

**LIBRETTO** 

# Steal a Pencil for Me

# **Cast of Characters**

(9 principals/chorus) (Character descriptions on next page)

Ina Soep (Lyric Soprano)

Jaap Polak (Baritone)

Manja Polak (Mezzo-Soprano)

Rudi Acohen (Lyric Tenor)

**Abraham Soep** (Ina's Father) (Baritone)

**Lisette** (Mezzo-Soprano), the Messenger of Love

The Commandant (Bass-Baritone), the Messenger of Death

First Nazi/SS Guard(Baritone)

Second Nazi/SS Guard (Bass)

**Chorus:** Amsterdam party-goers in Act 1, Scene 1 and later, the Prisoners of Westerbork and Bergen-Belsen. **(minimum of 8)** \*

# **Orchestra**

14 players: flute/piccolo, oboe/English horn, clarinet in Bb, bass clarinet in Bb, bassoon, horn in F, percussion, piano, 2 violins, 2 violas, cello, bass

# **Time and Place**

Act 1: Amsterdam; Westerbork Transit camp (1943-1944)

Act 2: Bergen-Belsen Concentration Camp; Amsterdam (1944-1945)

<sup>\*(</sup>Ina's Mother and Jaap's parents will be in the chorus)

# **Character Descriptions**

**Ina Soep**: 20-years old, from a wealthy family in Amsterdam involved in the Diamond business. Ina is a strikingly beautiful young woman who is intelligent, down to earth and knows her own mind. Ina possesses social grace and manners; her challenge during the war is to not give in to despair. Ina is a clear-eyed realist.

**Jaap Polak:** 30-years old, from a middle class Orthodox family in Amsterdam. An accountant. Married to Manja. Jaap has a tremendous willpower to survive. He is smart, clever, enterprising, down-to-earth and practical. Jaap is an unabashed and relentless optimist who is also cultured, intellectual and spiritual.

**Manja Polak:** 24-years old; Married to Jaap Polak. An outgoing, high-spirited young woman who loves to dance and flirt. A social butterfly with a sharp tongue. Manja is mercurial and cultured.

**Rudi Acohen.** 20-years old; Ina's boyfriend. Rudi comes from a Sephardic family that is involved in the stock broker business in Amsterdam. He is a level-headed, polite young man. Steady.

**Abraham Soep:** 50 years old; Ina's Father. He is very influential in the Jewish community in Amsterdam; he runs the second largest diamond factory in Holland at the time of the Nazi occupation. He is also president of the governing body of Amsterdam's Synagogues.

**Lisette**: in her 30's. A working class woman who is sociable, lusty, funny and smart. Lisette is the kind of person that is comfortable in any social group. Even the Nazi guards in the camps give her a (somewhat) free rein to come and go around the camp.

**The Commandant:** In his 40's. An aloof figure who is obsessed with order.

**Nazis:** two men in their 30's that run the camps and carry out the Commandant's orders.

**Chorus Members:** will play the roles of Amsterdam shoppers, vendors, and partygoers in Act One; and the Prisoners of Westerbork and Bergen-Belsen camps in Act Two.

# Act 1 Scene 1 A party in Amsterdam

Lights up on a party in Amsterdam.

#### **CHORUS**

It's so good to see you!
It's so good to see you, my friend.
In these hard times, we need a moment to relax,
A moment without worry,
A moment to celebrate!
It's so good to see you,
It's so good to see you, my friend.

(Lisette enters, carries around a tray of food.)

#### **LISETTE**

There's herring and pickle A loaf of Swedish bread That's all we've got.

#### MEN'S CHORUS

There's no butter or jam in Amsterdam! Not since the Nazis arrived

#### WOMEN'S CHORUS

(*Pointed, to the men.*) But that won't stop us from having a good time! But that won't stop us from having a good time!

#### **CHORUS**

It's so good to see you. It's so good to see you, my friend.

(The door opens. Jaap and Manja enter with Jaap's elderly parents.)

#### **IAAP & MANIA**

(To Lisette.) Heartfelt greetings on your birthday, Lisette!

#### <u>LISETTE</u>

Jaap! Manja! Mr. and Mrs. Polak!

#### **MANJA**

Darling—How are you?

#### **JAAP**

I brought along my parents! I won't leave them alone at night.

## **MANJA**

(Sharply.) He won't let them out of his sight.

#### **JAAP**

Not with the war. It's not safe.

#### **LISETTE**

Come in, have a cup of tea Take off your yellow star Forget about the war for a while!

(Everyone takes off the yellow stars.)

#### **CHORUS**

The Nazis occupy Amsterdam But not our hearts, not our homes, Not our spirits!

(Manja swoops into the room and makes a beeline for a group of men.)

#### **MANI**A

Hello Henrik! Hello Piet! Hello Victor, Hello Jan!

#### MEN'S CHORUS

Hello Manja! We thought you'd never get here!

#### **IAAP**

There she goes again!
Making eyes at all the men!
(Jaap pulls Manja away from the men.)
Manja, please!
Stop acting like a honeybee, landing on every flower!

## **MANJA**

But darling.
I am the flower, the men are the bees.
I'm not landing on them....

How can I help it if they are swarming around me!

#### **IAAP**

Manja, please!

(The door opens. Ina and Rudi enter with Ina's parents.)

#### INA & RUDI

Heartfelt greetings on your birthday, Lisette!

# **LISETTE**

Ina! Rudi!

I'm so glad you're here!

#### <u>INA</u>

I had to bring my parents...

#### **LISETTE**

Welcome, Mr. and Mrs. Soep. Make yourselves at home.

#### INA

(Pointed, to her father.)
My father won't let me go out at night!
My father won't let me out of his sight!

#### SOEP SOEP

Not with the war, Ina. It's not safe.

#### **LISETTE**

Well, it's safe in here! Come in. Have a cup of tea. Take off your yellow star!

#### RUDI

But did you hear the latest news?
The Nazis have issued another decree.
No Jewish students in public schools,
All Jews must be off the streets by eight,
We're not allowed in theaters,
We're not allowed in parks,
We can't ride in streetcars,
Can't even ride our bicycles-

#### **CHORUS**

It's getting unbearable for all of us!

#### LISETTE

Yes, I know! I know! But tonight is my birthday, You are my beloved friends. Let us forget about the war! Forget about the Nazis! That will be your present to me!

#### RIID

All right Lisette, I will do that for your birthday! (Rudi pulls Ina aside.)
My love, I'll get us some tea and something to eat.
Give me a little kiss before I go...

#### **INA**

Rudi! Not here! My parents might see!

#### <u>RUDI</u>

Come here, pretty Ina. Kiss me!

(She looks around to make sure no one is looking, then kisses him quickly.)

(Rudi heads to the table to get Ina some tea.)

(Jaap and Manja emerge from the crowd, arguing.)

#### MANJA

I didn't kiss them! They kissed me!

#### **JAAP**

In the middle of the room where everyone can see!

#### **MANJA**

I can't help it if I'm irresistible!

#### <u>JAAP</u>

Manja, please.

You're a married woman. Act like one!

#### MANJA

I'm just trying to have some fun! There's a war on, you know!

(She dances away.)

#### **JAAP**

(Calls after her.) No! There are two! The one with the Germans And the one with you! (But she doesn't hear him, she's gone.) This will never work. Every day, the same old fight...! (Jaap turns around and sees Ina.) There's the girl I should have married! Look how lovely she is! Beautiful and steady, gentle and sure... How different my life would be If I had married someone like her! My days would be peaceful and quiet! Not filled with arguments and fights How wonderful it would be To see her face on the pillow at night And to wake up to her in the morning. (Ina turns and smiles at Jaap.) She smiled! At me! She smiled! (He is instantly smitten.) Everything is suddenly new, suddenly changed! My bad mood melts like snow in the sun! She's the girl I should have married! What joy, what pride, if she were by my side! Oh, how different life could be. (Jaap approaches Ina.) Hello!

## <u>INA</u>

Hello....

**IAAP** 

What's your name?
INA Ina Soep.
<u>IAAP</u> My name is
(Manja swoops in.)
MANJA Jaap! (To Ina, coldly.) Hello.
(Rudi comes up to Ina with a glass and a plate.)
RUDI (To Manja and Jaap.) Hello
MANJA Goodbye!
(Manja whisks Jaap away.)
RUDI Who was that?
INA I don't know But they don't belong together.
(Manja and Jaap stand off to the side, arguing.)
MANJA (Quoting Jaap.) Who is now the honey-bee, landing on all the flowers?
<u>JAAP</u> You're a fine one to talk!
MANJA (Quoting Jaap.) You're a married man! Act like one!
<u>JAAP</u> Manja, our marriage was a mistake.
MANJA Yes.
<u>IAAP</u> We don't belong together.
MANJA We are wrong together.

JAAP & MANJA

As soon as the war is over

#### **MANIA**

We'll get a divorce...

#### **JAAP**

We'll get a divorce.

#### **MANJA**

Until then, we'll just have to pretend... Come here, Jaap. Sit here with me.

(Manja and Jaap sit quietly together, resigned, on the side of the room.)

#### <u>INA</u>

Rudi, when we get married I hope we don't fight like that.

# <u>RUD</u>I

We won't.

#### <u>INA</u>

But how do you know?

#### <u>RUDI</u>

We belong together.

#### <u>INA</u>

We are right together.

#### **RUDI & INA**

We are just meant to be!

#### <u>RUDI</u>

Quick, come here pretty Ina, kiss me!

(She does. Their romantic moment is interrupted by the party.)

#### **CHORUS**

Everybody gather round Everybody raise your glass It's time to celebrate. It's time to make a toast For our dear friend's birthday!

(Everyone gathers around Lisette.)

# **WOMEN'S CHORUS**

Here's our birthday wish for you:

#### **MEN'S CHORUS**

That the war is over

#### **WOMEN'S CHORUS**

That the war is over

#### **CHORUS**

Before the year is through Heartfelt greetings on your birthday, Lisette!

#### **SOEP**

And a toast to our home! Let us all give thanks that we live here, in Amsterdam, our beloved city.

#### <u>ALL</u>

Let us all give thanks that we live here, In the Netherlands, our beloved country.

(There is a loud knock on the door.)

#### LISETTE

Yes—Who is it?

(The doors open. Three Nazis enter; a Commandant and two officers.)

#### TWO NAZIS

Just what we thought! The Jews are here.

(The Commandant pulls out a notebook and pencil. He flips open the notebook; reads.)

# **COMMANDANT**

Henrik Jacob?

(A man steps forward)

(Points with the pencil.) Stand there.

Hilda Loeb?

(A woman steps forward.)

(Points with the pencil.) You too.

Rudi Acohen?

#### <u>INA</u>

Rudi! No!

#### COMMANDANT

Rudi Acohen?

# <u>RUDI</u>

(Steps forward tentatively.) Yes?

#### **COMMANDANT**

(Pokes Rudi with the pencil.)

When I call your name, you come, Jew boy.

(Checks names off the list with his pencil.)

Check, check, check.

It is correct.

(The Commandant snaps the pad shut. Then, he struts around the room, surveying everyone at the party. He stops in front of Ina, who looks down at the floor. He takes the pencil, puts it under her chin

and lifts her face so she is forced to look into his eyes. Long pause. Then, he abruptly turns away, nods to his two sidekicks and exits.)

#### TWO NAZIS

(To Rudi et. al.) Come with us. Get going! Get going!

#### <u>INA</u>

Father, do something.

#### <u>SOEP</u>

No, Ina.

#### <u>INA</u>

Father please!

#### **SOEP**

Ina, I can't... I can't.

#### <u>INA</u>

(To Nazis.) Why are you taking them?

#### TWO NAZIS

Orders, from Berlin.

#### INA

Where are they going?

# **TWO NAZIS**

Resettlement to the East.

#### **CHORUS**

(sighing with fear) Oh ...

(The Nazis exit with Rudi and the others. Ina runs after them.)

#### <u>INA</u>

Wait, wait...

#### **SOEP**

Ina! Stop!

(Her father stops her, as she cries after Rudi.)

# <u>INA</u>

(Anguished.) Rudi! Rudi!

(There is a musical gesture to indicate that it is curfew. Everyone at the party puts on their jackets and coats, with the yellow stars, and quietly leaves.)

(Ina's mother gets Ina's coat and puts it around her shoulders. They exit slowly, while Ina's father holds her, crying...)

#### INA

(Anguished.) Rudi, Rudi...Rudi, Rudi...

(Lights cross fade to the next scene...)

# Scene 2 Journey to Westerbork

The Nazis march Rudi and the two partygoers across the stage. They don't have coats or belongings with them. They stumble in the dark and shiver in the cold, then exit.

The Commandant enters holding a piece of paper. He reads:

#### COMMANDANT

Thirtieth September, Nineteen-forty-three Berlin has decreed that All remaining Jews in Amsterdam Are to report for labor immediately To Transit Camp Westerbork.

(The chorus enters. Unlike Rudi and the others, the chorus carries satchels, suitcases and rucksacks, and are wearing coats and hats. Lisette is in this group. This should be staged so that we see the chorus walk in the opposite direction as Rudi.)

#### **SOEP**

Let us give thanks that We are going to Westerbork and not to the east. Let us give thanks that we will still be here In the Netherlands, our beloved country.

(They cross the stage and exit. This should be staged so that there is a sense of many people traveling in this one direction. The chorus re-enters, still traveling. They describe what they see:)

#### LISETTE & CHORUS

(drained of emotion.) On the heath, Dry and windy Unforgiving, cheerless, bleak The ugly, barren land...

(Jaap, Manja, and Jaap's parents enter, a part of this group. His parents move slowly.)

#### **IAAP**

Father, do your feet hurt? Mother, are you hungry? Let me hold your suitcase Here's a piece of bread...

# Scene 3 Arrival at Westerbork/Tuesday Transport

The two Nazis stand ready, their pencils poised. The Commandant stands behind them.

# FIRST NAZI

Proceed to Administration For enrollment

# **SECOND NAZI**

Then to the Statistical Desk For classification

#### **BOTH NAZIS**

Then to the Commandant,

The Great Executive Organ of the Daily Administration,

For approval

Before entry

In the Central Card Index of

Transit Camp Westerbork.

(The Commandant and Nazis exit. Everyone is left alone; as soon as the Nazis are gone, several older members of the chorus usher the newcomers together quickly.)

#### **SOLO FEMALE PRISONER**

They make a list on Monday night

#### **SOLO MALE PRISONER**

There's a quota they must fill

#### SOLO FEMALE PRISONER

They count until the number's right

# SOLO MALE PRISONER

Then call the names for Transport.

#### **CHORUS**

Resettlement to the east.

#### SOLO FEMALE PRISONER

They make their checkmarks on their lists

#### **SOLO MALE PRISONER**

And they count each name again.

# SOLO FEMALE PRISONER

Then load the chosen on a train

#### SOLO MALE PRISONER

Like cattle in a car

#### **CHORUS**

Where it goes, no one knows...

Where it goes, no one knows...

Someplace east, in Poland.

Today is Tuesday Transport

Pray that you're not on the Tuesday transport list...

(The Commandant enters. He pulls out a notebook and pencil, flips it open and reads:)

# **COMMANDANT**

Barrack 63

The following Jews

Are to report for Transport:

Weissler, Simon.

Loebstein, Eva.

That's all.

(These are the older prisoners who have just told the newcomers about the transports. The Commandant meticulously checks off their names and snaps the pad shut.)

To the train!

(He abruptly turns and exits. The two older prisoners are led off by the two Nazis.)

#### **CHORUS**

The doors are locked
The whistle blows
We hear the muffled cries
Through the boxcar slats we see
Hundreds of eyes
Where it goes, no one knows
Someplace east, in Poland.

(The chorus breaks up, and exits back to the barracks. Jaap is left alone, as he watches the Jews go to transport. Ina and her parents enter, holding papers.)

#### **SOEP**

Excuse me, sir. Where is Barrack 64?

(Jaap turns around. He sees Ina.)

#### **IAAP**

Over there.

(Jaap points. They exit. Jaap watches Ina go, then calls out:)

# Scene 4 Jaap swings into action

#### **IAAP**

Get your things, Manja! We are moving to Barrack 64!

(Jaap grabs his rucksack and heads for the door. Manja enters.)

#### MANJA

I'm not moving!

I'm staying right here.

(The Two Nazis enter.)

# **SECOND NAZI**

(To Jaap.) Where do you think you're going you lousy Jew?

#### **JAAP**

We're moving to Barrack 64.

# FIRST NAZI

And why should we let you do that?

## **JAAP**

You need more beds in Barrack 63.

#### **TWO NAZIS**

(They look.) Oh, all right. Go ahead

#### MANIA

Jaap! What's got into you?

#### <u>JAAP</u>

Manja! Don't argue with me!

#### **MANJA**

I don't want to move!

#### **JAAP**

But there are more men in 64 than 63...

#### MANIA

(Instantly interested.) Is that so?

#### **IAAP**

Come and see...

(Jaap heads out. Manja follows. They cross the stage. The men's chorus enters.)

#### JAAP

What did I tell you?

# **MANJA**

(To the men.) Hello! Hello!

#### **MEN'S CHORUS**

Hello...

(Manja exits with the men; Jaap exits.)

# <u>Scene 5</u> Ina talks to Rudi

Ina enters. She stands outside, talking to the sky.

#### <u>INA</u>

Rudi! Rudi!
Where did you go?
I need to know
You're coming back, aren't you?
As soon as the war is over
We're getting married.
Right? Rudi? Right?

(Rudi appears somewhere on the stage. It must be staged so we know that he is in Ina's imagination and not physically present in Westerbork.)

# <u>RUDI</u>

(Like a memory.) Come here, pretty Ina, kiss me.

#### <u>INA</u>

Rudi...Rudi!

Where did they take you?

Where did you go?

#### **RUDI**

Don't think of that, Ina Think only of you Only what you must do to survive Stay alive, sweet Ina, just stay alive

#### INA

But how, Rudi? How?

#### **RUDI**

Remember the past Hold on to the hope That the present won't last

#### **INA**

I don't know how to do that, Rudi. But I'll try. I'll try. You try too...

# **RUDI & INA**

We'll remember the past Hold on to the hope That the present won't last That's what I'll do for you Sweet Rudi/Sweet Ina We will survive.

(Rudi slowly exits, leaving Ina alone.)

#### <u>INA</u>

Right? Rudi? Right?

# <u>Scene 6</u> Behind the barracks

Jaap enters.

#### **JAAP**

Hello. Remember me? From Lisette's birthday?

# <u>INA</u>

Yes, I remember you. Hello.

#### **JAAP**

Why so sad sweet girl?

#### <u>INA</u>

And what is there to be happy about? My Rudi, Rudi, was taken away! I don't know where he is... I've lost everything! Everything! My home, my freedom! The life I used to lead!

## <u>JAAP</u>

Spirits up, dearest lady!
The Nazis have locked up our bodies
But not our hearts, not our minds!
Meet me right here behind the barracks
Every night we'll take a walk
And talk of normal things.

#### <u>INA</u>

Oh, what will that do?

#### **JAAP**

Make us feel alive. Help us imagine a future!

#### <u>INA</u>

You think it could work?

#### **JAAP**

I know it will!
Why else would the Nazis take those things away?
We'll tell each other everything! Everything!
Even things that seem too small
Because, of course, they're not at all!
They're not at all!
They add up to a life!
Go on. Give it a try.
Tell me something small.

#### INA

I have a hole in my sock.

#### **IAAP**

Good! What else?

#### <u>INA</u>

I have a blister on my foot From walking all night. We walked for miles and miles The Germans took our house They took everything we own.

# <u>JAAP</u>

Tell me something good.

#### INA

There isn't anything good here!

#### **JAAP**

Oh, there's got to be something!

#### INA

I have a lump of sugar in my pocket.

#### **IAAP**

See? What did I tell you!

#### INA

Enough about me, what about you?

#### **IAAP**

This morning I washed my face with coffee.

#### <u>INA</u>

But why?

#### **IAAP**

There wasn't any water.
What else could I do?
And then I ate a piece of bread.
After that, I made my bed
And argued with my wife.

#### <u>INA</u>

Tell me something good.

#### **IAAP**

You arrived.

I've had a smile on my face ever since you got here. You have brightened up this dreary place for me.

#### INA

You shouldn't talk to me like that.

# <u>JAAP</u>

Why not?

#### **INA**

You're married!

# <u>JAAP</u>

Not for long As soon as the war is over We're getting a divorce.

#### **INA**

But I have a sweetheart.

As soon as the war is over We're getting married.

#### **JAAP**

I bet you could be happy with me.

#### INA

And what makes you say that?

#### IAAP

I can make you smile.

# <u>INA</u>

Is that so? What makes you so sure?

#### **JAAP**

You're smiling right now!

#### INA

(Tries to hide her smile.) You're a funny looking fellow!

#### <u>JAAP</u>

I know.

#### <u>INA</u>

You have big ears.

#### IAAP

And hardly any hair.

(He rubs his head. She laughs again.)

#### INA

All right I'm feeling better, a little.

#### **JAAP**

That's the spirit, dearest lady!
The Nazis can lock up our bodies
But not our hearts, not our minds.
Here by the wall,
where the barbed wire runs
We will be free.

# Scene 7 A pencil is stolen

(Jaap and Ina separate as the chorus enters. They are frightened.)

#### **CHORUS**

How quickly Tuesday seems to come. Week in, week out, My weary heart is growing numb... Another transport, another list...

#### (Manja enters.)

#### MANJA

I'm scared, Jaap...

#### **JAAP**

I am too. Come here. Hold my hand. Try to stay calm.

(The chorus huddle in fear as the names are called off.)

#### **WOMEN'S CHORUS**

How many will be called today?

#### COMMANDANT

(offstage) Lichtman, Joseph.

#### **MEN'S CHORUS**

Oh please don't call my name!

# **COMMANDANT**

Epstein, Anna

#### **CHORUS**

Not me, and not my family.

#### **COMMANDANT**

Rosen, Louis. Rosen, Eva.

#### **CHORUS**

Please, God no, not today!

## **COMMANDANT**

Krob, Eric.

Loeb, Daniel.

(The Commandant enters. He goes over his list, checkin off names with a pencil.)

#### COMMANDANT

Lichtman, Epstein, Rosen—two—

Makes four plus Krob and Loeb makes six.

Weissler, Vogel, Katz

In Barrack 63 makes nine.

Check, check, check.

Check, check, check.

Check, check, check.

Good. Everything's fine.

(The Commandant turns the page. He calls out.)

#### **COMMANDANT**

Barrack 64

The following Jews are to report for transport.

Polak, Grietje.

#### **IAAP**

Mama!

#### **COMMANDANT**

Polak, Frederick.

#### **JAAP**

Papa!

(Jaap's parents step out from the chorus.)

#### **COMMANDANT**

(To Jaap's parents.) Get going to the train!

#### **IAAP**

Father...Your shoes are worn...

Here. Take mine.

Where you're going,

You'll need good shoes

(Jaap takes off his shoes and gives them to his father.)

Mother...Let me take your bag.

Save your strength.

You'll need your strength in Poland.

(Jaap turns and watches the Commandant and the Nazis meticulously and happily checking off his list.)

#### **COMMANDANT**

Check, check, check!

Check, check, check!

It is correct, it is correct.

(The Commandant's pencil stub breaks.)

# **COMMANDANT**

Ach! Stupid pencil!

(He tosses the pencil to the ground.)

(To the two Nazis.)

Fetch me some new ones.

(The Nazis exit, followed by the Commandant. Jaap picks up the pencil.)

#### <u>IAAP</u>

Evil Nazis! Lethal pencils!

Breaking families with your lists!

You'll never break me!

(He holds up the pencil.)

I will make something beautiful

From this deadly little piece of wood!

I will use your instrument of death for life!

(Jaap pockets the pencil.)

# Scene 8 Messenger of love

(Jaap starts to write a letter on a piece of paper.)

#### **IAAP**

My always dearest girl:

In order to survive

We must rise above our darkest moods.

In everything,

Even the gloomiest things,

We must always look for the ray of sunshine.

So with this little piece of paper

And a really lousy pencil stub

I pour out my heart to you...

(Jaap wraps the letter around the pencil and puts it in his pocket. Two Nazis enter.)

#### FIRST NAZI

Hey, you lazy Jew.

What are you doing?

#### <u>IAAP</u>

I'm on my way to the factory.

#### SECOND NAZI

Well, get going!

# **TWO NAZIS**

To work, to work!

Everyone to work!

To work, to work!

Women to the laundry.

Men to the factory!

No more straggling!

This is not a holiday!

To work!

(The Nazis order Jaap to move along. The chorus enters. Manja, Ina, and the women fold laundry; the men work on electronic equipment. When the Nazis exit, Jaap sneaks over to the laundry. He pulls out the letter wrapped around a pencil and waves it to get Ina's attention.)

# <u>JAAP</u>

Ina!

#### <u>INA</u>

Hello!

(Ina sneaks away from the women to meet him. Manja swoops in to break them up.)

#### **MANIA**

What do you think you're doing?

JAAP I just came by to say hello.
MANJA To whom?
<u>JAAP</u> To you. Hello Manja!
MANJA Do you take me for a fool? Get back to your work, Jaap! Say your goodbyes!
<u>IAAP</u> (To Ina.) My wife has eyes in the back of her head!
MANJA Go, Jaap!
<u>IAAP</u> I'm going, I'm going!
MANJA Goodbye!
INA & JAAP Goodbye!
(They go back to work. This time, Ina sneaks away from the laundry and crosses over to where the men are working.)
INA Jaap?
<u>JAAP</u> Ina!
(Manja follows and swoops in to break them up.)
JAAP & INA Manja!
JAAP Hello, hello!
MANJA Surprise, surprise!

<u>IAAP</u> What are you doing here?

MANJA Say your goodbyes.

#### IAAP & INA

Goodbye!

(Jaap, Ina and Manja go back to their workstations.)

#### **JAAP**

This will never work.

I must find someone to be

The Messenger of Love for me.

(He looks around. He sees Lisette.)

#### <u>IAAP</u>

Lisette!

#### LISETTE

Hello Jaap.

#### **IAAP**

Do me a favor, old friend.

Deliver this note to Ina.

#### **LISETTE**

What is it?

#### JAAP

A message about my laundry.

# **LISETTE**

OK.

(Lisette takes the paper and pencil and delivers it to Ina.)

#### **LISETTE**

Hello Ina.

Here's a note from Jaap.

Something to do with his laundry.

#### INA

Thanks, Lisette.

(Ina reads the letter. She takes the pencil and writes back to him—on the same page.)

Dear Jaap:

Thank you for your letter.

It made me very happy.

And here is what I want to say to you....

(Ina writes a letter. We don't hear the contents of the letter. She finishes writing then wraps the letter around the pencil.)

Lisette?

Can you take this note back to Jaap?

#### LISETTE

Sure. Of course.

(Takes the note and starts to walk away. Then, she stops.)

Wait a minute.

Why isn't Manja doing Jaap's laundry?

#### <u>INA</u>

Oh, she's in quite a mood. You know that Manja! So unpredictable.

#### **LISETTE**

Yes, I suppose.

(Delivers the note to Jaap.)

Ina wrote back to you.

(Jaap reads the letter. He takes the pencil and writes quickly. Again, we don't hear the contents of the letter. He wraps the pencil in the note again.)

#### <u>JAAP</u>

Lisette.

#### LISETTE

What now?

#### **JAAP**

Could you take this note to Ina?

# **LISETTE**

Another message about your laundry?

#### **JAAP**

That's right.

#### **LISETTE**

How much laundry do you have, Jaap?

# <u>JAAP</u>

Well, a bit...

(Lisette takes the letter. As soon as she is out of Jaap's sight, she stops and looks at it.)

# **LISETTE**

Something's going on between these two...

I think I'll have a look...

(She opens the letter; gasps.)

I thought so! It's true!

#### **IAAP**

My Always Dearest Girl

# **LISETTE**

They're in love!

I want to write and let you know
In the very short time I have known you
I have fallen in love
When I am with you,
I feel a sense of peace that I've never known before
You are always in my thoughts
When I sleep, you are in my dreams
For me there is only one thing possible...
That is...to conquer the girl I love!

#### <u>INA</u>

My dearest boy, my Jaap: You bring a smile to my face... How can it be that I am happy? How can it be that here, Inside this barbed wire, There is love?

#### LISETTE

(Sighs.) There is love!

#### JAAP & INA

The barbed wire is a trestle for our love Which crawls up the walls towards the sky to be free How can it be? How can it be? There is love

#### LISETTE

There is love! Love!

#### JAAP

Many kisses,

#### <u>INA</u>

Many kisses,

#### **LISETTE**

(Sighs.) Kisses! Oh! Kisses!

#### **JAAP**

Your Jaap.

#### <u>INA</u>

Your Ina.

(Lisette delivers the letter to Ina.)

# Scene 9 Gossip

(After Ina exits, Lisette stands there exhilarated. Several Chorus members enter)

# **LISETTE**

They're in love! They're in love!

(To several chorus women.)

Can I tell you a secret? Jaap and Ina are in love!

# **CHORUS WOMEN**

(Amongst themselves, then to some men passing.)
Did you hear that?
Jaap and Ina are in love!

# **CHORUS MEN**

Did you hear that? Jaap and Ina?

#### **LISETTE**

They're writing love letters. She calls him "my dearest boy!"

#### **CHORUS WOMEN**

Dearest boy?

#### LISETTE

And he calls her, "my always dearest girl!"

#### **CHORUS MEN**

Always dearest girl?

#### **CHORUS**

Is it true, is it true that they're in love?

#### LISETTE

And he says: "I must...

I want to conquer the girl I love!"

# **CHORUS**

MEN: Conquer the girl? WOMEN: Conquer the girl! ALL: Conquer the girl he loves!?

(Someone turns around and sees Manja.)

#### **SOME CHORUS MEMBERS**

Manja!

# OTHER CHORUS MEMBERS

Manja!

(Everyone is quiet for a moment, then:)

# <u>ALL</u>

(In unison; too friendly.) Hello Manja!

neno manja.

(MANJA doesn't respond. Everyone shuffles their feet, averts their eyes and scurries back to the barracks, leaving Manja alone.)

#### MANIA

He's landed on another flower Like a honeybee in spring, I don't really care if he's having an affair, As soon as the war is over we're getting a divorce! So why does this honeybee sting? It's the way all of them look at me! They'll scour me for flaws List all the things I lack Compare my looks to hers, Talk behind my back... Wherever I go, they'll look away And give me that false smile And shuffle their feet And not know what to say... Just like they did today! No, No! I cannot live this way! No, No! I won't!

In this horrible place I've lost everything, everything. And all I have left are my pride, my dignity! Those I must not lose!
He must stop this at once!
This affair's not fair to me!
I know... we don't belong together,
We are wrong together,
But a man can have only one wife
And for now that wife must be me.
Until the war ends, the honeybee must pretend
That I am his only flower!

(Jaap and Ina enter).

#### **MANIA**

Jaap!

#### **IAAP**

Manja!

#### MANJA

You have to stop seeing each other!

# <u>JAAP</u>

Manja, please listen!

#### MANIA

Everyone is talking! There's too much gossip! Too much attention! This can't go on!

# <u>INA</u>

She's right.

We have to stop seeing each other.

# <u>IAAP</u>

Ina, wait—

#### INA

It's too hard, Jaap.

Besides, I keep thinking about Rudi...

#### **IAAP**

Rudi?

#### <u>INA</u>

Yes. I don't know if I can love you because of Rudi.

#### IAAP

But Rudi's not here, Ina. Rudi is far--

#### COMMANDANT (off)

--Attention!

(The Commandant enters, flanked by two Nazis. Jaap, Ina, Manja, Lisette, Soep, and the Chorus stand at attention.)

# TWO NAZIS

15<sup>th</sup> February

Barrack 64.

(The Commandant pulls out a notebook and pencil, flips it open and reads:)

# **COMMANDANT**

The following Jews Are to report for Transport: Friedman, Lisette Cohen, Hermann And Polak...

# <u>INA</u>

Polak?!

# **COMMANDANT**

Polak, Manja Polak, Jaap.

# <u>INA</u>

(Anguished.) Jaap! Jaap!

(The Two Nazis lead Jaap and Manja and Lisette and two chorus members off stage as the others watch.)

(Lights fade to black) **End of Act One** 

# Act 2 <u>Scene 1</u> Roll Call in Bergen-Belsen

Lights up on the chorus of prisoners standing at attention. Jaap, Manja and Lisette are among the prisoners. The Commandant, flanked by two Nazis, addresses the prisoners. As always, they are equipped with lists and pencils.

#### **COMMANDANT**

(Barks.) Roll Call! Morning Roll Call!

(The Nazis point with their pencils. The prisoners follow their directions.)

#### **TWO NAZIS**

Half-Jews, in the middle! Quarter Jews, in the back! Males on the left, Females on the right! You think we have all day for you, lousy Jewish swine!

#### COMMANDANT

(To Nazis.) Count the Jews!

#### TWO NAZIS

(Obsessively count the prisoners.)
One, two, three blocks of Jews
Plus a half block more
Quarter Jew, 32; Half Jew, 24
Total Jews, alive: 245

# **COMMANDANT**

How many dead?

#### **TWO NAZIS**

(Count from their list.) Ten, twenty... One, two, three. Total Jews, dead: 23

#### TWO NAZIS

(With their pencils.) Check, check! The numbers are correct!

#### COMMANDANT

You are the lucky ones,
The chosen few
Sent to Bergen-Belsen.
The Fortunate Jews,
Marked for Exchange in the Great German Plan.
Be mindful of that, your status can be changed.

(The Commandant and Nazis exit.)

#### MEN'S CHORUS

Bergen-Belsen We are the lucky Jews Who didn't go to Poland!

#### **WOMEN'S CHORUS**

One, two, three, four crusts of bread...

#### MEN'S CHORUS

We are the chosen few who get to pull the soles off shoes...

#### **WOMEN'S CHORUS**

Five, six, seven, eight crusts of bread.

(The two Nazis enter carrying a stretcher with a dead body. They cross the stage and exit.)

#### ALL CHORUS

There's never enough to eat But at least we're still alive The lucky Jews, chosen few Of Bergen-Belsen, Bergen-Belsen.

(The Commandant enters, flanked by the two Nazis.)

#### COMMANDANT

(Barks.) Roll Call! Morning Roll Call! (To Nazis.) Count the Jews!

(The prisoners stand at attention; the Nazis count them again.)

#### **TWO NAZIS**

One, two, three blocks of Jews Plus a half block more Quarter Jew, 29; Half Jew, 22 Total Jews, alive: 225

# **COMMANDANT**

How many dead?

#### TWO NAZIS

(Count from their list.) Ten, twenty, thirty, forty One, two, three, four, five, six, Total Jews, dead: 46 (With their pencils.) Check, check, check The numbers are correct!

(The Commandant exits followed by Two Nazis. The men pull soles off shoes; the women count bread crusts.)

#### **MEN'S CHORUS**

Bergen-Belsen!

The place for lucky Jews who get to live in bondage.

(The Nazis enter carrying another stretcher with a dead body.)

#### WOMEN'S CHORUS

One, two, three, four crusts of bread....

#### **ALL CHORUS**

The roll calls go on for hours, but the rags we wear are our own Us lucky Jews, chosen few—

(The Commandant enters, interrupting the chorus)

#### **COMMANDANT**

(Barks.) Roll call, Stand for Roll Call!

(The Nazis walk off stage and dump the body.)

#### COMMANDANT

Get in the line now or I'll beat you to a pulp. Count the Jews!

(The Nazis re-enter. The prisoners stand at attention; the Nazis count them again.)

#### **CHORUS**

Bergen Belsen

#### **TWO NAZIS**

One, two, three blocks of Jews

#### **CHORUS**

We are the lucky Jews who didn't go to Poland

#### TWO NAZIS

Four, five, six blocks of Jews Plus a half block more

# **CHORUS**

We are the chosen few

#### TWO NAZIS

Total Jews, alive...

#### **CHORUS**

We are the lucky Jews

# TWO NAZIS

Total Jews dead...

# **CHORUS**

Of Bergen Belsen... Bergen Belsen.

#### **COMMANDANT**

To carry out the German four-year plan The Berlin Directorate Has decreed that we must Increase our stock of Jews With an expertise in Diamonds. (Ina and her parents enter and take their place at roll call. Jaap sees Ina.)

#### **JAAP**

Ina!

#### **COMMANDANT**

(To Ina & her family.)
You are the lucky ones
The chosen few
You will help us build an industry
You are the Diamond Jews.

(To Ina.) You girl, they say you know shorthand in German.

Report for work as secretary to the Diamond Committee tomorrow.

(The Commandant and the Nazis exit. As soon as they are gone:)

# Scene 2 The things I want to tell you

(Jaap and Ina run behind the barracks. They speak quickly:)

#### <u>INA</u>

You're alive!

# <u>JAAP</u>

You're here!

#### JAAP & INA

I was afraid I'd never see you again.

#### INA

There's so much to say!

#### **JAAP**

The things I want to tell you!

#### INA

Tell me what it's like here.

## <u>IAAP</u>

Everyone is starving.
There's very little food.
So many people are dying—

#### <u>INA</u>

—Tell me something good.

#### <u>IAAP</u>

You're here.

#### INA

There is talk of liberation

There are rumors that the Allies are on the way!

Wouldn't that be wonderful?
I almost don't know what I'd do!

**JAAP** 

I have a vision of what life could be. It's the thing that I hold on to.

<u>INA</u>

What do you see?

<u>JAAP</u>

A life of Ordinary Breakfasts

<u>INA</u>

Ordinary Breakfasts!

Milk for the coffee, Sugar for the tea

Ordinary Breakfasts!

Sitting at a table Eating quietly

Oh what I would give

To live a life filled with ordinary breakfasts!

Eating from a plate...

Drinking coffee from a cup

A spoon to stir the sugar Butter for the bread!

Planning the day ahead

Over breakfast

Over breakfast

Just an ordinary breakfast

Just an ordinary breakfast

with you.

Ordinary mornings Afternoons and nights

Ordinary workdays

Coming home in the evening

Reading the paper Sitting in a chair

Taking a shower! Washing my hair!

Ending each day By sleeping in a bed!

With pillows and blankets

...and you.

And me?

Yes, Jaap, I've come to see.

My dreams of the future include you.

**JAAP** 

The thing I want to tell you?

INA

The thing I want to tell you?

I want...

JAAP & INA

to wake in the morning

Lying next to you,

<u>INA</u> JAAP

Planning the day ahead

Over breakfast

Over breakfast

#### **IAAP & INA**

A life of ordinary breakfasts

With you.

(Manja enters, walking quickly, joining Jaap & Ina behind the barracks.)

#### **MANJA**

The things I want to tell you? Where do I start? The things I want to tell you? I know what's in your heart, Jaap, But think of how this looks!

#### **IAAP**

Manja, try to understand Manja, you're right I don't want to hurt you I'm just trying to hold on in any way I can!

#### **MANJA**

I need to hold on too!
In a place where all decency is dead
In a place where dignity is denied
I need a shred of pride!
I need a shred of pride!

I need a shred of pride! It's all that I've got left.

MANJAJAAPINAMy prideOur loveOur love

#### JAAP & MANJA & INA

Is the thing that I hold on to

Don't take

MANJAJAAPINAMy prideOur loveOur love

# JAAP & MANJA & INA

Away

(Ina's Father (Soep) enters, carrying a letter, joining Manja, Jaap & Ina behind the barracks.)

# **SOEP**

So, it's true what people say! It's right here in this letter...! (Reads.) "My always dearest girl" Explain this, if you can!

#### <u>INA</u>

Father, you don't understand.

#### **SOEP**

I understand too well! He's a married man! There are things I want to tell you!

#### **MANJA**

(to Soep) Oh, the things that I could tell you!

#### SOEP

My good name is all I've got!
(To Ina.) And it's all you've got, as well!
And you're throwing it away!
Throwing it away!
You must give this up at once!
It's why we're not in Poland!
With our name, we might survive!
Oh, the things I want to tell you!
You must hold on to your name!

#### **INA & JAAP**

When I'm with him/her I'm happy I need him/her to survive

## MANIA: SOEP

In a place where all decency is dead My good name is all I've got!
In a place where dignity is denied Our name is all you've got as well

#### INA & JAAP

In this place of death He/she makes me feel alive.

#### MANJA SOEP

My pride is all that I hold on to! My name is all that I hold on to! My pride is all that I hold on to! My name is all that I hold on to!

#### **IAAP & INA**

Our love is all we hold on to!

#### MANIA

(More conciliatory, to Jaap.) Hold on to your love, Jaap.

#### SOEP

(More conciliatory, to Ina.) Hold on to your love

#### MANIA & SOEP

But keep it hidden from view Let it live only through letters That no one can see but you.

## <u>IAA</u>P:

For the sake of your pride, Manja, I'll keep my love hidden away

#### INA

For the sake of your name, Father, I'll keep my love hidden away.

#### ALL

In this place of desperation We must do what we need to survive The thing I want to tell you:

#### <u>INA</u>

Stay alive, Father.

## **SOEP**

Stay alive, Ina.

## <u>IAAP</u>

Stay alive, Manja

## **MANJA**

Stay alive, Jaap.

#### ALL

Just stay alive...

(Ina exits with her father, leaving Jaap and Manja on stage. When they are gone, Manja exits leaving Jaap alone.)

## Scene 3 Steal a pencil for me

(Jaap pulls the pencil stub out of his pocket and tries to write. Lisette enters. She sees Jaap with his pencil and paper.)

## **LISETTE**

He's writing another letter! (Approaching him.) Hello Jaap! (Jaap doesn't respond.)
Aren't you going to say hello?

## **IAAP**

No! I'm not speaking to you! You read my letters! Because of you, everyone knows about Ina and me!

#### **LISETTE**

Oh Jaap! They already knew! Anyone with eyes could see That you and Ina were head over heels in love!

#### IAAP

But from now on I will use another messenger!

#### **LISETTE**

Oh, don't do that! Please! Your letters give me courage They make my spirit rise They give me hope to know

That love could grow in this dreadful, desperate place! Your letters are the things that I hold on to! They are rays of light In this deep and never ending darkness. If you let me deliver your letters,

I promise you can trust in me

Please, Jaap. Please let me be your Messenger of Love!

#### **JAAP**

(giving in, somewhat amused) All right, Lisette, you'll be my messenger...

(Jaap hands it to her; she grabs it eagerly and reads.)

(Crestfallen.) The page is blank!

My pencil is broken, it has no lead. You'll have to speak my message instead.

## **LISETTE**

So, what's the message? (Overly sentimental; flowery:) "My always dearest girl?" "I love you with all my heart?"

JAAP

No, Lisette.

## **LISETTE**

"I ache when we're apart?"

#### **IAAP**

Not that either.

#### **LISETTE**

Well, what, then Jaap?

## **IAAP**

Steal a Pencil for me.

#### **LISETTE**

Steal a Pencil for me? That's it?

## **IAAP**

That's it.

## LISETTE

(Disappointed.) No words of love?

#### **JAAP**

No, not today.

## **LISETTE**

Oh, come on, Jaap!

Just a few words of love

To make your messenger happy!

#### **JAAP**

Just tell Ina to steal a pencil for me.

And then I will write her a few words of love...

(Lisette flies across the stage to Ina. Ina enters.)

## **LISETTE**

Ina! Ina! I have a message from Jaap!

#### <u>INA</u>

(Also rather amused at Lisette's excitement.) All right, Lisette, what is it?

#### LISETTE

Steal a Pencil for me.

#### INA

Steal a Pencil for me? That's it?

## **LISETTE**

Yes, that's it! And hurry!

#### <u>INA</u>

But why?

**LISETTE** 

He wants to write you a few words of love...!

(The Commandant enters and sees Lisette talking to Ina)

#### **COMMANDANT**

No time for talking!

(To Lisette.) You, get to work!

(To Ina.) You, go to your desk, girl!

(Lisette scurries off. Ina follows him into his office.)

#### COMMANDANT

Take down this new order from Berlin.

#### IΝΔ

I need a pencil and paper, sir.

#### COMMANDANT

We're low on supplies. Use mine.

(The Commandant gives her a pencil from his pocket and a pad of paper from his desk. He dictates. She writes.)

#### **COMMANDANT**

2<sup>nd</sup> of February, 1945

The Berlin Directorate has decreed that it is a necessity to bury the dead to stop the spread of Typhus Fever in Bergen Belsen.

Now give it to me. Stay here and do your work.

(Ina finishes writing, rips the decree out of the pad and gives it to him. Commandant goes out. Ina makes sure that he has gone, then begins to write:)

#### **INA**

Dearest Jaap:

Supplies are short; time is too.

I have no pencil to send to you.

No paper either, except for this note

Which is much too small to hold all I want to say.

I will send a pencil when I can;

Until then, I send you my love.

Your Ina

(Commandant comes back in and sees Ina with the letter.)

#### **COMMANDANT**

What are you doing?

(Commandant grabs the pad from her and reads.)

You're wasting my paper to send letters to your lover?

Give me the pencil.

(She does. He pockets it.)

I'll teach you a thing or two!

(He hands her the decree from the Berlin Directorate.)

Go to the women's encampment and give this to the guards.

#### <u>INA</u>

Where's the women's encampment?

#### **COMMANDANT**

On the other side of the camp. Get going!

(Commandant exits.)

## Scene 4 Darkness descends

(Ina carries the letter to the other camp. As she walks, she describes what she sees.)

## <u>INA</u>

On the path

Past the barracks

To a place where we never go

They look even worse than us

Everyone in prison stripes.

Oh, that stench!

Something putrid.

(Two Nazis enter pulling a cart. On the cart is a pile of bodies.)

Dead! Dead! Dead!

(The Nazis stop to chat. Ina doesn't move. She can't. She's horrified by what she sees.)

#### SECOND NAZI

They closed the camp at Auschwitz. The gas chambers too. Those damn Allies are getting close So they brought the prisoners here. All 30,000 of them.

#### **FIRST NAZI**

If you ask me, they should have gassed them, like all the rest.

## SECOND NAZI

(Sees Ina.) Hey you, Jew girl, what do you think you're doing?

#### INA

(Halting, terrified, almost unable to speak) The Commandant told me to give this to you.

(Ina hands him the paper from the Commandant. He reads.)

## SECOND NAZI

(Reads.) Another order from Berlin.

(Ina looks at the bodies in the cart. She starts to shake uncontrollably. She looks like she's going to faint.)

#### SECOND NAZI

(Laughs.) Look at her. She's getting sick!

#### **FIRST NAZI**

Just be glad you're not in Auschwitz, girlie. You know what they do to Jews in Auschwitz? They gas them! That's what! Then they toss them into ovens and burn them!

(Ina runs away, staggering. They laugh, then pick up the cart and pull it off stage.)

## Scene 5 I can't remember your face

(Ina reenters, running and staggering. She goes behind the barracks. She begins to shake uncontrollably. It is evening.)

#### <u>INA</u>

Rudi! Rudi!

Is it true?

Did they do that to you in Poland?

(Rudi appears somewhere on the stage. It must be staged so we know that he is in Ina's imagination and not physically present in Bergen-Belsen. Rudi is hidden in the shadows, more so than in his first appearance in Act 1, scene 5.)

## <u>RUDI</u>

Come here, pretty Ina, kiss me.

#### INA

How I miss you, my Rudi!

#### RUDI

Remember the past Hold on to the hope That the present won't last.

#### INA

I try! But the past keeps slipping away!

## <u>RUDI</u>

Close your eyes, Ina...

#### <u>INA</u>

(She closes her eyes)
I can't see you, Rudi!
I can't remember your face!
(She opens her eyes.) Where did you go?
I can't see you!

#### RUDI

The day belongs to the eye,
The ear, to the night.
Listen! Listen!
(Ina listens)
Can you hear me?
I'm taking flight...
The day belongs to the eye,
The ear, to the night.

#### <u>INA</u>

Where are you Rudi?

#### **RUDI**

Don't look for me, Ina. The day you see my face You will die...

# Scene 6 Passover/Roll Call Contemplation

(The Chorus enters, as does Jaap. The men sit in a circle pulling soles off of shoes. The women huddle in the barracks; they are holding a Passover Seder.)

## **IAAP**

Another Passover is here and still we are not free!

## **WOMEN'S CHORUS**

"And Egypt dealt harshly with us, and oppressed us; They gave us heavy labor."

#### MEN'S CHORUS

The shoes. The endless piles of shoes Where do they come from? Poland?

## **WOMEN'S CHORUS**

"And we cried unto the Lord, the God of our fathers. And the Lord heard our voices..."

#### MEN'S CHORUS

The soles of shoes, Ripped each day from the leather Like the souls of Jews Ripped too soon from life

## **WOMEN'S CHORUS**

"And God saw our plight, our misery and our oppression."

## MEN'S CHORUS

Do you think it's true they were gassed in Poland?

(Ina goes back into the barracks.)

#### **WOMEN'S CHORUS**

"And the Lord freed us from Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm."

#### **COMMANDANT**

(Offstage.) Roll Call! Evening Roll Call!

(Everyone in the barracks gets up.)

#### **LISETTE**

(To Ina.) Oh no, time for roll call again. (Ina runs to the back door.)
Ina! Where are you going?

#### <u>INA</u>

(*To Lisette.*) To the Commandant's office. To steal a pencil for Jaap!

#### **LISETTE**

But Ina! You'll get caught!

#### <u>INA</u>

I have to, I must!

## **LISETTE**

Don't Ina, please! Ina, wait!

(But Ina has slipped out already.)

#### IAAP

(beginning to sing softly) And we cried unto the Lord, the God of our fathers...

#### MEN'S CHORUS

And we cried unto the Lord, the God of our fathers...

#### **JAAP**

...and the Lord heard our voices,

## **MEN'S CHORUS**

...and the Lord heard our voices

#### **IAAP**

and saw our plight, our misery,

(The Commandant and the Two Nazis enter. The prisoners line up for Roll Call.)

## **COMMANDANT**

(Barks.) Roll Call!

Evening Roll Call!

(The two Nazis point with their pencils, indicating where prisoners are to stand. The prisoners follow their directions.)

#### TWO NAZIS

Half-Jews, in the middle! Quarter Jews, in the back! Males on the left, Females on the right!

## **COMMANDANT**

(to Nazis) Count the Jews!

## TWO NAZIS

(Obsessively count the prisoners.) One, two, three blocks of Jews Plus a half block more...
(Lisette is looking off stage for signs of Ina.)

## **FIRST NAZI**

(Stops; to Lisette.) You there. What are you looking at?

#### **LISETTE**

Nothing.

(He smacks Lisette)

## FIRST NAZI

Because of you my count is off I have to start again!

#### COMMANDANT

Stand at attention for Roll Call.

## **SECOND NAZI**

(*To Lisette.*) Eyes straight ahead. Shoulders square.

Mouth shut.

#### (Lisette stands straight, looking straight ahead.)

#### **IAAP**

"And we cried unto the Lord..."

## **CHORUS**

"And we cried unto the Lord..."

## TWO NAZIS

(Counting.) One, two, three blocks of Jews

#### CHORUS

"And the Lord heard our voices..."

#### IAAP

"And the Lord heard our voices..."

## TWO NAZIS

Four, five, six blocks...

## **CHORUS**

The Nazis control our bodies
But not our hearts, not our minds...
We are in bondage
But the mind is free
But the mind is free

(The Nazis stop counting. The prisoners stop singing.)

## **SECOND NAZI**

Someone is missing. The count is off.

We have to start again.

(Lisette looks offstage—nervously—for Ina.)

## **COMMANDANT**

Stand at attention for Roll Call.

#### TWO NAZIS

(Obsessively counting the prisoners.)
One, two, three blocks of Jews
Plus a half block more...

#### **CHORUS**

We are in bondage But the mind is free

#### TWO NAZIS

Four, five, six blocks of Jews

## <u>JAAP</u>

"And we cried unto the Lord..."

#### MEN'S CHORUS

"And we cried unto the Lord..."

#### WOMEN'S CHORUS

Think of our good life back at home..

## **LISETTE**

(To herself; frantically.)
Ina, where are you?
Please hurry back!

#### MEN'S CHORUS

"And the Lord heard our voices...

#### IAAP

"And the Lord heard our voices...

## **WOMEN'S CHORUS**

Walking in Amsterdam on a lovely day....

## **LISETTE**

Get the pencil But don't get caught!

## <u>IAAP</u>

And saw our plight...

## **MEN'S CHORUS**

And saw...

#### FIRST NAZI

Someone is still missing The count is off

#### **COMMANDANT**

Start again,

We'll find who is missing

They can just stand here all day.

(Ina enters—quickly—and scurries into line. She pulls a pencil out of her pocket and shows it to Lisette.)

#### TWO NAZIS

One, two, three blocks of Jews

#### **JAAP**

And the Lord freed us from Egypt

## **CHORUS**

And the Lord freed us from Egypt

#### <u>INA</u>

(To Lisette.) I finally got the pencil!

## **LISETTE**

My dearest girl!

You nearly scared me half to death!

#### MANIA

When I enter a room All the men will surround me Like honeybees.

#### **IAAP**

With a mighty hand and an outstretched arm And awesome power And with signs and wonders...

#### **CHORUS**

With a mighty hand and an outstretched arm And awesome power And with signs and wonders...

## **SOEP**

Oh, that I were back In Amsterdam our beloved city.

(Ina passes the pencil to Lisette. The pencil gets passed to Jaap during this section.)

#### **INA**

At last, he can write to me! A pencil for Jaap!

#### MANIA

Going to parties, dancing all night, dancing all night...

#### **LISETTE**

Rays of light in the darkness

(The COMMANDANT reenters holding a piece of paper.)

#### JAAP

And the Lord freed us from Egypt With a mighty hand and an outstretched arm.

#### **CHORUS**

And the Lord freed us from Egypt With a mighty hand and an outstretched arm.

## TWO NAZIS

One, two, three

## **SOEP**

Amsterdam my beloved city

#### <u>MANIA</u>

Dancing all night, all the men will surround me

#### <u>INA</u>

A pencil for Jaap!

#### **LISETTE**

Rays of light, letters of love

## **JAAP**

"And awesome power, and with mighty hand and outstretched arm..."

#### CHORUS

"And awesome power, and with mighty hand and outstretched arm..."

## **COMMANDANT**

Those lousy Jews!

#### MANJA

All the men will surround me

## **LISETTE**

Rays of Light Letters of love

#### **IAAP**

And awesome power

#### **CHORUS**

And awesome power

## **SOEP**

Oh that I were back.

## **TWO NAZIS**

Four, five, six,...

#### **COMMANDANT**

Get the count right!

## **CHORUS AND PRINCIPALS**

Signs and wonders,

(First Nazi stops in front of Jaap. Note: the pencil must be delivered to Jaap by now.)

<u>FIRST NAZI</u> <u>INA, MANJA, LISETTE, CHORUS</u>

(Referencing Jaap who now has the pencil.) Hey look. <u>JAAP & SOEP</u>

The Jew is smiling. Signs and wonders, Ah...

SECOND NAZI

All the Jews are smiling. Signs and wonders

**FIRST NAZI** 

Hey Jews! Wipe those smiles off your face! Wonders,

SECOND NAZI

Or we'll give you something to stop your smiling. Wonders

Jews!

#### **FIRST NAZI**

Jews! Jews!

## **SECOND NAZI**

Jews!

## TWO NAZIS

Stay in line!

## **COMMANDANT & TWO NAZIS**

Stand and listen!

This will stop your smiling!

## Scene 7 Final transport

## **COMMANDANT**

6th of April, 1945!

(Reads.) The Berlin Directorate has decreed that

Everyone must report for transport!

## **TWO NAZIS**

(To the Chorus.)

Get moving! Get moving!

Everyone go to the trains!

(The Nazis start to herd chorus members off.)

#### **CHORUS**

The Allies must be near

Do we dare to hope?

## **TWO NAZIS**

Get moving! Get moving!

## COMMANDANT

Report for transport!

#### **TWO NAZIS**

Keep moving, keep moving, moving!

(Jaap enters on another part of the stage. It should be clear that he is not in the scene with the others.)

## **JAAP**

Dearest Ina:

I never had the chance to write you another letter.

Our train is leaving

Where we're going, I don't know.

How I wish that I could see you

Just one glance would get me through this day!

My always dearest girl.

Ina, know that whatever happens I will always be yours,

Many kisses,

Farewell.

Your Jaap

(The chorus is ushered into two trains, Ina and Lisette are on one; Jaap and Manja on the other.)

#### **TWO NAZIS**

Get moving! Get moving!

#### **LISETTE**

Come Ina, come with me.

## **COMMANDANT**

Everyone to the trains!

Proceed immediately for transport!

#### **CHORUS**

Do we dare to hope?

## TWO NAZIS

Keep moving, keep moving!

(They herd Ina, Lisette, Soep, and everyone else onto the train.)

## Scene 8 Liberation

(On the train. The chorus sits, stands and changes position to indicate they are on a long journey.)

## **CHORUS**

Three days, three nights Standing, sitting, Sometimes stopped for hours Looking out the window At the barren, ravaged land.

#### **CHORUS**

What lies ahead?
Freedom? Or the final destination?
Six days, six nights
Typhus disease, on the train
People moaning, wracked with pain
People dying day and night
Reaching their final destination.

The train stops.
Gunshots. Bombs.
Is this the beginning or the end?
Over the hill soldiers appear
Telling us we are free. Free!

#### **LISETTE**

Ina, the war is over! We are free!

(Ina doesn't respond; she stands there, numb while all around her, the chorus pours out of the train.)

(In a different part of the stage, Manja enters with Jaap, holding him up. He staggers, barely able to stand. He is very sick. It should be staged so we know that he is not in the same place as Ina.)

## **CHORUS**

We are free

#### **MANIA**

Jaap, the war is over! We are free!

#### **IAAP**

(In a fever)

Free...free...free...

And the Lord freed us from Egypt

With an outstretched arm...

Free....

(Jaap collapses, stricken with typhus.)

#### **MANJA**

Jaap? (No response.) Jaap? (Shakes him.) Jaap?

#### **CHORUS**

We are free!

#### MANIA

Someone help me! My husband is dying!

## **CHORUS**

Free!

## **MANIA**

Help me please!

(Two chorus members come over and look at Jaap, who appears to be dead. Manja holds on to him, crying; they pry him away from her, and carry him off.)

#### WOMEN'S CHORUS

(Off.) We are free!

## MEN'S CHORUS

(Off.) We are free!

(Manja slowly gets up and exits. Ina is left alone on stage.)

## <u>INA</u>

Free. I am free. But what kind of freedom will this be If I am lost to you And you are taken from me?

# Scene 9 A reunion in Amsterdam

The war is over. The chorus enters, walking slowly. They are all wearing nicer clothes.

#### **CHORUS**

We are the lucky ones
The chosen few who survived.
The fortunate Jews who were passed over,
The lucky ones.

## **MEN'S CHORUS**

Every day we search Amsterdam For those who are missing.

#### **WOMEN'S CHORUS**

Every day we search the hospitals, the stations and squares.

## **CHORUS**

Every day we search the names on the lists of the dead. And every day, we wait We wait for news Of those who have been found alive.

(Soep enters with Ina. The chorus crowds around him.)

#### **CHORUS**

Mr. Soep! Mr. Soep! Have you heard of new arrivals? Anyone coming back today?

## **SOEP**

No, nothing today. Maybe tomorrow.

#### **CHORUS**

But Mr. Soep! Mr. Soep! Tell us something! Our hearts are aching for those we love.

## **SOEP**

I am sorry
Come back tomorrow.
Maybe there will be news tomorrow.
(The crowd is dejected; they start to leave. He calls after them)
But for now, let us all give thanks
That we are back at home in Amsterdam,
In our own city.

#### **CHORUS**

Yet even though we're home, At night in our dreams, We are still in Bergen-Belsen.

## (The Chorus exits.)

## **SOEP**

Come, Ina. Let's go back home.

Maybe there will be news of Jaap tomorrow.

#### <u>INA</u>

No, father, I must go look for him.

## **SOEP**

Suit yourself.

(SOEP exits. Ina starts to exit. Manja enters on the opposite side of the stage)

## **MANJA**

Ina?

## **INA**

Yes? (Sees Manja.) Manja? Manja!

## **MANJA**

Hello Ina. I just arrived in Amsterdam yesterday I wanted to see you right away

#### INA

But where's Jaap?

## **MANJA**

He's not here, he's—

## <u>INA</u>

—No!

#### **MANIA**

Oh no, Ina!

Ina don't cry!

Jaap is alive.

#### INA

He's alive!

## <u>MANJA</u>

He almost died of Typhus Fever But I nursed him back to life. He is arriving in Amsterdam today.

## <u>INA</u>

Oh, thank you, Manja! Thank you! All the fear, all the anguish, gone! Gone in a single moment! Gone with three little words: Jaap is alive! Jaap is alive!

Jaap is alive:

But it must have been so difficult for you to come here.

## **MANJA**

No, not at all. It's time for us to part and start anew It's time to build a new life He's a good man, but he's not for me

#### <u>INA</u>

Jaap is alive!

#### **MANJA**

You and Jaap were meant to be.

(Jaap enters, looking awful: he's skinny, bald, dressed in rags and missing his teeth.)

#### **JAAP**

My always dearest girl!

(Ina runs to him.)

## <u>INA</u>

Jaap! Jaap!

I've been looking for you everywhere!

You look—awful!

#### JAAP

Yes, I know! But I'm alive!

#### <u>INA</u>

You are alive!

## Trio: INA, JAAP, MANJA

We are the lucky ones The chosen few who survived The Fortunate Jews Amazed just to be alive.

#### <u>INA</u>

Rudi, Rudi...

(Rudi enters. Like before, we should know that he is not physically present, but instead, is in Ina's mind.)

## <u>RUDI</u>

I was not one of the chosen few, Ina, my love. It's time for you to start anew.

## <u>INA</u>

Without you...?

RUDI

Without me.

Leave me to my fate, Ina.

Your future is bright, embrace it

## Quartet: The following sections are sung together:

#### JAAP:

Here's the woman I will marry
Look how lovely she is
And now I know her courage,
And now I know her strength
And now I know I'll be with her for all my life.

And there's the woman I had married We have been through so much together I wish her a good life as we both start anew

Here's the woman I will marry Look how lovely she is And now I know her courage, And now I know her strength And now I know I'll be with her all my life.

#### INA:

Here I am with the man I love Saying farewell to the boy I loved Oh Rudi, Rudi, I will never forget you, how could I ever?

How can I forget you? But now I know I must leave you to your fate And embrace a bright future with the man I love

Here I am with the man I love, Saying farewell to the boy I loved, Now I know I embrace a bright future.

#### **RUDI:**

Ina, it is time to leave me to my fate I belong to the night, you belong to the day. Your future is bright, Ina, embrace it with the man you love.

Ina, it is time to leave me to my fate I belong to the night, you belong to the day. Embrace your future, embrace your future.

#### MANJA

There's the man that is my husband A good man, it's true, We have been through so much together But now it's time for us both to start anew

There's the man that is my husband A good man, it's true, Now it's time for us to part.

## **JAAP**

Thank you, Manja.

#### **MANJA**

But of course, Jaap.

#### **INA**

Farewell, my Rudi.

(Rudi exits slowly. When Rudi has left, Ina turns to Jaap who holds out his arms.)

## **JAAP**

My always dearest girl!

#### INA

(With affectionate humor.) What am I going to do with this fellow?

#### MANIA

You're going to marry him! And you're going to do it quickly. I want a divorce!

(The Chorus enters carrying a table, coffee cups etc. They set the table center stage)

#### MANJA

Today, my husband gets married!

(Chorus members carry in two chairs. Ina sits on one; Jaap on the other. The chorus gently lifts them up, and holds them briefly in the air, then sets them down, in their chairs, at the table.)

#### **JAAP**

Dearest girl?

#### <u>INA</u>

Yes, Jaap?

## <u>JAAP</u>

Shall we have breakfast?

#### <u>INA</u>

Yes, my darling, always.

(Ordinary Breakfast begins. Chorus slowly backs away, leaving Jaap and Ina center stage, alone, eating breakfast at the table.)

## **END OF OPERA**