

**ACT 2:
LIVING UNDER WATER**

(based on memoirs of “The Girls in Room 28”

by Hannelore Brennor and adapted by, Patricia Hesse for this act)

CAST:

Friedl Dicker Brandeis - SARAH

Maria - SADEY

Marta - SCARLETT

Helga - MAGGIE

Little Alice - BRAE

Anna - SOPHIE

Vera - EDEN

Eva - OLIVIA

Handa - JOJO

Little Lenka - EVE

Little Trude - Aimeelyn

Pavla - MARIA

Little Ruth - MARLEY

Judith - KAYLEN

Didi: Kynlee

Megan

Emily

Abigail

SCENE 1 (*night --girls' shoes are lined up by bunks.Friedl
Dicker-Brandeis reads by candlelight from Les Miserables. Girls are
eagerly looking to her*)

Friedl: Let's see, we left off somewhere near here last night. (*she turns
pages*)

Didi: I hate the Thenardiers!

Alice: I just know Jean Valjean will save her!

Girls: Sshhhhhh...

Friedl: Here we are... "Meanwhile, the traveller had risen to his feet.

"What is the matter?" he said to the Thénardier.

"Don't you see?" said Madame Thénardier, pointing to the corpus delicti which lay at Cosette's feet.

"Well, what of it?" resumed the man.

"That beggar," replied the Thénardier, "has permitted herself to touch the children's doll!"

"All this noise for that!" said the man; "well, what if she did play with that doll?"

"She touched it with her dirty hands!" pursued the Thénardier, "with her frightful hands!"

Here Cosette redoubled her sobs.

"Will you stop your noise?" screamed the Thénardier.

Jean Valjean went straight to the street door, opened it, and stepped out.

As soon as he had gone, Madame Thénardier profited by his absence to give Cosette a hearty kick under the table, which made the child utter loud cries.

The door opened again, the man re-appeared; he carried in both hands the fabulous doll which we have mentioned, and which all the village brats had been staring at in the shop window ever since the morning, and he set it upright in front of Cosette, saying:—

"Here; this is for you." (She closes the book)

Little Ruth: I had a doll... My grandmama said she will be there waiting for me when I go back home. *(girls look at Ruth)*

Friedl: And I'm sure she will be, Ruth. It's getting late girls, this is a good place to stop ...time for bed.

(Verdi's Requiem - slowly fade IN ...Begin at 2:20)

Girls: Ohh...

Alice: I just knew it! I told you Jean Valjean would save her.

Marta: Giving her a doll isn't exactly "saving her."

Friedl: Girls. Quiet! Listen, they're in the basement again. (Verdi's Requiem plays in background. Everyone is still) The concert in the attic is tomorrow night. The air may be stale, the wooden benches an agony for bony backsides, but it will be a packed house in rapture.

Anna: Wish I could go.

Vera: If you'll just be quiet, we can hear it tonight. ***(The music begins to play louder)***

SCENE 2: LIGHTS OUT - ON ...DAY (*Girls are putting on shoes and making beds, fixing hair, etc. when new girl walks in. Friedl is not there*)

Helga: Hello. I am Helga Pollak. They told me I'm supposed to live here.
(*Girls stare at her*)

Marta: Oh, great! Just what we need --someone else! She's not sleeping in my bunk! (*Helga hangs her head*) Let her sleep with Judith (*she points at Judith, who hangs her head*). She has no friends and doesn't even seem to care!

Maria: Marta! (*Maria walks over to Helga, taking her suitcase*) Here, you can sleep in our bunk. (*She leads her to bunk. Marta sticks out her tongue, other girls ssssh her*)

Helga: They took a lot of things out of my suitcase and they didn't give them back!

Sophie: They always do that.

Marta: It's called STEALING!!!

(HELGA - "Your Wife" - Joshua Bell)

Helga: (*sits on edge of bunk, crying...girls gather around her, except Marta*) I don't know where they have taken my mother. I don't think my

father and brother were even on the train. I'm all alone. (*She continues crying*)

Eva: My mother is here in the women's dormitory. I bet your mother is there too. I just know my mother is with your mother.

Handa: At least, your mothers are here. I don't know where my mother is. I haven't seen her...

Maria: (*obviously interrupting to stop conversation... Helga is bewildered. The younger girls are crowded around, looking worried*). Everyone sit down and I'll tell you a story. (*Maggie sits by her and little one in front, indian style*)

Handa: Oh yes! Maria tells the very best stories!

Maria: This story is especially for Helga and for my little ones too! (*Younger girls beam*) A small village in a valley was told that within two days their hometown would be flooded. There was no escape. No way to stop the flood. No chance to be rescued. So the rabbi called his faithful to the synagogue and told them: 'Ladies and gentlemen, we have exactly 48 hours to learn how to live underwater.' (*Scarlett gets up disgusted*)

Marta: Typical Maria story... As usual, that story makes absolutely no sense.

Little Lenka: But Maria, how can people live under water? (she is sitting next to Sadey..

Marta: (*disgusted*)..out of the mouth of babes!

Maria: The story means we cannot sit here weeping, but instead, we will use our will to create, to match our will to live, just like Miss Friedl has taught us. We will study, play, dance, sing, create art, write poems, and perform in plays right here, in Room 24. Even in Theresienstadt, there is still education, art, culture, and love. Do not forget that little ones.

Lenka: We ARE living under water! Aren't we, Maria?

(fade out on HELGA - "Your Wife" music)

(*Friedl enters*)

Little Lenka: Miss, Miss... we have a new girl and we're living under water! (*She brings her forward*)

Friedl: My goodness! A new girl! And ..'Living under water, too!!?' That is remarkable Lenka. (*to Helga*) I am Friedl. What is your name, sweetheart? (*Big girls go to bunks, braiding hair, talking, not paying attention. Laying down, Reading a book.*)

Helga: (*Helga bows nervously*) My name is Helga Pollak. I am from Prague.

Friedl (*bending down*): Welcome Helga. (*she hugs her and then opens the suitcase she has brought into the room. It is full of art supplies. The girls each take the brushes, paint, and paper, excited*) Girls, we are going to have our own art exhibition right here in Room 28! We will invite all the girls in the dormitory to see your creations. (*Girls are excited*)

Trude: What will we paint?!!!

Friedl: (*organizes groups*) I will give you several choices. . . Helga, why don't you work next to Maria? Today, there will be no talking, no sharing of ideas. Today is about just you. Let's see. We will need four different groups. You girls will be Group 1 (*group them together*). You girls will be Group 2 (*girls are excited*) and how about, Group 3 here and Group 4 here. I will give each group a different thing to picture in your mind's eye --think about what that idea makes you see --that will become the subject of your painting. Ready?

Anna: Oh, this is fun! (*girls giggle*)

Friedl: (*She hands out the paper*) Group 1, close your eyes and see, really see. **“3” FOUR SEASONS STORM** (*Pause*) “Storm, dark ...s. See it? ... Lightning, dark clouds rolling. (*Girls imagine and paint as Olivia dances the scene. They begin painting*).

Friedl: Group 2. Here's another. Close your eyes. See this now.

(CHERISH) Let your mind wander. If your dreams could come true, if you could be anywhere --where would you like to be right now? What would you hear? Who would you be with? What would you be doing? How would you feel? See it? *(they act out the scene and begin drawing)*

Friedl: Group 3, here's another. Close your eyes. Open your heart... **(DREAM DEBUSSY REVERIE)** of all the things you know, of all the things you love and cherish, what means the most to you? What do you treasure above all that you know? Can you see it? ... *(they act out the scene and begin drawing)*

Friedl: And finally, Group 4... Close your eyes. Don't be afraid to see, to really see. To see with honest eyes --the way things truly are.

(JEWISH PRAYER) Imagine you are looking around you here at **Theresienstadt**, *(all gasp on the word, look up, sadly turn their paper over and draw it up to their chest)* here in our room, you are looking when you go outside to work. You are looking when it's your turn to bring the soup. You are looking at the guards. You are looking closely at Room Theresienstadt. Be brave. What do you see? *(they act out the scene and begin painting. The other girls eventually, sadly look up and over and do the same movements. They begin painting.)*

Scene ends with spotlight on Olivia.

SCENE 3 - LIGHTS OUT (FOOD SCENE) LIGHTS ON

(choreographed with metal pie plates)

(girls are eating out of tin pie pans. Dancers on floor --others on edge of beds)

Pavla: The soups are the same every day. *(everyone drinks on day)*

Vera: They look like water from a mop pail! *(makes face on pail)*

Anna: Do you know what I'd really love to eat? Pumpkin soup. *(pause --everyone frowns)* Funny, I always hated that soup when Mama made it.

Vera: Do you know what I'd really love to eat? Goulash and potato dumplings

1-2-pass-4-hit sequence

Didi: Fried cheese and tartar sauce

Helga: Fish stew and brown bread

Marta: Pancakes with ice cream

Eva: Kolache and Jam

Anna: Sauerkraut and roast duck

Handa: Schnitzel and Fried Mushrooms

(One at a time --Plate over head, circle, step out right foot, extend pie plate with both hands)

All girls: Belgian chocolates, homemade toffee

Newly squeezed orange juice, freshly ground coffee

Strawberry crepes and honey cakes

Apple strudel and soft bread noodles

Linzer cookies and butter spread

Poppy seed cakes and gingerbread

Sweet rice pudding and almond crescents

(they pause)

No...Anna's mother's pumpkin soup

(they pause --and look at Sophie)

Sophie: But just to imagine ...I can taste it all ...it is wonderful... *(they continue eating)*

LIGHTS OUT

SCENE 4 - NIGHT TRANSPORT

(NIGHT - girls in bunks)

Marta: When I go back home, I will run to my backyard and climb the chestnut tree.

Didi: When the war is over, I will play toy soldiers with my little brother as long as he wants --I'd give anything if I'd done that ...before.

Eva: When the Germans are defeated I will study the violin, everyone will be back home, and I will play in the symphony orchestra with my grandfather...someday.

Little Ruthie: When I go home I will see my doll, Treena, just like Grandmama said.

(it gets quiet)

Maria: When we are free again, I will forever remember each and every one of you. Forever. Each and every one of you.

(“Survivors DOUBLE ” Joshua Bell)

(Pause. Friedl comes in with candle. She has a transport list and tag for Maria. She walks over and gently wakes up Maria.)

Friedl (*softly*): Maria. I'm so sorry, but there is a transport tonight and your name is on the list.

(*Girls slowly get up. Frightened. "Oh, no...not Maria, etc." Maria gets her bag and packs the few things she has. The girls are standing around her. Quiet, Some weeping. Marley should be on bottom bunk. Sadey with Maggie*)

Maria: (*looking at them*) It will be alright. We must be brave.

Marta: No! No! It will not be alright. It should be me going, not you! Not you! (*weeps and goes to bed*)

Little Ruth: (*hugging Maria*) But, who will tell the stories if you leave us?

Maria: (*kneeling down to little Ruth*) One last story, especially for you little one. 'When the sun goes to sleep and Mr. Moon graces the night, there are stars that twinkle brightly in the sky --even here in Theresienstadt, just outside our window. Some stars shimmer so brightly, they seem to say, "Look at me!" It may be hard to believe, but the brightest stars we see burned out long ago. They are so very far away, it takes a long time for their light to reach us. Even though they are gone, they give us a special light. Just like those stars, my stories will always be right there (*she points to little Ruth's heart*)... Every night when you look at the stars sparkling in the sky, remember that wherever I am, I will be looking at them too, thinking of you --(*she looks around at*

the other girls) thinking of you all. (Maria hugs Little Ruth and leaves without looking back. Friedl goes with her)

Judith: *(everyone is frozen --most weeping. Judith looks at them and speaks --everyone is surprised to hear her speak)* Yes, I've stopped trying to make friends. All my friends keep disappearing. My best girlfriend in Prague was Suse Pick. She and her family were deported to Lodz. Then another friend who was a wonderful soccer player... What a horrible thing it is, when friends that you've shared your secrets with simply vanish and you don't know where they went. You simply never hear from them again. *(She goes to her bed, lies down and turns away from the others)*

Little Ruth: But where is Maria going?

BLACKOUT

SCENE 5: BRUNDIBAR

(Friedl enters excitedly)

Friedl: Girls, come here! *(girls gather around)* They're holding tryouts in the attic tonight for a special opera performed by children, for children!

Marta: An opera?!!

Eva: What's it about?

Friedl: There is a mother who is ill and her two children go to fetch milk, but they have no money. (*Little Ruth begins excitedly raising her hand, wanting to talk*) The children meet a talking sparrow, a clever cat, and wise dog who help them. Oh, and there's an evil organ grinder named Brundibar! (*laughing*) Yes, Ruth, you can try out too!

Little Ruth: Miss Friedl --that sounds like my Uncle Hans opera! He brought it with him! I saw it in his suitcase! Aunt Marta told me has music inside him!

Friedl: He certainly does! Mr. Krasa is a very talented composer. I know you are proud to be his niece! I hope many of you will be fortunate to sing in his wonderful opera! And guess what girls ...you do not have to wear your yellow stars on your costumes! (*The girls cheer*)

LIGHTS OUT - CURTAIN CLOSES