

Belzec December Night

A one-act play.

by M. Stefan Strozier

A production of La Muse Venale, Inc. (501c3, non-profit theater company), 303 Park Avenue South, #1440, New York, NY 10010. Artistic Director: M. Stefan Strozier (646-620-7406) www.lamusevenale.org. The world premiere of *Belzec December Night* was in Teaneck, New Jersey, in 2008.

All characters in this play are entirely fictional. The timeline and research conducted were purely amateur and as accurate as possible. The author is not Jewish and this is a work entirely of his imagination. Any corrections or suggestions are welcome.

Note: This is the first in a series of nine one-act plays about America that will be produced by La Muse Venale Acting Troupe. The playwright had hoped to produce this series in 2009; but the actors he interviewed seemed decidedly uninterested at the time. In addition to the Holocaust, this play represents immigration to America from other shores, however that occurs.

Cast:

Abraham Bauer

Ruth Bauer

Ruth Zimmerman:

Time: Alternating between December 11th, 1942 and December 29th, 2008

Setting: In the present, Ruth Zimmerman is in New York City. She is a college student home from college during the holidays. She is going to the library to conduct research for a paper on the Holocaust. She is using this class requirement to explore what happened to her own German Jewish family during the Holocaust. She has limited information about her mother's family. Her father's family escaped Germany in the 1930s. Her monologues are internal thoughts and not to be addressed to the audience. The set should be sparse, and the items that are mentioned in the play should be displayed prominently. Ruth Zimmerman's maternal grandparents live in Berlin in a basic apartment. They have moved from a large house.

Act I, Scene I

Setting: A young woman combing her hair in New York City, last day of Hanukkah, 2008. A Menorah has seven lights lit on it.

Ruth Zimmerman: A comb. A brown, heavy comb. It is an old comb. It is chipped in places. But it is a good comb. It is wooden and strong. Who owned this comb? It was my mother's comb; but this comb is a hundred years old if it is a day old. There are so many strange, old things in this house. Perhaps its owner was a man who worked in a factory, and every day he combed his blonde hair with this comb, until one morning—

1st Male voice: [Offstage.] Wake up, Ruth!

Ruth: I am awake! —a robber broke into his house chased by a policeman and the robber jumped out the window; but not before smashing into the man who owned this comb and this tooth of the comb broke.

1st Male voice: [Offstage.] Let's go, Ruth!

Ruth: I'm coming!

[Lights fade to black. Lights rise on Ruth Bauer combing her hair with the same comb that Ruth Zimmerman was using.]

Act I, Scene II

Setting: Berlin, Germany. A young woman combing her hair on the last day of Hanukkah, 1942, with the same comb in previous scene. Abraham and Ruth Bauer are married. They are long hold-outs in Berlin to the Nazi government. They have recently given their daughter, Daphne, up to adoption, in the hopes that she will be smuggled out of Germany. Abraham and Ruth have been able to survive the various laws that the Nazis have put into place by a combination of determination, cunning, well-connected friends, and Abraham's position as a highly regarded chemist. However, by now almost all means of survival have been exhausted. Operation Reinhard has begun in Poland. Belzec extermination camp, on the outskirts of Poland, exists from March to the end of December, 1942. A Menorah has seven lights lit on it.

Abraham: [Offstage.] Wake up, Ruth!

Ruth Bauer: I am awake!

[Ruth Bauer turns suddenly and her comb hits the table. Enter Abraham Bauer.]

Ruth Bauer: Oh, I broke my comb! This comb is too old. I must buy a new comb when I go out today.

Abraham: We don't have any money for new combs. Besides, look, you only broke a single tooth of it. This comb has plenty of life left in it. Where is my pocket watch?

Ruth Bauer: How should I know where your pocket watch is?

Abraham: Here is my watch. Every morning my pocket watch is in a new place. Does it have tiny legs and wander around the room during the night?

Ruth Bauer: Have you made coffee?

Abraham: I have made coffee.

Ruth Bauer: Thank goodness. You must wake up early to make the coffee.

Abraham: I am up early every morning. But you sleep very well and don't hear me. Here you are.

Ruth Bauer: Thank you.

Abraham: You're welcome.

Ruth Bauer: What do you work on, since you are not at the institute anymore?

Abraham: There is much to do. Chemistry formulas do not write themselves. I may write a book. I have always been interested in the many applications of petroleum.

Ruth Bauer: That is good. But wouldn't you rather be at the institute?

Abraham: Why do you ask?

Ruth Bauer: Oh, no reason.

Abraham: Do I have any choice?

Ruth Bauer: No, I suppose not.

Abraham: Yes, I would rather be working at the institute. I miss the camaraderie of my fellow scientists.

Ruth Bauer: Do you wonder what they are doing?

Abraham: I imagine the German scientists have been drafted to serve in Hitler's military. And the Jewish ones have been shipped to Auschwitz. Perhaps some are surviving like us.

Ruth Bauer: Please, Abraham, you are always so cold-hearted.

Abraham: That is not true. I simply answered your question.

Ruth Bauer: It's not what I asked.

Abraham: What did you ask, then?

Ruth Bauer: I was asking about your colleagues, not what happened to them.

Abraham: Oh, they are probably confused, the German ones. But they might not think too much on it. For them, life is not that changed. There is a war; but their work keeps them going.

Ruth Bauer: It is not that simple! Our race is being exterminated by the Germans.

Abraham: Please don't talk like that.

Ruth Bauer: It's the truth!

Abraham: You cannot say that for certain.

Ruth Bauer: We read the papers. We read between the lines. Work camps are now death camps. Laws that used to only restrict our travel now don't allow us to go outside in the daytime.

Abraham: The curfew.

Ruth Bauer: The curfew for Jews only.

Abraham: We must follow the law.

Ruth Bauer: No, we must break the law. We must resist.

Abraham: Please, Ruth, you understand how much I hate politics, especially this early in the morning.

Ruth Bauer: Who can I talk politics with, if you refuse? I would go to the library if I were allowed; but there are no more libraries in Berlin anyway. They have all been burned to the ground, like the Library of Alexandria!

Abraham: Why all this drama? Would you like more coffee?

Ruth Bauer: Abraham, these are dramatic times! Think of everything we have lost. Society is no longer normal. The government has lost its mind!

Abraham: I was not a great scientist. I *am* a well-respected scientist. But nothing the Nazis do can change that fact. Be rational. Society is not insane, or the cars would not be running in orderly fashion on the street, and people would not keep their money in the banks. There are levels of chaos. We are still living in a functional country. Things will turn around, in time. We must be patient and continue to survive as best we can.

Ruth Bauer: We are Germans! The trains run on time! Look closely at what our world has become and you will see insanity. Germany is no longer our Fatherland. It has become an evil place. The German people have embarked upon a quest. But their quest is not a Biblical one; it is based on strange fantasies of race. We Jews—a great race ourselves—are left to suffer. Lies and propaganda are everywhere. Who else can I talk to about these things?

Abraham: And what of our friends, and my colleagues, are they evil too?

Ruth Bauer: You have become an apologist for this mad world. I am sorry. I was cruel in saying that. You are my husband and a good and honorable man. I love and respect you dearly.

Abraham: It's not true, anyway. Don't be irrational.

Ruth Bauer: But there is nothing wrong with a little bit of drama! As all of Germany is aware, even greater Europe, I am still a fine actress in the theater. I have not gone away, the theater has! I shall one day act on Broadway in New York!

Abraham: I am fine with holding a coherent conversation with you, but you never cease with your drama. We are talking about our personal welfare, and that of our daughter! In these matters any discussion has real meaning.

Ruth Bauer: I have nothing here. I no longer have a maid. I don't even have a house. That was taken too. We must go to the store today.

Abraham: No.

Ruth Bauer: I *insist* that we go to the store.

Abraham: No. Every morning it is the same thing.

Ruth Bauer: If you will not go to the store, then you must permit me to go to the store.

Abraham: No and no.

Ruth Bauer: Today is Friday and I cannot live another day without going to the store to buy what I need to cook dinner. I must buy meat, chicken, and vegetables, and I also need spices. I have not been to the store for nearly two weeks. How can your civilized society permit a woman like me to not go to the store to buy the basic foodstuffs that I require to run a household?

Abraham: I did not say Germany is civilized in 1942. I said it is merely functioning. You cannot go to the store, no.

Ruth Bauer: Stop saying no! I must buy the vegetables that we need, in order for me to cook a proper dinner!

Abraham: No! No! We are not going to go to the store. You are not going to the store and I am not going to the store!

Ruth Bauer: Then when will we go to the store? Will we starve?

Abraham: We are never going to go to the store, ever!

Ruth Bauer: How can you say that?

Abraham: We are never going to the store!!

Ruth Bauer: By not going to the store you are nothing more than a coward of a man!

Abraham: Do not insult me like that.

Ruth Bauer: It is true! Show some manliness. Stand up for what is right!

Abraham: I have shown plenty of manliness. How else would we still be where we are, after nearly a decade of struggle? Don't lecture me about manliness! I have kept my family intact, despite ruthless circumstances. Let me tell you, my wife, I have insured the safety and well-being of our daughter, Daphne, despite the monsters that lurk around every corner. How have I been able to do that, I ask you? Do not lecture me about being a man, and taking care of my family!

Ruth Bauer: Then, if you are the man that you say you are, you must have the ability to allow me this one wish: I must go shopping.

Abraham: You cannot go to the store anyway; I have spent all of our money to insure the safety of Daphne.

Ruth Bauer: I have some money left.

Abraham: And what if that is the one thing that I demand that you do not have?

Ruth Bauer: I want to go to the store. Normal people do not live like this.

Abraham: Perhaps you are right.

Ruth Bauer: I will go in precisely one hour, at 7 a.m., prior to the curfew. I will get ready now.

Abraham: Yes, go ahead, fine. And what if the Brown Shirts that are constantly at the corner store take us away to the death camps? What about our daughter, Daphne? Won't you consider her? There is still some food in the cupboard.

Ruth Bauer: I would like to eat a dignified meal for once. How long has it been since we have enjoyed a decent, well-cooked, candlelight meal? If the Brown Shirts are at the corner store then they are surely here with us in this room, and therefore our daughter is not protected. I do not believe that! I will not have my child live in fear! She must make it to America. And if we are not paranoid enough to believe that the Brown Shirts are here, then they are still in our hearts. Do not pretend to yourself that the Nazis are not terrorizing us. They are killing us, even before they even lay a finger on our bodies. They are corrupting our hopes, and blackening our hearts. And I will not have a weak or compromised heart, never. I do not care what happens. My heart will remain strong and pure and hopeful, to the end, whatever that may be.

Abraham: Go do whatever it is you must do. Buy the food at the store. We will face the Brown Shirts, then, tonight.

Ruth Bauer: Yes. I must buy some rice and asparagus. You do not need to come with me. It would only bring more suspicion.

Abraham: Yes, fine. I hope you make a good dinner tonight.

Ruth Bauer: Don't you like my cooking?

Abraham: Of course, your cooking is wonderful.

[Exit Ruth Bauer. Lights slowly fade to black on Abraham.]

Setting: Enter Ruth Zimmerman into her kitchen.

Ruth: A gold pocket watch. A gift from my mother to my father. My father leaves it here every day. Who wears a pocket watch these days? Is it possible that he leaves it here on purpose? Maybe that way he will not lose it. It is a heavy, gold, and very high quality. Audemars Piguet. Must be German. There is an engraving on the back of the watch. I can't believe that I have never noticed that before. It's so obvious. It says, 'To Abraham, from Ruth. I love you.' Those are my grandparents. They died in the Holocaust. How did this watch make it here? I have to get to the library and finish my paper.
[Exit Ruth Zimmerman. Lights fade to black.]

Act I, Scene IV

Setting: Lights rise on Abraham sitting in the same chair. Enter Ruth Bauer.

Ruth Bauer: I have returned from the store. It was no big deal. You were wrong all along. There were Brown Shirts there; but I prominently displayed my badge and all was fine. You worry for nothing, Abraham. We will survive this mess. I am sure of it. Have no fear.

Abraham: I have no fear.

Ruth Bauer: Germany will recover from this horror.

[The sound of marching soldiers outside the window. Abraham goes to the window.]

Abraham: Look at that, a street full of marching Schutzstaffel SS soldiers, dressed in shining black. The black they wear is darker than the night. I think they must keep marching, or they will lose their peculiar luminescence, the way a shark must keep swimming to breath oxygen. But where do they march? They must be told. They have no mind. Hitler is their mind. Hitler is their father. He tells them to march, to keep marching. Hitler tells Germany to keep marching. And the Germans march. March, march, march, march, march, march. You fools. You damn fools. As you often remind me, Ruth, I am a scientist. All indications point toward failure.

Ruth Bauer: Science is political as well as factual. Politics means that things can change.

Abraham: And science is purely factual, though it has taught me about God.

Ruth Bauer: Why do you sound so moody? Is something wrong?

Abraham: At times, I wish I had a woman who could talk logically with me.

Ruth Bauer: Oh, you do not enjoy my company?

Abraham: I didn't say that. Of course, I love you. I would not substitute you for anyone else.

Ruth Bauer: I'm honored.

Abraham: I'm sorry. Maybe I am in a bad mood. Did you buy food?

Ruth Bauer: Yes, everything for a nice dinner.

Abraham: That's good.

Ruth Bauer: Just relax. Can you make some coffee?

Abraham: Yes.

Ruth Bauer: Thank you.

Abraham: Was the store busy?

Ruth Bauer: No, it was nearly empty.

Abraham: I hope you were careful.

Ruth Bauer: Of course I was.

Abraham: You must always be careful.

Ruth Bauer: If only we were in France, just a few years ago.

Abraham: Maybe we should try and get on the train to Paris? Now may be the time to leave Berlin and Germany.

Ruth Bauer: Isn't that risky? Should we simply abandon everything?

Abraham: Would you rather stay in Berlin?

Ruth Bauer: No, but we would be caught.

Abraham: You are right.

Ruth Bauer: What will we have for lunch? Not that you have braved the store like I have.

Abraham: I would like a vegetable sandwich. Can you make that?

Ruth Bauer: Yes, of course. Just a minute. I bought a new scarf today.

Abraham: You went to another store? You took too many chances.

Ruth Bauer: I refuse to live in fear, Abraham!

Abraham: Then we will die.

Ruth Bauer: Please. I am preparing our dinner. It is not a feast fit for a king but it's not too bad. You did not say if you like my scarf. Here is your sandwich. Bon appetite.

Abraham: Do you think America will enter the war?

Ruth Bauer: Why should they? This is a European war.

Abraham: It's not really a war at all. It's an expansion of Germany's borders.

Ruth Bauer: France has fallen. The Battle of Britain is ongoing. I don't think America would allow Britain to fall. Funny that America did not save France.

Abraham: I think the Blitzkrieg happened too fast. The Maginot Line could not hold for long.

Ruth Bauer: The very line you fought for in World War One.

Abraham: Yes, for Germany.

Ruth Bauer: The lack of respect is beyond words.

Abraham: I think I will lie down while you cook. I have a headache.

Ruth Bauer: Feel better, dear.

Abraham: Thanks.

Ruth Bauer: I will finish the coffee.

[Lights fade to black.]

Act I, Scene V

Setting: Ruth Zimmerman is riding a bus to the library. She wears the same scarf from the previous scene.

Ruth Zimmerman: This bus is too crowded. What a miserable, cold day. I have to finish my research for my paper at the library. Tonight is the last day of Hanukkah. I am ready for the New Year. I wonder what my boyfriend is doing. I will call him. Writing about the Holocaust is not easy. It's depressing to read this material. Thank God I live in America. Even though I say that, living in America has no meaning for me. I feel more

connected to my German grandparents than I feel like an American. What does it mean to be an American? Oh, this guy smells very bad.
[Lights fade to black.]

Act I, Scene VI

Setting: Ruth Bauer is writing a letter. She finishes and puts it in an envelope. Enter Abraham, awake from his nap.

Abraham: What are you writing?

Ruth Bauer: A letter to our daughter.

Abraham: Why?

Ruth Bauer: Please, Abraham.

Abraham: It just so happens that a representative for the family that I paid to take our daughter will be here tomorrow to pick up any important items.

Ruth Bauer: Oh, wonderful!

Abraham: We should put them all in a bag and put the bag under the designated floorboard.

Ruth Bauer: But we don't have anything left.

Abraham: Then we can leave ordinary items. Here, I still have my watch.

Ruth Bauer: My comb.

Abraham: You see?—It is still useful. A sandwich?

Ruth Bauer: Please don't joke about this.

Abraham: I was being serious. Here are some scissors.

Ruth Bauer: A wine glass.

Abraham: Will it break?

Ruth Bauer: Wrap it in newspaper.

Abraham: There we are.

Ruth Bauer: My scarf! I acted in my first theater play wearing this scarf.

Abraham: Good.

Ruth Bauer: That's all that we have.

Abraham: It is enough.

Ruth Bauer: It is so unfair.

Abraham: Yes. Yes, it is.

[Lights fade to black.]

Act I, Scene VII

Setting: Ruth Zimmerman at the library, reading a book out loud.

Ruth Zimmerman: Inge Deutschkron, *I Wore the Yellow Star*. Two or three weeks before a transport would depart, the Gestapo would demand that the Jewish community submit a relatively large number, 3,000-4,000, of completed questionnaires to them. The Gestapo would select those designated for the next transport based on these questionnaires. The forms were numbered serially and returned to the Jewish community. Then the Gestapo sent written notification to the individuals in question, who by a certain

time had to report with their luggage to the assembly center in the Levetzowstrasse synagogue for the so-called resettlement. The initial Jewish community practice of sending advance written notification to those individuals destined for the next transport was prohibited by the Gestapo after several months, because too many people fled after receiving these notices. After that, the Gestapo collected those who had been selected directly from their homes and brought them to the assembly center. One of the other lodgers, the 65-year-old widow Klara Hohenstein, received one of the questionnaires from the Jewish community. Shortly after 8 a.m. the doorbell rang loudly and insistently. Mother sat as though paralyzed. Almost noiselessly, she whispered only: 'For God's sake!' Since there was no doubt who was demanding entrance, I put on my coat with the 'Star of David' and opened the door. Two tall men in gray loden coats stood before me. They inquired: 'Does Klara Sara Hohenstein live here?' I pointed out the door to her room and went back to my mother. The next morning, it had quickly gotten around that those who had been arrested were in the Levetzowstrasse synagogue awaiting transport. It was said that one could bring them things. But then the wildest rumors began to circulate: everything was being seized from the deportees anyway; they were being beaten, and weren't getting anything to eat. Under cover of darkness, my mother and I went to the synagogue on October 17. We stayed across the street from it. We didn't dare get any closer. We looked over at the synagogue, but couldn't see anything except the lighted windows. On October 18, 1941, the first transport departed from Berlin to Lodz. After several weeks, a pre-printed postcard arrived that read: 'I am fine. I am in Lodz. Send me packages.' Yes, we did send packages for a long time. They contained bread, dried vegetables, things that we saved up to buy. We never received an answer.

Act I, Scene VIII

Setting: Ruth and Abraham Bauer have finished eating dinner.

Abraham: That was a delicious dinner.

Ruth Bauer: Thank you. It was nothing.

Abraham: You made something out of nothing. You're good at that.

Ruth Bauer: Should we be despairing?

Abraham: Then we would get nowhere. Now I will light the final light on our Menorah.

Ruth Bauer: There. We made it another year.

Abraham: Yes we did.

Ruth Bauer: I only hope our daughter makes it to America.

Abraham: She will make it, I am certain.

Ruth Bauer: How can you be sure?

Abraham: Because God is good.

Ruth Bauer: He seems to be on a bit of a vacation lately.

Abraham: Nonsense! God exists in this very room with us.

Ruth Bauer: Well.

Abraham: We must believe, Ruth. America too must believe. Our daughter has embarked on a great journey. Our family will live on through her.

Rock of Ages let our song
Praise thy saving power;
Thou amidst the raging foes;
Wast our sheltering tower

[The loud sound of footsteps coming up a staircase.]

Furious they assailed us,
But Thine arm availed us,
And Thy word broke their sword,
When our own strength failed us.

[The footsteps grow louder.]

Children of the martyr race
Whether free or fettered
Wake the echoes of the songs
Where ye may be scattered

[Banging at the door. Ruth Bauer screams.]

Yours the message cheering
That the time is nearing
Which will see all men free
And tyrants disappearing

[Offstage: German shouts to open the door.]

Kindling new the holy lamps,
Priests approved in suffering.
Purified the nation's shrine,
Brought to God their offering.

[Offstage: a door is kicked open.]

And His courts surrounding,
Hear in joy abounding,
Happy throngs, singing songs,
With a mighty sounding

[Lights fade to black. Intense struggling and loud screaming in the darkness.]

Act I, Scene IX

Setting: Ruth Zimmerman reads from a book at the library.

Ruth Zimmerman: Excerpt from the memoirs of Ruta Wermuth: In September 1942, the entire population of the Kolomyja ghetto were ordered to gather in the yard of the *Judenrat*, allegedly to be registered. Some 5,000 people presented themselves. In the manner commonly used by the Germans by way of selection, approximately 300 were chosen and sent to the right – which meant life. All others, surrounded by Ukrainian militia and SS men with specially trained dogs, were herded in the direction of the railway station. The column moved slowly towards the railway station. Apart from the sound of the scraping of thousands of feet, it was amazingly quiet. From time to time a child would cry, to be quickly silenced by its mother. There were only a few children and elderly men and women. Always amongst the weakest of the ghetto inmates, many of the youngest and eldest had perished earlier. The ghetto had been closed in early spring, and terror, hunger and disease had prowled there ceaselessly. It was a long journey to the railway station, situated on the outskirts of the town. We waited in vain for a miracle to happen. We came to the station buildings, but we were driven on further, to the ramp, where a very long train with many cattle wagons was waiting. The doors of the wagons were already open, ready for loading. There was an odor of chlorine, which had been abundantly sprinkled within the wagons. Obedient to this point, at the sight of the train the column wavered, then with a final cry of despair, broke and dispersed. Did I scream too? If so, it was subconsciously, joining in the anguish of all around me. Suddenly we heard shooting. An additional detachment of Ukrainian militia ran towards the ramp. Like the *Gestapo*, they carried long whips. The SS and militia began to attack the crowd, who were already deranged with fear. The nightmare began. Barking dogs, cracking whips, the guttural orders of Germans and the vulgar shouts of Ukrainians: ‘Vorwärts, los, los, schnell, schnell!’ and ‘Go on, you damned Jewish pigs!’ the screaming voices all merging into a single yell. Attempting to avoid the beating, people quickly helped each other to climb the high steps of the cattle wagons for the assumed safety of the wagons' interiors. Wave by wave, driven on, insulted and cursed, the people rapidly filled the wagons. When it was so full that it seemed impossible than any more could be crammed in, a drunken Ukrainian militiaman climbed into the wagon and began swinging his whip and shooting in all directions. As a result, people standing near him pushed themselves further into the wagon in order to avoid the lashing whip. Into the space thus created, another group was forced, to the accompaniment of shouting and shooting. This method of filling the wagons had been long established. The screaming and yelling did not cease until late afternoon, when the train finally moved. To where? There was no doubt – ultimately to death. I was in one of those wagons, along with my parents. We were still together. My parents probably thanked God that I often lost consciousness, because what was taking place inside the wagon exceeded the most vivid conception of purgatory. How long did it last? Hours? Eternity? Whenever I recovered consciousness I was still there – in hell. In a wagon that could hardly contain 50 or 60 people, some 200 had been packed. Cries, stench, and the acrid odor of chlorine. Through the screams and the drumming of the wheels we could hear shooting. In a moment of awareness, I realized that we were standing naked, pressed to the side of the wagon. With their intertwined arms, my parents had created a kind of shelter. It was thanks to this that I was still alive. I noticed that everybody was naked, although I remembered that we had all entered the wagon fully clothed. It was so hot that people had somehow managed to undress themselves in the midst of the crowd. Those standing in the middle were probably already dead, but were

unable to fall down. Suddenly, I felt a breath of fresh air. There was now more room around us. My mother whispered in my ear: 'Do you hear me dear? If you understand what I say, just nod. Some young people managed to make a hole in the side of the wagon and they are jumping out, one by one. We have decided to do the same. First Papa will jump, then you, and finally me. The train is going through the forest now. It's night. If you make it, try to hide in the forest. Don't be afraid. We will find you afterwards.' I nodded that I understood. Before I realized what was happening, strong arms took me up and pushed me out of the wagon through a narrow hole. I was suspended for a moment, held by my armpits, choked by the blast of fresh air. I became more aware. Not for long. The arms that held me opened and I fell into a dark abyss.

Act I, Scene X

Setting: Ruth and Abraham Bauer are on an overcrowded train to Belzec death camp in Poland.

Abraham: This is the middle passage.

Ruth Bauer: What does that mean?

Abraham: Like when a baby is born, there is point when he or she is halfway to being alive; but he is not yet alive, so we cannot say for sure she will make it, though probably she will make it. That is the middle passage.

Ruth Bauer: That is nonsense. What do you know of giving birth?

Abraham: I was there when you gave birth to our daughter, Daphne.

Ruth Bauer: Oh, this train car is much too crowded.

Abraham: Yes, it is. But what can we do about it?

Ruth Bauer: At least we are near each other.

Abraham: Yes, as we travel the middle passage.

Ruth Bauer: Oh, stop with that, will you, please?

Abraham: Yes, fine.

Ruth Bauer: It is cold.

Abraham: We are in December. What do you expect?

Ruth Bauer: This is a long way from Berlin. How long do you think we've traveled?

Abraham: Oh, I am not sure, exactly. But it has been most of the evening on the train, with only 3 stops, this being the third stop, about half an hour each, probably for the guards on the train to urinate and enjoy a smoke.

Ruth Bauer: Enjoy a smoke, you say. How can you be so precise at a time like this? You are sometimes heartless.

Abraham: I am trying to answer your question.

Ruth Bauer: I am sorry, I don't mean that. Please, continue.

Abraham: Yes, thank you. I think that if calculate 4 hours of travel by train, then we have gone about five hundred miles. Approximately. And, I think we are going east.

Ruth Bauer: How do you know we are going east?

Abraham: Because I saw the moon through the crack in the door, just there. Look, you can see the moon right now. Hurry, it will pass.

Ruth Bauer: Yes, I see the moon.

Abraham: It is three-quarters full.

Ruth Bauer: It is the moon, Abraham. It is the moon in the December night sky, partly covered by clouds.

Abraham: It is the moon. Yes. And, as I was saying, I have calculated that where the moon is in the sky, indicates that we are traveling in an easterly direction. Therefore, we are far into Poland. I think we have traveled too long to be on our way to Auschwitz or Buchenwald.

Ruth Bauer: Do you think we are going to a labor camp, or worse?

Abraham: Please, Ruth, don't avoid the truth. It is far too late into 1942 to be going to a labor camp. We are going to a death camp.

Ruth Bauer: Yes. Everyone is quiet in this car. The smell is too much to take. Perhaps I can sleep.

Abraham: And leave me awake? No, Ruth. That leaves Chelmno, Majdanek, Sobibor, and Treblinka. Maly Trostenets is too far, even for our journey. And we have not passed any cities, so we are not going to Warsaw. But I feel we are moving slightly southward, as well as east. That rules out Chelmno, Majdanek, Sobibor, and Treblinka. Therefore, I think we are going to Belzec.

Ruth Bauer: Belzec? Is it nice?

Abraham: Is it nice? Your innocence is almost as offensive as my logic.

Ruth Bauer: I am just asking a question. Do not get angry at a person who simply asks a question. Is it still in Poland?

Abraham: Yes, just on the border, if I remember.

Ruth Bauer: At least we are in occupied Germany. In some places, they torture people with medical experiments. I have heard.

Abraham: Perhaps.

Ruth Bauer: Why are we not going to Buchenwald? We are Berliners, not Poles. We must be on the wrong train. It is very crowded on this train. It is very crowded. I am tired. I can go to sleep on my feet.

Abraham: Please don't go to sleep, Ruth. Please.

Ruth Bauer: This morning you were calling for me to wake. And now you don't want me to sleep. Which is it?

Abraham: I am not sure. I simply call you in the morning because every morning you sleep in late. Every morning I have to call you to wake you.

Ruth Bauer: Make up your mind what you want.

Abraham: I want you to stay awake, Ruth. Please, stay awake with me.

Ruth Bauer: Then I will stay awake.

Abraham: Good. Thank you.

Voice of Man Outside Train: Hello, Jews! Do you want some fresh water?

Ruth Bauer: Yes, over here, please.

Abraham: Ruth, don't bother.

Voice of Man Outside Train: You must pay for it.

Voice of Male Passenger on Train: Over here! I have a gold watch! Give me the water!

Voice of Man Outside Train: Here is your water.

Ruth Bauer: Abraham!

Voice of Man Outside Train: You are on your way to Belzec death camp in Poland.

Voice of Male Passenger on Train: We are on our way to a labor camp in Ukraine.

Voice of Female Passenger on Train: It is not possible that all the Jews shipped on trains went to death camps.

Abraham: We have started moving again.

Ruth Bauer: You were right, Abraham. What about our child? What will happen to our dear Daphne?

Abraham: Oh, Ruth, perhaps there will be a moment to discuss this when we arrive at our station?

Ruth Bauer: I want to talk about it now.

Abraham: She is with resisters. I have paid them well. They will protect her. She may already be in Poland, like we are.

Ruth Bauer: My baby.

Abraham: Our baby.

Ruth Bauer: Maybe she will make it to America. That is what I told the family to do, to take her to America, New York.

Ruth Bauer: Did you pay them enough?

Abraham: I gave them everything. All we have. What can we do with money now?

Ruth Bauer: My little girl.

Abraham: Our little girl.

Ruth Bauer: Will the letter to our daughter make it?

Abraham: Yes, of course, it will get picked up with the other items from our apartment.

Ruth Bauer: You don't understand what it means to be a woman.

Abraham: No, that is true.

Ruth Bauer: Yes, she is your daughter; but you are not a woman. You can never understand women.

Abraham: That is very true.

Ruth Bauer: What do you think of the night, and the moon? Please, let's talk about anything.

Abraham: I think the night is simply absence of daylight. And the moon, while a remarkably close celestial object, is just a rock in space.

Ruth Bauer: Do you think we will ever walk on the moon?

Abraham: We, the human race? Yes, I think that can happen, though I have doubts.

Ruth Bauer: We must keep talking! Do you think the moon has anything to do with love?

Abraham: It clearly does, because it controls the tides, and even menstruation cycles.

Ruth Bauer: Oh dear.

Abraham: It is science.

Ruth Bauer: Yes, of course.

Abraham: I am speaking of women in a purely scientifically way.

Ruth: Women understand women. Men understand nothing, except cars.

Abraham: Cars?

Ruth Bauer: Yes, cars, fast cars.

Abraham: Where did you come up with that?

Ruth Bauer: I am certain that men love cars more than they appreciate women.

Abraham: Oh, please, Ruth. Must you argue with me now, in this place? My body is packed next to other bodies. They must listen to us talk too.

Ruth Bauer: I want to talk on this cursed train!

Abraham: Then we should not talk negatively.

Ruth Bauer: Tell the truth! You love your motorcar more than you love me!

Abraham: I don't have a motorcar!

Ruth Bauer: Do not lie to me! You have pictures of one! I saw them in your study!

Abraham: That picture is cut out of Life magazine, sent to me by one of our American relatives.

Ruth Bauer: You want to be a racecar driver, don't you?! Admit the truth!

Abraham: Yes, I want to be a racecar driver. Are you satisfied now?

Ruth Bauer: Yes.

Abraham: Good.

Ruth Bauer: Thank you.

Abraham: You are welcome.

Ruth Bauer: There is the moon again.

Abraham: It is further north now, in the sky. We are surely going to Belzec.

Ruth Bauer: It is fuller now, than before.

Abraham: That is not possible.

Ruth Bauer: Please, let it be possible.

Abraham: I suppose it may be possible. In some cases, it may be possible for the moon to change its location to another part of the sky.

Ruth Bauer: Yes. It is possible.

Act I, Scene XI

Setting: Ruth Zimmerman reading from a book at the library.

Ruth Zimmerman: SS Lt. Kurt Gerstein, who worked in the SS medical service, was ordered to deliver a shipment of Zyklon B to Belzec. He was so shocked by what he saw that he immediately buried the canisters of poison gas, and confessed his experiences to a Swedish diplomat. Unterscharführer Hackenholt was making great efforts to get the engine running. But it doesn't go. Captain Wirth comes up. I can see he is afraid because I am present at a disaster. Yes, I see it all and I wait. My stopwatch showed it all, 50 minutes, 70 minutes, and the diesel did not start. The people wait inside the gas chambers. In vain. They can be heard weeping, 'Like in the synagogue,' says Professor Pfannenstiel, his eyes glued to a window in the wooden door. Furious, Captain Wirth lashes the Ukrainian assisting Hackenholt twelve, thirteen times, in the face. After 2 hours and 49 minutes—the stopwatch recorded it all—the diesel started. Up to that moment, the people shut up in those four crowded chambers were still alive; four times 750 persons in four times 45 cubic meters. Another 25 minutes elapsed. Many were already dead, that could be seen through the small window because an electric lamp inside lit up the chamber for a few moments. After 28 minutes, only a few were still alive. Finally, after 32 minutes, all were dead...Dentists hammered out gold teeth, bridges and crowns. In the midst of them stood Captain Wirth. He was in his element, and showing me a large can full of teeth, he said: 'See for yourself the weight of that gold! It's only from yesterday and the day before. You can't imagine what we find every day—dollars, diamonds, gold. You'll see for yourself!'

Act I, Scene XII

Setting: Ruth and Abraham Bauer arrive at Belzec. The scene begins with them pushed off the train and into a holding area. They are being shuffled around and talking as they move around the stage. They each carry a traveling bag.

Ruth Bauer: This is the end for us, Abraham.

Abraham: Yes. It has been quite a day.

Ruth Bauer: Remain strong.

Abraham: And you too. I love you, Ruth.

Ruth Bauer: I love you too, Abraham. Goodbye!

Abraham: Goodbye, Ruth!

Act I, Scene XIII

Setting: Ruth Zimmerman is lighting the final light of the Menorah. She picks up the letter on the table and reads it.

Ruth Zimmerman: December 11th, 1942. Dear Daphne, my lovely daughter, when you read this letter you will be safe in America. Germany has become a very bad place to live. I can only hope that America never turns into Germany. Your father, Abraham, and I may not be as lucky as you have been. But if you read these words then our efforts were worth it, and you must make the most of your new life in America. Do not waste time, get right to work. If you are studying, then study very hard. America seems like a very nice country, and I would have liked to star in a play on Broadway; but that will not come to pass, sadly. I love you, now and forevermore.

And to you, my granddaughter; perhaps you are a grandson; but I think that you are, in fact, a granddaughter; I hope that you enjoy your life in America and follow all of my same wishes. Never give up your hopes and dreams. And if you have to use your imagination and pretend, then pretend you are on a nice beach. Remain positive, always remain strong and positive. Goodbye, I love you.

The End.