

HENDEL

You're right. I'm sorry.

(she sweeps up her
baby and buries her
head in his
blankets. Her
voice breaks)

I'm so sorry baby. I'm so sorry.

Blackout

SCENE 3

The curtains open to a small house. SARA and SHOLOM sit by the table. SARA is mending a skirt, SHOLOM has a sefer. There is a room divider where GITTEL and other children sleep. Though SARA and SHOLOM focus on the conversation, they continue their tasks as well, looking up for especially serious or intense parts.

SARA

Sholom, it's only going to get more and more dangerous. We need to do something now before its too late!

SHOLOM

It may already be too late. Last week they cleared out the entire street two blocks away from here. How long do you think it will take for them to get to us?

SARA

I know. That's why there's no time to waste!

SHOLOM

(sighing)

Sara, what do you propose we do? There's nowhere to run, nowhere to hide. And how would we survive with three little children to feed? And winter - how would we keep everyone warm? Where would we stay? How would we -

SARA

(interrupting)

I know! That's not what I meant. I know that there's no way we could escape. Even if we managed not to be caught, we wouldn't survive for very long anyhow. No, that's not what I was referring to.

SHOLOM

So then what do you mean?

SARA

(pauses for a moment
and gathers her
thoughts)

We can save Gittel.

SHOLOM
(surprised)

Gittel?

GITTEL stirs and moans softly in her sleep. SARA darts a look towards the room divider and motions SHOLOM to keep quiet.

SARA
I heard... They say that there's an orphanage that will take children from ages 5-10.

SHOLOM
(gently)
And how much time until the Germans come to take them too?

SARA looks at him steadily.

SHOLOM
(with a questioning glance)
You don't mean... You can't seriously be talking about... No!

SARA
(begging)
Sssh! Sholom! You'll wake the children!

SHOLOM
Sara! Absolutely not! How could you even think of such a thing! To entrust our daughter to goyim? To place our precious neshama in a convent and allow her to be brought up as a goy? Is that really a fate better than death?

SARA
(voice breaking)
I know Sholom. I know! Do you not think I wrestled with the same questions over and over? I figured I could shield her, save her, keep her close to me.

(crying)
And then they took my cousin Chaya. And I see her children's terrified faces every moment of the day. They keep asking me, "Where's Mama? When is Mama coming home?" And Gittel -
(she breaks off in sobs)

And Gittel looks at me and she knows Sholom. She knows! She knows that Chaya isn't coming back. And she looks at me,

looking for a sign that I won't abandon her like Chaya did her children.

She buries her face in her hands and cries. GITTEL sirs in bed and sits up, listening quietly. SHOLOM sits with a bowed head for a few moments. SARA eventually calms down.

SHOLOM

And - and if we do this? If we sent her to the nuns?

SARA

They promised they would keep her safe and return her to us after the war. Pesha sent her Zeesha there last week and that's what they told her.

GITTEL tiptoes to the room divider and puts her ear to it.

SHOLOM

(shaking his head)

But how? How can we entrust her into the hands of goyim?

SARA

Sholom, Gittel is a smart girl. She'll remember everything I've taught her. She'll remember.

SHOLOM

(closes his eyes and takes a deep breath)

Well, if we've come to a decision, we have no time to waste. Do you know how to smuggle her out?

SARA

Yes, Pesha told me -

GITTEL comes running out, sobbing and crying. She flings herself into SARA's arms.

GITTEL

No Mama, no! Don't send me away! Don't leave me! Mama! Mama!

She continues crying and
sobbing. SARA holds her tight
and cries with her. Blackout.

SCENE 4

ESCAPE DANCE. SARA and GITTEL emerge from stage left, both cloaked in black. SARA carries a small bundle. They creep stealthily, trying to remain discreet. Other dancers are village women, police men, soldiers, etc. They come in groups, blocking the way as they dance across stage. SARA and GITTEL try to evade them or dance around them. Eventually, SARA and GITTEL manage to make their way across stage. The dancers finish up and clear out.

Curtains close. SISTER MARGARET stands stage left, waiting. SARA and GITTEL walk in front of the curtain from stage right, slowly and with plodding footsteps. SARA stops at stage center and lifts her eyes heavenward for a brief, intense moment of prayer. Then she turns and crouches next to GITTEL, holding her arms. She searches her eyes.

SARA

Gittel.

(voice breaks)

Gittel mein kind.

(she forces herself
under control)

You'll - you'll remember everything I taught you, yes?

GITTEL

(tearfully)

Yes Mama.

SARA

And - and you'll never forget that you're a Jewish child?

GITTEL

Yes Mama.

SARA