OF NO PLEASANT SIDE

By

Frank S. Petrilli

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For Marie…

CHARACTER LIST

(in order of appearance)

Ernst Steiger, Haupsturmführer (SS) -- A highly educated man. A t
rue officer and a gentleman. Eloquent. Fair. Personable. Upper- class. He reports directly to the Der Gruppenführer. (*Middle Age*)

Reverend Mother Immaculata –- A Sister of Saint Ludmila. Pragmatic. Hard-working. Educated. Stalwart. She is the Mother Superior of Saint Ludmila's Infirmary. (*Middle Age*)

Frieda Tobanczyk, a Midwife – Polish. Gruff. Brash. Crass. She is a drinker and a chain-smoker. (*Middle Age*)

Sister Agata –- An aging Sister of Saint Ludmila. Tough. Frank. Forthright. Puckish at times. She can get cranky when hungry and has a sweet tooth. (*Senior*)

Doktor Hodža –- Czechoslovakian. A banty-rooster of a man from the Hospital in Prague. He is the attending physician of Saint
Ludmila's, and a bit high-strung. (*Early Middle Age*)

Otto Von Straub, Obersturmführer (SS) –- A boorish, pompous show-off with a forceful demeanor. He struggles to be high-class but is not. Adjutant to Der Gruppenführer. (*Early Middle Age*)

Korporal Franz Jaeger (SS-VT) – A sensitive young man who is a music student back home. He finds himself trapped within his heart and the Party-Line. (*Young Adult*)

Leutnantin Gerta Meier, Wachführerin (DRK) – A military German Red Cross Head Nurse. A strict, severe woman bearing the burden of her position and saddled with the Party-Line. (*Adult*)

Jutta Mohr, Haupthelferin (DRK) –- A civilian German Red Cross Nurse. Serious. Dark. Stealth. Lean. Quiet. She is Gerta Meier's number-one. (*Adult*)

Trude Beck, Oberhelferin (DRK) -- A civilian German Red Cross Nurse. Fair-haired. Zaftig. Robust. Friendly. Disingenuous. She is Gerta Meier's number-two. (*Early Adult*)

Lydi Groote, Assistierende Krankenschwester (BDM) – She is a volunteer Nursing Assistant, an innocent, but goofy young lady; a country-bumpkin with an odd guffaw. Clumsy but pleasant, with strong optimism and a positive attitude. (*Lates Teen to Early 20's*)

Der Gruppenführer: Das Reichsprotektor of Bohemia, Moravia und Sudetenland (SS) – Charming. Well-spoken. Lean. Charismatic, but lethal. He is the definitive CEO for the Third Reich who has total power over the Sudetenland. (*Adult*)

OF NO PLEASANT SIDE

ACT I
SCENE 1

Lights Up A concentrated area is lit downstage left. DOKTOR HODŽA speaks directly to the audience.

HODŽA. On that dark day in '33, when Der Führer came to power, he promised to tear-up the Treaty of Versailles to pieces and take back the land that had been stripped from Germany. True to his word, after taking back Austria by force, Der Führer demanded that the Sudetenland region of Czechoslovakia be handed over to him.
In order to prevent war, the Prime Minister of Britain, Neville Chamberlain, met with Der Führer in search of a remedy. Chamberlain forged his proud Munich Agreement that stated Adolph Hitler could take back the Sudetenland region of Czechoslovakia -- provided that Der Führer promised not to invade the rest of Czechoslovakia. Of course, Hitler agreed, and in September of 1938, Chamberlin signed a pact with the Devil himself, thus securing "Peace in Our time."*(Hodža moves to exit, then turns back)* In March of 1939, just five-and-a-half months later, Der Führer invaded the rest of Czechoslovakia. *(Lights Down. Lights Up. Reich Main Security Office (RSHA) Prague, Sudetenland. Mid to Late Summer, 1939 A nondescript desk, a desk chair, and a plain chair sit in a concentrated area downstage right. On the desk sits a practical desk lamp with stacks of official files and folders. An SS insignia desk-weight is prominent on the desk-top. HAUPSTURMFÜHRER ERNST STEIGER, a sharp SS Officer, with a keen eye of an eagle, sits behind the desk. MOTHER SUPERIOR IMMACULATA, dressed in a full white Roman Catholic habit, sits in the plain chair and is quite composed. Steiger stares at Immaculata with intent, then, he chuckles to himself in disbelief.)*
STEIGER. I am simply amazed.
IMMAC. Amazed?
STEIGER. Amazed at what I see before me.

IMMAC. Have you never seen a Catholic Nun before?
STEIGER. You do not look like a killer.
IMMAC. Do not let my veil and tunic fool you.
STEIGER. I do not fool easily; I assure you.
IMMAC. (*spoofs*) Ach! Thank the Lord for small miracles.
STEIGER. Such humor, Mutter! Imagine...such light-heartedness, particularly at this heavy time in your life, such as this.
IMMAC. There is much to be said for a bit of humor, particularly in weighty times, such as these.
STEIGER. I look into your eyes, and I do not see the capability to take another life; not intentionally, that is.
IMMAC. In times like these, one can never know another's capacity.
STEIGER. I have served the Fatherland in combat during many battles. I have seen lives taken; many lives taken by many killers. I know the look of a killer. That killer-look is not in you.
IMMAC. But I did...*kill*.
STEIGER. (*correcting*) Nein. They say you committed *murder*.
IMMAC. I did commit murder. I poisoned them.
STEIGER. So you say, Reverend Mother. So you say. *(Slight Pause. Steiger looks through the case files)* Tell me about this Tzofi Getzl.
IMMAC. Tzofi Getzl...the baby?
STEIGER. Yes.
IMMAC. You want to know about a baby?
STEIGER. Yes. The baby. The baby Getzl.
IMMAC. *(Immaculata takes a breath)* Very late, one afternoon, one of the local midwives, Frieda Tobanczyk, brought the baby, Tzofi Getzl, to Saint Ludmila's Infirmary....*(Crossfade.)*

Saint Ludmila's Infirmary, Libedec, Sudetenland. Mid to Late summer, 1939 At right is the entrance to a modest foyer, which is also utilized as a waiting room and parlor. Up right of center are Double Doors leading out to a small terrace. A small fire-place wall breaks center left of the double doors leading to the hallway that leads to the rest of the building, its wards, quarters, and kitchen.

At center, in the hallway, is a wall-shrine of the Strahov Madonna. A votive candle flickers. Flowers adorn it, and holy water sit slightly below it. Down center is a wooden table with chairs around it. Down left, is an administrator's desk, with telephone, and typewriter table and files, shoved into a closet. A painting of Saint Ludmila hangs above the desk. Crucifixes and framed Holy Images adorn the walls. Immaculata steps into scene and stands by the table. She listens to FRIEDA TOBANCZYK, a weathered midwife, who sits, across from her. Frieda chain smokes, and drinks Weinbrand that she pours into a glass from a bottle. On the table is a baby basket with pink blankets peeling around the top. It is dusk.

FRIEDA. I knew the kid was sick the minute I cut the cord.
IMMAC. How so?
FRIEDA. It did not look right. It was listless. It did not cry.
IMMAC. Did not cry?
FRIEDA. It just whimpered. It was pathetic. Gasping for air. Sucking for life.
IMMAC. The poor child
FRIEDA. The mother and father insisted I bring it to you – "To save its life." Or try to, at least. So here it is.
IMMAC. A boy or a girl?
FRIEDA. I am not sure. A girl, I suppose. The mother gave it pink blankets. *(Frieda pours another brandy and smashes out her cigarette.)* You will take it off my hands?
IMMAC. Of course we will take it. (*calls off*) Sister Agata! *(Immaculata sits at the table across from Frieda)*
FRIEDA. *(Frieda lights another cigarette)* I am not responsible for the costs!
IMMAC. Have I ever sent you a bill, Frieda Tobanczyk?
FRIEDA. (*Frieda slugs her brandy)* I will not pay it! I have enough debt in my life
IMMAC. I would never ask you to pay. *(SISTER AGATA**,** an ageing woman enters. She, too, is dressed in a full white Roman Catholic habit. She hovers over the baby-basket)* Sister Agata, please place this baby into a crib with hot water bottles, to be kept warm all night. We will need to feed it, as well.

FRIEDA. It will not eat, either. The mother tried. It rejected the teat. *(Frieda rises to exit.)* I told the parents that they should try, again.
IMMAC. To feed her?
FRIEDA. No. They should try, again, to make another kid.
IMMAC. Good Lord.
FRIEDA. There's nothing good about that kid. It's a curse rather than a blessing. *(Frieda downs her brandy and gathers her things)* The kid's credentials are in the basket. Thanks for the Weinbrand. (*Frieda exits. Immaculata puts the tray with the Weinbrand bottle and glasses away to the credenza, then fans the air of cigarette smoke)*
AGATA. *(Agata enters)* That child is not full-term.
IMMAC. I am more than aware that the child is not full-term.
AGATA. Here is her papers (*reads aloud*) "Tzofi Getzl." - She may not make the night.
IMMAC. I fear that the most. We can ask for a miracle, can we not? We have before. *(Immaculata and Agata move to a statue of the Strahov Madonna. Agata lights a votive candle. The Two Sisters make the sign of the cross* (+) *and pray)*
IMMAC. (+) In nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti. Amen. -- Salve Regina, Mater misericordiae.
IMMAC. and **AGATA.** Vita, dulcedo, et spes nostra, salve
IMMAC. *(The two Sisters pray quietly and quickly amongst themselves)* (+) In nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti. Amen.
AGATA. *(Immacualta and Agata move from the shrine.)* Should not that midwife have seen it?
IMMAC. Any good midwife would recognize that. I am sure Frieda Tobanczyk knew full well that this baby was not full-term.
AGATA. And yet, she brought the child to us to care for, as if we do not have enough on our hands, as it is. Today, alone, we had two lacerations, a sprained wrist, and a broken finger.
IMMAC. Aga-
AGATA. Now, we have work to do, rounds to make, supper to deliver, bed pans to clean. Ja, Mutter Oberin?

IMMAC. Yes, Sister Agata! It is that time of day, is it not? (*Immaculata moves to exit)* I made a large pot of Kartoffelsuppe, today. *(She turns down the Waiting Room lights)* Hopefully we will have enough left over so we can eat tonight.

AGATA. It would be nice to eat a meal, tonight. Oh, to have some black bread, with it, as well!

IMMAC. Now you *are* asking for a miracle. (*Immaculata and Agata exit. Pause. The Waiting Room is still. The votive candle under the Madonna flickers. A Military Transport Vehicle is heard pulling up to the entrance. Headlights flash the walls. Footsteps approach the entrance. KORPORAL FRANZ JAEGER enters. He scans the room. Franz opens the door. OBERSTURMFÜHRER OTTO VON STRAUB enters and scans the room)*

VON STRAUB. Is everyone dead or asleep, Korporal?

FRANZ. I do not know, sir. All seems quiet. It is a possibility that they are in another ward.

VON STRAUB. Impossible. This is a country clinic for peasants, Korporal, not a hospital. The nearest hospital is in Prague.

FRANZ. Yes, sir.

VON STRAUB. Here they stitch wounds, set breaks, wipe the asses of the elderly, and treat babies with the colic and the croup.

FRANZ. Yes, sir.

VON STRAUB. Find the Mother Nurse or whatever they call her. I'll wait here.

FRANZ. Yes, sir.

VON STRAUB. And get some god damn light in this room!

FRANZ. *(Franz turns on the lights, and exits)* Jawohl, Herr Oberst!

Von Straub spots the bottle of Weinbrand, pours a glassful and drinks. He pours another and sets the glass at the table. He pulls a cigarette from a cigarette case, puts it into a cigarette holder, clenches the holder in his teeth and searches for matches, but cannot find any. Von Straub eyes the votive candle, takes it from under the Strahov Madonna statue and lights his cigarette. He places the votive candle by his schnapps and sits. Von Straub draws on his

cigarette, and sips his brandy Slight Pause. Immaculata rushes in. Franz follows behind her. Von Straub rises, clicks his heels and bows his head)

VON STRAUB. Ach! Frau Mutter! Guten Abend.

IMMAC. I beg your pardon!

VON STRAUB. Guten Abend, Frau Mutter, ja?

IMMAC. It is either "Reverend Mother," or "Mother Superior," Herr Oberst, but definitely not "Madam Mother."

VON STRAUB. (*smiles*) You guessed my rank!

IMMAC. My father was a Colonel in the Great War. He had a similar swagger as you.

VON STRAUB. (*forces a chuckle*) Obersturmführer Otto Von Straub - Adjutant to Der Gruppenführer: Das Reichsprotektor of Bohemia, Moravia und Sudetenland. "Heil Hitler."

IMMAC. Sister Immaculata - Mutter Oberin of this modest clinic for the Holy Father, Pope Pius XII- and, "peace be with you."

VON STRAUB. (*chuckles*) Ah ha, Mutter, you have a sense of humor. Sehr gut! But of whom do you report to?

IMMAC. Monsignor Hugo Kral of Saint Václav's in Prague.

VON STRAUB. Hugo Kral... Hugo Kral. I am familiar with the name, but do not know him personally. *(Von Straub sits back down, and pours another brandy)* Perhaps I will pay him a visit, one day.

IMMAC. Perhaps. *(Immaculata changes tact)* And what do I owe the courtesy of this visit from you, Herr Oberst? I see you have found our brandy.

VON STRAUB. It is quite good, Mutter. Danke. Shall I pour one for you?

IMMAC. No thank you. Weinbrand is for guests only.

VON STRAUB. I appreciate your generosity. *(Von Straub snaps his fingers. Franz produces an itinerary, unfolds it and lays it out on the table, and steps back. Von Straub lights another cigarette with the votive candle. Then, Von Straub looks at Agata, then back to Immaculata)*

VON STRAUB. (*sotto voce*) Mutter, may I speak to you in private?

IMMAC. Of course. (*turns to*) Thank you, Sister Agata**.** You may continue serving supper to our patients. *(Agata does not move)* I am fine, Agata! If I need you, I will call you...I promise. *(Agata retreats and exits)*

VON STRAUB. (*to Franz*) You! Wait outside by the vehicle. *(Franz clicks his heels and exits)* Now, Mutter. We have many plans to discuss with you. Many plans. Important plans. *(Von Straub beckons Immaculata to sit and join him)* Specific plans about the future of the "New Eternal Germany." *(Immaculata sits. Lights down.)*

SCENE 2

The Infirmary Office - the next morning. Immaculata is standing at her desk, on the telephone, and paces as she converses.

IMMAC. Yes, Monsignor Kral. Yes. Yes, Monsignor. I see. But of course we will make room-... But, Monsignor- ...But...Yes, I understand...But may I-... may I also-...Yes, Monsignor. *(Agata enters).* We will. Yes. Yes, of course...Danke... Gott segne Sie, Monsignore Kral. *(She hangs up and sits)*
AGATA. Our prayers were answered. Baby Tzofi Getzl is still alive, and has eaten, and sleeps quietly.
IMMAC. (+) Gott sei Dank im Himmel! I hope she finds the will to thrive.
AGATA. (+) Only time will tell.
IMMAC. I just received a telephone call from Saint Václav. Herr Oberst wastes no time. He visited Monsignor Kral first thing, this morning. Herr Oberst actually interrupted morning Mass. Der Monsignor was not pleased.
AGATA. Did Herr Oberst drink all of Monsignor's alter wine, too?
IMMAC. This is no time for levity, Agata**.** (*takes a breath*) You better prepare yourself.
AGATA. Prepare for what, Reverend Mother?
IMMAC. We are having visitors.
AGATA. Visitors?
IMMAC. Guests...from Berlin.
AGATA. Guests? *(sits)* Who?
IMMAC. Observers. Advisors. Trainers.
AGATA. Why? Why do we need someone to train us?
IMMAC. To show us a better way. A superior way. The New German way.

AGATA. (*sarcastic*) Someone is going to show me a "better way" to clean a bed-pan? Alleluja!
IMMAC. Agata**,** be agreeable. Bitte. I need your cooperation. Der Monsignor needs our cooperation. The Vatican needs our cooperation.
AGATA. Bah!
IMMAC. They are bringing us supplies, and medicine.
AGATA. Well, there's a miracle. I will do as I'm told, then, but I will not be happy.
IMMAC. Neither will I, but we must do what we must do. *(Slight pause.)*
AGATA. Do we need to feed them, too? You stretch the potatoes thin enough as it is!
IMMAC. I am sure Herr Oberst will make for their provisions, but just in case, I will add extra cabbage to the zuppe...just for tonight, at least.
IMMAC. *(Agata turns to exit)* Sister Agata – There is one more thing.
AGATA. Gott im Himmel, was? What else?
IMMAC. We must make accommodations, here, for three guests.
AGATA. Guests! Who?
IMMAC. Herr Oberst's Wachführerin, and two of her nurses.
AGATA. Die Wachführerin! Why do we need another Chief Nurse? You are the Mother Superior, here. You are the Chief Nurse, not some fancy egg-head from Berlin!
IMMAC. Sister Agata! No grumbling. Please!
AGATA. Ja, Mutter Oberin. *(DOKTOR HODŽA, an aging banty-rooster of a man, enters wearing a dapper, traditional suit and hat. He carries his black medical bag and a sack of fresh Kolache*)
HODŽA. (*in Czechoslovakian*) Dobré ráno! Dobré ráno!
IMMAC. Ach! Good morning to you, Doktor Hodža! What a pleasant surprise! We didn't expect to see you until the weekend
HODŽA. I have fresh Kolache. I hope you have some hot coffee made.
AGATA. No, but I will be more than happy to brew some, particularly for fresh Kolache!
IMMAC. *(Agata scurries off to the kitchen.)* Bless you, Doktor, but you did not come all this way for Káva a Kolache.

HODŽA. I received a visit, early this morning, from an Obersturmführer Von Straub.
IMMAC. He wastes no time, that one. What do the English say: "The early bird catches its worm?"
HODŽA. Well, this bird is directly from Berlin, and I was the worm in his beak bright and early in the morning.
IMMAC. So was Monsignor Kral, Herr Doktor. He telephoned me, just now.
HODŽA. Oh no! Two worms in one beak! This bird might be an eagle.
IMMAC. Yes, I think so...a German Eagle.
HODŽA. More of the Imperial kind of eagle. A Reichsadler, I would venture to say.
IMMAC. He is imposing. I will admit it.
HODŽA. Agreed. I expect Herr Oberst to be here, shortly, or so he said. I cannot imagine what the urgency is, on his part. He must be following orders, I suppose, strict orders from Berlin.
HODŽA. (*Doktor Hodža moves to Immaculata with an alarm*) I caution you, Mother Immaculata, do not take Von Straub or his people lightly. They are a serious force to be reckoned with. They ask for complete capitulation...absolute obedience - and a word to the wise...do not, under any circumstances, challenge them. Question them, with respect, for clarification only, but do not question their authority, nor disagree with their principles. These "Eagles" have keen eyes, fierce claws, razor-sharp beaks, and a robust taste for blood. *(Immaculata is speechless*) You are an educated women, Reverend Mother. I ask you, now, to differentiate between the "right" answers, and the "wise" answers – no matter how much they conflict. (*closing in)* Reverend Mother, as is oft times said: "Let wisdom be your guide."
AGATA. *(Agata enters all smiles. She grabs at the bag of Kolache as a pirate would a treasure)* Come! Come! Come! Káva a Kolache in the kitchen. It is warmer in there, as well.
IMMAC. But first, Doktor Hodža needs to stop and see Tzofi Getzl.
AGATA. (*to Hodža*) Ja. Ja. Ja. You see the baby, and I will be in the kitchen. (*grumpy*) Forgive me if I start without you! (*takes a Kolache out of the sack*)

IMMAC. *(Agata exits back to the kitchen with the bag of Kolache.)* We must forgive Sister Agata**.** She is getting cranky in her old age. *(Crossfade.)*

Steigers office. Hodža steps into scene and sits across from Steiger. Steiger stares down at Hodža as the Doktor pulls at his shirt collar. He wants to loosen his tie.

STEIGER. How long have you been at the hospital in Prague?
HODŽA. Since nineteen-twenty eight. Eleven years.
STEIGER. And how long have you been the resident physician, there, for St Ludmila's in Libedec?
HODŽA. About eight years or so.
STEIGER. You visit the Infirmary once a week.
HODŽA. Usually on the weekends. Saturdays, mostly.
STEIGER. You spend Sunday with your family?
HODŽA. Yes.
STEIGER. Your wife, Zuzka, and your two girls, Kaja and Janicka
HODŽA. (*alarmed*) Why, yes!
STEIGER. Do not be surprised, Herr Doktor. We are very thorough.
STEIGER. *(Steiger shifts through his notes without looking up)* Tell me about Gerta Meier.
HODŽA. Gerta Meier. Frau Leutnantin? The chief nurse?
STEIGER. Yes. I am curious of your impression of her. How did you find her?
HODŽA. I found her "by-the-book." *(He nervously pulls at his collar, again.)* She was very fastidious about her duties. From the few times I met her, I could tell that she was a no-nonsense individual to contend with.(*He struggles*) She must have been a very good student *(positive, with a forced smile)* The "top of her class." *(Slight pause as Steiger keeps staring at him)* Uh...She...she... . (*fretful*) She must be sorely missed by her hospital in Berlin...that she worked at, you know, before she came here to Libedec (*catches his breath*) I...I know...I know I would...miss her...at my hospital. *(Hodža forces a weak chuckle. Steiger writes more notes. Hodža strains to peek at what is being written.)*
STEIGER. (*without looking up*) When did you meet Gerta Meier?

HODŽA. The first day she arrived at Saint Ludmila's Infirmary...with Herr Oberst.
STEIGER. Obersturmführer Von Straub?
HODŽA. Ja. Ja. Von Straub... Otto Von Straub. *(Crossfade.)*

Saint Ludmilla's Infirmary – late morning. Korporal Franz Jaeger enters the Infirmary and scans the room. He then opens the door for Von Straub, who enters and scans the room

VON STRAUB. Is this place always an empty egg-shell?*(Von Straub moves to the votive candle, takes it from under the Strahov Madonna statue, places it on the table, puts a cigarette in his cigarette holder and lights it.)* Find these people. *(Franz exits to the rest of the Clinic. NURSE JUTTA MOHR enters. She is a dark, severe woman in a nurse's uniform with a Red Cross arm band. She is carrying two white medical containers with the Red Cross symbol on them. She sets them on the table, lights a cigarette from the votive candle and moves to the side. NURSE TRUDE BECK enters. She is a fair-haired, zaftig woman in a nurse's uniform with a Red Cross arm band. She is carrying three pieces of luggage. She sets them down by the corner and sits, quietly leafing through a magazine. WACHFÜHRERIN GERTA MEIER enters. She is in a woman's skirted military uniform with garrison cap, a neatly tied neck-tie against a clean shirt, and with a German Red Cross Eagle and Swastika arm band. Gerta has an attaché case in her arms with a German Red Cross Eagle emblem on it. Gerta scans the room, and stands close to Von Straub. Pause. Immaculata, Agata and Doktor Hodža enter from the kitchen followed by Franz. Agata has a half-eaten donut in her hand, and Doktor Hodža a napkin tucked in under his chin. Trude rises.)*
HODŽA. Dobré ráno!...I mean, Guten Morgen, Herr Oberst! We have Káva a Kolache waiting in the kitchen. We would be more than happy to bring it out for all to enjoy. *(turns to)* Yes, Reverend Mother?
IMMAC. *(Immaculata pulls the napkin away from under Doktor Hodža's chin)* But of course, Herr Doktor. Who can pass up fresh Kolache a Káva!

VON STRAUB. I have no time for such frivolities, Mutter. (*forces a smile*) Maybe another day. (*turns to*) Danke, Herr Doktor. *(Agata pockets her Kolache)* May I introduce to you Wachführerin Gerta Meier.
GERTA. Guten Morgen, Herr Doktor. (*raise an arm*) Heil Hitler!
HODŽA. (*raise an arm*) Heil Hitler!
VON STRAUB. As you can see, Gerta Meier has a small staff of two. I am sure that they will be of no trouble for you at all.
HODŽA. None, Herr Oberst. We have arrangements all the ready to be implemented, just as you have requested.
VON STRAUB. Gut. I am leaving der Korporal, and a vehicle, at her disposal. (*turns to*) Korporal! Bring in the boxes of medicine and medical supplies and sundry.
GERTA. Take care with those boxes, Korporal. There are glass ampules in those cases.
FRANZ. *(Franz rushes off as commanded)* Jawhol, Frau Leutnantin.
VON STRUAB. (*to Hodža)* Please extend all courtesies to Frau Leutnantin Meier as you would to me.
HODŽA. It will be my pleasure.
VON STRAUB. (*a crescendo*) Leutnantin Meier has important work to do for the good health of the Fatherland, and for the future of the New Germany. She has her orders, Herr Doktor, specific orders. I expect her work to go as efficiently as possible, and without any interference or troubles. (*cautions*) I do not like troubles.
HODŽA. *(with a bow)* But of course, Herr Oberst. Neither do I.
VON STRAUB. Sehr gut. Now, I have a late morning meeting with the Gruppenführer that is pressing, and I must return to Prague, post-haste. *(turns to)* Mutter. Danke, again, for your pleasantries. Perhaps another time. *(Von Straub quickly exits. The SOUND of an engine turning over, and then, there is the SOUND of a military vehicle driving off. Franz enters with boxes of medicine and medical supplies, puts them down in the Parlor, then he stands behind Gerta, Jutta and Trude. An Awkward Pause.)*

(Gerta, Jutta and Trude, on one side, stare at Immacualta, Agata and Doktor Hodža on the other. In between them is the table with the Red Cross supply containers on it, and the flickering votive candle. Trude moves forward)
TRUDE. (*jovial*) I am the Watch Nurse, Trude Beck.
JUTTA. (*intense*) And I am the Head Nurse, Jutta Mohr.*(Jutta moves in and lights another cigarette with the votive candle. In contrapposto, Agata moves to a side chair, sits, then pulls out her Kolache and nibbles at it. All regard each other with uncertainty. Crossfade.)*

Steiger sits at his desk. Hodža steps into scene, and sits back down at Steiger's desk. Steiger stares at Hodža, who fingers his inner-collar.

STEIGER. Tell me about this baby, Tzofi Getzl.
HODŽA. Ah, the premature birth. Very weak. Listless. Fragile. But, the poor thing survived the night. By the time I saw her, the reverend Mother, and Sister Agata, managed to get her to feed, but just a little. That helped a great deal to gather some semblance of strength.
STEIGER. Was this baby dying?
HODŽA. I would not say she was dying, but rather, that she was not wanting to live.
STEIGER. So death was imminent for the child.
HODŽA. On the contrary. Kept warm and hydrated and nourished, the baby would survive.
STEIGER. But she died, nonetheless.
HODŽA. That's what I was told in the report. Overnight. It was found dead.
STEIGER. Why?
HODŽA. We cannot be sure as to why the baby died. A strain on the heart, probably. It just could not keep up, I would presume.
STEIGER. Heart failure.
HODŽA. In all likelihood, yes.
STEIGER. *(Steiger writes his notes.)* You signed the certificate of death?
HODŽA. No. No. I was back here, in Prague, on duty at the hospital. The Chief Nurse, Gerta Meier signed the papers of death.

STEIGER.*(Steiger produces the Death Certificate and studies it.)* I see**.** (*without looking up*) The baby was a Jew?
HODŽA. Pardon?
STEIGER. The baby, Getzl. It was a Jew.
HODŽA. I...I do not know. I only did a quick examination-
STEIGER. (*scornful*) Yes. Yes. I know. Der Kaffee und Kolache were waiting in the kitchen. *(Steiger looks up at Hodža as if the Doktor was prey for the taking in his sights and takes aim)* Getzl. Getzl is a Jew name.
HODŽA. Ah...uh-
STEIGER. That was a Jew baby.
HODŽA. I suppose you are correct-
STEIGER. Now, a dead Jew baby.
HODŽA. *(yields)* Yes, mein Herr-
STEIGER. You wasted your time, Herr Doktor, with the Jew baby, that is. Der Kaffee und Kolache in the kitchen was much more important. *(Lights Down.)*

SCENE 3

*The Infirmary Office. Gerta Meier stands at the desk and reviews a list carefully. Frieda Tobanczyk sits in front of her. In her one hand is a cigarette; in the other is an ashtray***.**

GERTA. *(Gerta drops the list and leans back against the desk)* This list of yours, it goes back five years?
FRIEDA. Yes.
GERTA. And all of the "special cases," you have marked with an X?
FRIEDA. Yes. That's what you said, so that's what I did.
GERTA. How many are here, like you, in Libedec?
FRIEDA. Midwives?
GERTA. Yes, yes, midwives.
FRIEDA. There were three of us. Now one is dead, so, two of us.
GERTA. And their names?
FRIEDA. Hildi...Hilda Němeček and Lenka Schloss.

GERTA. Who is dead?
FRIEDA. My friend Hildi
GERTA. Němeček.
FRIEDA. Yes. Hildi died when-
GERTA. This Lenka Schloss, is she still a working midwife?
FRIEDA. Yes. When she can. She has-
GERTA. Do you know where to find her? Can you bring Lenka Schloss to me today?
FRIEDA. I know where to look, but I cannot guarantee I can bring her in. She might not-
GERTA. Here. This should help you find this Lenka Schloss, for me, today. *(Gerta produces a stack of Reichmarks and begins to count out individual bank notes. Frieda holds her breath at the site of the money)* Find her, and bring her in. *(Gerta hands Frieda a handsome amount of cash)* I need your help. The good health of the New Germany needs your help. I would like to employ you, employ you to help, on the outside. True, I have two nurses, but I need them here. You see, the lists, the lists such as yours, are vital to the work we will do here. I will need such a list from Lenka Schloss, and if you could procure the midwife records from the family of your dear friend, Hilda Němeček (*disingenuous*) may she rest in peace, it would be most helpful, as well.
FRIEDA. I will do what I can to help.
GERTA. I know I can count on you. Am I correct, Frieda Tobanczyk?
FRIEDA. Yes. Yes, you can.
GERTA. *(confidant)* I know I can. Sehr gut. *(Gerta stands to shake Frieda's hand, and as she does raises Frieda out of the chair)* Hopefully, I will see you later, today, with Lenka Schloss, and her completed list. And then you will do your best to bring to me Hilda Němeček's midwife records. Ja?
FRIEDA. Ja.
GERTA. *(dismissive)* Guten Tag dann.
FRIEDA. *(Frieda turns to exit)* Good day.
GERTA. Oh, and Frieda**.**
FRIEDA. *(turns to)* Yes, meine Herrin.

GERTA. Remember. If you do any work at any time, midwife work, that is, I want complete details, first-thing.
FRIEDA. Ja. Ja.
GERTA. Particularly, "Special Cases." *(holds up Reichmarks for Frieda to see)* "Special Cases." Ja?
FRIEDA. *(in agreement as she exits)* Ja! *(Gerta immediately rubs alcohol her hand that she shook Frieda's hand)*
JUTTA. *(Jutta enters)* Ach! Expect "The Old One" to give you a problem.
GERTA. "The Old One" is a problem for Trude**.** *(confidant)* She will handle it. It is "The Good Reverend Mother" that I must deal with. *(Jutta exits the front door with the container. Gerta picks up her clipboard and also exits the front door)*
AGATA. *(Agata and Trude enter from the hallway. Agata is distraught)* I say it again. You should have woken us immediately!
TRUDE. Und I say it again! For what reason?
AGATA. Because it is the right thing to do!
TRUDE. What is over is over.
AGATA. *(lands on the sofa weeping into her hands)* What is right is right!
TRUDE. She is just as dead now as she was at dawn. Why cause an alarm? Use your head, woman. Be sensible!
IMMAC. *(enters from the terrace wearing dirty gardening-gloves, and carrying a watering can)* Tears, Sister Agata! What has happened?
AGATA. Baby Tzofi ist tot.
IMMAC. What?
AGATA. Baby Tzofi. Tzofi Getzl is dead. Mein Gott!
TRUDE. The baby died in the middle of the night.
IMMAC. That baby was beginning to thrive!
AGATA. Yes. Yes she was…
TRUDE. *(takes position)* Things happen. They just do. (*beat*) I could not sleep well, last night...you know, unusual surroundings and such. I tossed and turned until sunrise. I decide, enough of this. I said: "Trude, get to work. There are patients waiting for you." So, I made the rounds, which I am prone to do,

having worked at the hospital in Munich. I know the morning routine, you see. That's when I found the baby cold and unresponsive.

IMMAC. Cold! *(critical)* Was not the baby surround with hot water bottles, Agata?

AGATA. Yes. Yes, she was-

TRUDE. (*to Immaculata*) The bottles were warm. The baby was cold. It is not Agata's fault. The baby was tot at sunrise this morning. *(Slight pause.)*

AGATA. Gott in Himmel!

IMMAC. *(in resignation)* I guess...God just wanted her back. (+).

AGATA. I don't understand.

IMMAC. *(Immaculata comforts Agata.)* It is not ours to understand God's Hand. – It is ours to simply accept.

TRUDE. *(sits next to Agata)* I am beside myself, as well...as is our poor Agata. *(rubs Agata's back with affection)* There, there, Agata**.** I know. I know, meine kleine Mutter. *(Gerta enters from the front door and moves to the desk)* Shall I make some tea for you...it will calm you down. Eh? Some nice hot tea? Do you have Kamillentee in the kitchen.

AGATA. Yes. Yes we do.

TRUDE. Sehr gut. I will make some, then – a nice pot of tea. *(Agata is silent. Trude looks at Immaculata for support and nods her head in the affirmative)* It will probably do us all some good, ja?

IMMAC. *(positive)* Ja. That sounds like a good idea (*to Agata*) Sister Agata, please, show Trude where she can find the Kamillentee. Ach! And please put these late summer flowers in the chapel. I will save these flowers for Sister Anna. *(Agata wipes the tears from her eyes and rises, and moves to exit to the kitchen, but turns back to Immaculata for reassurance)*

IMMAC. Go. Go. I will join you in the kitchen in a bit. (*Agata and Trude exit. Immaculata gathers the flowers, she places one at the Shrine of the Madonna.)*

GERTA. (*to Immaculata*) Sister Anna? I thought there was only the two of you?

IMMAC. Sister Anna died five years ago. We put the flowers on her grave out back.

GERTA. Ah! I see. *(Slight pause.)*

IMMAC. The baby has died.
GERTA. So I have heard. It will be put it into my report.
IMMAC. She was beginning to thrive.
GERTA. It was weak. Nature does not pardon weakness. We know this to be the Supreme Law of Nature, and it must be respected. (*inhales*) Ja, ja, we feel compassion for the living, we comfort the sick, heal their wounds, ease their pain, then we weep tears for them when they die, as does Agata**.** But in our heart, we must be loyal to Nature...Never turn your back on Nature. Be steadfast. Resolute. To have pity for the weak is be disloyal to Nature, itself. Life is precious, ja, but weakness...weakness is "life unworthy of life." Nature knows this is abhorrent, and takes life back with great greed, as the weak have no future. It is the Natural Order - the Natural Order of the universe. Ja? *(Immaculata does not respond).* Do you not agree, Immaculata?
IMMAC. (*firm*) I tend to the sick, bury the dead, put flowers on their graves, and pray for the repose of their souls.
GERTA. (*yields*) Ja. Ja. That is your job. That is what you do - and I am sure that you are very good at it, too. *(Immaculata and Gerta assess each other)* Have we come to an understanding, you and I.
IMMAC. I think it is wise, yes. Danke.
GERTA. Sehr gut. *(Crossfade.)*

Steiger sits behind his desk. Frieda Tobanczyk sits across from Steiger. A cigarette burns in her hand.

FRIEDA. Hildi died, and now there are only two of us.
STEIGER. Hilda Němeček is dead. Lenka Schloss is alive
FRIEDA. Ja. *(Steiger writes a notation*) But I worked for Gerta Meier, and Lenka worked for me.
STEIGER. By whose authority?
FRIEDA. By Gerta Meier's authority, of course. (*boasts*) I was the "Die Hebamme Führen" in Libedec – at least that's what she called me...– "The Midwife Leader." (*Frieda points to Steiger's notes.)* Make sure you write that down, mein Herr, about me - "The Midwife Leader."

STEIGER. So, Gerta Meier paid you, and then you paid this Lenka Schloss.
FRIEDA. Ja, but only if she earned it. She wasn't getting something for nothing. She had to work for it. She had to do what I did.
STEIGER. Which was what?
FRIEDA. Report all births, and to bring in "Special Cases."
STEIGER. Bring in "Special Cases."
FRIEDA. Ja, each "Special Case" brought in was paid for one by one. Most of the time, Lenka was working in the brewery, or in the field, so I did most of the deliveries.
STEIGER. So you got paid more than she did.
FRIEDA. Ja! And why not!
STEIGER. Did that upset, this Lenka Schloss, that you were paid more money than she? Was she jealous of you? Did it make her angry at Gerta Meier?
FRIEDA. Not that I know of – at least she didn't tell me so. To her it was extra money in her purse. She was happy. What the hell did she care.
STEIGER. When did you meet Gerta Meier?
FRIEDA. That young Korporal of hers found me in der Biergarten, and demanded that I go with him to the Infirmary.
STEIGER. Did you go?
FRIEDA. I had no choice, now, did I? I am not an ass! Of course I went with der Korporal - but he had to wait, there, for me.
STEIGER. Wait. For what?
FRIEDA. I had to finish my bier, first! (*Frieda cackles to herself, and then extends a package of cigarettes towards Steiger)* Zigarette, mein Herr? *(Crossfade.)*

The Infirmary- early evening. Gerta, Jutta, Trude and Immaculata are concluding the day's report. LYDI GROOTE – "Bund Deutscher Mädel, *Bonn-Monschau" enters and stumbles in the front entrance. She is sweet, but clumsy, naïve, innocent, and accident prone. Lydi is full of smiles, optimism and the zeal that is youthful. Lydi struggles with her luggage and text-books*

LYDI. (*happy*) Hallo! Hallo! Guten Tag! Guten Tag allerseits!

(Lydi's luggage and text books slip from her arms, and to the floor in a heap) Ach! *(Lydi lets out an odd, nervous guffaw)*

JUTTA. (*to Gerta*) Wer ist dieser Ulknudel?

LYDI. *(Lydi searches the floor foraging her things, but keeps dropping an item here and there. She continues to let out odd, nervous guffaws, then proclaims)* Assistierende Krankenschwester! Assistierende Krankenschwester!

JUTTA. Who is this clown?

LYDI. (*to Jutta*) I am the new Nurse's Assistant, if you please, from St. Johannes-Hospital in Bonn.

TRUDE. Ach! (*mocks Lydi*) "If you please!"

LYDI. (*turns to Gerta*) I am finally here! Late, but here. I got lost in Prague. It is such a big city!

GERTA. Who is here, for the sake of god? Who are you?

LYDI. Lydi Groote, Bund Deutscher Mädel. Gebiet Bonn-Monschau. (*hands Gerta her papers*) My papers, meine Herrin. *(Gerta reviews her papers as Jutta lights a cigarette from the Madonna Shrine's votove candle)*

TRUDE. Who sent you here, kid?

LYDI. Ilse. Ilse Herz.

JUTTA. Who the hell is Ilse Herz!

LYDI. Meine Leiterin at the Bund Deutscher Mädel in Monschau. Monschau is my home town. I am a volunteer. I answered "The Call!"

GERTA. (*scans Lydi's papers*) This says Ilse Herz is her Leader of the League of German Girls in the Bonn-Monschau Area. It appears that this Ilse Herz answered Der Gruppenführer's request for volunteers and additional assistance, here in the East (*she reads*) "...to serve the Future of the New Fatherland." (*holds up her papers*) "Approved" – signed by Der Gruppenführer: Der Reichsprotektor of Bohemia, Moravia und Sudetenland, himself. (*hands papers back to her*) Your papers are all in order, Fräulein Groote.

LYDI. Danke.

IMMAC. (*coming forward*) Welcome to Libedec, Fräulein Lydia Groote from Mosnschau.

LYDI. LYDI. They call me "Lydi,"

IMMAC. Very well..."Lydi" - Willkommen hier.

LYDI. (*chuckles*) Danke!
IMMAC. I am Mutter Oberin Immaculata of St. Ludmila's Infirmary, which is not as grand as your St. Johannes-Hospital in Bonn, but you just might find it quaint.
LYDI. Frau Ilse sent me to St. Johannes-Hospital, for training as a Nurse's Assistant. I know I will be very happy, here, Mutter Oberin, especially if I am assisting you.
JUTTA. (*mutters*) Oh, Christus!
IMMAC. (*smiling*) Are you hungry, Lydi? You must be, after all of that travel, all the way from Monschau. *(Immaculata locks arm and arm with Lydi and they move to exit to the kitchen)* We were all about to have Kamillentee in the kitchen. Let's see if Sister Agata could scrape up something to for you to eat. Maybe some potato soup with black bread, ja?
LYDI. Ja! Danke! Kartoffelsuppe would be wonderful, right now - just wonderful, Mutter Oberin! I'm so happy to be here with you! *(Immaculata and Lydi "AD LIB" happy-chat as they exit. Lydi guffaws again)*
JUTTA. (*exasperated*) Jesus Christus, Gerta**.** Jesus Christus!
GERTA. I'll instruct this "Young One" to follow "The Old One" around - follow her around wiping asses, cleaning bed-pans, and emptying urinals - all while I side-track "The Good Reverend Mother." This "clown" from Monschau will stay out of our way, Jutta, so we can do our work without interference. I promise you that.
TRUDE. Danke, meine Herrin.
GERTA. Now, let us have some Kamillentee in the kitchen.
JUTTA. I would rather have some Weinbrand at the table.
GERTA. Me, too. Ha ha! Me too! *(Gerta, Jutta, and Trude laugh as they exit. Lights Down.)*

SCENE 4

The Infirmary - later that night. It is quiet. All are asleep. Lydi enters from the hallway in her robe and slippers. She carries a paper sack. She is excited, can't sleep and is restless. She wanders into the Parlor, flicks on a table lamp and thumbs through a magazine, loses interest and tosses it back. Then, she, opens the paper sack and pulls out some homemade Lukken Cookies and munches. Suddenly, the SOUND of an approaching transport-vehicle is heard. The HEADLIGHTS splash the room. The transport-vehicle parks, the engine is turned off. Footsteps approaching can be heard. Franz enters the Parlor. Lydi freezes and holds her cookie in mid –air. Slight pause.

LYDI. Who are you?
FRANZ. I am Franz**.** Franz Jaeger. Who are you?
LYDI. Lydi. Lydi Groote from Monschau. (*offers the cookie*) Want some Lukken, Franz? (*in Dutch*) Mijn Moeder made them for me.
FRANZ. Was ist Lukken?
LYDI. Silly. They are cookies. Belgian cookies.
FRANZ. Belgian cookies! (*he takes a bite*) Mmm! Sie schmecken sehr gut!
LYDI. Yes. I know how good they are! Lukken are my favorite from a family recipe that was passed down from mijn Grootmoeder. Traditionally Lukken are made around the New Year, you know, to bring good luck. Mijn Moeder made them special for me to bring me luck on my big trip East to Libedec.
FRANZ. May I have another...please?
LYDI. Yes, you may, but just one more. They need to last, a while.
FRANZ. Danke.
LYDI. Lukken must be baked on a special Belgian lukken cookie press that is very expensive. Mijn Tante has one. You would like her, mijn Tante. She is very sweet.
FRANZ. So are these Lukken...So are you.
LYDI. If you know someone, here, in Libedec, that has a Belgian Lukken cookie press, I could make some for you.
FRANZ. I don't know anyone in Libedec.

LYDI. Well, Franz Jaeger, now you know me.
FRANZ. So...you...are you a patient, here, at this clinic?
LYDI. Me, a patient! No! Are you are a silly. I am the new nurse's assistant. Korporal Franz Jaeger, may I introduce Lydi Groote, the new Assistant Nurse (*sniggers*) and the keeper of Lukken all from Monschau.
FRANZ. *(Franz clicks his heels)* Pleased to meet you, Fräulein Groote.
LYDI. *(Lydi curtsies)* Pleased to meet you, Korporal Jaeger. *(They laugh)*
FRANZ. *(Lydi guffaws a little too loud)* Sssshhh! You will wake all of them up.
LYDI. (*whispers*) I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I get excited easily.
FRANZ. *(Franz moves to the hallway door and looks in for a moment. He moves back to Lydi)* All seems quiet.
LYDI. Gut. We can talk some more. (*pats seat*) Come. Sit here. I promise I'll be quiet.
FRANZ. *(Franz sits next to her)* So. Why are you awake at this hour of the night?
LYDI. I am so excited to be here, I could not sleep – not even a wink.
FRANZ. Ach!
LYDI. Und why are you awake at this hour of the night?
FRANZ. I just returned from Prague.
LYDI. Prague! I got lost, there! It is so big!
FRANZ. Ja.
LYDI. Your turn, now, Herr Korporal. You know where I am from, now it is your turn to tell me.
FRANZ. My family is from Munich. Mein Vater is a railroad conductor.
LYDI. And you?
FRANZ. I was a student at the University, and in the summer, I worked for the railroad. Papa got me the job.
LYDI. The University! What did you study?
FRANZ. Music. I love music. I play six instruments, including the piano.
LYDI. Six instruments! I tried to learn the violin, but mijn Papa said it sounded as if the cat got caught in the chimney...even after six months of lessons.

FRANZ. *(Lydi and Franz laugh together, joining their foreheads for a moment. Lydi guffaws too loud, again)* Sssshhhh! Lydi, we will get into trouble.
LYDI. Sorry.
FRANZ. One day, I'm going to compose something as profound as Schumann's "Dichterliebe," or as lovely as "Mariä Wiegenlied" by Max Reger.
LYDI. I know "Mariä Wiegenlied!" We sing that at Christmastime at home.
FRANZ. It is my favorite piece of his.
LYDI. I also know of "Die Blaue Danube" from school.
FRANZ. That's by Johann Strauss II. He was an Austrian. Maybe I'll write an Opera, one day!
LYDI. I have never heard an opera, though.
FRANZ. You've never heard an Opera! Mein Gott, Lydi, we must go then. You will love it!
LYDI. Me? Go? Go to the Opera?
FRANZ. Yes, to the Opera. To the Opera in Prague! A matinée! Yes?
LYDI. Yes?... Of course! (*hesitant*) Is it expensive, to go to the Opera?
FRANZ. It is not as if we are going to the movies, but we can sit in the upper balcony for almost the cost of a movie. Don't worry, it will be my treat.
LYDI. Franz, that would be so wonderful! The Opera!
FRANZ. *(Franz pulls a cigarette out of a pack)* Zigarette?
LYDI. Erm. (*hesitates*) Yes. Yes, I would! (*sniggers*) Why not.
(Franz lights two cigarettes at once and hands one to Lydi)
FRANZ. *(Lydi takes a puff, exhales, takes a second puff and then begins to loudly cough and gag)*Ach du lieber Gott! You do not smoke. Lydi! *(Lydi continues to loudly cough and gag. Gerta enters in her robe and slippers. Lydi grows dizzy and collapses in to the chair.)*
GERTA. Groote! Korporal! Was ist das?
FRANZ. Nothing, Frau Leutnantin. We were just smoking die Zigaretten.
(Lydi jumps up. Her stomach turns. She puts her hand to her mouth as she heaves into it. Lydi runs off in a panic to the hallway to vomit)
FRANZ. I think it is die Fräulein's first Zigarette, Frau Leutnantin.
GERTA. Apparently so.
FRANZ. I did not want to cause any trouble, Frau Leutnantin.

GERTA. But trouble is what we now have, Korpral.
JUTTA. *(Jutta enters in her robe)* Die Ulknudel is throwing up in der wastebasket.
GERTA. Her first Zigarette.
JUTTA. Ach! Shame on you, Korporal – taking advantage of a girl's youth, that way.
FRANZ. *(coming forward)* I assure you, mein Frauen, I did nothing of the sort. I just gave her eine Zigarette.
JUTTA. Did you light die Zigarette for her – two Zigaretten at the same time…from one match?
FRANZ. Well...yes. Yes I did.
JUTTA. (*to Gerta*) Ah hah! We have a real "Casanova" in our midst! *(Jutta exits laughing to herself)*
GERTA. (*coming forward*) Make sure she cleans up her mess. I do not need "The Old One" nor "The Good Reverend Mother" complaining about trouble to Der Oberst. Is that clear, Korporal?
FRANZ. Jawhol, Frau Leutnantin. Quite clear. *(Gerta turns to exit)* Frau Leutnantin?
GERTA. (*turns to*) Ja, Korporal. (*irked*) Was ist ut?
FRANZ. Are you putting me on report? *(Slight pause.)*
GERTA. Nein. (*cautioning*) Not this time.
FRANZ. Danke, Frau Leutnantin. (*clicks his heels*) Gute Nacht. *(Gerta exits. Crossfade.)*

Steiger sits behind his desk. Franz steps into scene and sits across the desk from Steiger.

FRANZ. How was I to know that the girl did not smoke?
STEIGER. And?
FRANZ. I cleaned up the mess. I cleaned up her face. The two Nurses brought her to her bunk, and put her to bed.
STEIGER. The two Nurses - Jutta Mohr and Trude Beck?
FRANZ. Yes, Herr Haupsturmführer.

STEIGER. And?
FRANZ. And never a word was said, again. The Mutter Oberin and the Old Nun slept through the night, undisturbed.
STEIGER. The Old Nun, do you mean Sister Agata.
FRANZ. Yes, Herr Haupsturmführer – Sister Agata. *(Pause. Steiger stares intently at Franz, sizing him up for some type of dissection. Franz shifts his seat in the silence.)*
STEIGER. Did you sleep with her?
FRANZ. I beg your pardon, Herr Haupsturmführer?
STEIGER. You are not hard of hearing, Korporal. I ask you again. Did you sleep with her?
FRANZ. Sleep with whom, Herr Haupsturmführer? With the Assistant Nurse?
STEIGER. Ja. Ja. The young girl from Monschau. Did you sleep with her?
FRANZ. Nein, Herr Haupsturmführer? I did not sleep with her.
STEIGER. Nein? Nein! What is wrong with you, Korporal. She was young! She was pretty! And, am I to understand, she was a virgin?
FRANZ. With all due respect, Herr Haupsturmführer, she was not that kind of girl.
STEIGER. Und what kind of girl was she? *(Slight pause.)*
FRANZ. The kind of girl that you take to the opera. *(Crossfade.)*

The Infirmary - early morning. Gerta and Jutta are at center. Jutta is sipping coffee from a coffee cup.

JUTTA. It's zero seven thiry hours. What time did they leave?
GERTA. Forty five minutes ago.
JUTTA. *(lights a cigarette from the votive candle)* Tell me again – from the begining.
GERTA. "The Good Reverend Mother" and "The Old One" are going with der Korporal to Prague. Something about some Saint, some August Holy Day, and some special Mass at Church with Der Monsignor. Und "Die Clown from Monschau" is also going to Prague with them, today. She is taking her first

week's pay with her. Something about shopping, an ice cream parlor, and the opera.

JUTTA. The opera?

GERTA. Ja. "Die Magic Flute." Mozart. Apparently our "Young Casanova" and "Die Clown from Monschau" have become "an item" in only one week's time.

JUTTA. "Der Korporal and Die Ulknudel" – I should write a picture-book for der Kindergarten.

GERTA. That means we are in charge of the Infirmary for the day.

JUTTA. That means that we are alone.

Pause.

GERTA. *(gently takes Jutta's cigarette and puts it out and softly caresses Jutta's cheek with the back of her hand)* It has been quite a sometime since we have been alone.

JUTTA. *(Jutta sensually kisses the inside of Gerta 's hand, and then places it at the center of her breasts and over her heart)* In the movies, the cliché is: "It has been too long since we have been alone."

GERTA. And in the movies, the other cliché is: "We have some lost-time to make up for." *(Slight pause.)*

JUTTA. Where is Trude?

GERTA. Way out in the country-side, with that Frieda Tobanczyk, picking up a few "Special Cases." They will not be back for hours.

JUTTA. *Jutta caresses Gerta 's hair away from her forehead, picks up Gerta's face by the chin and looks into her eyes.)* I miss you.

GERTA. I miss you, as well.

JUTTA. (*tenderly*) Meine Liebling. (*Gerta gently caresses Jutta lips with her finger tips.)*

GERTA. *(Gerta turns and moves to the front door)* I will lock the front door, then. *(Gerta locks the front door of the Infirmary, and turns back. Jutta unbuttons her blouse)*

JUTTA. *(firm)* Bring the Weinbrand. (*Gerta does as she is told and fetches the bottle of Weinbrand. Gerta and Jutta exit. Lights Down.)*

SCENE 5

The Infirmary - later that night. Lydi sits center at the table. Immaculata, Agata, Jutta, Trude surround her. Franz stands above her. Gerta stands away from the group and observes. Lydi has a gift-bag in her lap

LYDI. Reverend Mother, Sister Agata, Franz and I had ice cream, together, in Prague. It was my treat. But I have not forgotten all of you. I have brought something back for you. *(Lydi hands a candy box to Jutta)* Chocolate pralinky for Jutta,
AGATA. (*hovering*) Ach! Are those pralines, Jutta, or are they truffles?
JUTTA. They are mine!
LYDI. *(Lydi hands a candy box to Trude)* Chocolate Lízátka for Trude.
TRUDE. Lollipops! Lollipops are my favorite!
LYDI. *(Lydi moves to Gerta and hands a candy box to her)* And delicate, hand decorated Marzipan specialties for Frau Leutnantin. (*Gerta accepts them without expression or comment)*
IMMAC. *(speaking for Gerta*) Oh my! Such a pretty box, Lydi**…**I'm sure die Wachführerin Meier will enjoy them thoroughly.
LYDI. *(moves back to the table and pulls a new bottle of Weinbrand from the sack, holds it up for all to see, and puts it on the table)* And a new bottle of Weinbrand for us all! *(There is modest applause by all, but Gerta)*
AGATA. Danke, Lydi, you are a very thoughtful and generous young lady, but Weinbrand is for guests only. *(Agata removes the Weinbrand from the table and places it on the credenza).*
AGATA. Mutter Oberin. Do you know what happened to the open bottle of Weinbrand?
IMMAC. I did not know it was missing. - Unless Herr Oberst drank it all! *(They all laugh, but Gerta)*
GERTA. (*barks*) Attention! While we all appreciate your kind gestures, Fräulein Groote, our important work awaits us. *(turns to*) Immaculata. Agata**.** If you would excuse us. We have our duties to attend to. (*turns to Jutta and*

Trude) Frauen. Bitte. *(Smiles vanish into thin air. Jutta and Trude snap to their tasks preparing meds)*

GERTA. Korporal. The festivities are over, and the holiday is finished. Back to work. *(Franz and Lydi hold their breath. They look at each other for a beat. Gerta barks*) Now, Korporal!

FRANZ. *(Franz exits the front)* Jawhol, Frau Leutnantin.

GERTA. Fräulein Groote, there are certain patients in the ward that need to be cleaned, and bedpans waiting to be emptied.

LYDI. Jawhol, Frau Leutnantin.

GERTA. (*Gerta moves to the desk)* Then report to Agata for further instructions.

LYDI. Jawhol, Frau Leutnantin. *(Lydi moves to exit, but turns back)* Frau Leutnantin!

GERTA. What do you want?

LYDI. (*sincere*) This was the best day of my life, meine Herrin! Danke schön.

GERTA. (*uncomfortable*) Ja. Ja. Ja. Now, go. - Go!

JUTTA. *(Lydi scampers off. She stumbles as she exits)* Die Ulknudle has two left feet.

TRUDE. Ja, but she has good taste in candy. *(Frieda Tobanczyk enters, and waits in the Parlor and clears her throat, loudly, to be noticed)*

JUTTA. (*to Gerta*) That Frieda Tobanczyk is in the Waiting Room.

GERTA. Send her in *(Trude beckons Frieda to enter)*

GERTA. What do you want from me? I paid you this afternoon, midwife.

FRIEDA. I bring you five "Special Cases," but you paid me for four.

GERTA. One was not a "Special Case." It needs to be brought back.

FRIEDA. Who? Who was not a "Special Case."

GERTA. *(checks her list)* Jedlicka. Bruno Jedlicka.

FRIEDA. Jedlicka is scrawny. Shrunken. It is puny. A lost cause.

GERTA. Jedlicka is small-framed, but it is not feeble.

FRIEDA. Yes it is feeble!

GERTA. (*to Jutta*) Jutta, kommen sie her!

JUTTA. Yes, Frau Leutnantin.

FRIEDA. Tell this Frieda Tobanczyk about Bruno Jedlicka.

JUTTA. It fed as a pig, pissed as a racehorse, cried as an alley-cat, and shit as a cow. Small-boned, but in perfect health. (*Jutta goes back to preparing meds*)
GERTA. Danke. *(to Frieda)* Four out of the five will be transported to hospital for "Special Treatment." The fifth will remain here. I cannot waste resources and supplies. You must take it back. *(Immaculata enters)*
FRIEDA. (*in hushed tones*) You know that I have to pay Lenka Schloss.
GERTA. (*in hushed tones*) So pay Lenka Schloss. You have a handful of money.
FRIEDA. It is not enough.
GERTA. It is not enough because you went directly to the Biergarten, this afternoon, and spent your money there.
FRIEDA. So, the puny kid goes back.
GERTA. My assessment is final.
FRIEDA. (*loudly declares*) I must protest, Frau Wachführerin.
GERTA. *(rising in volume)* Who are you to protest - a common, ignorant mid-wife with tobacco stained fingers, and that stinks of bier! (*irate*) Now go. Go! Get out. Get out and take it with you! *(Jutta and Trude close in on Frieda)* Take it back to where it belongs. (*seething*) And don't you ever come back here complaining nor questioning me again, if you know what's healthy for you. Ever! Understood?
FRIEDA. *(realizes that she's being strong-armed)* Understood.
GERTA. (*turns to*) Trude! Take this woman to collect Bruno Jedlicka, and see that der Korporal escorts her away from here.
TRUDE. Jawhol, Frau Leutnantin. Bruno Jedlicka.
GERTA. And Trude...use the back door.
TRUDE. As you wish. *(Trude and Frieda exit the hallway)*
JUTTA. *(Gerta is shaking within her anger)* Calm down. Getting this upset is not good for you.
GERTA. God damn Polish. They are almost as bad as Jews. *(Gerta gently touches Jutta's hand in appreciation of her concern, then, Jutta returns to her meds. Gerta turns her back and works on her reports)*
IMMAC. *(approaches Gerta with caution)* Gerta, is there anything I can do for you?

GERTA. Nein, Immaculata. Danke. Just some trouble with the help. (*brushes it off*) You know how it is.
IMMAC. *(chuckles)* Yes. Unfortunately, I do. Frieda Tobanczyk is quite a pill to swallow.
JUTTA. I'm off to distribute medications and do the final rounds before lights-out.
GERTA. Sehr gut. (*Jutta exits with med tray in hand)*
IMMAC. *(moves closer to Gerta)* Your young nursing assistant, Lydi Groote from Monschau, is very sweet. She is a credit to the group.*(Gerta tosses her gift box of Marzipan into the desk drawer)*
GERTA. (*glib*) Ja. Ja. Very sweet.
IMMAC. Lydi reminds me of me when I first came her to Saint Ludmila's. It might interest you to know that, nineteen years ago, when I arrived here after the Great War, Sister Agata was the Mother Superior. Sister Anna, may she rest in peace, was her "right-hand-man," so to speak. I was the one on bed-pan duty. Ach! I went from the blood-soaked trenches of the Argonne Forest to the urine-soaked latrine of our Infirmary. Quite a shock, no?
GERTA. *(turns to)* You served in the Great War?
IMMAC. As best I could, but between the bullets, bombs, bayonets, and barbed wire, there was not much we could do to save lives. We just offered comfort, eased the pain, until death arrived. The mustard-gas was horrific.
GERTA. So I have heard.
IMMAC. (*kindly*) Go easy on yourself, Gerta**.** Life is very slow here, as you can tell, and the people are also simple here...quite ignorant, in fact – as you have found out.
GERTA. I follow orders, Immaculata. Nothing more-
IMMAC. I am aware.
GERTA. (*blunt*) Though I admire your service history to the Fatherland, there is nothing about either one of us that is similar – similar at all. I am nothing like you.
IMMAC. *(dejected)* I see.
GERTA. You did not ask for me. Just to reassure you, I did not ask for you...but here we are, nonetheless.

IMMAC. Yes...Yes, indeed...So, here we are. *(The two women stand in a stalemate position. Crossfade.)*

Steiger sits alone at his desk. It is night. After hours. All is quiet. Steiger studies his files. He yawns and kicks back to rest his eyes. DER GRUPPENFÜHRER enters. He is a thin, long faced man with sharp, birdlike features. Charismatic, and yet, chilling.

STEIGER. (*stands*) Herr Gruppenführer. Heil Hitler.
GRUPPEN. Heil Hitler. Sit, sit, Ernst. Please. Sit. Enough of the formalities. With "King Heinrich" prancing about the office, I am smothered by god-damn formalities all day long. *(They sit. Der Gruppenführer puts down his things and lights a cigarette)*
STEIGER. Do not let anyone else hear you call Heinrich Himmler "The King." There will be more than hell to pay. You know that, Reini.
GRUPPEN. Ernst – trust me. I won't. But, the sooner King Heinrich leaves Prague and returns to his damn Castle in Westphalia, the better for us all.
STEIGER. So I understand.
GRUPPEN. Do you have any hard liquor in that desk drawer of yours?
STEIGER. Ja. Vodka, Scotch, or Schnapps?
GRUPPEN. Scotch. (*Steiger pours two drinks)*
GRUPPEN. (*They raise their glasses in a Beer House toast*) "You know what we need?"
STEIGER and **GRUPPEN.** "We need to gulp down a strong drink!" Prost!
STEIGER. *(They slug their drinks and slam down their glasses together, and cavort as fraternity-brothers would)* Ha! Just like the old days in Munich!
GRUPPEN. *(smiles)* Life was a struggle, in Munich, but life was so much easier, back then, was it not? *(Steiger pours another round, and now, they sip their drinks)*
GRUPPEN. So.
STEIGER. So?
GRUPPEN. So, I see that we have a murderer down in Libedec...in Libedec at the Catholic Infirmary.

STEIGER. Yes. Yes we have.
GRUPPEN. A killer of nurses. A killer of Germans.
STEIGER. Two dead. Poisoned. One is missing – We have yet to find that body, but we will.
GRUPPEN. *(sips and savors the whiskey)* Are you sure there is a third body? You may need to apprehend that third nurse, rather than recover a body. The missing third nurse just might be your suspect.
STEIGER. Ah! There's the rub. I have a suspect, Reini, and a confession, as well - but I do not believe her. I do not believe this Mother Superior. She is a liar. She is lying to me to protect another.
GRUPPEN. So, I repeat; that missing third nurse *is* your murderer, or so it appears.
STEIGER. It's a possibility, ja. But I am not quite sure, yet.
GRUPPEN. Be that as it may, either way, someone needs to be charged, declared guilty, and executed for these crimes. When Himmler learns of these two murders, he will want to be satisfied. Best that he gets *schtupped*, and walks away satisfied. I, myself, certainly do not want to leave our dear Reichsführer dissatisfied...and neither do you. (*leans in*) I say that to you, Ernst, not only as your friend, but also as your Superior Officer.
STEIGER. Danke, mein Herr.
GRUPPEN. *(stands)* I can only give you another day for you to get to the bottom of this "mystery" – another day before I make an Official Report to The King in his Castle of Westphalia. By then, I will need someone to be executed for these crimes...and I do not care who you have to shoot - not why. *(finishes his scotch and collects his things. Steiger stands)* Thank you for the single-malt. I found it quite smooth, with notes of toffee and vanilla underneath the smoke...and, of course, this conversation - it never happened...And remember, Ernst - I do not care who you shoot. (*Der Gruppenführer exits)*
STEIGER. (*sotto voce*) Guten Nacht, mein Herr. And yes - "King Heinrich," in his Castle will be satisfied, indeed. *(Blackout. End of Act I)*

THE PLAY IS NOT OVER!! TO FIND OUT HOW IT ENDS—
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