

## GHETTO

- Set in the Jewish ghetto of Vilna, Lithuania, in 1942, and based on diaries written during the darkest days of the holocaust, GHETTO tells of the unlikely flourishing of a theatre at the very time the Nazis began their policy of mass extermination. 'Every time we put on a show - sold out three weeks in advance! ... People who knew next day they'd be on a train to the camps, the night before they'd put on their finery and come to a play.'
- Premiered in Britain in 1989 at the National Theatre in this version by David Lan, GHETTO was first staged in Israel in 1984 and has been seen in Berlin, Vienna, Cologne, Toronto, Oslo, Paris, Chicago, Washington and Los Angeles.
- Born in Israel, Joshua Sobol was Artistic Director of the Haifa Municipal Theatre for many years and is author of some twenty plays. This edition of GHETTO includes the songs and music from the play - arranged by Jeremy Sams - as well as extracts from the original ghetto diary.

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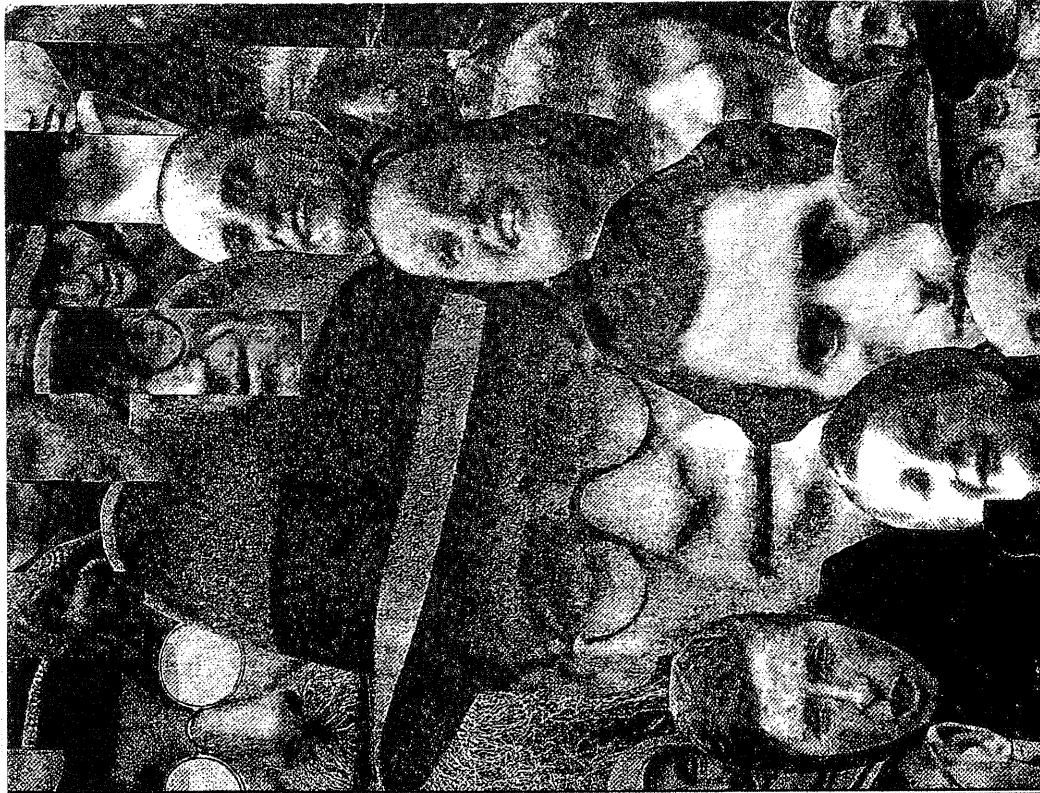
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JOSHUA SOBOL

GHETTO

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PRICE £8.99  
IN UK ONLY



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## JOSHUA SOBOL

The last theatrical production, *Der Mahl* (*The Flood*), a translation of *Syndafloeden* by the Swedish dramatist Henning Berger, opened during the summer of 1943, in the last weeks of the Ghetto's existence. This story of the trials of a group of people trapped in an American saloon during a flood might again seem an odd choice for the Vilna Ghetto, but the moral – that people pull together during times of common danger, but revert to petty divisions when the danger appears to fade – was relevant enough.

Despite the ominous signs of the approaching liquidation of the Ghetto, plans for the coming theatre season went forward, with Sholom Aleichem's *Tevye der Milkhiker* (*Tevye the Milkman*) [the play on which *Fiddler on the Roof* was later based] as the next production. It had not yet opened when the end came in September 1943.

# GHETTO

**Characters**

SRULIK (the NARRATOR), a ventriloquist and actor, aged 30  
 the DUMMY  
 KITTEL, a Nazi officer (also plays DR PAUL)  
 WEISKOPF, an entrepreneur, in his forties  
 HAYYAH, a singer, in her twenties  
 GENS, head of the ghetto, in his forties  
 the HASSID, in his thirties  
 KRUK, the ghetto librarian, in his forties  
 JUDITH, an actress (plays WEINER, a young physician)  
 OOMA, an actress  
 GOTTLIEB, an elderly physician  
 a JUDGE, aged forty-five  
 a RABBI, aged fifty  
 LUBA,  
 YANKEL, } young black-marketeers  
 GEIVISH, }  
 ELIA  
 DESSLER, Jewish ghetto police officer, aged thirty-five  
 ACTORS, DANCERS, MUSICIANS  
 HAIKIN, a musician

**Note**

*Ghetto* is one of three related plays by Joshua Sobol set in the Vilna ghetto. The other two in the triptych are *Adam*, about the resistance movement, and *Underground*, dealing with the dilemmas facing the medical staff in the ghetto hospital. Neither has yet been staged in English.

The lyrics and melody lines for the songs in *Ghetto* are at the end of the book and their order of performance for the National Theatre production was correct at the time of going to press, although rehearsals were not completed. The songs can, however, be sung in different sequence for different productions.

*Ghetto* was first staged in Great Britain in the Olivier auditorium of the National Theatre.

First preview was 20 April 1989; press night was 27 April 1989.

The cast was as follows:

SRULIK	<i>ventriloquist and director</i>	Jonathan Cullen
KITTEL	<i>SS Officer</i>	Alex Jennings
also DR PAUL		Maria Friedman
HAYYAH	<i>singer</i>	Linda Kerr
DJIGAN	<i>the Dummy</i>	Scott
GENS	<i>Chief of Jewish Police</i>	John Woodvine
WEISKOPF	<i>tailor</i>	Anthony O'Donnell
KRUK	<i>Ghetto Librarian</i>	Paul Jesson
DESSLER	<i>Jewish police officer</i>	Ivan Kaye
The Theatre Company:		
YOSEF GERSTEIN	<i>the Hassid and the Rabbi</i>	David Schneider
JUDITH LARES	<i>the woman</i>	Nicola Scott
OOMA ORSHEVESKAYA	<i>Dr Weiner</i>	Angela Pleasance
YITSHOK SAMBER	<i>Dr Gottlieb</i>	Jon Rumney
AVROM MOLEVSKY	<i>the Judge</i>	Nicholas Blanc
LUBA GRODZINSKI		Laura Shavin
ELIA GEIVISH	} <i>black marketers</i>	Mark Lockyer
YITZHOK GEIVISH		Glyn Pritchard
YANKEL POLIKANSKI		Mark Addy
ALEXANDER AZRA	<i>trumpeter</i>	Jo Stone-Fewings
SHABSE BLIAKHER	<i>bass player and violinist</i>	Sandy Burnett
SONIA ELMIS		Sandra Butterworth

YAKOB GERTNER  
HELENA GOTTLIB  
YITZHOK GRUDBERG

HAIKIN *violinist*  
SHMUEL IRIS *trumpeter*  
SASHA LIPOVSK *guitarist*  
YAKOB MANDELBLIT

BARUCH NADIR *violinist*  
NEMI NATAN  
LEAH NEMI *saxophonist*  
MOISHE NORVID *clarinetist*  
ZIGMUND RUDKOV *trumpeter*  
HENRY TARLO *accordionist*  
AVROM TAYLBOYM  
POLJA VAITER  
AVROM WITTENBERG

GESTAPO GUARDS:

JEWISH POLICE  
OFFICERS

*Directed by*  
*Designed by*

Ged McKenna  
Jill Stanford  
John Fitzgerald  
Jay  
Vladimir Asriev  
Oliver Beamish  
Ivan Kaye  
Michael  
O'Connor

Trevor Sellers  
Judith Sim  
Jennifer Hill  
Merlin Shepherd  
David Roach  
Keith Woodhams  
Brian Greene  
Sandy McDade  
Tam Dean Burn

Christopher  
Armstrong  
Melvyn Bedford  
Toby E Byrne  
Ciaran McIntyre  
Mark Addy  
Christopher  
Armstrong  
Melvyn Bedford  
John Fitzgerald Jay  
Mark Lockyer  
Glyn Pritchard  
Trevor Sellers  
Nicholas Hyrner  
Bob Crowley

## PART ONE

### Scene One

*1983. The living room of a middle-class apartment in Tel Aviv. Very clean and tidy. In an armchair sits the NARRATOR, an old man wearing a bathrobe. He has only one hand. The NARRATOR is being interviewed by an unseen person.*

NARRATOR. Our last performance? I remember nothing.

Our last performance . . . It was the night before Kittel murdered Gens. Ten days later the ghetto was destroyed. That was the last performance.

A good house? Listen to what I'm going to tell you. The theatre was full. Not even standing room. Every time we put on a show, sold out three weeks in advance! Never mind the misery, the fear - that's how it was. People who knew next day they'd be on a train to the camps, the night before they'd put on their finery, came to the play.

Yes, yes, the last one, I'm right. By then Gens was head of the ghetto. When the Gestapo came for him I was sitting in his office reading plays. I was artistic director. I had to decide, what shall we do next? We had a competition: write a play about life in the ghetto. Entries poured in. Katrelka Broude, Leibeleh Rosental, Hirschke Glick, Israel Diamantman . . . Everyone wrote one. Marvellous plays. Full of life! All of them lost. Real works of art! Gone. What remains?

I remember . . . a scene here, a scene there.

Well, we *wanted* to stage the winning entry but ten days later . . .

Somewhere I've got a few songs from the cabaret, our small auditorium. We put on satirical reviews. *'Die Yaganech in Floss'*. Do you get it? It's a pun. Diogenes, you know, the philosopher.

he lived in a barrel. Diogenes - *die yoganesh*, which means running around. In a barrel - *in fass*. 'Running around in a barrel.' And we were! He was looking for justice. We were looking for justice. Could we find it?

Can I find it? 'Die Yoganesh'. Maybe in my library. I don't remember . . .

*He stands. Moving is an effort for him. Suddenly he bounds forward and passes through the wall. The walls of the apartment vanish. The stage is empty all the way to the wings.*

### Scene Two

*Darkness. An iron gate. To one side, piles of metal chairs. The clinking of locks, the rattling of chains, the squeaking of bolts. The gate opens wide with a thud. A truck reverses in. It brakes sharply and stops. The back section tips up depositing a huge pile of clothes onto the stage. The motor is turned off. Through the gates, the sound of a raging storm and fierce winds. The shadow of KITTEL, a German officer, appears at the gate. He wears a long army coat, boots and a helmet. He carries a gun (a Schmeisser) in one hand, a long black case in the other. With a torch KITTEL lights up the back of the truck revealing the huge pile of clothes.*

**KITTEL.** Chaos!

*WEISKOPF, his clothing tattered and caked with mud, stands near KITTEL who shines his torch on the fuse box. To WEISKOPF:*

Let there be light!

*WEISKOPF throws a switch. Industrial lamps cast a dim glow over the stage.*

More light!

*WEISKOPF turns on more lights. A group of shadows appears and approaches. They are women and men, emotionally and physically exhausted. They wear filthy rags. The NARRATOR, SRULIK, is standing near this group. He now has both hands.*

**SRULIK.** I remember . . . we had to keep walking and walking. We came to a huge pile of clothes.

**KITTEL.** Some are dry, some are soaking. Some are men's, some are women's, some are children's. Sort them. Begin!

*The group divides into two. Some bring clothes forward and sort them into separate piles. Others bring clothes from the truck, then go backwards and forwards bringing ever more clothes to be sorted. Despite their exhaustion, they work efficiently, mechanically. KITTEL watches with indifference.*

*From a dark corner HAYYAH appears. Wrapped in a ragged blanket, she shivers from the cold. Her hair is dishevelled, her bare feet filthy from wading through mud. She stops a short way from KITTEL and watches the back and forth movement of those carrying clothes. KITTEL sees HAYYAH, shines his torch on her.*

**HAYYAH.** Please . . . a pair of shoes?

**KITTEL.** Over here.

*HAYYAH walks towards him, stops a short distance away.*

**KITTEL.** You wanted?

**HAYYAH.** A pair of shoes.

**KITTEL.** Don't you realise whose shoes they were? (He watches her.) Well, now you do. So help yourself, any pair you fancy.

*HAYYAH hesitates, then goes to the pile, sits, tries on shoes. KITTEL shines his torch on her from a distance. Some of the workers watch anxiously, others go on with their work. HAYYAH finds a pair of boots that fit, gets up, hurries away, reaches the wings.*

**KITTEL.** Over here!

*HAYYAH goes to him. KITTEL indicates the cloak of rags she wears.*

Off.

*HAYYAH takes it off, revealing a torn slip.*

So many dresses and no-one to wear them. Choose.

*HAYYAH shakes her head.*

Do it!

*HAYYAH goes to the pile of women's clothes, selects a dress.*

Put it on.

*She does.*

Now a coat.

*She puts one on.*

Why not a hat?

## 4 GHETTO

*She takes a beret from a pile of hats.*

Over here.

*She goes closer to him.*

I said, here!

*He shines the torch in her face.*

Hold your chin up. Smooth your hair. Now, the beret.

*She puts it on.*

Delicious. When you Jews are beautiful, you're the most beautiful of all. Turn.

*She turns. He notices a swelling over her stomach.*

What's that?

*He jabs the butt of his Schmeisser into her stomach.*

You know you're not allowed to get pregnant. Didn't you think what they'll do to you? Lost your tongue? Over here!

*She goes even closer. He feels her stomach, laughs.*

Take it out.

*HAYYAH takes a paper bag from under her slip. KITTEL holds out his hand and she gives it to him. He turns it over. Beans scatter everywhere.*

*KITTEL reads the label.*

'Beans. One kilo.' The black market. From whom did you buy it? I want names.

*She says nothing.*

You didn't buy it. It's stolen. You stole a kilo of beans from the army store. Turn! To the wall, march!

*HAYYAH walks towards the wall, stops. KITTEL cocks the Schmeisser, takes aim. SRULIK has been holding an armful of clothes and watching.*

*Now he drops them and rushes towards KITTEL. With him is a*

*DUMMY. SRULIK ventriloquises the DUMMY's voice in such a way that it seems to be the DUMMY who takes the lead and SRULIK who holds him back.*

DUMMY. Wait! Halt! Arrrtez! Stoi!

SRULIK (to the DUMMY). Don't do that! You're a hero, it's me who gets shot in the head.

DUMMY. Who cares about your head?

SRULIK. I do. I'm attached to it.

DUMMY. It's Hayyah! Aren't you a man? Defend her.

SRULIK. A man? No, just a Jew. I surrender.

DUMMY. Just a Jew? And you're proud of it?

SRULIK. I'll hang my head but I'll hang onto it.

KITTEL (to SRULIK and the DUMMY). Over here!

*They go to him.*

Who are you?

DUMMY (pointing at SRULIK). That's who gave her the beans!

KITTEL (to SRULIK). Is it true?

SRULIK. He's lying.

DUMMY. I'm lying?

SRULIK. He'll say anything to finish me off.

DUMMY. He'll say anything to stay alive! (To KITTEL.) Blow out his brains! Free the world from this rat!

KITTEL. Enough.

SRULIK (to the DUMMY). See?

DUMMY. You heard him?

SRULIK. He's talking to you.

DUMMY. Me?

SRULIK. You heard him.

DUMMY. He's talking to you!

KITTEL (to the DUMMY). Shut up! Or I'll shoot out your throat. (To SRULIK.) Did you give her the beans?

*Silence.*

SRULIK. If I had beans, I'd eat them myself. She wouldn't dirty her hands in the black market. She's a singer.

DUMMY (to KITTEL). You see? He's absurd. She croons - la la la.

SRULIK. She's a remarkable artist.

DUMMY. He's cracked about her.

SRULIK. Before the war she was a star. These days . . . When was her last engagement? She's starving! That's why I appeal to you. After all, you're an artist, she's an artist . . .

DUMMY. Don't flatter him. Kittel hates arselickers.

KITTEL *laughs*.

KITTEL. You understand me.

DUMMY (to SRULIK). You see? Art has nothing to do with it. What if she had lost her voice? Would she have no right to live?

KITTEL, *very amused, laughs loudly*. Then, *suddenly serious*:

KITTEL. Everyone, over here!

*Everyone stops what they're doing and moves towards KITTEL.*

You! Bring those scales.

*Someone fetches the scales. KITTEL puts the bean bag on them.*

In one minute every bean will be back in the bag. Begin!

*Everyone scurries frantically round gathering beans, putting them in the bag. KITTEL looks at his watch.*

Stop!

*He looks at the scales:*

Nine hundred and forty grams. And the other sixty? How will you repay your debt?

*He hums a few bars of a song to himself. Then to HAYYAH:*

Shall I use this? (*Pointing to the Schmeisser.*) Or that? (*Pointing to a long black case.*)

HAYYAH *hesitates a long time*.

HAYYAH (*of the case*). That.

KITTEL *chuckles, kneels, opens the case slowly, takes out an object wrapped in rags. Gradually he peels off the covering and reveals a saxophone. He plays a few notes of a German song. 'There once was a king in Tulla.'*

KITTEL. Do you know it?

HAYYAH *nods*.

Then sing!

KITTEL *plays*. HAYYAH *opens her mouth but no sound comes out. He stops*.

That Jew said you're a singer. Was he lying? You'll both be in Ponar by morning. You won't want to sing there. Sing!

HAYYAH *opens her mouth, tries to sing, can't. Pointing to her throat*:

HAYYAH. Dry.

KITTEL. Why didn't you say so?

*He takes out a hip flask, hands it to her. She drinks, hands it back.*

HAYYAH. Please, one of our songs.

KITTEL. *S'il vous plaît, Madame! S'il vous plaît!*

HAYYAH *sings*.

#### SONG NUMBER ONE.

KITTEL. You sing well, Jewess. I'm very moved. Look. (*He shows them a tear he has wept.*) That was worth ten grams. Fifty to go. How will you make them up to me?

*Silence.*

You're all artists, right?

DUMMY. We are! The whole lot of us!

KITTEL. This will be your theatre. I'll order the ghetto council. I'm giving you a chance to prove art is worth fifty grams of beans. But I warn you, I'm a connoisseur. You can't palm off rubbish on me.

*He goes. Everyone leaves, except HAYYAH, SRULIK, the DUMMY and an ACTOR who searches obsessively through the pile of clothes.*

HAYYAH (to SRULIK). I can't ever thank you.

DUMMY. Of course you can. Easy.

SRULIK. You owe nothing.

DUMMY. What's stopping you? Say what you feel!

SRULIK. I'm glad you're alive, that's the end of it.

HAYYAH. He could have killed you!

SRULIK. If he did? What's my life?

DUMMY. 'Without you.' Say it! 'What's my life without you?'

SRULIK. I'm nothing. A ventriloquist. A bit-part player.

HAYYAH. A hero. *(She kisses him.)*

DUMMY. No, no! I saved you! He tried to stop me! Hayyah 'leh, sweetheart, you owe your life to me!

HAYYAH. You're sweet. *(She pats the DUMMY's head.)*

DUMMY. Ohhh! Oooh! Aaah! It's been so long. Now my turn.

*The DUMMY feels her up.*

SRULIK. Stop it. You should be ashamed!

DUMMY. He's jealous! *(To SRULIK.)* Park yourself over there - further, further - good. *(To HAYYAH.)* You do love me, don't you?

HAYYAH *(laughing)*. It's impossible not to.

DUMMY. I adore you. From the moment I laid - eyes on you.

Hayyah 'leh, little one, skinny little . . . You're starving! *(To*

SRULIK.) Give her something to eat!

SRULIK. I've got nothing.

DUMMY. Liar! Turn out your pockets!

SRULIK *turns out one pocket. It's empty.*

Other one! Other one!

SRULIK *turns out the other pocket and finds a carrot.*

SRULIK. I forgot.

DUMMY. And you want her to want you?

SRULIK. Take it. *(He hands her the carrot.)*

HAYYAH. But you . . .

DUMMY. Ha! You wouldn't have got that if he didn't have another.

SRULIK *pulls out another carrot.*

See? Enjoy.

SRULIK *and HAYYAH eat.*

You're enjoying? So, where do you sleep?

HAYYAH. Me? In the stairwell.

DUMMY. Why not sleep with us?

SRULIK. What's got into you?

DUMMY. We've got plenty of room.

SRULIK. To even suggest it!

DUMMY. Do you keep me warm? *(To HAYYAH.)* I want to be warm. Is that a sin?

HAYYAH. No, my little one. I'm so sick of cold nights. I also want to be warm. Come on, let's go.

DUMMY *(to SRULIK)*. Put your arm round her, idiot.

*(SRULIK does.)*

Tighter! Must I tell you everything?

SONG NUMBER TWO.

HAYYAH *and the DUMMY go. SRULIK remains. He looks around.*

Scene Three

GENS *enters, walks over to SRULIK.*

GENS. Srulik! What do you know! There is a God in heaven. How long have I wanted to give you a theatre? Everywhere opposition. Today the council orders me: do it! So, what do you think? Is this place suitable?

SRULIK. In what sense?

GENS. Are there enough seats? Count them.

SRULIK. It's the first thing I did.

GENS. And the stage?



SRULIK. It's a stage.

GENS. Then it's yours. The theatre of the ghetto. And not just for plays. You can hold meetings, discussions, put on concerts. Here's paper, a pen. Draw up a list of what's missing. Write down anything you need.

SRULIK. By when?

GENS. 'By when?' The day before yesterday. Now!

SRULIK *inspects the building and diffidently draws up his list.*

#### Scene Four

*The ACTOR who earlier was searching through the pile of clothes, has dressed himself as a HASSID. He comes forward.*

HASSID. Your honour! Mr Chief of Police!

GENS. What do you want?

HASSID. I am blessed with a gift. I can foretell your future by means of one glance at your palm. If your honour would oblige me by lending his hand . . .

GENS. Foretelling the future? What rubbish! You've got work to do. Do it!

HASSID. Mister, you don't know what's coming. By summer, your whole life will be revolutionised.

GENS. You know so much? You didn't even look at my palm.

HASSID. I also read ears. The palm gives more detailed results.

*GENS holds out his hand. The HASSID examines it.*

HASSID. Amazing!

GENS. What? Tell me.

HASSID. This circle makes a right angle, you see it?

GENS. If you say so.

HASSID. The circle makes the letter 'G'. The right angle an 'L'. Or an 'F'. On your palm a 'G' turns into an 'L'. Or an 'F'.

GENS. Does it mean anything?

HASSID *(looking at his hand)*. You are - chief of the Jewish police.

GENS. Fascinating.

HASSID. But that's just the beginning. You're going to run the whole ghetto - 'G'. That's the Germans. You're going to free your people from the Germans. You'll give them their liberty - 'L'. And lead them to freedom - 'F'. See?

GENS *(laughing)*. Read the future some more. Tell me when.

*The HASSID examines his palm again.*

HASSID. In the time of - three cycles.

GENS. Three cycles? What's that?

HASSID. Three weeks, three months, three years.

*GENS laughs. The HASSID holds out his hand to be paid.*

Three marks.

GENS. What!

HASSID. Three marks, please.

*GENS pays, becomes serious.*

GENS. Go find some real work. This hocus pocus won't save your life.

*The HASSID goes.*

#### Scene Five

GENS *(to SRULIK)*. How is the place?

SRULIK. The place is fine. The time isn't.

GENS. It's not?

SRULIK. This is no time to start a theatre.

GENS. Oh.

SRULIK. Three weeks ago fifty thousand Jews were massacred here, right here. Their blood isn't dry! Fifty thousand people. Gens. How can we put on a play?

*GENS looks at SRULIK for a moment, walks to a door, opens it.*

GENS. You! All of you! Come out of there!

*A crowd of women and men enters. They are dressed in rags which look like shrouds. SRULIK, amazed, goes to them. After a moment:*

SRULIK. Lionek? Is it you? My God. (To OOMA.) Who is this?

GENS. Ooma?

SRULIK. Ooma! (To GENS.) Do you know this woman? She was our finest actress. She played Lady Macbeth. Look at her. (He kisses her.) Ooma. (SRULIK lets go of OOMA.)

GENS embraces her.

SRULIK recognises HAIKIN.

SRULIK. Haikin! (He pulls open HAIKIN's ragged coat. HAIKIN wears nothing but a filthy cloth.)

What happened? I searched for you till my eyes came out. (To

GENS.) This skeleton was leader of the Vilna orchestra for sixteen years. Aron! Gustaw! Miriam! Where did you find them?

GENS. In gutters, in cellars, in forced labour gangs.

HAYYAH runs on.

HAYYAH. Haikin! You're alive! (She embraces him, weeps.) Haikin! Where's your violin? Somebody give him a violin! Can you play? You must!

*One of the actors gives HAIKIN a violin. HAYYAH rubs his hands. Other actors pick up various musical instruments.*

Come, please, darling. There, now your hands are warm. Play!

*Hesitantly, HAIKIN starts to play. Gradually other musicians join in what becomes a tango.*

*When the music is over, the actors and musicians return to their pitiful, depressed state.*

GENS. Do you know what your friends have in common?

SRULIK. They're all marvellous artists!

GENS. They haven't got work permits. That's all. In the next massacre, they're for the chop. You intellectuals! When all this is over, you'll tell the world: 'Three weeks after the massacre, Gens made us act in a play. I kept my hands clean! Look in their eyes! Do a play, any play, find parts for them. Give them a

job! If they're employed I can get them work permits. And bread. Some butter. Potatoes. Soap.

ALL. (*whispering*). Bread. Butter. Potatoes. Soap.

GENS. And that's not all. There's the moral aspect too. We live in dark times. Shouldn't Jewish actors, Jewish musicians use their skills to shed some light? Look at who's next to you. Look at yourselves. You're dejected, depressed. You've lost all will to live. We've forgotten that we're human beings with a language, a culture, a great heritage. Your task is: remind us what we are. I want a performance. Start work.

SRULIK. But what kind of performance? What kind of a theatre?

GENS. Do I ask you how to run a ghetto? Do something that makes us feel human. I ask nothing more.

*The actors leave with SRULIK. WEISKOPF has been amongst the actors. He remains behind with GENS.*

### Scene Six

WEISKOPF. Mr Gens! Mr Gens!

GENS. Go with them. Practise your part.

WEISKOPF. I look like an actor?

GENS. Then what are you?

*HERMANN KRUK appears on another part of the stage. He speaks as if dictating to an unseen typist. The sound of a typewriter rattles away in the background.*

KRUK. That's Weiskopf. A few months ago he was a tailor. A face in the crowd. Then - the ghetto. In no time at all he was king. Weiskopf. A name to remember.

WEISKOPF. Spare me only five minutes.

GENS. Three.

WEISKOPF. Mr Gens, you run this ghetto.

GENS. No! The Jewish Council runs the ghetto.

*Silence.*

## 14 GHETTO

Well, in a way. Go on.

WEISKOPF. Mr Gens, have you any idea how many top-class tailors we've got in this place?

GENS. Tailors?

WEISKOPF. How many sewing machines?

GENS. No idea.

WEISKOPF. Look! *(He takes out a note pad and gives it to GENS.)* Tailors, seamstresses, sewing machines. A full list. Names, addresses. I went house to house, room to room.

GENS. But what for?

WEISKOPF. Mr Gens, can I ask you a question?

GENS. You already have.

WEISKOPF. Mr Gens, at night don't you ever watch the trains going home to Germany all the way from the Russian front?

GENS. Two minutes.

WEISKOPF. What's on those trains? The torn, blood-stained uniforms of the German army. Here's my question. Why do they go back to Germany?

GENS. To be mended.

WEISKOPF. To be mended, to be laundered, to be ironed. Then they send them all the way back. And sitting right in the middle are our tailors, our seamstresses, our sewing machines.

GENS. *(examining WEISKOPF's note pad).* Enough for a workshop . . .

WEISKOPF. No more *schlepping* uniforms backwards and forwards, wasting coal, blocking railways. The Germans should bring them here! It's good for them, it's good for us.

GENS. How many workers can you use?

WEISKOPF. On day one, a hundred. If it goes well, increase by fifty per cent.

GENS. One hundred and fifty more families saved. My office, tomorrow, eight o'clock.

WEISKOPF. And waste a whole night? No, at eight o'clock you'll take the Germans tables, precise figures, all the details. At ten they'll issue a permit to open a workshop. At twelve we'll start

our first shift of the day and we'll take our first tea-break at three.

GENS. My friend, if everyone in the ghetto was like you -

WEISKOPF. Hey! My name's Weiskopf.

GENS. Workshop manager Weiskopf. After you.

GENS. *ushers him out.*

## Scene Seven

As KRUK dictates, the typewriter rattles away. *He sorts out some papers.*

KRUK. Weiskopf. In my chronicle of life in the ghetto, he could fill a whole chapter. So could Gens.

*He reads from an invitation.*

'January the seventeenth, 1942. On Sunday the eighteenth, you are invited to the first performance of the Ghetto Theatre Group. A programme of scenes from plays, satirical songs, modern music, dances.'

*Silence.*

Write this in capital letters: 'No theatre in a graveyard!'

*Members of the ghetto's underground resistance rush on and cover the walls with posters bearing the slogans: 'No theatre in a graveyard!' and 'Don't dance on our graves!' They go off.*

## Scene Eight

GENS enters KRUK's office holding one of the posters.

GENS. Hermann Kruk! I know everything that goes on here.

What's the meaning of this?

KRUK holds up the invitation.

KRUK. I could ask you the same.

GENS. The Theatre Group sent one to every VIP. You're director of the library. Of course you're invited.

KRUK. They think I need entertainment?

GENS. You don't enjoy theatre?

KRUK. You really can't feel how offensive this is?

GENS. Who's offended?

KRUK. I am. So is every other member of the workers' association. In other ghettos perhaps it's still possible to have fun. If there's a chance to do something artistic, meaningful, why not? Go ahead. But in this one? Gens, at Ponar, five miles up the road, there's a pit overflowing with bodies. For God's sake! There were seventy-six thousand Jews in Vilna. How many are left? Fifteen.

GENS. Sixteen!

KRUK. A theatre?

GENS. Hermann Kruk, permit me to remind you of a few facts. September the sixth, 1941. That is, four months ago. No, I'm going to go on. We Jews of Vilna were herded like animals out of our homes, driven here. It was a night spent in hell. Choking with rain, people hauled themselves on hands and knees through the mud. But all you could see were the books flapping in the wind, being kicked about on the ground. You dashed here, there, gathered them up. People who'd lost everything stumbled in a daze through the storm. You rescued pamphlets. The very next morning you opened this library. And for that, though you're a member of the socialist Bund, I salute you. (*He salutes.*)

KRUK. Please . . .

GENS. I disgust you? I don't ask you to salute me. I don't belong to your party. I'm a Zionist. On that black night I didn't notice the books, I admit it. I gathered up women and men. I clothed them. I fed them. I gave them back their professions, their old lives. If they were actors, why shouldn't they act? Haikin, you remember him, must he crush his fingers swinging an axe or should he play his fiddle? You call that a sin? Tomorrow you'll be at the theatre. I insist.

KRUK. Why does it matter to you if we're there or not?

GENS. I want the people to feel solidarity. We're a nation. We must never forget that. Representatives of every group in the ghetto will be there.

KRUK. Why should you miss us? You've invited the chiefs of the Jewish police, the heads of the labour brigades. And such guests: German officers, their gorgeous females. I hear our greatest singer is learning some *lieder* in case they feel homesick. GENS. We can continue this after the show. Tomorrow you'll come.

KRUK. The workers' association of the ghetto declines your most kind invitation. We won't join your chorus of vultures.

GENS. The workers' association is banned.

KRUK. It's the only democratic organization left in the ghetto!

GENS. You don't say.

KRUK. Your concern for the people, it's hypocrisy! You're building a kingdom! This theatre will be your Versailles! I'll have nothing to do with it!

GENS. You want politics? I'll give you politics. One more poster like this, you and your friends will wake up in Ponar! Don't tempt me!

KRUK (*dictating*). The chief of the ghetto has dissolved the workers' association, the only democratically elected body left in the ghetto because it's 'political'.

GENS. History will judge us. At the time of catastrophe, who served the Jews better, you and your ideals or me! So go on writing everything down. Put it all in your diary. Record this too. Everything!

*He goes.*

KRUK. I am recording it all. What else can I do? (*He dictates.*) We live in the midst of such horror, no one can see what is happening. No-one will listen. They can't understand. I say if we are doomed to become victims of fascism, our duty is to pick up a pen and write everything down. My diary has to see, has to hear. It must become the mirror and the conscience of this appalling catastrophe, these terrible times.

## Scene Nine

*While KRUK was speaking, the actors have appeared. They start to rehearse a mournful song, stopping, beginning again, altering the arrangement, the key and so on. Some of the actors pick it up quickly. Others stand about lost, join in for a bit, drop out again, stand staring into space.*

## SONG NUMBER THREE.

WEISKOPF rushes in.

WEISKOPF. Girls and boys, why the weeping? Why the whining?

SRULIK. Weiskopf, we're rehearsing.

WEISKOPF. Times are hard? So times are hard. When did Jews have it easy? You tell me. Suffering makes us strong, gives us power. Look at me. I could stand and cry. I've got good reason. Before the war I had a drapery. The war came. So they pushed me in here. My shop? *Kaput!* Could I cry? And how! But did I?

I said to myself, why do they call you Weiskopf? Wise Kopf. So I took my wise Jewish Kopf and I said: the shop you lost. Will crying bring it back? My arse. If you lose your head as well, you're done for. Nothing else can save you. And that they can't take, not as long as you're alive.

Next I looked around. Walls. A ghetto. I'm closed in. Can I find an opening? Where? I found it! Before the war I was what? A miserable textile worker. Now? I'm managing a tailor's workshop. In the whole region it's number one. Two months and this head's taken me so far! I've got a hundred and fifty Jews working under me. One hundred and fifty! The Germans place their orders, buy my clothes. It's a gigantic operation!

Each day it's getting bigger. The sun rises, my income rises too. And I don't sit on it. My hands are open! If I make a donation to a cause, I give at least five thousand. I'm generous. And I don't hide it. Why should I? Let everyone see and hear. I want the world to know. I'm not ashamed! I make a living and I let others live. Hundreds of others!

Take my example, boys and girls. I'm nothing special. We Jews have talent, more than any other people. If more of us did what I do and stop that whining and complaining, this ghetto would be productive. The Germans would need us! We'd be an asset. Could they get by without us? No! That way we'd survive!

KITTEL appears out of a pile of clothing holding two large cases. He puts them down and applauds.

KITTEL. Bravo, Weiskopf! Bravo! I love this man. And as long as I love him he'll survive.

*He goes to OOMA and slaps her. She falls to the ground.*

Why no salute?

*Everyone salutes.*

You're forgiven, this time. I didn't use the gate. Your lookout had no time to warn you. Kittel's in the ghetto. *(He laughs.)* Watch out! Kittel slides around like a snake. Hide in a tunnel, he'll come up through the floor. Lock yourself in the attic, he'll leap down through the roof.

*He points at one of his cases. To SRULIK:*

What's in there? Take your time. You'll regret a mistake.

SRULIK. The Schmeisser.

KITTEL opens the case, takes out the gun.

KITTEL. Schmeisser!

*He cocks the gun. To HAYYAH:*

And in that?

HAYYAH. Saxophone.

KITTEL opens the case and takes out the saxophone.

KITTEL. Saxophone! Schmeisser and saxophone. *(In a threatening tone.)* Why do I love you, Weiskopf?

WEISKOPF. I'm useful.

KITTEL laughs.

I help the war effort.

KITTEL. And who made you so productive?

WEISKOPF. You did.

KITTEL. Me? *(He smiles then snarls with rage.)* I can't stand arselickers! *(To SRULIK.)* Why should that be?

SRULIK. You're an artist.

KITTEL. What do artists love?

SRULIK. Beauty.

KITTEL. And?

SRULIK. Goodness.

KITTEL. There you are, Weiskopf, that's why I love you. You're beautiful and good. Your energy! Your vitality! You don't owe me that. All I did was provide the right conditions. Take a walk through the streets of the other Vilna, Lithuanian Vilna, Catholic Vilna. They're not people, they're slugs, they're worms. They're the ones we should stamp on, not you.

So I slither in here. Life! Feverish, frantic! There's such beauty, such goodness in that. Can't you see it? No. People who garden in paradise forget the deserts elsewhere. Your shops! Your cafes! Your theatres! Exhibitions! Concerts! Cabaret! Your sense of style! You've run out of luxuries. What do you do! Shred beetroot, call it caviar. The champagne's exhausted? Don't fret. Try a glass of sauerkraut brine. I love it! Your resilience! It's insane!

(To WEISKOPF:) I made you productive? No! I just brought you on, encouraged your inherent beauty to blossom. And we've only started! This painful cross-fertilisation - German soul with Jewish spirit - where will it lead us? Did you dream you would even come this far?

WEISKOPF. I didn't.

KITTEL (to SRULIK). So what else does an artist love?

SRULIK. Truth?

KITTEL. Without truth no art. Weiskopf, answer from the depths of your profound Jewish spirit. Remember, art is truth! Any distortion - (He picks up the gun.) Tell me, what is the difference between partial liquidation and total liquidation?

WEISKOPF. Kill fifty thousand Jews and not me, that's partial liquidation. Kill me, that's total.

KITTEL. Incredible! All this and they can still make jokes. Humour must be in their genes. (To WEISKOPF:) Forget the Schmeisser! (He throws it down and picks up a pot of black paint and a paint brush. He starts painting the actors' faces black.) I give you my word, when the ghetto is destroyed, I'll push a piano to the gate. As you march to the train, I'll play Schumann: 'Scenes from Childhood', 'Kreisleriana', 'Carnaval', our greatest classics,

for you!

Silence.

Nobody asks why I'm here. Musicians! To your places, if you please!

The musicians go to their instruments, pick them up

Suddenly, out of the blue, I just had to hear Gershwin. Isn't that strange? Those philistines, the 'ministry of culture', banned Gershwin. It's a crime to play jazz. Where can I hear him? Nowhere. Then I remembered: the ghetto jazz band! And your singer! (He picks up his saxophone.)

Silence.

Where's the singer who owes me fifty grams of beans?

HAYYAH steps forward.

You and Gershwin together, how many grams?

He waves his saxophone.

Swanee!

The band plays 'Swanee', HAYYAH gives a sensuous, sparkling performance - her life depends on it.

#### SONG NUMBER FOUR.

As they play, KITTEL goes to OOMA, drags her up from the ground and starts to dance with her. The actors join in the dancing. When the music is over:

KITTEL. Thank you. Thank you. For the first time in years I felt joy. Which doesn't mean you can't do better. The choreography was dead. This is jazz! The body should swing free and easy. Like so. (He demonstrates as he sings a line or two. To HAYYAH:)

But you really are something. I'd like to hear you try 'Porgy and Bess'. Your performance was worth twenty-five grams. Really, not bad. (To WEISKOPF:) You allow my artists to perform in those rags?

WEISKOPF. I offered them costumes.

KITTEL. Then do it! Use the best cloth!

WEISKOPF. Naturally! From the top drawer!

KITTEL. I'll be there to see! (To the others:) I'm always here to see.

So watch out! Kittel can creep through any crack, any hole. Look, it's Kittel! The snake!

*He laughs and leaves the way he came.*

### Scene Ten

*The huge heap of dirty rags has become a neatly stacked pile of mended and laundered uniforms and clothes.*

WEISKOPF. Costumes . . . ? Any size, any style, I've got it. Some we patched. This blouse has bullet holes. (*He throws it to an actress.*) Find them. This jacket was ripped from here to here with a bayonet. This one's brand new. (*He stitches them behind his back.*) Which is which? Don't be nervous!

*The actors start to examine the clothing.*

Dresses, suits, slips, trousers, tailcoats, overcoats, undershirts. If you need, take - there's plenty. English corduroy, can you use it? Fine linen from Naples, French silk, it's gorgeous. Starched, ironed, everything ready for use. I've got children's clothes, piles of it. A little girl's skirt. With blue rabbits. Are there any children in your play?

*Appalled, the actors throw back the clothes.*

Something's wrong? It's clothing. What else should it be? Here. Policemen: jacket, trousers, hat, a complete set. Judge's robes, doctor's gowns - we've got dozens. Hassidic frocks, plenty, even a rabbi's hat. Tweed suits, the finest from Manchester. This one was heavy with mud, we got it out.

Ties from Warsaw. Polish uniforms, who needs one? Uniforms of heroes. Bayonets in hand, on horseback, they charged German tanks. It didn't do the uniforms much good. Peppered with bullet holes. My women sewed them up. Is there even a spot of blood? German uniforms, all ranks, we've got them. We make no distinctions. Everyone gets treated the same. Into the laundry!

You should visit our laundry. You'll come out with a show. In our cauldrons are human dramas. The fires in the ovens roar! The air weeps tears of soap and chlorine. Everything comes out

in the wash - the mud, the blood, the oil! The sewage boils in black and crimson streams. And then on to the sewing workshop. A gigantic hall. A hundred and fifty sewing machines clanking and rattling. It's like a railway station!

Help yourselves! Why hold back? Clothing, we've got plenty. Yes, clothing's one commodity that's not in short supply.

*Some of the actors have picked out costumes. A few have started to put them on. The first to be dressed is JUDITH. She covers her head with a shawl and - improvising a scene - rushes at WEISKOPF who doesn't realise what is going on. He continues sorting through the clothes and offering them to the actors. Other actors watch the improvisation and comment to each other.*

JUDITH. Help me! They've taken my husband! Oh, my husband!

WEISKOPF (*without looking at her*). Don't worry. It'll work out all right.

JUDITH. They caught him buying flour. They took him straight to Lukishki.

WEISKOPF. I told you: don't worry.

JUDITH. Your honour, you're the only one -

WEISKOPF. Not now. I'm busy!

JUDITH. If we can only find twenty thousand roubles, if we can just pay the fine -

WEISKOPF. Who's talking to you? Am I talking to you?

JUDITH. Please, hurry! No-one comes home from Lukishki!

*JUDITH addresses some of the other actors who are partly dressed in WEISKOPF's clothes.*

This man's an angel. He gives food to the poor. He frees people from jail. We should kiss his white hands. (*To OOMA.*) Are you a doctor?

OOMA (*hesitantly, as if waking from a dream*). What? Oh, yes. A doctor.

*OOMA finishes her dressing by putting on a doctor's black coat. She will play the part of WEINER, a young physician.*

JUDITH. Doctor, my husband's diabetic. Help me get him his insulin. Without it he won't live a day.

WEISKOPF. Go home. Make your husband soup. He'll drink it then have insulin for dessert.

JUDITH. That's how he is. He helps everyone. (To the RABBI:) Are you a rabbi?

*Silence. Then the RABBI finishes his dressing up by putting on a rabbit's hat.*

Bless him, rabbi, bless him. Pray God keeps him strong.

WEISKOPF. OK, I'm finished. I'll go see my German. Come to my office in one hour. Don't be late! I've got plenty other problems to sort out, not only you.

WEISKOPF goes.

*The actors gently applaud JUDITH who takes off her shawl and throws it back onto the pile. SRULIK embraces her. Silence. As the actors begin to improvise, SRULIK moves the others aside, turning them into an audience and clearing a space for the performance. Then he moves among the actors, encouraging and prompting them. An actor who will play the elderly DR GOTTLIEB has put on doctor's clothes. Another actor has dressed as a judge. (These parts, and that of the RABBI, may be played by either men or women.)*

#### Scene Eleven

WEINER. Gentlemen, I've called you to this meeting in the hospital basement for one reason and one reason only.

RABBI. Who are you?

WEINER. Dr Weiner. I am in charge of the hospital dispensary. In the ghetto we have fifty diabetics. Some are serious cases in the final phase of the disease. At any moment they may lapse into unconsciousness. As my colleague, Dr -

GOTTLIEB. Gottlieb!

WEINER. - Dr Gottlieb can verify these patients need high doses of insulin, up to fifty units a day.

RABBI. Fifty injections every day?

GOTTLIEB. No, no, no. Fifty units can be given in three or four doses. (To WEINER.) Keep it simple. Stick to the point.

WEINER. How can they advise us if we don't tell them everything?

JUDGE. Some patients need fifty units a day. We understand so much. Go on.

WEINER. Of course other patients are much better off. They can get by with, let's say, ten units. They're young, they're fit. Apart, of course, from their diabetes.

JUDGE It all seems quite logical.

WEINER. Yes, now: to keep all fifty diabetics alive we need one thousand units each day. In my dispensary we have one hundred thousand. Enough for three months. When it's gone, the most seriously ill will be dead within days. The others will take longer. All will die.

GOTTLIEB. So we'll raise money, buy insulin on the black market like we buy other medicines.

GENS enters. *The actors stop acting. GEN S makes a gesture inviting them to go on. They resume.*

WEINER. There is no more insulin.

GENS. That's right.

GOTTLIEB. Not even on the black market?

JUDGE. Nonsense! You can buy anything - French soap, perfume - if you can meet the price.

GENS. Forget it.

WEINER. There's none. Not anywhere in the whole city.

GENS. Nor in any other ghetto.

WEINER. In fact, we're well off. If the Germans knew how much we have, they'd take the lot. We haven't even told them we have any diabetics. No, for once it's not a question of price. Insulin is priceless. There's none to be had.

JUDGE. So what are you asking us? What can we do?

WEINER. Well, if we stop treating the serious cases, we'd need four hundred units a day instead of a thousand. Our supply would last nine months. If we're even more rigorous in choosing who we treat, we can keep the twenty most healthy alive for a year and a half, maybe two.



RABBI. This is ridiculous. It's crazy to plan even two months ahead. God knows what could happen. Even two days!

JUDGE. He's right. For us two months is eternity. You say we have insulin for three.

WEINER. That isn't the point.

JUDGE. The point is that I'm not a doctor. Neither is he. How can we tell if this one is critical or that one? We can't advise you which patients to treat.

WEINER. That's not what I'm asking you!

JUDGE. So explain.

WEINER. My question is: do I have the moral right to stop treating the seriously ill, to let them die so that others will have a better chance to pull through?

*Silence. It becomes more and more oppressive.*

JUDGE. Presumably you invited me here because I'm a judge. Very well. Let's consider the case from a legal viewpoint. We start with the general case. Do we ever have the right to sentence people to death? Answer: we do. We may execute those convicted of certain crimes provided the law stipulates the death sentence. We move on to the particular. Of which crime are you accusing these people? If I understand you, their crime is that they are seriously ill. What's the evidence? Does it stand up? You've measured the level of their blood sugar and so on and so on. Now I must tell you I have read, I won't say every law book but, in my life, quite a few. I have never found it written that possessing a blood sugar level of any degree is grounds for passing the death sentence. Never. So, madam prosecutor, I can inform you there are no grounds in law that allow me to sanction the execution of these people.

WEINER. Juridically you may be right. But I'm appalled at the casual way in which you condemn every one of these people. Rabbi, I need guidance.

*Silence.*

RABBI. A story from the Talmud. Will it help? It can't hurt. So let's try. An army is besieging a city. They demand as the price for lifting the siege . . . thirty people. If they're handed over to be slaughtered, the city will be spared. I'm not saying it fits our case exactly. Let's see where it gets us. So the Talmud asks:

should we hand over the thirty or not? And the Talmud answers: if no individuals have been specified you must hand over no-one. The whole city must go up in flames. But if the enemy asks: give us this one and this one, if they ask for them by name, then hand them over, save everyone else. So says the Talmud. Now, who here is the enemy? Can anyone specify which individuals must die so that others may live? Obviously not.

WEINER. Here is the list. Patients and case histories, patients and blood sugar levels, patients and marital status, age, profession. What more do you need?

RABBI. I don't want to look at it.

JUDGE. Nor do I. Put it away!

WEINER (*reading*). Seventy-eight, widower, no children, critical. You want his name? Thirty-six, married, father of three -

GOTTLIEB. How dare you do this?

RABBI. Only God can give life. Only he can take it. Human beings have no right to interfere.

KITTEL *appears out of nowhere and gets on the stage. The actors freeze.*

KITTEL. Gens! Gens!

GENS *comes on.*

I need help with a problem of logic. A man and wife have a child. Have they increased the race or not?

GENS. They haven't.

KITTEL. And if they have two children?

GENS. Still no. Two children from two parents is no increase.

KITTEL. Three children?

GENS. They've increased.

KITTEL. Is that so? So we do have a problem. The Führer has forbidden any increase of the Jewish race. One child, fine. Two, still permissible. Three?

GENS. One too many.

KITTEL. You've solved my problem! I knew you would. OK, let's do it.

GENS. Do what?

KITTEL. Get rid of every third child.

*He throws a stick to GENS.*

Father, mother, child, child. The third one - *(Snaps his fingers.)*

*Using the stick, GENS carries out the selection.*

GENS. Father, mother, child, child . . . Father, mother, child, child . . . Get a move on! Hurry it up! Father, mother, child, child . . . Move faster!

KRUK appears. *He speaks against a background of GENS's selection, the screaming of the families, the rattling of his typewriter. After a moment the sound of screaming is transferred into song.*

#### SONG NUMBER FIVE.

KRUK. A father, a wife and three children. Gens counts them: Father, mother, child, child. The third child is a twelve year-old boy. He's shoved out of line, hit on the back with the stick. Mother, father, child, child are pushed into the group of survivors. They cry: 'It's a Jew who's taken our child from us!' The crowd starts to murmur then to scream: 'Gens is a traitor! Gens is killing our children!' Gens pays no attention: Father, mother, child, child. Father, mother, child. A family with only one child. Gens yells at the father: 'You idiot! What have you done with your second child?' The father, already distraught, becomes terrified. 'I only have one!' Gens lashes at him with his stick. 'Imbecile! Where is your other child?' In all the confusion, nobody sees Gens retrieve the twelve-year-old boy with his stick, thrust him into the arms of the man. 'Here he is! Here is your second child. Hold onto him. Next time you'll lose him for good.' Father, mother, child, child. The boy, almost fainting, stands among strangers, among the survivors. Two hundred and nineteen others were sent to Ponar.

KRUK goes. GENS, KITTEL, the families have gone. *Some of the actors - not WEINER - have taken off part of their costumes. The argument continues for real between them.*

RABBI. No one has the moral authority to decide who will live, who will die. Only God gives life. Only he can take it away.

WEINER. In what world? A world in which justice prevails. Here? Here men decide everything. The will of God? It's the will of evil men.

RABBI. That's blasphemy.

WEINER. We all cling to vague hopes. The Russians will break through. Our families, our friends will survive. Maybe, maybe. In this liquid you can see hope, you can touch it. For some this is life. God's will? No, it's your will. It's mine.

RABBI. Blasphemy!

WEINER *(to GOTTLIEB)* You're older, more experienced than I am. Say something. Help me.

GOTTLIEB. Discriminating between patients? There's never any justification. I'm leaving this meeting in protest.

*(He throws his costume on the pile, goes out.)*

WEINER. So I must dole it out, first come first served? Blindly, mechanically with no thought, no feeling, no plan?

RABBI. You with your direct access to the almighty, do as you please!

JUDGE. Selecting patients to live or to die? That's Nazi medicine!

RABBI and JUDGE *throw their costumes back on the pile, go out. The other actors and SRULIK have gone.*

WEINER. Let everyone perish! Avoid the moral issues! You're the Nazi doctors not me!

#### Scene Twelve

GENS *returns to the deserted theatre with a bottle in his hand. He is drunk and exhausted.*

GENS. Father, mother, child, child. Father, mother. . . *(He sees OOMA.)* Still here? *(He flings himself down on the pile of clothing.)* You've got papers, fake Polish papers. Don't deny it, I know you have. And the right face. Your accent's pure Warsaw. What are you waiting for? Leave the ghetto.

OOMA. I'm afraid.

GENS. You'd be safer with the partisans in the forest.

OOMA. I'm afraid to make a decision. To break out, to fight, to resist - that takes courage. To stay, even to die, that's nothing.

GENS. I can't understand you.

OOMA. To live here - it's just something that happened to me.

To resist - who knows, maybe it's not the right time. We've lived through so many disasters. Make a decision? On what grounds? In fact I made a decision, we all did: wait and see.

GENS. There's no future for the ghetto.

OOMA. You served in the Lithuanian army.

GENS. So?

OOMA. You understand weapons. Why don't you go to the forest?

GENS. I belong here with my people.

OOMA. They need you to fight!

*As he speaks, GENS recovers from his drunkenness.*

GENS. They still don't see what's being done to them. Listen! There is another kind of resistance. Not fighting, not the forest, not even joining the underground here in this ghetto. OK, pretend you don't know what goes on. You're all mixed up in it. I know everything! No! Real resistance is deeper. And harder. And has to be done!

You asked me a question. 'Why don't I go to the forest?' I'll tell you. The Germans want to destroy us. Physically yes, but worse than that, spiritually. They want to cut out our souls. Can we resist? They've conquered all Europe. Can we fight them? Only on the spiritual level. 'Neither by might, nor by power, but by our spirit, saith the Lord!' Do you hear?

That insulin. Let me tell you about it. Jews have always suffered, always. Never like this. They want to kill us all. Listen: all. They won't. No, no, they're going to lose this war. But when they've retreated, gone, what state will our souls be in? Pure, Jewish, healthy? Or riddled with their fatal disease?

We must build a wall round our souls. In this spiritual ghetto we'll protect who? You don't know? The strong. That's what that insulin means. Protect the strong! In body, in spirit. Do you see what we've come to? Selection! That's it. The sick, the weak, the hopeless - (*Snaps his fingers.*) What else can we do? (*He drinks.*)

Will our grandchildren understand why we did it? Will they

justify us in their songs, in their plays? Who cares! We must save what we can. So I won't go to the forest. My work is here. I want theatre. And lectures. Education. Intellectual activities. I must save as many Jews as I can! (*He drinks.*) There's no future in the ghetto. (*He drinks.*) None at all.

GENS collapses. OOMA, who is sitting on the ground, takes him in her lap and sings a lullaby.

### SONG NUMBER SIX.

*Fade out.*

End of Part One.