certainly all know “Oy vey!

PENELOPE

I like the sound of it.

JOSEF

It means “woe is me.” Some of us have been saying that a lot lately.

LOTTE

Father says it a lot.

LEVI

I only said that on our walk to Marseilles.

PENELOPE

I'd love to see Marseilles.

HANS

It was dirty – kind of like this porch.

RACHEL

Hans!

ROSE

The porch will be clean soon enough. Rain is coming.

LOTTE

But it's sunny out.

ROSE

It's in the air. I can smell it.

HENRY

Smelling the rain – it's an Iowa thing.

MIKLOS

Maybe the heat will break.

ABE

A song? To stop all this “ka-vetch-ing.”

ABE (or another volunteer.)

Sing low, sweet chariot.
Coming for to carry me home
Swing low, sweet chariot
Coming for to carry me home.

(And at different intervals, the American volunteers join in the singing.)

ABE and VOLUNTEERS

I looked over Jordan and what did I see
Coming for to carry me home
A band of angels coming after me
Coming for to carry me home.

Swing low, sweet chariot
Coming for to carry me home
Swing low, sweet chariot
Coming for to carry me home.*

**Music easily found on internet. In public domain. A recording can be found here:
<https://www.loc.gov/item/jukebox-128141/> “Home Sweet Home” is another possibility. A
possibility for recitation is W.B. Yeats “The Lake Isle of Innisfree.”*

HELEN

Many times I hear the word “home.” Is it about going home?

ABE

Some say it's about going to freedom.

ROSE

Other people think it's about dying and going to heaven.

PENELOPE

That's the cheery version.

MARIANNA

Cheery?

PENELOPE

Upbeat? Happy?

HANS

Dying is happy?

PENELOPE

No but people think going to heaven is "happy."

ROSE

Not exactly "happy" – but – what's a better word?

PENELOPE

Carefree?

ABE

Fortunate?

HENRY

Joyful. Probably in this context – joyful.

JOSEF

All those words for "happy?"

PENELOPE

Yes but – with different nuances.

SUZANNE

New-on-sis?

PENELOPE

Meanings.

JOSEF

I may never get correct English.

ROSE

Give it time. Your English is already better than my German.

SUZANNE

You speak German?

ROSE

No.

HELEN

English is a problem language. This hostel is called “Scattergoods.” But when I asked the librarian in town what it meant – she said it was a “wasteful person.” So I have been wondering why you named a hostel in honor of waste. It seems like you are saying this experiment here is a waste of time.

ROSE

Oh no! Please don’t think that. We think of this place as “scattering goodness” around.

HELEN

So maybe you should have called this home “Scattering Goodness.”

ABE

You have to hand it to Helen – you have an Austrian correcting your English.

ROSE

Maybe I shouldn’t have tried so hard to be creative.

(Church bells ring. Yabe it is the Westminster chimes.)

HENRY

The bells are reminding us that the day is done. Rose is right about one thing. The clouds are moving in. We better go in before the rain starts unless you all want a late-night bath.

ROSE

The fields will be muddy tomorrow. Wear your overalls. (Denim.)

LEVI

I don’t have any.

ROSE

Don’t worry. You won’t need them yet. We have you slated or the kitchen tomorrow. Bertie needs help.

LEVI
Kitchen?

ROSE
Cooking.

LEVI
I don't cook.

ROSE
You will tomorrow. You and Hans together.

(HANS reacts.)

LEVI
I think my wife would be better suited in the kitchen.

RACHEL
I do not think so. I do not cook. We had someone cook for us. Remember?

ROSE
I have something very special planned for Rachel.

PENELOPE
With the early light, our morning meetings will be at 6 a.m. You may come for fellowship and just quietly meditate – or sleep in for the extra half hour. It's not required. Lotte and Marianna, I will see you just after sunrise.

LOTTE
I'll be ready.

(ABE may strum the guitar to get things moving and all move inside chattering away. MIKLOS and VERA remain. MIKLOS strums a little bit on ABE'S guitar.)

ABE
You play?

MIKLOS
Not this instrument. The hammered dulcimer – I was in a Klezmer band in Amsterdam. But I think I could pick it up. It's pretty American, right?

ABE
It's for everyone.

VERA
I always thought he could be a professional musician but he was insistent on being an engineer.

MIKLOS

It's a better living.

(MIKLOS strums the guitar.)

MIKLOS (cont'd)

I like the sound of this. It reminds me of home. Sometimes we'd listen to water lapping against the canal walls and play our instruments to the beat of that sound.

ABE

Let me show you some easy chords.

(ABE is showing MIKLOS chords as VERA listens and the lights fade to black.)

SCENE 4

(In front of the porch of the Scattergoods Hostel. PENELOPE is waiting – she has some large baskets and hats. LOTTE enters – freshly bathed, well-dressed and ready for the day. It is the next morning of a warm mid-August day.)

LOTTE

Good morning!

PENELOPE

Oh my. Don't you look lovely. Are you sure you don't want to change?

LOTTE

Mother thought these were good gardening clothes.

PENELOPE

You look so – clean.

LOTTE

Thank-you.

PENELOPE

You understand – you're going to get muddy.

LOTTE

That's fine.

PENELOPE

Dirty, grungy, muddy. And the bugs are going to love the fresh smell of soap on you. A word of advice – the time to bathe is after you work in the fields. We're not exactly gardening. We're

PENELOPE (cont'd)

picking tomatoes in the hot morning sun. And we have to pick fast. With all this rain, the tomatoes are likely to rot or split. They don't like wet feet.

LOTTE

Tomatoes have feet?

PENELOPE

I mean – their roots. They don't like it when their roots are soaked. Then they send up too much water into the plant and it splits – or worse – rots. Heinz Ketchup will not pay for rotten tomatoes.

LOTTE

What do you do then when they are rotten?

PENELOPE

We eat them!

LOTTE

Does this Heinz place pay a lot?

PENELOPE

We get about seventy-five dollars a year. Every little bit helps. Here. Wear this. It will save you from getting sunburnt.

(LOTTE plops a makeshift hat over LOTTE'S head.)

PENELOPE (cont'd)

Very attractive.

LOTTE

Really?

PENELOPE

Would I lie?

LOTTE

I don't know. Would you?

(MARIANNA enters.)

MARIANNA

Good morning! Is it so hot already?

PENELOPE

Enjoy the heat. Winter comes soon enough. I must say, both of you speak English very well.

LOTTE

Mother taught us English and French growing up. It came in handy when we had to escape to France. And then to Casablanca. And then to Bermuda. And then to New York. And then to here.

MARIANNA

I learned in Belgium when we found out we were approved to come here. We were busy learning French and then – what do you Americans say – poof! Now we’re learning English.

PENELOPE

You two have seen a lot of the world.

LOTTE

I have run away from a lot of the world.

MARIANNA

We have that in common. After the Anschluss, Papa went straight to the AFSE office in Vienna and asked, “how do I get out of here?”

LOTTE

AFSC?

PENELOPE

American Friends Service Committee. We have offices all over trying to get vulnerable people out. I love talking to you but we should start walking. The fields are on the other side. It’s a bit of a hike.

LOTTE

You are talking to someone who walked over three hundred kilometers in less than a week to escape Paris. I am a – professional – walker.

PENELOPE

It is very pretty when the sun is shining.

LOTTE

Yes. *(Beat.)* I don’t trust pretty. Pretty can hide the ugly. The French countryside is very pretty.

MARIANNA

I’ve always wanted to go to France. But now – I don’t know.

PENELOPE

Who knows? Maybe the world will right itself again. For me, the countryside is a reminder of the good in the world – the natural beauty. The bushes hold their berries for the birds and the deer. The tall grasses give the pheasants a place to hide from predators.

LOTTE

They do make good hiding places. Especially when there are planes overhead.

MARIANNA

That must have been scary. I was always on a train. And then a boat. And then a car ride here.

PENELOPE

It's nice having guests close to my age. I like having friends.

LOTTE

Mother says that you call yourselves a group of friends. Do you think everyone is a friend?

PENELOPE

Yes.

LOTTE

Even Jewish people?

PENELOPE

Of course.

LOTTE

I thought I had friends in Berlin. Then the Nazis came – and how do you say word – what Marianna said – Poof! Like magic – no friends. One day, I went to my friend Ilse's house like I did all the time and her mother answered the door. She told me not to come anymore. I step away and hear her say, "Dirty Jew."

PENELOPE

I'm sorry. That's awful.

LOTTE

We were friends for a long time. I went to her Holy Communion. That's a Catholic celebration.

PENELOPE

Yes. Did she ever go to any of your celebrations?

LOTTE

No. Because – we didn't celebrate much. We are – Jewish but not religious. I am hoping America is kinder to us. Especially because we don't care about religion. We never went to synagogue or did any Jewish celebrations. I don't care about being Jewish.

MARIANNA

I love the celebrations. Especially Purim. You eat sweets and dress up in costumes and make a lot of noise and nobody yells at you. It's expected.

LOTTE

I'd like the sweets!

MARIANNA

I love it all.

PENELOPE

Oh dear – the sun is way up – we had better get to those tomatoes before they fall into the mud.

(LOTTE, MARIANNA, and PENELOPE exit. LEVI and HANS enter with ROSE and HENRY. LEVI and HANS are well-dressed with splotches of flour on them. ROSE has some aprons.)

LEVI

I refuse to wear that. Leave me some dignity.

HANS

They are – what do you say – silly?

ROSE

Suit yourself. But you're already getting flour all over you. I'd wear the apron.

HENRY

She's right, you know. She's always right.

LEVI

Tell me, where is Rachel?

ROSE

A church in town wanted to see if I had anyone here who could translate some German documents and of course now that Rachel's here – I have the perfect person.

LEVI

So I am in kitchen and Rachel...

HENRY

Is in my office.

LEVI

I'm in kitchen and Rachel is in office. America likes to turn things around.

ROSE

We try. We'll make bakers out of you yet.

LEVI

Ha! The only thing is good is the pounding. Hans is really good at that.

HANS

Bertie says you can get mad at dough and punch it. I like that.

ROSE

Yes, well... remember we are a non-violent people. Don't punch too hard.

HANS

It makes dough happy.

ROSE

That's one way of looking at it. Hans, you won't be relegated to the kitchen for too long. I've registered you and Lotte for school. Your English is good enough to be in a classroom. School starts in two weeks.

LEVI

It's been three years since they have been in school. Will they be behind?

ROSE

We shall see. It will be good to be with children your own age. How do you like the sound of it?

HANS

It is good and maybe not good. Good if they like me. Sometimes in Berlin, the children did not like Jews. I don't know. But I hope it's better than the kitchen.

ROSE

It will be an adventure. There's some berries and coffee and tea in the meeting room. You can take a break while your punchy dough rises.

(LEVI and HANS exit.)

ROSE (cont'd)

It's always interesting here.

GLORIA (O.S.)

Yoo hoo! Rose! Henry!

HENRY

And it's about to get more interesting.

ROSE

I think I'll check on Rachel.

(ROSE exits.)

HENRY

Rose! Don't leave!

(GLORIA enters followed by HALLIE. HENRY forces a smile.)

GLORIA

Good Morning, Henry! How are the new recruits doing?

HENRY

Our guests?

GLORIA

Yes. That's what I meant. Oh this is Hallie. Isn't that a cute name? Hallie? She's named after a city – Halle in Germany. I never knew you could name people after a city. She's just moved here from Pella. So she's new – like your ... guests.

HENRY

Pleased to meet you.

HALLIE

I'm happy to be here. I've always wanted to meet a foreigner. Especially a German one.

HENRY

Yes, well our *guests* are hard-working. They don't have much time for socializing.

HALLIE

Oh! Do they like cookies? I bake cookies. When I can find sugar. I'm making jam today.

HENRY

Oh. Very nice. I've never discussed cookies with my guests. I'll have to ask them.

HALLIE

Oh! Everyone likes cookies. Especially with jam. It's my grandmother's recipe. They're called Hamantas or something like that – they're German.

HENRY

Don't go to any trouble. I know ingredients are hard to get. Can I help you, Gloria? Unless you're also here to discuss cookies.

GLORIA

I'm here to talk business. Is Abe around?

HENRY

He's already in the fields.

GLORIA

Always working. A farmer's life is nothing but work. When can I expect him?

HENRY

Not till late. Why don't you discuss your business with me?

GLORIA

I don't know. Abe seems to be more open to my ideas.

HENRY

Try me.

GLORIA

It's about the West Branch United Methodist Church – where I am a member and the church secretary so I am an important member of the congregation. I was talking to Jacob – our custodian and he wants to retire by the end of the year so we will have a job opening and I immediately thought of your foreigners/

HENRY

Guests.

GLORIA

Yes. What do you think?

(Henry pauses a moment.)

HENRY

You think one of our guests would be a good custodian for your church.

GLORIA

Now, I didn't say that but I was hoping you would say that. You would know if there was anyone suitable for the job.

(HENRY pauses again.)

See, you always do that. Just sigh when I have an idea. That's why I wanted to talk to Abe. He always looks at things with a more positive attitude. Of course if you think being a custodian is not ... suitable .. for your "guests," just say so. I understand you have some highly educated folks here who would scoff at janitor work.

HENRY

It's not that. Last month we placed a Professor of Chemistry from the University of Munich on an assembly line in Detroit. And placed a doctor in a meatpacking plant – the irony was not lost on him. Our guests know they are starting over and that they will be working jobs here that they are overqualified for. It's just...

GLORIA

There's that sigh again.

HENRY

I am thinking of your congregation. I am not sure that all of them would welcome a Jewish worker into their fold. They won't attend the church.

GLORIA

Services are one hour a week. It won't detract from their religion if they attend.

HENRY

I think it might in fact – detract. I think it shows a lack of respect for their religion.

GLORIA

I'm just trying to help.

HENRY

And help is most appreciated. But the help needs to match the need.

GLORIA

No harm in asking. Come on Hallie, we'll come back later when Abe is around.

(HALLIE notices the quilt on the bench.)

HALLIE

That's a beautiful quilt.

HENRY

Thank-you. My mother made it.

GLORIA

She does do beautiful work. I've been trying to buy that quilt for a year.

HENRY

It's not for sale. It's a – pleasantry I keep outside for my guests. It's not just pretty – it's quit cozy when there's a chill in the air.

GLORIA

You think a lot of your guests.

HENRY

Yes, I do.

GLORIA

Time to go. We can come back when Abe's around. You'll like him. He's much more reasonable.

(HALLIE is peering around – trying to get a look at the inside. GLORIA drags her away.)

HALLIE

Bye!

(ROSE peers out.)

ROSE

Are they gone?

HENRY

Don't leave me alone with her again.

ROSE

It's good for you. You need to work on your friendship skills. Look at this. A possible new recruit just in time for hay season. It says he's been in America for eight months and speaks English.

HENRY

Eight months and nobody could place him?

ROSE

He's a loner.

HENRY

Problematical when you are asking him to live with ten other people.

ROSE

He grew up in the mountains in Italy. He can mend fences, is good with mechanics and a strong worker. We could use someone like that here. The fields are ready to be harvested.

HENRY

Lorenzo Castille. Jewish?

ROSE

No. A political refugee. I say we accept him. What can it hurt? The attic is empty. It's perfect for one person. Will says there aren't a lot of people seeking refuge these days. Hard to believe when we are in the middle of a war.

HENRY

The borders are closed. Nobody new is coming in. We'll just have to see who is left that could use help. Call Will and tell him to make arrangements. And hope that too many people aren't on the party line. We provide enough gossip for the town as it is.

(ROSE exits. LEVI enters with some bread.)

LEVI

Look at this! It's a work of art. Bertie says I am a genius with bread. Who knew?

HENRY

All right, Genius. Is there more coming? Because we will have a lot of hungry people tonight.

LEVI

Hans is just getting them out of the oven.

HENRY

And is Hans also a genius with bread?

LEVI

Let's just say, Hans is a good pounder. He pounds and I stretch and shape. We're a good team. Who knows? Maybe you'll find a good bakery who wants workers like us.

HENRY

Who knows?

(LEVI exits. HENRY settles on the bench with LORENZO'S paperwork.)

HENRY (cont'd)

Lorenzo Castille. Let's see what you can do.

(Lights fade to black.)

SCENE 5

(It is late August. Hot. ABE is teaching the Constitution. LEVI, RACHEL, HELEN, JOSEF, MIKLOS and VERA are assembled on the porch. They are talking amongst themselves.)

JOSEF

But America is Christian country, right?

ABE

Not exactly. By population – yes. The majority of Americans are Christian. But by design – no. The Constitution specifically states that Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion.

MIKLOS

In easier English, please.

ABE

Congress is not allowed to create a national religion that the population... the people must follow. God is not mentioned in the Constitution. However, each state has a constitution and

ABE (cont'd)

many of them do reference God. But not necessarily a Christian God. In Iowa, for example, the state constitution talks about a Supreme Being. It does not say that it is Christian.

LEVI

Given the number of churches I've seen, Iowa is Christian.

ABE

True. But there are many forms of Christianity and they do not all agree. The Quakers left England because they did not conform to the prevailing Christianity of those times. They were discriminated against – jailed, beaten, deprived of earning a living. It's similar to what you have experienced.

RACHEL

And when did that happen?

ABE

They left England in 1689.

VERA

So, in the last two-hundred-fifty years, you have not met with problems because of your religion? Is that true?

ABE

Yes.

JOSEF

Must be nice. Jews seem to run into trouble every generation.

ABE

In America, it will be different.

RACHEL

We shall see.

ABE

To recap, the first amendment of the Constitution guarantees American citizens freedom of speech, freedom of press, and to peacefully assemble to protest grievances.

(We hear a school bus. It stops.)

HELEN

School's out. Lesson over!

(We hear children's voices.)

CHILD VOICE 1
I spy – SPIES!

CHILD VOICE 2
German spies!

CHILD VOICE 3
Go back to Germany! Spies!

(HANS, LOTTE, SUZANNE and MARIANNA come rushing on. MARIANNA and SUZANNE go straight into their mother's arms.)

HANS *(Yelling)*
I'm not a spy! What a bunch of bullies. Just like Berlin. You dirty, little/

LOTTE
/Hans! Don't! We're better than that.

HANS
Don't you want to give them what they gave us?

LOTTE
No. Don't turn into them.

MARIANNA
I'm never going back. Never!

ABE
I'm sorry. Things have gotten – problematical since Pearl Harbor. I'll talk to the school.

LEVI
Maybe they need a lesson in the Constitution.

JOSEF
I don't know. They already understand the Freedom of Speech part.

ABE
I'm sorry.

HELEN
Was the whole day like this?

SUZANNE
No. Most was calm. The bus ride home was not good.

MARIANNA

It was started by this Charley-boy.

ABE

We can see about getting the children home ourselves.

MARIANNA

I'm staying here. Mama can teach me. Like in Belgium.

HELEN

Let's go inside. We can talk about solutions then.

(ALL exit except for ABE and LOTTE.)

ABE

Was the day horrible?

LOTTE

Most kids stayed away from us. I'm used to that. Teacher was nice.

ABE

I'll talk to Rose and Henry and see what we could do.

(ABE goes inside. LOTTE sits on the porch. PENELOPE joins her.)

PENELOPE

I heard what happened. I'm sorry.

LOTTE

In Berlin, German children ran after us because we are Jewish. Now, American children are running after us because we are German. What do you Americans say? No wins.

PENELOPE

"You can't win."

LOTTE

No. I can't. In Germany, people would say that the Juden – us – tried harder to be German than the Germans. My family never seemed Jewish. We never had a menorah. But we did have a Christmas tree. Hans and I wanted one so we could be like everybody else. My father liked the idea. He said – "Juden assimilierten in die Deutsch Kultur." Jews... assimilierten.... Like we melted into German culture.

PENELOPE

Assimilate?

LOTTE

Sounds correct. I would like to a-sim-i-late into American culture. Be more American than you. But would it matter? If someone with power wanted to get rid of me in twenty years, would they think I am American or German or Jew?

PENELOPE

What's happening in Europe can never happen here. We are a nation of laws.

LOTTE

Germany was a nation of laws. My father was a judge. Suppose America decided to change their laws?

PENELOPE

They won't. They're proud of their Constitution and their history of welcoming people.

LOTTE

I didn't feel welcome today.

PENELOPE

It's an isolated incident.

LOTTE

What that means, please?

PENELOPE

It means that what happened to you today is not what happens every day.

(MIKLOS enters. He picks up the guitar.)

MIKLOS

Will this be a disturbance?

PENELOPE

Music is never a disturbance.

(MIKLOS is figuring out "Hava Nagila Hava." We might hear bits and pieces of it. He Strums some chords. It is very pleasant. VERA enters.)

VERA

There you are! Dinner is in an hour. Did you want to wash up?

MIKLOS

In a little bit. It's pleasant here right now. It reminds me of the end of a summer day in Amsterdam when the sun is reflected on the buildings and in the canals. I miss it.

VERA

As do I.

MIKLOS

But you won't go back.

VERA

I saw them, Miklos. I saw the Dutch police come around with a wagon, check their papers and pick up men on the street. Jewish of course. Then they were carted off. There was no word to the families. Nobody knows where they went. Nobody knows if they will hear from them again. If you were there – they might have picked you up. No. I won't go back.

MIKLOS

Even if it goes back to the way it was.

VERA

It will never be the same.

MIKLOS

Maybe if I had stayed... maybe if I had stuck with the resistance I would be part of returning the Netherlands to normal.

VERA

I love your idealism. I am not sure one person can make a difference.

MIKLOS

There's an army of resistors.

VERA

And a bigger army of Nazis. I know that we have not had one letter from our families or friends since the Nazis took over Amsterdam. They have poisoned our country.

MIKLOS

What does the Royal House of the Netherlands say? "I will maintain." I wish I could maintain. I miss the tulips. And the skating.

VERA

We will plant American tulips and skate on American ponds.

MIKLOS

What about you, Lotte? Do you miss Germany?

LOTTE

No.

MIKLOS

But there must have been some things in Berlin that you treasured. What did you love about your homeland?

LOTTE

The parks. Britzer Garden had miles of paths through rolling hills and lakes. Father loved to take us to the Historic District and wander the museums. Hans and I enjoyed a lot of that but what we really loved was walking down the Spree River and sitting on the riverbank with some ice cream. It's been so long. I'd almost forgotten those days.

PENELOPE

It is good that you have these fond memories.

LOTTE

I have other memories, too. Memories of a city on fire. Synagogues, Jewish shops. A father covered in blood.

(Beat.)

VERA

Being Jewish is nothing to be ashamed of. It's more than a religion. It's a culture, a bloodline/

LOTTE

/bloodied clothes. Being Jewish is looking out the window and seeing blood. Blood on a man coming up the steps. He's hunched over but when he reaches the last step - he stands up straight and rings the doorbell.

(Pause.)

Your mother lets him in and a man who still has - pride - stands up – straight - in ripped clothes. Your mother holds him and then goes out. When she returns, you learn that she had sold all of the silver and her jewelry and has tickets to Paris. Your father says, "They've already punished me. What else can they do? We stay. We're German." And for the first time, your mother disagrees with your father and says, "The Germans do not think of us as German – only Jewish. I will not stay here and endanger the children. You may stay, but the three of us are leaving." Two days later you find yourself on a train to Paris.

VERA

Your mother was smart to get out. But that's not what being Jewish is.

LOTTE

That's what being Jewish is to me.

(*LOTTE exits.*)

PENELOPE

We should probably go in and see about helping with dinner.

(PENELOPE exits. VERA and MIKLOS follow.)

HALLIE enters with a box or a bag. She looks around and sees that no one is there and gingerly places her parcel on the bench in the porch. And as quickly and quietly as she came, she exits.)

SCENE 6

(It's evening. Dinner's been consumed and all is put away. ABE enters. He sees the package and moves it over. HE grabs the guitar and strums. PENELOPE, HELEN, JOSEF, SUZANNE, and MARIANNA join him.)

HELEN

There's a chill in the air. A new season must be coming. Zuzu and Mari, are you cold?

SUZANNE

No.

MARIANNA

I like it.

(ABE brings the quilt over and places it around HELEN.)

ABE

Better?

(HENRY, ROSE, The ROSENTHALS, MIKLOS and VERA gather.)

PENELOPE

What are you hiding in that box?

ABE

I have no idea. It was just here. I thought one of you might know about it.

PENELOPE

It's not addressed to anyone. May I open it?

(And she does.)

Cookies!

SUZANNE
Did someone say cookies?

HANS
I'm hungry.

RACHEL
You just ate.

HANS
But – cookies!

MARIANNA
Can we have one? Bitte! Please!

ABE
Who are they for?

ROSE
It says “For the Honored Guests at Scattergoods.” But we don't know who they're from.

(SUZANNE peeks.)

SUZANNE
They're Hamantaschen cookies! See – they 're shaped with three corners just like Haman's hat.

PENELOPE
And who is this Haman?

MARIANNA
An evil man who lived a long time ago in Persia. He wanted to get rid of all the Jews. But the Jews were saved by Esther and we celebrate a holiday called Purim where we eat Hamantaschen. By eating Haman's hat, we are destroying him.

VERA
Who here would know about these special cookies?

HANS
Does it matter? They look tasty.

SUZANNE
Can we have one? Pleeeeease!!!!

PENELOPE
Don't be s stick in the mud, Rose.

ROSE

I'll leave it up to the parents.

HELEN

Somebody did go to a lot of trouble/

MARIANNA

/Mama says, "yes!"

(MARIANNA and SUZANNE dive in. HANS holds back and HELEN hands one to him and then to LOTTE and of course the adults partake.)

ROSE

It's made with jam!

HANS

So good!

MARIANNA

If it was really Purim, we would be in costumes and shaking noisemakers.

SUZANNE

And floats decorated with flowers!

(MARIANNA, SUZANNE, JOSEF and HELEN join in the fun with stomping feet, making noises, clapping. LOTTE and HANS just watch.)

MARIANNA

Father! Tell a story!

MARIANNA and SUZANNE

Story! Story! Story!

JOSEF

(JOSEF adopts the demeanor of the "Jester-storyteller" often present at Jewish celebrations – especially Purim.)

Well... I don't want to take over the celebration. But – if you insist...

HELEN

Ha! You love doing this. Perhaps a tale from Chelm?

SUZANNE

Yes! A story from the silly people town!

JOSEF

If I must... of course I will. Once there was a town between two mountains. It was a poor town but the people were happy and had large families. Soon, they would no longer fit into the synagogue so it was decided that a new synagogue should be built – at the bottom of the mountain right next door to the old one. The problem was all the rocks needed to build it were at the top of the mountain. But that didn't stop the townspeople. They schlepped up the mountain and with great care carried down the rocks. The rabbi came to see what they were doing and was appalled. "Why are you carrying the rocks down the mountain? Wouldn't it be easier to just let them roll down?" The townspeople were amazed at the wisdom of their rabbi and agreed that it was the sensible thing to do. So the townspeople carried each rock back up the mountain so they could roll them down. The end.

(All applaud.)

RACHEL

I love these old tales. I'd forgotten them.

HANS

I don't get it. That's just silly.

HELEN

That's the point!

(We hear a car door slam. Nobody hears it – as they are busy chatting among themselves.. HENRY approaches with LORENZO. LORENZO has a suitcase in each hand.)

JOSEF

And now before we go in, I would like to thank our friends for indulging me in my old story and giving us new ones in this new land. I am grateful. As they say in the old country, "Maybe you lost your job AND your wife left you AND your children don't speak to you, "A bi gezunt" – as long as you have your health – you're fine." We, who have lost our country, our possessions, our place in society are grateful that we have our health and friends who are helpers. A bi gezunt!

ALL

A BI GEZUNT!

LORENZO

What is this? A hostel or a synagogue?

(All movement stops. Everyone is frozen.)

LEVI

Pardon?

LORENZO

I don't know. Do we pardon Jews here?

HENRY

Good evening, guests. Meet Lorenzo. He's a refugee from Italy and has come to help us get the harvest in.

(JOSEF has his hand out in greeting.)

JOSEF

Welcome to Iowa! Land of Beans and Biting Flies. I am Josef.

(LORENZO lifts up the suitcases in each hand showing he won't be shaking anyone's hand.)

LORENZO

There are a few more Jews here than I expected.

HENRY

Come inside, Lorenzo. I'll show you to your room.

(ROSE and HENRY exchange a glance with HENRY nodding as in, "Yes, I know. I'll talk to him." HENRY and LORENZO exit into the Hostel. All stand stunned for a moment and look at each other.)

PENELOPE

I think I'll turn in. Morning comes soon enough.

(And the guests exit. The box of cookies is left. HALLIE (who has watched everything emerges and gets her box. She may even stroke it and exits from whence she came. The lights fade to black. Maybe we hear the church bells.)

SCENE 7

(It is the next evening. LOTTE is alone on the porch doing homework. BUD, a young man from town shyly approaches. He may clear his throat before he speaks. He is nervous.)

BUD

Guten tag.

LOTTE

Pardon?

BUD
Guten tag.

LOTTE
Guten abend.

BUD
I ... don't know what that means.

LOTTE
You wished me a 'good day.' It is evening. So I wished you a 'good evening.'

BUD
Oh. Thank you.

(A beat.)

LOTTE
Are you looking for someone?

BUD
You. I was ... am... looking for you.

LOTTE
You found me.

BUD
Yes. *(Beat.)* I noticed you're not on the school bus anymore.

LOTTE
We thought it would be better... best? If someone picked us up after school.

BUD
I see.

LOTTE
Anything else?

BUD
Yes. I came because my mother said... well actually I want... to apologize. For last week on the bus. We were rude.

LOTTE
Ja. You were.

BUD

We didn't mean anything. Or rather – I didn't mean ... I just went with what everyone was saying. And I shouldn't have.

LOTTE

I'm not a spy.

BUD

I know.

LOTTE

But I am German. I don't want to be. But I am.

BUD

I wish I was German.

LOTTE

Are you Jewish?

BUD

No.

LOTTE

Then you would be safe being German. It's not safe for me.

BUD

I'm sorry.

LOTTE

I thought America would be safer.

BUD

It is!

LOTTE

Not on school busses. (Beat.) Why do you wish you were German? They just started a war.

BUD

It's the music. I especially love Bach. My mom is a piano teacher. The kids make fun of me because sometimes in school I play his music – not very well. They like to sing popular songs from the radio. When I play Bach, they think I have a few wheels loose.

LOTTE

Wheels loose? What wheels? Explain.

BUD

They think I am crazy. Do you like the Brandenburg Concertos?

LOTTE

I don't know them. I know the Brandenburg Gate.

BUD

That's is supposed to be magnificent.

LOTTE

Mag- ni-fi- cent?

BUD

You know – splendid.... wonderful.

LOTTE

Oh! Wunderbar! It is. My father worked nearby. We went through it a lot.

BUD

You're lucky. To have seen it. I bet you saw many things in Germany.

LOTTE

I did. You're lucky. Not to have seen all that I have seen.

BUD

Don't you like anything about your country?

LOTTE

My country is America now.

(RACHEL appears.)

RACHEL

Lotte, can you help Hans with his homework. They do arithmetic differently in America.

Oh! Hello.

BUD

I'm Bud.

RACHEL

Bud? Like the flower?

BUD

Short for Buddy. It's a nickname. It's nice to make your acquaintance.

RACHEL

And it's nice to meet yours. You have good manners.

BUD

Thank-you.

RACHEL

Lotte, can you come in?

(RACHEL exits.)

LOTTE

I have to go in.

BUD

Can I ... may I visit again?

LOTTE

What do all of you say? "It's a free country." *(Beat.)* So sorry. That was rude. Ja, I mean yes.

(LOTTE exits as HENRY enters.)

HENRY

Hi, Bud. Can I help you with anything?

BUD

Oh. No thank-you. I was just out for an evening stroll.

HENRY

I see.

BUD

I had ... better get back.

HENRY

Give my regards to your parents.

(BUD exits as HELEN and JOSEF enter.)

JOSEF

Good evening. I wonder if we could speak.

HENRY

Absolutely.

JOSEF

I know you have done a lot for us and I would like to do something in return. But it involves a favor.

HENRY

Ask away.

JOSEF

Helen and I would like to make a proper Rosh Hashanah dinner for all – our way of saying thank-you and welcoming the Jewish New Year. We would do everything.

HENRY

That's an easy one. I am sure Bertie would not mind a day off.

JOSEF

Yes and the farm already has provided most of what we need. But I... we were wondering if we could find a beef brisket – it can be small – I know beef is quite dear right now and we are happy to pay for it.

(HELEN holds out a brooch.)

HELEN

It's solid gold and I am sure it would pay for the meat. Please. Take it. Bitte.

HENRY

That looks like an heirloom.

HELEN

It was my mother's. We sold my jewelry to pay for the crossing to America. I kept this in reserve.

HENRY

And you would part with it to supply a beef brisket?

HELEN

I think using it for that purpose would please my mother.

HENRY

Let me see what I can do. Hold on to your brooch for now. When is this dinner?

JOSEF

September 12. I promise to make it special.

HENRY

A special feast will be most welcome as we bring the harvest in.

HELEN

Thank-you.

(GLORIA appears.)

GLORIA

Yoo hoo! Oh Henry! (Beat.) Oh hello. I'm Gloria.

JOSEF

Pleased to meet you. I am Josef and this is my wife Helen.

GLORIA

I've been hoping to meet some guests. But you're not what I expected.

HENRY

And what would that be?

GLORIA

Different. I thought you would look different but you look just like us.

HELEN

Maybe it's because we're all human?

(GLORIA suppresses a phony laugh.)

GLORIA

Oh! You're making a joke, right? Was that a joke?

HELEN

Just an observation.

HENRY

What can I do for you, Gloria?

GLORIA

May I speak to you ... in private?

JOSEF

Not at all. Our ... business ... here is done.

(JOSEF and HELEN exit.)

GLORIA

Nice to meet you. Oh dear. Was I rude? I didn't mean to be rude.

HENRY

You were - just being Gloria.

GLORIA

Oh! Phew. That's good then. I was wondering if you checked with anyone about the custodian job.

HENRY

Actually, I haven't. I am sorry. I am behind. I haven't checked on any jobs for this crew. Maybe it's because I've grown fond of them and I don't want them to leave.

GLORIA

Oh. Shall I check back then?

HENRY

You don't have to come all the way out there/

GLORIA

/I don't mind/

HENRY

/Really. I'll get back to you.

GLORIA

If you're sure.

HENRY

I'll get back to you.

(GLORIA starts to leave and then stops.)

GLORIA

I still adore that quilt. Remember, if you ever want to sell it, come to me first.

HENRY

Thank-you. I will.

(LORENZO enters from the house.)

LORENZO

Better. I can breathe out here. There's too many ... "people" inside.

GLORIA

Hello. I don't believe we've met. I'm Gloria.

Lorenzo. LORENZO

Not German? GLORIA

Italian. LORENZO

I didn't know there were any Italians who are Jewish. GLORIA

I'm not Jewish. LORENZO

My mistake. GLORIA

God forbid. LORENZO

Dinner will be served shortly. So if there's any more business, we can discuss it later. HENRY

Later. HENRY

I know when I'm being dismissed. It was nice to meet you, Lorenzo. GLORIA

(SHE just nods at HENRY.)

Henry. GLORIA (cont'd)

(GLORIA exits.)

Nice lady. LORENZO

She means well. At least that's what I tell myself. HENRY

(PENELOPE enters.)

PENELOPE
Dinner is being served.

LORENZO
You look lovely this evening, Signorina.

PENELOPE
Why ... thank you.

LORENZO
Bella. Beautiful.

PENELOPE
Thank-you... again. Coming?

(PENELOPE goes back into the house.)

LORENZO
That is – Penelope?

HENRY
Yes.

LORENZO
Pretty name for a pretty lady.

(LORENZO goes into the house. HENRY follows as the lights fade to black.)

SCENE 8

(PENELOPE enters with ABE. ABE sits on the bench and maybe struma the guitar.)

ABE
Beautiful evening.

PENELOPE
I do treasure this time of day.

ABE
One can almost believe all is right with the world.

PENELOPE
Or maybe we should be grateful that there is this time of day to remind us of the good.

(LORENZO enters.)

LORENZO

Signorina! You did not eat much.

PENELOPE

I ... had a big lunch. I am not used to two big meals in a day.

LORENZO

I like it here. Mostly. It's not as hot as home.

PENELOPE

Do you miss Italy?

LORENZO

The food is better at home – not as plain as your food. We Italians like a little more spice in our life. *(Beat.)* Would you like to take a walk? Get away from this crowd?

PENELOPE

Oh. No, thank-you. Working in the field has tired me out.

LORENZO

You are very pretty.

PENELOPE

Thank-you.

LORENZO

A nice change from the ... “guests” who are here.

PENELOPE

Excuse me?

LORENZO

I think American girls are sweet. Not as temperamental as the ones back home.

PENELOPE

You'd be surprised.

(HANS and LOTTE enter.)

LOTTE

Show me!

HANS

It needs to be private.

PENELOPE

Excuse me. I should check on our guests.

LORENZO

I'm a guest.

PENELOPE

Yes, and I just checked on you and you are doing fine.

LORENZO

I'd be more fine if you stayed with me.

PENELOPE

Excuse me.

(PENELOPE walks away. HANS shows LOTTE something. It's a jewel case (an ark for a Torah. VERA and MIKLOS enter and go to ABE.)

LOTTE

Where did you get that?

HANS

Don't tell Mother or Father.

LOTTE

Tell me!

HANS

Remember after the synagogues burned? I went out walking. And I went inside one of the buildings.

LOTTE

That's dangerous! Why did you do that?

HANS

I wanted - something from the Synagogue. I know you want to forget that you are Jewish but I want to remember. I saw this case with all the jewels on top and thought – this is important. The Nazis would want this but I'll make sure they don't get it. I wanted to show the Nazis that they can't take everything.

LOTTE

The building could have fallen on you.

(RACHEL and LEVI appear.)

HANS

I didn't think of that. Don't tell Mother.

RACHEL

Don't tell Mother – what?

(RACHEL looks intently at HANS'S treasure.)

What is that?

HANS

I'm not sure.

RACHEL

May I?

(RACHEL takes the object from HANS and opens it. Inside there is a scroll RACHEL is visibly moved.)

Why, it's a Torah. A children's Torah I haven't seen one since I was a child. Where did you get that?

HANS

I ... found it. In one of the synagogues. You had been taken away and I was upset and just went walking. Please don't be mad. I looked at the building – it was still so beautiful and at first I thought, I'll take a stone – something to show that it was here. And then I went further in and saw this – just lying on the floor. The sun sparkled on it and I just grabbed it and ran.

RACHEL

This tiny cabinet is the Ark – it holds the scripture. The Ark is supposed to keep it safe. It did its job. I love that they had a children's version of it – something easier where children could learn....

LEVI

Rachel?

RACHEL

I'm sorry. It's been so long since I saw one. The memories are rushing into me. The synagogue where I went to services as a child had a children's Torah. We must keep this safe.

HANS

I've kept it safe all the way from Berlin!

RACHEL

And it must be treated with respect.

Can you – read this?
LOTTE

It's been too long.
RACHEL

So.... I can keep it?
HANS

RACHEL
It's rightfully yours. But maybe we should put it somewhere away from harm.. Where have you been keeping it all these years?

HANS
Inside the sweater that Grandma knitted for me.

LOTTE
The one that is now three sizes too small?

HANS
It's soft and protects the ... Ark.

LEVI
Is it valuable? Should we have our friends lock it in a safe?

HANS
It's mine! I saved it!

RACHEL
I think we can trust Hans. He's kept it safe for three years. Put it away for now. It's not a tchotchke to be tossed around.

(Beat.)

I'm sorry. My children. We've done you a disservice. You should have been brought up to understand your faith.

LOTTE
I don't care about it.

(LOTTE and LOTTE exit.)

LEVI
Rachel?

RACHEL

I haven't felt Jewish in so long – not since my mother died. My father had no interest in keeping up the traditions and then I met you and we never really spoke about religion.

LEVI

I thought you were fine leading a secular life.

RACHEL

I thought I was, too. But now – I'm not so sure.

(RACHEL exits. LEVI follows. The conversation turns to ABE and PENELOPE.)

ABE

He's watching you.

PENELOPE

Yes.

ABE

I'm here. I'm not going anywhere.

PENELOPE

Thanks. I think I'll go in.

(LORENZO starts to follow. ABE stops him.)

ABE

Signore, how are you finding Iowa?

LORENZO

It's not what I expected. Scusi.

ABE

What is it like where you are from?

LORENZO

Not as flat. Scusi!

(LORENZO exits into the house. ABE follows. MIKLOS and VERA enter.)

MIKLOS

Things seem – off tonight.

VERA

It's Lorenzo – he's the one who is off.

MIKLOS

We are what – a little slice of the world put together in one house. Things are bound to be tricky.

VERA

What are you staring at?

MIKLOS

Amsterdam. I see it in my vision. I never should have left. I should be there – fighting – resisting. Look - over there – near the grassy area – it's empty. I would love to fill it – with tulips.

VERA

And where would you get the bulbs?

MIKLOS

I already talked to Rose. She has some connections in Pella. They have a tulip festival in May. They would because they were settled by the Dutch. We should move there.

VERA

We will move wherever they find us work.

MIKLOS

You are so practical. I don't feel practical today. I just feel – what do they say here – antsy. Like I should do something.

(HALLIE appears.)

HALLIE

Excuse me. So sorry – I don't mean to be interrupting anything but I have to talk to someone. Are you German?

MIKLOS

Dutch.

HALLIE

Oh. Well – are you at least Jewish?

MIKLOS

We are.

HALLIE

Because I need to talk to someone who is Jewish. The thing is...

(Beat.)

MIKLOS

Is there more to that sentence?

HALLIE

I think I am Jewish.

MIKLOS

You either are or are not.

HALLIE

I don't know. And I want to know. Can I show you something?

(HALLIE takes out a small box. It has the recipe for Hamantaschen cookies and an old boat passage tag. She takes them all out.)

VERA

What's this?

HALLIE

My grandmother left me this box when she died. It had a few recipes and a luggage tag. That's my grandmother's recipe for cookies.

MIKLOS

You're the cookie baker!

VERA

Yes.

VERA

Mystery solved. They were delicious. We should tell everyone.

HALLIE

I didn't come here about the cookies. I came because – well – look.

VERA

An old luggage tag from a ship – Esther Gottlieb.

HALLIE

Is that a Jewish name?

VERA

It does sound that way.

HALLIE

My grandmother always said her name was Emily Gilbert. I was wondering why she would have saved a luggage tag with someone else's name on it unless she was Esther Gottlieb.

VERA

And changed her name.

HALLIE

My grandmother was only five when she came over so my great grandma must have changed her name. And I was wondering why she would do that and the only thing I could think of – it was because they were Jewish. And didn't want to be. But my great grandma did save the tag. Maybe she thought someday they could be Jewish again?

VERA

You should talk to your mother about this.

HALLIE

I did. *(Beat.)* She told me to get rid of it and never mention it again. She sounded – ashamed. But I don't want to get rid of it. I loved my grandmother. She didn't have much to pass on – but she wanted me to have her recipes and this tag. Do you think she wanted me to know?

VERA

Yes. Somewhere inside she wanted you to know that you are probably Jewish.

HALLIE

I'm Christian. But I'm maybe Jewish. I don't know what to think. Or if this means anything.

MIKLOS

Come inside so we can introduce the wonderful cookie baker. There are a lot of people inside that you can talk to.

HALLIE

Thank-you.

(And they go into the house as the lights fade to black.)

SCENE 9

(The VOLUNTEERS and REFUGEES are on the porch. HALLIE is there. Only LORENZO is missing. The Quilt is gone.)

JOSEF

Shana Tova, Friends! Dinner was good tonight, right? I would like to thank our friends for giving us the afternoon off to prepare this special meal. As you know, It is customary to not work on our holidays but I think we would be forgiven for helping our friends after all they have done for us.

I would like to thank our honored volunteers for getting so many ingredients for tonight's dinner. There are many traditional foods for Rosh Hashanah and although we didn't have every one of

JOSEF (cont'd)

them – pomegranates are hard to find in Iowa - our table was heavy with good wishes and - sweet and tasty food.

As we know now, beans are numerous in Iowa and they symbolize hope for all of us for a prosperous New Year. Let us not forget the apples and honey – all from the farm. Their sweetness gives us hope for a sweet year.

I don't know how Henry managed to find some brisket in Iowa – but that is my tradition – and wasn't it delicious? It's my mother's recipe. Nobody can criticize it. Shana Tovah, friends. Thanks for sharing the table with us..

ALL

Shana Tovah.

VERA

Miklos! A dance!

(And MIKLOS starts "Hava Nagila Hava." Music supplied at end or go online. Do as many times as you like. It should get faster and faster. It's very easy!

VERA, MARIANNA, SUZANNE, HELEN, JOSEF and RACHEL start the dance in a circle. RACHEL is thrilled.

The VOLUNTEERS, HALLIE and even LOTTE and HANS will be figuring it out and eventually join the circle. Finally, LEVI will have figured it out and joined. It is joyous.)

LOTTE

Mother?

RACHEL

I haven't done this since I was a child!

AS MANY IN THE CAST WOULD KNOW IT SING

Hava nagila,
 Hava nagila,
 Hava nagila,
 Venis mecha.
 Hava nagila,
 Hava nagila,
 Hava nagila,
 Hava Nagila hava
 Venis mecha.

CAST (cont'd)

Hava neranena,
Hava neranena,

Hava neranena,
Venis mecha.

Hava neranena,
Hava neranena,
Hava neranena,
Venis mecha.

Uru, Uru achim,
Uru achim belev sameach,
Uru achim belev sameach,
Uru achim belev sameach,
Uru achim
Uru achim
Belev sameach.

(May repeat as necessary. Towards the end LORENZO enters and watches.)

JOSEF

Lorenzo! Join us! You missed the feast but there are leftovers. Such tasty leftovers.

LORENZO

Monkeys! Look at you – arms and legs everywhere. You're nothing but a bunch of monkeys.

*(HENRY starts to approach LORENZO but is pulled back by one of the VOLUNTEERS.
LEVI approaches LORENZO. Everything happens fast.*

*NOTE: There is the threat of violence in the air – but there won't be any – no punches,
no shoving, no physical contact. The tension arises from LORENZO'S mood.)*

LEVI

To my face. Now say it to my face.

LOTTE

FATHER!

(LEVI puts his arms up in the air as if in surrender..)

LEVI

Punch me. Go ahead. I've been beaten by worse than you. Here I am, Lorenzo. A proud man. A proud – Jew! Happy to be so.

As am I!
JOSEF

And me!
RACHEL

And me!
HALLIE

(LORENZO looks around at all defiantly staring at him. He brushes himself off as it be rid of them and starts to exit but pauses by PENELOPE.)

LORENZO
You should get away from here. You're better than them.

(LORENZO goes into the house.)

HENRY
I'm sorry.

(HENRY follows LORENZO as the cast freezes – numb. Blackout.)

OPTIONAL INTERMISSION

SCENE 10

(The porch has a few more blankets scattered about. It is early November. The VOLUNTEERS and GUESTS will have a few more layers on when they are on the porch. VERA and MIKLOS are off to the side conversing. LOTTE bursts through the front door and BUD follows.)

LOTTE
No more math. My head is buzzing.

BUD
I like math – it seems to go with music. There's something precise about it all.

LOTTE
My mother knows the Brandenburg Concertos. She thinks you have good – feelings – good knowledge –

BUD
I think you mean good taste.

LOTTE

Taste? Music? You hear music. You don't eat it.

BUD

It's just a saying.

LOTTE

I should write that down. I keep a notebook. Oh - look. This is my favorite German poet – Heinrich Heine. He was banned by the Nazis so I like him.

BUD

It's in German.

LOTTE

Because he was German.

BUD

I can't read German.

LOTTE

“Eiri Fichtenbaum steht einsam”

That means that one single spruce tree is standing alone...

“Im Norden auf Kahler Hoh”

In the north on a bare hill.

(LOTTE now freely translates)

It sleeps with a white deck – so he's covered with snow –
Ice and snow surround him. – And snow is everywhere.

Then it says:

He dreams of a Palm tree
Those far away in the east.

And now the Palm tree is thinking -
Who mourns alone in silence
Among the burning rocks.

BUD

So the cold Spruce tree is sad because of the cold and dreams of a warm Palm tree who is – also sad but because of the heat.

LOTTE

Very good. You get an A in German poetry. They each want what the other one has. Isn't that like people – looking around and thinking the other person is better off?

BUD

In America, we say the “grass is always greener on the other side.” Meaning – our neighbor's side has greener grass so his life must be better.

LOTTE

“The grass is always greener.” Must write that. That's how I feel about America – the grass is greener here than in Germany. But sometimes at night, I dream. Of Germany – the Germany before and wish for it back.

BUD

You miss it.

LOTTE

I miss – feeling cozy? Comfortable? I understood everything. Of course later, I understood nothing.

BUD

It sounds like you are lonely – kind of like the trees – all alone pining for what they don't have.

LOTTE

I know what I don't have right now – I don't have a country.

(HENRY approaches.)

HENRY

Bud, remember what I promised your mother.

BUD

That I'd be home before dark.

HENRY

And dark comes earlier and earlier.

BUD

I'll see you tomorrow at school. Don't worry about the math test. You'll do great.

(BUD exits.)

LOTTE

I hate math. *(Beat.)* Everyone's so quiet tonight. It's like everyone is having a math test.

HENRY

They've been reading the news and listening to the radio. Let's just say, this was not a good news day.

LOTTE

What happened?

HENRY

Maybe you should talk to your mother.

(And LOTTE goes inside. ROSE enters and sees HENRY.)

ROSE

How is everyone?

HENRY

Somber?

ROSE

Do you think it's true? What the papers say? Can the Germans really be gassing Jews?

HENRY

It's so horrible, I am thinking it must be true. How can you make that up?

ROSE

Will has nobody for us. Surely we can get some more people out of Europe.

HENRY

How Rose? Think. The borders are closed.

ROSE

There must be secret trails, ways to Switzerland.

HENRY

Our offices are closing. Will has his hands full with our current government.

ROSE

If the Germans hate the Jews so much that they are killing them – you'd think they'd be happy to send them here. I don't understand their mindset.

HENRY

I hope you never understand the way they think.

(PENELOPE enters.)

PENELOPE

Can you take any more bad news? I was just speaking with Gloria. She says that Lorenzo was spotted in town. He was applying for work at the hardware store.

ROSE

I thought he was in New York.

PENELOPE

We all thought that. Apparently New York didn't want him either.

(A beat.)

I'm scared.

ROSE

You don't think ... he wouldn't return here. He hated everything here.

HENRY

He liked some things. Or rather – someone. I want you two to barricade the door when you go to bed. Push the dressers up against it. I'll sleep down here tonight.

PENELOPE

You don't think/

HENRY

/nothing will happen. I'll made sure of that.

PENELOPE

I wish Abe was here. I like it better when the four of us are together.

HENRY

Abe's in Des Moines for the rest of the week. His grandmother is failing. Rose, quietly tell people that Lorenzo is in the area. I don't want to make a big deal of it and frighten anyone but they should know.

(ROSE, PENELOPE and HENRY go inside as the focus goes to VERA and MIKLOS.)

MIKLOS

I can't bear it.

VERA

I know. It is good that we left.

MIKLOS

Yes. I see that. But it does make me want to do something.

VERA

There's nothing we can do.

MIKLOS

I'm not so sure.

(VERA and MIKLOS exit as the lights fade to black..)

SCENE 11

(The guests are "scattered about the porch. HALLIE is there with VERA. ABE, ROSE and PENELOPE are seeing to the GUESTS. HENRY enters..)

HENRY

Guests? Hello – Friends...

(HENRY starts to get their attention.)

There are a few things I would like to discuss with all of you. It may be strange to make an announcement about an upcoming dinner when we've just had dinner but here goes. As you know, we will be having Thanksgiving next week. That means a day of no work and lots of feasting. I was hoping some of you would be up for extra-duty in the kitchen the day before. I'd like to give Bertie the day off to be with family. This is the one day we Americans set aside to offer gratitude for what we have been given – a roof over our heads, a warm fire, food – and the fact that someone donated a turkey for our dinner.

HANS

One turkey for all of us? How big is this turkey?

HENRY

You've seen him – at least sixteen pounds.

SUZANNE

Wait a minute. Are talking about Plucky? Are we going to eat Plucky?

ROSE

That was the plan.

SUZANNE

But we know him. We can't eat him.

HENRY

This isn't a turkey farm. He was given to us by a neighbor for our Thanksgiving dinner.

MARIANNE

No, **thank-you**. See – I am grateful but I don't wish to eat Plucky.

HANS

Me, neither.

ROSE

You eat our chickens and our eggs and the local pork. What's different about eating a turkey?

HANS

He follows us around like he wants to be our friend.

LOTTE

It would be wrong to eat a friend.

ROSE

Does everyone else feel that way?

(There is a show of hands and indeed – even the adults are iffy about eating Plucky.)

HENRY

I guess I can say I am grateful to know this now.

LEVI

It's good to be thankful for something in these dark days.

HENRY

These may be dark days, but I would like it to be known that right now, I am thankful that you are all here and that I have had a chance to know you. All of you.

ROSE

And I am thankful for your bravery in leaving your homes to start a new one. And for trusting us to help you.

(Pause.)

HELEN

I'd like to thank Abe for being here so soon after his loss. We are sorry about your grandmother. May her memory be a blessing.

(Others murmur the same condolences.)

ABE

Thank-you, all.

(A small emotional pause and finally HENRY breaks the silence.)

HENRY

As you know, Scattergoods is only meant to be a temporary haven for those seeking a new life in America. As such, we have had to say a lot of good-byes over the last few years as guests left us to pursue new beginnings. After Thanksgiving, we shall say good-bye to one of her friends. Miklos Leder recently got his Green Card and used it as an opportunity to sign up for the armed forces. He reports to Fort Des Moines right after Thanksgiving.

(Reactions.)

HELEN

Vera!

VERA

Miklos and I have had many conversations about this. When one gets married in the Jewish tradition, we do not say vows. All is silent except for the blessings. But when we exchange rings, we may talk. I remember putting the ring on Miklos's finger and saying, "With this ring you are made holy to me for I love you as my soul." Miklos's soul needed to do something to help with the war effort and as our souls are now one, I could not deny him that.

HENRY

Vera also wished to support her husband and do her part in the war effort. She will be going to Pella to work in the munitions factory there. We have secured her a small apartment.

(HELEN or PENELOPE or others will go to hug VERA in support.)

VERA

We will keep in touch?

ROSE

And now that we have secured a place for Vera, maybe she will take Plucky since we are not allowed to eat him!

VERA

I don't think the apartment is large enough.

ROSE

Very well, Plucky stays here.

HENRY

But we are not setting a place for him at the table. I have a few more announcements. Finding work suitable to your abilities is next to impossible. You are overqualified for most openings. As much as I would like us all to continue like this into the New Year – Mm job is to find all of you jobs.

ROSE

With your considerable English skills, we were hoping to get you into places as teachers or translators. The government, the military, and schools are all looking for people fluent in German and English.

(ROSE pauses for a beat.)

LEVI

But.

ROSE

Yes, there's a but.

LEVI

They're afraid we might be spies.

ABE

Bingo!

LOTTE

What is this "Bingo?"

ABE

It means your father hit the nail on its head.

LOTTE

Explain better, bitte.

ROSE

He got it right. Everyone is afraid that anyone from Germany is a spy.

JOSEF

Why we would spy for a country that hates us?

HENRY

Ahhh – you want the government to make sense. I'm afraid you can't get a politician to do that.

PENELOPE

Henry! Are you criticizing America?

HENRY

Not at all. Just the occasional elected official. I've spoken to Josef and Helen. They will be leaving us right after Thanksgiving to work on a Christmas tree farm in St. Paul. When the Christmas season is over, Josef will be working the greenhouses and fields at the University. We have secured student apartments for them for the next year.

JOSEF

Word of my strong muscles from shelling beans must have spread far and wide.

HELEN

Oy vey! There is no end to this man's vanity.

JOSEF

I am told St. Paul is colder than here.

ABE

It is a wee bit colder than here.

MARIANNE

Explain "wee bit."

ABE

I'm told that temps hover around 0 degrees.

(ALL shiver.)

JOSEF

Fahrenheit or Celsius?

ABE

Fahrenheit.

(ALL shiver more.)

JOSEF

Maybe all of you can start knitting us mittens?

LEVI

And am I – to remain here and be a beggar?

ROSE

We're still working on placing you. There are so many munition factories these days, we thought placement would be easier. But many women have filled those jobs to support the war effort.

Thank-you, Vera.

LEVI

As long as I am hard to place, I have a request. A request that may make placing me even more difficult.

ROSE

Do you really want to make things more difficult?

RACHEL

It's a Jewish thing.

LEVI

We would like to be placed somewhere where there is a synagogue. We are thinking it was not smart to bring the children up without knowledge of their heritage.

ROSE

I don't see how that's a problem.

HENRY

We'll see what we can do. I cannot guarantee anything.

ROSE

Enjoy your evening, friends.

(The guests "scatter about." They read newspapers, play cards, do puzzles, etc. VERA approaches HALLIE.)

VERA

I'm going to miss you. I've enjoyed sharing the Jewish faith you.

HALLIE

I'm so confused. I don't know who I am anymore.

VERA

Think of it as a blessing. You have been given the gift of two faiths.

HALLIE

But I have to choose.

VERA

I'm not sure what scripture says about that. Keep learning and later you will decide if you need to choose. *(Beat.)* I knew I would be leaving soon and I brought something down for you – to help you remember your grandmother and your great-grandmother who may have had to make a tough choice.

(VERA presents a candle.)

VERA

Think of it as a Yahrzeit candle. One can get a special one but not in Iowa! We light them on Yom Kippur to remember a loved one who has passed. They can also be lit on the anniversary of

VERA (cont'd)

their death. But I think, one can also light one when one is remembering a powerful memory and wants to feel them close. Right now, I am thinking of my mother and how she would approve of this new life I am making here with Miklos.

HALLIE

You are missing her.

VERA

Never more than now.

HALLIE

Could we ... would it be wrong to light the candle now? For all of our loved ones? Would this be an okay time?

VERA

It' the perfect time.

(They conveniently find a candleholder. And with everyone quiet in the background, VERA and HALLIE come close together and light the candle. Maybe they see their loved ones in the glow as the lights fade to black.)

SCENE 12

(The VOLUNTEERS, GLORIA, and BUD are onstage bidding good-bye to HELEN, JOSEF, MARIANNE, and SUZANNE. There are suitcases and the travelers are in coats.)

ROSE

This is the hardest part of the process in Scattergoods – saying good-bye. Last week it was Vera and Miklos and this week it is the Grundbergs. We even have representatives from town here to wish you well. Gloria has a few things from her congregation.

GLORIA

Thank-you, Rose. We know that you will be experiencing your first Midwest winter so our knitters went to work and created these for you.

(And GLORIA puts some scarves on them or hands them mittens or a combination of both.)

HENRY

Please thank them, Gloria. It is very kind.

GLORIA

You could come to services and thank them yourself.

HENRY

Maybe I will. How's the quilt working out? Does it match the paint in your bedroom as you thought it would.

GLORIA

Actually, I didn't want to tell you this but I don't have it anymore.

HENRY

But I thought/

GLORIA

/I gave it to Mrs. Marchand. She's been ill and when I went to bring her food, I noticed her blankets were threadbare so I brought her the quilt. The colors make her happy.

HENRY

That makes me happy. I'll tell Mother.

ROSE

And Lotte and Hans have a remembrance for you.

(LOTTE and HANS get up and sing. The melody is to "Ta ra ra boom ay A" – found at the end of the script.)

LOTTE and HANS

Farewell to Scattergoods
Where they make us chop our wood.
We shell a lot of peas (Spoken: Oy vey! The peas!)
But at least there are no fleas.

We lost our liberty.
We came here to be free.
Farewell to Scattergoods
Where we are understood.

(Maybe applause from audience and thank-you from LOTTE and HANS.)

LOTTE

We have a few gifts.

(They have one of each of these for the two families.)

HANS

Bread – so you may never go hungry.

JOSEF

Did you pound this yourself?

HANS

Of course!

LOTTE

And a candle so you will always have light.

HANS

And a penny so you will always have wealth.

ABE

The car is ready!

(A flurry of good-byes, "Write!" and hugs and all too quickly, they are gone.)

ROSE

I miss them already.

(All exit except for LOTTE. BUD enters..)

BUD

I'm sorry I haven't been around much.

LOTTE

I'm used to it.

BUD

It's just/

LOTTE

/Charley called you a "Jew-lover." I heard.

BUD

Yeah ...and... it confused me.

LOTTE

It's fine. As I said. I'm used to it.

BUD

What I mean is – well, I do like you. And I didn't want anyone to think I was in love with you. But then I started thinking of someone trying to insult me because they thought I loved someone. And then I thought, "is that horrible?" "Is that an insult?" Maybe I want to be a "Jew-lover," you know? And a "Quaker-lover" and a "Lutheran-lover," and just someone who loves people. And I realized that while Charley thought he was making fun of me – he sort of was giving me a compliment. And I told him so.

LOTTE

You did? Really?

BUD

Yeah. And you know what the best thing was? He didn't say anything after that. Not another insult like he usually does. He just stared at me – speechless. I didn't even want to punch him anymore. I just saw this sad-looking kid who thinks the way to make friends is to make fun of people. I just walked away – thinking he would jump me. But he didn't. I wanted you to know.

LOTTE

Thank-you... I think.

(Awkward beat.)

BUD

Are ... you still having trouble with Robert Frost?

LOTTE

Nothing means what I think it means.

BUD

He was a master at double-meanings.

LOTTE

Bitte?

BUD

A lot of his things seem to mean two things at once. And he asks a lot of tough questions. Let me get my book.

(And he quickly (conveniently) grabs his book.)

Here – the shortest poem of all asks maybe one of the most important questions of all.

A voice said, Look me in the stars
And tell me truly, men of earth,
If all the soul-and-body scars
Were not too much to pay for birth.

LOTTE

I don't understand "soul and body scars."

BUD

Think of what you've been through. Those last days in Berlin, the struggle to get here. Has it put scars or a mark on your heart or soul? Robert Frost is asking if being alive is worth the pain – is

BUD (cont'd)

it worth the sorrow. What if there was no birth – you weren't born? If you weren't here – you would not have had to endure all that you have suffered.

LOTTE

But I would have missed the smell of freshly baked bread. And sunrises, apples straight from the tree ... hugs from my family.

BUD

So – in spite of everything – you are glad you are here.

LOTTE

Aren't you?

(ROSE and HENRY enter.)

ROSE

It's starting to snow.

HENRY

Which means ...

BUD

I have to go.

HENRY

While you can still see the path in front of you.

BUD

See you at school?

LOTTE

Yes.

(BUD grabs his stuff and exits. ROSE and HENRY sit.)

Any news for us?

ROSE

Just one job offer which is unlikely. Unless someone in your family can learn to be an expert skier by the New Year.

LOTTE

I don't know that we need to do that.

ROSE

Of course not. It was silly to mention it.

LOTTE

I mean – my father is already an expert skier.

HENRY

Say that again.

LOTTE

My father is an expert skier. He was invited to be in the 1924 Olympics but bowed out because he was working and didn't have time to train. I know my father sometimes looks like a penguin when he walks – don't tell him I said that – but on skis – he's a swan.

HENRY

Could you bring him down here?

LOTTE

Of course. We all ski, you know. Did you ever hear of the Alps? We spent many winter vacations there. They're not far from Vienna.

(LOTTE exits. HENRY and ROSE smile at each other as the lights go down.)

SCENE 13

(It is Christmas. Maybe there's a wreath or a small tree. ABE, PENELOPE, ROSE, HENRY, LEVI, RACHEL, LOTTE, and HANS are gathered with cookies and coffee. The ROSENBERGS are dressed for travel. HENRY may go back and forth loading up the car.)

RACHEL

I do love seeing the snow on the trees. We used to bring in a small tree for Christmas. Does that surprise you? We had the prettiest ornaments.

PENELOPE

Did you give them away before you left?

LEVI

We wish. We heard later that not even a day after we left, the apartment was looted. Everything was gone.

PENELOPE

I'm sorry.

LEVI

It makes it easier to start over when everything is gone.

(BUD and HALLIE approach. Greetings of "Merry Christmas.")

ROSE

Merry Christmas.

HALLIE

I brought cookies. I used the last of the jam and brought most of them to church for the Christmas Eve service. Jewish cookies for a Christian holiday. How does that sound?

HANS

Did they like them?

BUD

We devoured them.

HALLIE

Are you all set for your next adventure?

RACHEL

If you mean are we ready to go live in the arctic circle, the answer is: what do you all say, "ready or not, here I come?"

HENRY

It's not that far north.

LEVI

Yes it is. All that's missing are the penguins.

BUD

That's actually the South Pole.

LEVI

Thank-you, young man. I love being corrected by the younger generation.

BUD

Merry Christmas.

(He goes to LOTTE.)

For you.

(LOTTE opens the package.)

LOTTE

Robert Frost's poetry. Thank-you.

BUD

I thought ... well... if you had any questions ... you could write.

LOTTE

I just might.

ROSE

Before I forget – here's the address for the synagogue in Duluth. It's small but growing.

HENRY

We'll stop on our way up to Lutsen.

RACHEL

And peace in 1944.

(Church bells chime.)

PENELOPE

They're calling people to the last service.

RACHEL

I like to think they're bidding us good-bye.

ROSE

Until Next time.

HENRY

The car is ready.

(As the church bells ring, there are good-byes – not exactly slow motion but not to be sped through – they murmur good wishes to each other. THE ROSENBERGS exit with HENRY. The rest crowd the porch with their hands up waving good-bye. They freeze as the lights dim and the church bells fade away.)

EPILOGUE – March 1943

(Mid-March – it's still chilly so they are in coats.)

HENRY

Everything shut down?

ROSE

Yes. It's hard to believe this place was teeming with life three months ago. Surely it could still be useful. Maybe if I spoke to the town.

HENRY

Stop beating yourself up. They said "no."

ROSE

But this has got to be better for families than some internment camp.

HENRY

We are at war. One gentleman mentioned that it would not be kind to the soldiers overseas to welcome the same people here that they are currently fighting.

ROSE

They're not the same people! They are Americans.

HENRY

The town agreed with him.

ROSE

All these bedrooms, a working kitchen, running water for baths/

HENRY

/and I have faith that it will be put to good use again one day. Just not tomorrow.

(VERA appears.)

VERA

I heard from Hallie that the building would be permanent closed today. I wanted to come and say a proper good-bye. And to say thank-you for everything you did.

ROSE

You drove all the way here to say thank-you?

VERA

Why not? I am staying with Hallie and her Mom. We keep in touch. They want to explore their Jewish ancestry. Purim is in a few days so I thought it would be a good time to visit and try and catch you two before this was closed for good.

ROSE

Any news from Miklos?

VERA

He leaves the states soon. He doesn't know where he's going.

ROSE

It must be hard. I see he left us a surprise. The tulips have broken through.

VERA

He thought it would cheer the new guests. We had no idea there wouldn't be any.

HENRY

It will be a welcome spring wave to the townspeople when they go for their walks.

ROSE

Do you hear from anyone back home?

VERA

Not a word. We don't really know what's happening in Amsterdam but we suspect it's not good. You saved us.

HENRY

Just helping.

VERA

No, saving.

HENRY

It's all closed up. Shall we walk you to Hallie's?

VERA

Please.

HENRY

No looking back.

ROSE

No – do look back. Know what we did here so we can carry through into the future.

(They walk away as the lights fade to black.)

END OF PLAY

NOTES

TCHOTCHKE: (pronounced chotch-key); a trinket; an object with no use – just decorative or silly

MUSIC

1. Swing Low Sweet Chariot:

Youtube song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v8frEt6w4G8>

Music: <https://michaelkravchuk.com/free-lead-sheet-swing-low-sweet-chariot/>

2. Hava Nagila Hava

Dance tutorial: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j3LYf2bIuG4>

(Grapevine, kick, kick....)

MUSIC: <https://musescore.com/user/27143663/scores/6329314>

Or

MUSIC: with chords (easy): <https://www.capotastomusic.com/piano-sheet-music/easy/hava-nagila.pdf>

Or

MUSIC: <https://www.8notes.com/scores/519.asp?view=full>

LYRICS (Hebrew and English)

Hava nagila

Hava nagila

Hava nagila

ve-nismeha

(repeat)

Hava neranenah

Hava neranenah

Hava neranenah

ve-nismeha

(repeat)

Uru, uru ahim!

Uru ahim be-lev sameah

(repeat line four times)

Uru ahim, uru ahim!

Be-lev sameah

English Translation for 'Hava Nagila'

Let us rejoice

Let us rejoice

Let us rejoice and be happy.

Let us sing

Let us sing

Let us sing and be happy.

Awake, awake, my brothers!

Awake my brothers with a happy heart.

Awake, my brothers!

Awake, my brothers with a happy heart

Dance for 'Hava Nagila'*

Dancers all join hands in a circle.

Step the left foot across to the right

2) Let the right foot follow

3) Step the left foot in back of the right

4) Follow again with the right

This "grapevine" like motion is done in an exuberant circular motion to the right. Dancers may sing and the band may speed up the tempo.

*In Conservative communities, men and women did not touch hands. They used a cloth napkin where the man would hold one end and the woman would hold the other end as they danced.

*Bells Ringing: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=aqcIg40-ZQI>