

FIREFLIES
By Charmaine Spencer

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(OFFICER slams the heel of his gloved hand down on FRIEDL's fingers.)

FRIEDL: Ahh!

(From LEO's hiding place, the flats shift a little.)

FRIEDL: *(Cont'd. Turning her head to the hiding place.)* Don't!

OFFICER: Don't? Is that an order? *(Laugh.)* Well, listen to me, artist. Here is my order for you. You will paint new stage scenery for the children's opera by Hans Krása. "Brundibár," I think it is called. Commander Rahm does not like the old scenery. It is too dark. The scenery for this opera must be bright, happy. You understand? When next the opera is performed, it will reflect the good cultural life we have provided for you Jews here. You understand?!

FRIEDL: Yes.

OFFICER: Your little artists will also make pictures. Flowers, butterflies, games being played. Carefree things such as this. You will make an exhibit which will demonstrate that you are satisfied to be here with many opportunities and healthy activities for the children. *(Puts HIS face close to FRIEDL's, grabbing her injured hand.)* We know what your old gossips say of the terrible fate of the Jews in Poland and I will tell you, Friedl Dicker-Brandeis, because you are so important and your husband Pavel Brandeis, the carpenter, is so important. I will tell you about these terrible rumors. They are true. *(Laugh.)* So, you would like to remain here at Theresienstadt?

FRIEDL: Yes.

OFFICER: You would not like to be transported to Poland.

FRIEDL: No.

OFFICER: Then we have an understanding. Heil Hitler. *(Salutes, turns toward the door, but stops at the pile of scenery.)* These are ugly. We will have colors!

AUDITION 2

FRIEDL: Oh, dear heart, you are so young. But listen, listen to me. If these visitors want to see the truth, they will. But they don't. They don't want the truth. The truth is too horrible. It's too much for them. I think, when this is over, when the Nazis are defeated, it will still...it will take years for the world to face up to it. It may even take a generation. Your generation, Leo. It will be up to you. You and Rebecca and... Listen to me. Leo, look at me. You can beat Commander Rahm. You can beat Rahm and Hitler and every one of them. When you're free, you can shout...shout the truth from the tree tops and make the world listen. But not now, you can't do that now. Now you have to live. You see? Whatever you feel, whatever you do, your job right now is to stay alive.

FRIEDL: The boys' magazine? Why risk...why now? *(Reads.)* "The Visitor's Route." "How to Get Close." "Using Eye Signals." Signals? Oh God.

LEO: I don't think He can hear you.

FRIEDL: Sending signals to the visitors? If the SS saw this...

LEO: The truth is worth dying for.

FRIEDL: Oh, you are so young.

LEO: The truth—

FRIEDL: Dear heart, if these people really want to see... they'll see. But, they don't, it's too horrible. The truth is too much for them. I think...when this is over, when the Nazis are defeated, it will still...it will take years for the world to face up to this truth. It may even take a generation. Your generation, Leo. It will be up to you. You and Rebecca and... Not now, my child, not now. Now you have to stay alive. Leo, look at me. You can beat Commander Rahm. You can beat Rahm and Hitler and every one of them. Stay alive. Stay alive! And when you're free, you can shout...shout the truth to the tree tops and make them listen. But you can't do that now. Now you have to live. You see? Whatever you feel, whatever you do, your job right now is to live.

AUDITION 3

LEO: Understand? Oh, I understand. I got it all from Kurt. These people from outside... from somewhere... out there. They're coming here and the Nazis are going to show them new paint and smiling Jews sitting in a cafe. They're going to show them cute little children in happy little shows. Of course, everything they see will be a lie but they won't know that because they won't see the old people, on stretchers, shoved into boxcars. They won't see the mothers fighting for potato peelings or the babies with typhoid. They won't see the crematorium or smell the...

FRIEDL: Leo—

LEO: Leo what? It's true isn't it? These investigators are going to have a nice stroll through the Stadtpark. They'll sniff the pretty flowers and then they'll go out and tell the whole world how nicely Herr Hitler is caring for his Jews. Oh yes. The Jews in Europe are just fine. Happy and fine. They are going to spread THAT lie and we...YOU, you are going to help them do it. Now. Tell me Frau puppet, what is it I don't understand?

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