

Into the Clouds
[MRS. BLOEM]
By Julia Britton

CHARACTERS

MRS. BLOEM, 45
ANDREA STEVENS, 37
ROB STEVENS, 40
JOSS, 36
EMERALD, 12
EVA, 16-25
NURSE

SCENE 1

- MARBURG, A SMALL UNIVERSITY TOWN, GERMANY 1929. EVA IS SIXTEEN.

EVA: **(To audience)** I'm starting my journal today, because today's the first real day of my life.... the day I started flying. When I was twelve, I told my father I wanted to learn to fly so I could be a medical missionary. I reckon I'd need to fly if I'm going to work in Africa. Tanganyka, our colony, is what I'm heading for.

Father was keen on the medical part, he's Professor of Surgery at the University. But about the flying - he said, don't say a word about it until you've got your school leaving certificate, if you still want it, I'll pay for your lessons. I did well, and he gave me a beautiful gold and amethyst necklace. But I handed it back. I got my lessons. Of course it was gliding lessons. Ever since that wicked treaty of Versailles we can't build powered planes. But everyone's mad about gliders. There are a few ancient planes, they've repaired and got into the air again. But for us beginners, it's gliding.

Gliding's so wonderful. I don't think I'll ever want to fly a powered machine. And today was the day of days. I passed my "C" test. That's it. I'm a real flyer! Of course I did my "A" test before... broke a few rules, I shouldn't have tried to climb into the clouds. Then the "B" test... easy that. And now this. I had to stay up five minutes, but the wind took me up so gently it was like climbing to heaven. I can't describe the sensation. It was wonderful. I lost all sense of time. I was a bird. When I looked at my watch I was horrified. I'd

been up for more than an hour. There was a lot of cheering going on the ground. I couldn't think what it was about. I soon knew. I'd broken the national record!

Next week a new glider, a much improved model is coming to our club, and our chief instructor is going to let me fly it. I'm not telling him, but I'm going to try for the world record. I know I can keep the glider up. I know. I know. If I get this, father's got to take me seriously. And one day, Germany will rise again. We're already first in the world in gliding. One day that rotten treaty will be scrapped... and then we shall see!

SCENE 2

- ANDREA AND ROB'S HOME, ROSE BAY, SYDNEY, 1991. LATE AFTERNOON. ANDREA IS SITTING WRITING A LETTER. SHE SCREWS UP THE PAPER AND BEGINS AGAIN. SHE THROWS THIS ONE AWAY TOO. SHE IS STARTING A THIRD ONE WHEN THE DOOR BELL RINGS AND SHE LETS IN MRS. BLOEM.

- ANDREA: Oh, Mrs. Bloem... Come in. I'm sorry there's been a change of plan. We won't be needing a baby sitter tonight. I'm really sorry. It was all rather sudden. I couldn't let you know in time.
- MRS. BLOEM: Don't worry. Another time.
- ANDREA: Later in the week, if that's convenient.
- MRS. BLOEM: Oh yes... any evening.
- ANDREA: Thank you. **(Pause)** I'd better explain. I won't be here... in the flat, any more. Emerald and I are going away for a while.
- MRS. BLOEM: For a holiday?
- ANDREA: No. But we'll be living somewhere else...
- MRS. BLOEM: I see.
- ANDREA: **(She looks in her bag and takes out some notes)** Please take this. I'm sorry you came for nothing.
- MRS. BLOEM: It isn't necessary... really. Just make it next time.
- ANDREA: Oh no. I wouldn't feel happy about that. Please.

MRS. BLOEM HESITATES, BUT DOESN'T TAKE THE MONEY.

MRS. BLOEM: It's all right.

ANDREA: No. You've got your fares, and time. Of course you must be paid. Take a taxi home. I'm sorry. I'm sure we'll need you again soon. I'll ring you in a day or two.

MRS. BLOEM: Anytime you want me, I'm always free. I don't sit for anyone else these days.

ANDREA: I'll be calling you soon.

MRS. BLOEM: Can you give these to Emerald for me?

SHE HANDS HER A SMALL PACKET.

ANDREA: Of course. Thank you. You're very kind.

MRS. BLOEM: Well, I'll be on my way.

ANDREA: Goodbye. I'll keep in touch.

MRS. BLOEM GOES. ANDREA STARTS WRITING AGAIN ROB ENTERS.

ROB: Oh. I didn't think you were here.

ANDREA: I've had that feeling for a long time.

ROB: What are you doing back so early? You're not sick, are you?

ANDREA: No. I just left work early. And you? I didn't expect you till midnight.

ROB: Ah. Count Dracula risks all for love. **(As she repels him)** Just on my way to the blood bank, actually. I've got to be out tonight. Two of our bosses from Tokyo are here. Like to be a geisha girl? M'm? No? Perhaps as well. You don't giggle at bad jokes do you? Feeling a bit fragile, as a matter of fact. I could do with an Alka Seltzer.

ANDREA: You know where they are.

ROB: Oh yes, yes. Up there with the Valium, Serepax, Mogadon and the rest of last night's Ecstasy. I hope I didn't disturb your correspondence Madame de Maintenant.

ANDREA: Now that you're here, it won't be necessary. I was writing to you.

ROB: Me? If it's so urgent, why don't you just send me a fax?

ANDREA: I'm leaving you.

ROB: Leaving me what? All your worldly goods, mayhap?

ANDREA: Leaving. Now. This afternoon. I was writing to tell you.

ROB: Why this passion for writing? Joining the Trappists?

ANDREA: I'm actually serious, Rob.

ROB: What are you talking about?

ANDREA: I've told you before and you wouldn't believe me. I'm going. **(She gets up to move away. He takes her arm)** Please.

ROB: Where?

ANDREA: Where doesn't matter.

ROB: Have you been at the mescaline again?

ANDREA: Stop this bullshit. I am leaving you. I have packed my case and am about to call a cab.

ROB: You mean you want a little time on your own. Very understandable. Why couldn't you say so? We'll have a second honeymoon when you come back. Come to think we never had a first one, did we? Why the writing nonsense?

ANDREA: I didn't want an argument.

ROB: Oh.

ANDREA: We've argued before and got nowhere.

ROB: Sometimes we went to bed. What's wrong with that?

ANDREA: Nothing. But it's not the solution to everything as you seem to think. People wake up in the morning. I'll ring you later in the week.

ROB: If you are serious and I can't think you can be, we have to talk this out. Perhaps we should see a marriage counsellor. Oh yes, of course, *you* are a marriage counsellor, I had forgotten.

ANDREA: Just accept it. I'll ring you up in a few days.

ROB: Who is he?

ANDREA: I'm not answering questions.

ROB: Who's the man?

ANDREA: No one you know.

ROB: So there is a man.

ANDREA: You can talk.

ROB: I'm open and above board. You know all about my affairs. We said we'd be free.

ANDREA: I'm being free for once.

ROB: You're not. You're being deceitful. You've done all this behind my back.

ANDREA: I've done nothing behind your back I'd be ashamed of.

ROB: Oh you have, you know, you have.

ANDREA: If you try to stop me, I'll just go tomorrow.

SHE GETS UP AGAIN. HE GRABS HER BY THE SHOULDERS.

ROB: So you've been cheating for years. Quel slut.

ANDREA: I have not. This is the first time. Unlike you.

ROB: I wouldn't leave you. You know I wouldn't. These affairs of mine aren't serious. You know that.

ANDREA: That's a nice point. You think a lot of shonky affairs don't matter. It's just fun. Kids half your age. They don't matter. But when I'm serious. When I've met someone I really trust and respect, then I'm a slut. Right?

ROB: I love you, Andrea.

EMERALD ENTERS WITH HER SCHOOL CASE AND STANDS IN THE DOORWAY.

ANDREA: Love, did you say?

ROB: Yes I did. Love. I love you. I always have. I need you. I would never leave you and you know it. You can't leave me like this.

ANDREA: I can.

ROB: You'll not go without a struggle. Do you hear? **(HE GRABS HER AGAIN.SHE KICKS HIM. HE HITS HER. SHE STUMBLES AGAINST A CHAIR HURT. EMERALD RUNS TO ANDREA)** I'm sorry. I didn't mean... have I hurt you?

ANDREA: Now you've made your point, perhaps you'll let me call a taxi. Come on, Emerald. We'll go now. We'll come back for our things later.

EMERALD: I'll just get my cello. I need it for tomorrow. And Zeppo. I can't leave him behind.

SCENE 3

- JOSS'S FLAT. ANDREA LETS HERSELF IN FOLLOWED BY EMERALD. BETWEEN THEM THEY CARRY SMALL CASES, A CELLO IN ITS CASE AND A CAGE WITH A SMALL ANIMAL INSIDE.

ANDREA: Are you there, Joss? Joss! **(Pause)** It's a bit early for him. I don't suppose he'll be in till six.

EMERALD: Are we going to stay here Mum?

ANDREA: For tonight, yes. Afterwards, maybe or maybe not.

EMERALD: Where shall I put these?

ANDREA: There's a little room off there to the right. It's Joss's workroom. Put them there for now. **(EMERALD takes her cello and cage. ANDREA pours herself a drink. EMERALD returns. ANDREA lights a cigarette and looks around for an ashtray)** Sit down Em. I want to talk to you. I'm sorry you saw that scene at the flat. It must have been a

bit of a shock to you. But I want you to try not to take it too seriously.

EMERALD: I hate him. He hit you.

ANDREA: Yes, but that isn't the important part. He was just angry I was going without telling him. I knew if I didn't make a clean break I'd never go. I meant to leave a letter and do the talking afterwards.

EMERALD: He's a rotten pig to hit you. I never want to see him again.

ANDREA: It's just the heat of the moment. He said he was sorry.

EMERALD: He stinks. Are you going to get a divorce?

ANDREA: I expect so. I don't know. Probably. But I do mean to leave him for good which comes to the same thing. I've been meaning to do this for a long time.

EMERALD: Are you going to marry Joss?

ANDREA: I can't answer that one. It's all in the future. It depends on a lot of things. But whatever happens I shall consult you. You're very important to me and I won't do anything you don't like.

EMERALD: Don't mind about me. I'll be okay. I'll be leaving home soon anyhow.

ANDREA: Oh.

EMERALD: I know kids, fourteen, sixteen living on their own in flats. They're okay.

ANDREA: I know about them too. One day, when you're going to University.

EMERALD: I don't want to go to Uni.

ANDREA: All right. But you'll do some training. Something you want to do... your cello maybe.

EMERALD: I want to learn to fly.

ANDREA: I know. You've told me. And I hope we'll be able to get lessons for you when you're old enough. But you'll scarcely be able to make that a career.

EMERALD: I've been thinking about that. I want to be a pilot.

ANDREA: Well... a pilot.

EMERALD: Why not?

ANDREA: No reason, I suppose. Yes, we can aim at that. **(Pause)** You like Joss, don't you?

EMERALD: Yeah. He's okay.

ANDREA: Good.

EMERALD: I've got to practise my cello. Can I do it in that room?

ANDREA: Yes, that's all right.

EMERALD: I've got to learn a part for tomorrow. We're doing a quartet for the end of term. Did you know MRS. BLOEM plays the piano?

ANDREA: No. I didn't. By the way, she gave me this for you. **(Takes a packet out of her bag)** I nearly forgot.

EMERALD: Oh, the pancakes. She's made some special German pancakes. Did you know her mother is German?

ANDREA: No. She never talks about herself to me.

EMERALD: Her mother taught her how to make these. They're lovely. Have one.

ANDREA: Thank you.

EMERALD: When is Mrs. Bloem coming again?

ANDREA: Want some more pancakes? Is that it?

EMERALD: No. Well, I do of course, but it's not that. She's going to bring me some pictures of Germany. She promised.

ANDREA: Next week, I suppose, if you can wait that long.

SCENE 4

– EVA. MARBURG.

EVA: **(To audience)** This year has been a hectic one, and I've hardly had time to keep my journal. But this event I must record. I've been accepted for the Civil Airways Training course at Stettin. The first and only girl. The officers aren't too pleased about it and I get into trouble sometimes doing drill. But the other trainees don't seem to mind.

I can't get a uniform small enough. This cap comes right down over my eyes, and my boots are like barges. I have to stuff the toes with newspaper.

Father let me give up medicine. I was spending all my spare time flying anyway. The thing that clinched it was the soaring championships up in the mountains, for gliding. I didn't win... I never expected to. But I attracted quite a bit of notice, and got the chance to appear in a film. I didn't know whether to take it or not. But the money was good. I did. This meant I could pay my way to go with the team on a trip to South America. We were going to show the paces of the new German gliders. And they're good.

It was fabulous! Though I did run into a bit of trouble. Once I had to force land on a football field. That was all right, except that there was a match going on. I really had no choice. The players ran for their lives, and I shot straight through the goal posts. That took a bit of explaining away. But it all ended in a great party.

One day, practising, I managed to stay up for eleven hours. That was a world record for women. Of course it wasn't recognised as it wasn't planned. But I did it, and I could do it again. It doesn't matter anyhow, because I fly because I love it. For that incredible feeling of freedom... of getting away from the earth.

I've already taken up a twin-engined plane on a cross-country flight. Soon it will be loops and rolls. And one day, if all goes well, I want to train on the Heinkel 46, to do night flights for the Met. Department. Night flying's fabulous. Sounds a bit ambitious, I know. But I think I could do it.

Germany's getting on her feet again. All those unemployed street kids are getting jobs. Whatever people say about

Hitler, he's getting on with it. My father doesn't like him. He likes that dreary old Hindenburg. But what did he ever do for us? Hitler's got a vision- to rebuild Germany. I want to be part of this. To help my country start again. If I can learn to fly well, I'll make my contribution that way. The more I learn about flying, the more I love it. I could never, never have too much of it. Now I must run. It's time for class!

SCENE 5

- THE SAME. LATER. SOUNDS OF CELLO PRACTICE WITHIN. JOSS AND ANDREA.

ANDREA: Must have been a bit of a surprise finding me here.

JOSS: A good surprise. I'm glad you made the break. You must, if you're going to survive. I said, come anytime, middle of the night... whenever. I'm glad you did.

ANDREA: You've taken it marvelously. I meant to give you proper warning.

JOSS: You don't have to. Just move in.

ANDREA: And Emerald...

JOSS: *And Emerald.*

ANDREA: It's wonderful. You have no idea how good it feels to be with you. I don't know how I stood it all those years. I should have left long ago.

JOSS: It's hard to make a break... even when things go wrong.

ANDREA: Sometimes it was all right. Rob can be great company when he wants to. But the last few years have been pretty bad. I always hoped if I gave him enough love and support it would all come good. But it never did. I suppose the truth is, I failed him.

JOSS: That's all over. Now you can start again and live.

ANDREA: I wonder if people ever do start again. There seems to be a depressing pattern.

JOSS: You see too much of it. That's half your trouble. You see only those who don't make out. It's bound to affect your attitude.

ANDREA: They care so desperately, some of them. It's tragic. And the more they care, the worse it seems to get.

JOSS: Some relationships follow the law of inverse proportions. That's one of them. Try to take the simple view. Look at today. It's turned out well, hasn't it?

ANDREA: You make things sound so simple, but of course they're not.

JOSS: You'll sort them out. You're a very sensible, intelligent, self-sufficient person.

ANDREA: I think I'm weak and helpless and dependent.

JOSS: That's the last thing you are. You'll come to terms with it.

ANDREA: I mean to try. Now it's all happened, I've got a lot of thinking to do.

JOSS: Suppose I hadn't been around. Would you have left ?

ANDREA: Eventually. It was getting worse and worse. At one time I thought I could live with it. That it was my problem. That I was too self-obsessed. That I didn't give enough. But now there's Emerald to think of. I don't want her to be involved with the sort of life Rob leads.

JOSS: No. I can see that. It could all happen too soon and not the right way.

ANDREA: That's about it. He's good to her. I'll say that. But any minute it now it will be boyfriends, the pill, drugs and... God knows what else!

JOSS: I hope I won't be a difficulty.

ANDREA: I don't think so. She likes you. There'll be no problem there.

JOSS: I hope not.

ANDREA: Of course, there are a few practical ones. Where I'm going to live, for a start.

JOSS: You can stay here as long as you want to.

ANDREA: No. That wouldn't be fair. I don't want to dump myself on you. The flat's too small.

JOSS: We'll get a bigger one.

ANDREA: No, no. Why should you disrupt everything? I'd never considered being here for any length of time. Just a temporary haven. At the weekend I'll look for a flat... nearby, perhaps. I like this part of Sydney. I still think it's fun going on the ferries.

JOSS: Incurably romantic. Wait until it's winter.

ANDREA: I saw a flat to let on our way here. It looked big enough for all our stuff. I need a study and Em really needs a room to practise in... and somewhere for all her things. She's got more junk than I have, believe it or not. But we won't be too far away.

JOSS: Don't be in a hurry. Wait and get something you really like. I'm sorry I won't be here this week-end to help you look... We're going to look at a location.

ANDREA: Far?

JOSS: A fair distance.

ANDREA: Who's going?

JOSS: The whole unit, practically. James, Alistair, Sue, Rosette, Wolfgang. But we'll be back Tuesday or Wednesday.

ANDREA: Oh. I'd looked forward so much to having this week-end together.

JOSS: There'll be other times.

ANDREA: Of course there will.

JOSS: Lots and lots and lots of lovely times. **(He kisses her. EMERALD comes in and watches)** We're going to be very happy.

ANDREA: I know, I know. It's a wonderful feeling. **(EMERALD shrugs her shoulders and retreats)** I haven't felt like this for a long, long time. **(There is a sudden burst of music as EMERALD puts on a tape. ANDREA breaks away)** You see. No peace!

JOSS: Come on. Dance! **(They laugh and begin to dance. EMERALD comes in again and watches. They smile at her. JOSS waves her in)** Come on Emerald, dance!

HE TAKES HER HAND AND DANCES WITH HER FOR A TURN, THEN TURNS BACK TO ANDREA.

EMERALD: Will I do the vegetables?

SCENE 6

- ANDREA'S NEW FLAT. A FEW WEEKS LATER.

EMERALD: **(To audience)** Do you remember what it was like to be twelve, going on thirteen? And how you felt about your parents? I mean even in families that don't break up like mine there's always something going on. Mum's worried about me, of course. But she should hear what other kids have to put up with. But I won't go into that. It's pretty boring.

I may only be twelve, but I can look a good bit older. It's mostly the clothes. Wait! This is something Rob bought me. **(Holds up a frock and high heeled shoes)** See? In this and my shoes I look eighteen... well, say sixteen. Rob used to take me out sometimes to the Hilton with his friends. This and my earrings and some eye make-up. What do you think? Rob likes me to look old when I go out. But not Mum. I know. I wear school type stuff when I go out with her and her friends. She takes me out a lot... or she did till Joss turned up. We go to see her friends and I'm supposed to play with their kids. Some of them are pretty drippy. Some are actually only eleven... ten even! Imagine! I think she feels guilty because I'm an only child and wants to make up for it.

Anyway, my friends can come here for weekends and I go to them. That's better. I don't know about this flat... it's a bit small, but I suppose we'll manage. I can put a mattress on the floor for Fiona. The kids'll like to come here because it's

on the beach. Most of them live in boring suburbs. Bit far out, though. Hope it's not too far for Mrs. Bloem to come...

We've done a lot of talking, Mum and Rob and me. I hate these talks. They don't make any difference to this break-up business. Rob wants to grab on to me, but it's mostly to spite Mum. I'd only be a drag to him really, and he knows it. I don't mind seeing him. He's not that bad, I suppose. He takes me to places where I can wear lipstick and paint my nails. He says he'll let me drive his red Porsche, off the road, somewhere out of town... and he takes me yachting, that's cool and I can take Fiona.

Mum thinks all this will make me funny about sex. Turn into a dyke or a baby basher. Can you imagine? If you're a pilot you just can't be bothered with all that. I mean you can't be having babies all over the cockpit

Things are changing too. Everyone says so. I wouldn't be surprised if all that went out of fashion. I mean getting married and having kids. Mum and her friends were taking a lot about I.V.F. or something, it means getting babies in test tubes and even men getting babies. I hate going out to dinner with her, but at least the food's special. Sex is okay. I suppose pilots get a lot of t. Anyway I can go on the pill soon and make up my own mind. Fiona's going on it next year. She's nearly fourteen.

They don't have to fuss about me, product of a broken home. I know all about that. There's not much you don't know if your Mum's a marriage counsellor. I used to read all her cases. The ones she kept locked up in her desk. Wow. What a mess most people's lives are. Who'd want to get into all that? When I'm sailing though the air, I'll look down and say I'm glad I'm not mixed up in it.

You should read some of those cases... ordinary people like you. Maybe you're in the files? Could be. This one thing, sex... getting it right... you'd think it was something madly difficult. It's unbelievable. And Mum... after all these years. You'd think she'd know all the answers. I mean anyone could see that she and Rob would never hit it off. I've known for ages. And now Joss. Doesn't she ever learn? All those degrees and talking about it every day. I mean, I like Joss, he's cool, but anyone can see, I mean, you can't you? It's not on. I can't tell her. Anyway she wouldn't want to know. But at least Joss isn't likely to come in at two in the

morning and wake us up. And he's not on the booze. But she'll get knocked... too keen on this guy. That's her trouble.

So - it's lots of nights with MRS. BLOEM for me. That's if she can get here. I don't mind that. I really like her. We've got a lot to talk about and she really listens. She understands about flying. She lent me some books. Some are in German but there's lots of pictures and diagrams. I wouldn't mind it if she lived here. But then there's her mother. She can't leave her. But you're not interested in our baby sitter. I'd better get back to my cello. I've got a lesson tomorrow. I just wish I could get the message across. It's not me they've got to worry about... it's them!

SCENE 7

- ANDREA'S FLAT. A FEW WEEKS LATER. EMERALD IS SITTING DOING HER HOMEWORK. MRS. BLOEM IS READING.

EMERALD: Mrs. Bloem! Help me with my homework.

MRS. BLOEM: What are you writing on?

EMERALD: "Why the World Needs Rain Forests". Do you know anything about rain forests?

MRS. BLOEM: Not much. Didn't you have a lesson on it?

EMERALD: Yes, but I wasn't listening. I always turn off when it's Miss Morris. She's *really* boring.

MRS. BLOEM: Haven't you a book on it?

EMERALD: It's at school. I was going to the library, but Mum said she wanted me to come straight back. I know it's got to be about Brazil and the Amazon and all that.

MRS. BLOEM: There are rain forests here. Write about those.

EMERALD: They don't count. There's no Indians in them. Read it for me and see if it sounds all right.

MRS. BLOEM: There's a lot of spelling mistakes.

EMERALD: That doesn't matter. She never takes them in. We just have to read them.

MRS BLOEM: I don't think it's a very practical idea to bring the Indians to Queensland.

EMERALD: They could eat all the kangaroos.

MRS. BLOEM: They don't live in rain forests.

EMERALD: Well, it's just an idea. They could go to the Simpson Desert... and rabbits. They could eat all those.

MRS. BLOEM: You don't really think that, do you?

EMERALD: No. But you have to say something. It takes up six lines.

MRS. BLOEM: You could talk about making paper.

EMERALD: Give it to me. **(Writes)** "Everyone should stop using paper and they wouldn't have to cut any more trees down." That's enough.

MRS. BLOEM: Is that all you have to do?

EMERALD: Only learning. I can do that in Social Studies. Did you hate school?

MRS. BLOEM: I liked some things. I used to play in the orchestra like you.

EMERALD: Yeah. That's okay. It's all the rest. I want to leave as soon as I can. Mum and Rob are set on me going to University. They did. That's why. I don't see why I should do things just like them.

MRS. BLOEM: No, but you might want to one day.

EMERALD: I don't mind going to Tech and learning about aircraft engines until I'm old enough to train. Aerodynamics. All that. I've read lots already, don't really understand it. But I try. I got a book out of the library, but it's too hard. Here. **(She takes a large book from among her school things)** Look. All this bit's about the theory. It's difficult. Do you know anything about it?

MRS. BLOEM LOOKS AT THE BOOK.

MRS. BLOEM: I'm afraid I don't.

EMERALD: **(Turns the pages)** That's a Spitfire engine. Merlin. Rolls Royce. Isn't it... it beautiful?

MRS. BLOEM: It looks very technical to me.

EMERALD: Look at this. Flying Fortress. It's weird. All the last parts about jets. It'll take me ages before I understand about them. But one day I'll fly one. One day. I'll be able to take you up. Here's the Concorde. But I suppose they'll scrap it before I get my licence.

MRS. BLOEM: You should put your school things in your bag. Is this your music for tomorrow?

EMERALD: That's my exam piece. And this is what we're doing for the end of term concert. Yuk! "Heigh-ho! Heigh-ho! and Back to Work We Go!". If I have to play that once more I'll be sick. They think the parents will like it.

MRS. BLOEM: They probably will.

EMERALD: All parents are stupid. Did I tell you I'm learning to drive? I can do most of it now. That's one good thing about Rob. He let's me try. Fiona's father's got a Volvo. Think of it a Volvo! Anyway he won't let her go near it.

MRS. BLOEM: I'm going to start making tea. Why don't you do your practice?

EMERALD: No. I want to help you.

MRS. BLOEM: There very little to do. You mother's left it all ready on plates.

EMERALD: I don't want to eat now. I just want a doughnut. **(She gets some)** Do you want one?

MRS. BLOEM: Not now, thank you. Aren't you practising?

EMERALD: I hate doing it without the piano. Do you know Fiona's learning the bassoon? If we had a piano we could play together.

MRS. BLOEM: There's not much of a repertoire for cello and bassoon.

EMERALD: What was your Dad like? Did he go on like Rob?

MRS. BLOEM: I never saw him. He died before I was born.

EMERALD: You were lucky. You didn't have to listen to all that yak-yak-yak. I'm sick of talks with Mum and Rob. They seem to think they have to keep explaining everything. I mean it's quite simple. She's pissing off. That's it. Let them just get on with it and let me get on with it. Did you get yourself all worked up about sex when you were a kid? I bet you didn't.

MRS. BLOEM: I was a bit confused and I did worry sometimes. When I was a teenager people didn't talk about it so much - so openly anyway. My mother never mentioned it. I just read a few books.

EMERALD: I've got books too. Full of stupid pictures - all pink and red. They're disgusting. I mean what does it matter about all those things inside you? I don't want to see inside people. Most of it's covered with skin anyway!

MRS. BLOEM: Don't you want something to drink?

EMERALD: I'll get something. What about you? Like a Coke?

MRS. BLOEM: No, thank you. I'll make some coffee soon.

EMERALD: I like talking to you. You don't say *anything*.

MRS. BLOEM: **(Laughs)** I don't get a chance when you get going.

EMERALD: Go on then. Say something. Tell me about your mother. When she was flying?

MRS. BLOEM: My mother? My mother didn't talk to me about flying. All I knew was she flew planes during the war.

EMERALD: What sort of planes?

MRS. BLOEM: Stukas, I suppose and Messerschmitts.

EMERALD: If I'd flown a Messerschmitt I'd never stop talking about it. Those were crash hot fighters. Did your Mum fight? I mean only men fight. Did she dress up as a man?

MRS. BLOEM: No. She just worked with them. But she wouldn't talk about it. She just said: "Remember we are Australians now. That's all in the past. I want to forget it all. This is a new life. No one wants to know about the war. We were fighting for

Germany and don't talk about it to anyone. If your school friends know you'll never have any peace. You have nothing to do with Germany. " She told me I must just get on with my music. " It's hard for me," she used to say: "I'll only make it out here if I put all that behind me. It never happened. Just remember that".

EMERALD: But it did, didn't it?

MRS. BLOEM: Not to me. And I didn't ask any more questions.

EMERALD: Have you got a photo of her?

MRS. BLOEM: Not a proper one. I found a newspaper cutting once in an old scrap book.

EMERALD: Can you bring it next time?

MRS. BLOEM: I'll try.

EMERALD: You must. Tie some string round your big toe.

MRS. BLOEM: All right. Did you feed your hamster?

EMERALD: No. I'll give it some lettuce off the salad. **(Laughs)** Hope it likes French dressing.

MRS. BLOEM: Do it now.

EMERALD TAKES SOME LETTUCE INTO THE NEXT ROOM AND MRS. BLOEM PUTS HER SCHOOL THINGS IN HER BAG. EMERALD RETURNS.

EMERALD: I don't think he likes this little flat.

MRS. BLOEM: He'll get used to it. Has he got plenty of water?

EMERALD: Buckets of it.

MRS. BLOEM: I see on your list: "History Homework"

EMERALD: I can do that in class.

MRS. BLOEM: Better get it done now. What are you doing in history?

EMERALD: World War Two. We did World War One last week.

MRS. BLOEM: Is it learning?

EMERALD: **(Looks at notebook)** Write notes on three of the following. 1. Hitler. 2. Dr. Someone... Gobbles. 3. Rudolf Hess. 4. General Eisenhower. 5. Churchill. 6. General Rommel. I saw him in "The Desert Fox." Nothing but tanks and tanks. Not a single plane. Boring. **(Mutters)** Hitler... Gobbles - he's out- never heard of him. Rudolf Hess... **(Sings)** "Rudolf the Red-nosed Reindeer, had a very shiny nose..." I know about him. **(Writes)** Rudolf Hess was a Nazi pilot and... **(Pause)** had a very shiny nose. **(MRS. BLOEM turns away)** He flew to England in a ME 109. This a single engine fighter made by Messerschmitt. Did you know some German planes had Rolls Royce engines? The ME 109 has a cruising speed of 320 m.p.h. Hess landed on a castle in Scotland. After he was dead they thought he was somebody else. Tick him off. Eisenhower. Was he at Pearl Harbour?

MRS. BLOEM: I don't know. Just try to get on with this yourself.

EMERALD: **(Shrugs)** I know about the Japanese fighters. Kamakasis and all that. Better leave him. Churchill. Churchill had a big cigar. He was Lord of the Sea or something. We've got a set book called: "Lord of the Flies." It's pretty stupid. He fought the Battle of Britain with Spitfires. Did you know Spitfires fire through their propellers? Smallest fighter planes... not so fast as Messerschmitts but turn faster. He also had Bristol Bombers and Hurricanes and the Yanks gave him Venturas and Flying Fortresses. Next. It's got to be Hitler. Mrs. Bloem, you know about Hitler. Please!

MRS. BLOEM: I think you should do this for yourself.

EMERALD: All right. Hitler was the top Nazi... Do you watch "Hogan's Heroes"? It's funny. **(She looks at MRS. BLOEM who makes no response. Sighs)** He made people wear brown shirts and say: "Zieg Heil!" **(She mimics this several times as in "Hogan's Heroes")** What does 'zieg' mean?

MRS. BLOEM: Leader.

EMERALD: How do you spell it?

MRS. BLOEM: **(In a dead voice)** Z-i-e-g... Please don't ask any more questions.

EMERALD: He invented the buzz bomb and buzzed London. That's enough for him. Finished!

MRS. BLOEM: We really must have tea now Emerald. It's after six.

EMERALD: I'm not really hungry.

MRS. BLOEM: There's some salad and fruit. You'll be able to eat some of that.

EMERALD: There's a series on old planes starting. Sort of history of flying. We can eat quick and then watch that, if it's not too late? Anyway Mum won't be back for ages.

SCENE 8

- LIGHTS DOWN AND THEN UP ON SAME SCENE LATER THAT EVENING. MRS. BLOEM AND EMERALD ARE WATCHING T.V. ANDREA ENTERS.

EMERALD: Why are you back so early?

ANDREA: Hi Em! Had a good day at school? How did your music go?

EMERALD: Please don't talk Mum, they're just getting the very first flying machine into the air. Look! Isn't it mad? I mean it's just bits of wood and wire. Look at this one!

ANDREA: Mrs. Bloem, I'm not going to the meeting tonight, so I won't need you any longer. Thanks for coming. See you on Friday, if that's all right?

SHE HANDS HER AN ENVELOPE.

MRS. BLOEM: Yes, I've reserved Friday, I will see you then. **(She picks up her bag and jacket)** See you Friday, Emerald.

EMERALD: See you, Mrs. Bloem. Don't forget.

MRS. BLOEM: Bye now.

ANDREA: Can you turn that off now?

EMERALD: What for? I want to watch it.

ANDREA: I want to talk to you.

EMERALD: Oh Jeez, Mum, I want to watch this.

ANDREA: Just listen a moment. **(EMERALD turns off the sound but stays with her eyes glued to the picture)** Rob wants us to have a talk. He's coming around tonight.

EMERALD: What time?

ANDREA: Soon - now.

EMERALD: I don't want to talk to him. You can talk to him. I want to watch this programme. Can't I ever do anything I want?

ANDREA: You can watch it till he comes.

EMERALD: I won't talk. I won't say a word. You can't make me. Now please shut up and let me listen.

ANDREA: Did you eat your tea?

EMERALD: Yes.

ANDREA: And your homework?

EMERALD: Yes, yes, yes! Now please Mum!

SHE TURNS UP THE SOUND. THERE IS A KNOCK AT THE DOOR. ANDREA LETS ROB IN.

ROB: Hello. Hi Em.

EMERALD: Jesus.

SHE FLINGS HERSELF DOWN ON THE SOFA AND CLOSES HER EYES.

ROB: **(Puts a package on the sofa)** I brought this for you pet. **(EMERALD opens her eyes)** Aren't you going to open it?

EMERALD: Thanks. **(She opens it. It's a pair of pretty shoes with small heels)** Thanks. They're great.

ROB: Aren't you going to put them on?

EMERALD: **(She puts them on and stand up)** Mmmm. They fit okay.

ROB: **(To ANDREA)** All right? Do you approve?

ANDREA: Yes, nice.

ROB: **(To EMERALD)** Sorry about that night. I want you to try to understand. I didn't mean to hurt anybody.

EMERALD: Yeah, yeah.

SHE CLOSSES HER EYES AGAIN.

ROB: **(To ANDREA)** I know you're angry, Andy. But I want you to rethink a bit. Don't make a complete break. After all you rushed out without giving me a chance.

EMERALD: Can I go to bed?

ROB: Listen Em.

EMERALD: I'm falling asleep.

ROB: I don't want to break this family up. I'm always here.

EMERALD: Okay. I know.

ROB: I'm still your father and I always want to help you. Don't you want me around?

EMERALD: Sometimes. Just get it worked out. I don't want to talk anymore. I want to go to bed. Why don't you let me go to Fiona's for the weekend? Then you can talk all the time.

ROB: All right, Em, run off. Hey! How about a hug? **(EMERALD looks at him, takes off the shoes and goes with them in her hand. To ANDREA) You don't help much.**

ANDREA: I don't want to change my mind. I've lived with it long enough. Now I want something new.

ROB: We had some good times. Have you written all that off?

ANDREA: No, but those times are over. It was good at first. When we were students. You were different then. Best speaker in the Union. You were a leader. You had ideals.

ROB: Remember the demonstrations?

ANDREA: Yes. But all that's past.

ROB: You supported me then.

ANDREA: I adored you. I was willing to work while you finished your doctorate. I thought you were going on to great things. But you gave it away.

ROB: I wanted a decent job and money. You didn't object at the time. I wanted it for you too.

ANDREA: All right, you got all that. All that charm. You couldn't miss. But what does it lead to? P.R. work... entertaining, expense accounts, travel here and there, the best hotels, parties, drugs... I never knew where you were half the time. Or who you were with...

ROB: If I'd gone on with research where would we be now? On the dole most likely.

ANDREA: There are some good men on the dole right now. Some of our friends. They've stuck it out. They haven't given up.

ROB: How would you adapt to some cheap flat in some dreary street? Living on tuna... none of the mod cons you've been used to. Em at some overcrowded education factory around the corner? I wonder, I just wonder.

ANDREA: I would have given it a go. After all I had a job. We wouldn't have starved.

ROB: No, we wouldn't have starved. But on your wages we wouldn't be far off. What I came to talk about is Em. I don't want some other man around her. How do I know what this guy's like you're going to shack up with? **(Getting louder)** Don't you think of Em? Don't you care what all this is doing to her?

ANDREA: **(Louder)** Of course I care. I care when you come in the early hours knocking things over, singing. Waking the child up. I care when I hear you're letting her drive your Porsche. That's no car to teach anyone on, least of all a child.

ROB: **(Shouts)** I can take the Honda.

ANDREA: That's not the point. She's too young. You're a rotten influence. I don't want her to grow up with all this.

ROB: **(Loud)** Why don't you let her decide?

EMERALD: **(Comes to door)** Why can't you both shut up talking about me? I can hear every word you say. If I hear my name again, I'll scream.

SHE THROWS THE SHOES INTO THE ROOM.

ANDREA: All right, darling... we won't, I promise you.

EMERALD: I just want to be in some place where I can't hear you.

SHE GOES.

ANDREA: I think you'd better go. It's doing no good. Please go, Rob.

ROB: **(Angry but keeping his voice low)** All right. This time. But this isn't the end. When this guy gets tired of you, mark my words, you'll be damn glad to come back to me. **(Getting louder)** You're thirty-seven and don't forget it. Soon you'll be forty and then what? **(Shouts)** Where's the next lover coming from? Think about that.

EMERALD FROM INSIDE GIVES A LONG PIERCING SCREAM.

ANDREA: Get out. Just go, just go.

SCENE 9

- ANDREA'S FLAT. A FEW WEEKS LATER. A TABLE IS SET FOR DINNER.

ANDREA: It's nearly nine. I wonder what's keeping him. He didn't ring when I went out to get the cream?

EMERALD: Nobody rang.

ANDREA: Get a plate and help yourself. It's all in the oven... have lots, there's plenty.

SHE LIGHTS A CIGARETTE.

EMERALD: **(Tasting)** This is yummy. You never cooked this for Rob... or me!

ANDREA: Rob was never in and rich food isn't good for you.

EMERALD: I like it.

ANDREA: You'll get fat. You'll see. You won't be able to get in the cockpit.

EMERALD: How old do you have to be to take lessons?

ANDREA: I don't know. Eighteen probably.

EMERALD: I don't mean go solo. Just learn.

ANDREA: I'll find our if you like.

EMERALD: I could just sit by the pilot and watch.

ANDREA: We'll see.

EMERALD: Did you make some dessert?

ANDREA: Just fruit.

EMERALD: Mind if I take it to the lounge room? There's something I want to watch.

ANDREA: I don't want you sitting up all night watching cop shows.

EMERALD: This isn't.. It's a documentary about flying in World War 2... about German aces, you know, Messerschmitts and Stukas.

ANDREA: All right then. Just that. Then bed.

EMERALD: I promise. I won't sit up late. I've got to grow. If you want to get into the airforce you've got to be tall. I've got to grow twenty-seven centimetres. Of course, I could be a civilian flyer, but the airforce is my first choice.

ANDREA: Okay, group captain. **(EMERALD goes. telephone rings)**
No. He isn't here. Who is speaking? How did you know my number? I see... No. I'm sorry I've no idea.

SHE RINGS OFF PICKS UP A BOOK AND SITS WITH HER FEET UP.

JOSS: **(Entering)** Andrea darling. I'm sorry I'm late.

HE KISSES HER.

ANDREA: What happened? Did you forget?

JOSS: Of course not, darling. We had an unexpected assignment. Up the coast. It went on a bit long. I couldn't let you know... miles from a phone. Come here. Say you forgive me.

ANDREA: Of course I do, you must be tired and starving.

JOSS: We got a snack on the plane.

ANDREA: I'll get you a drink.

JOSS: Could I ask you one thing? Sorry to bring it up. But that cigarette. You know how I feel about it and you promised you'd try to stop.

ANDREA: I have tried, truly.

JOSS: What about this?

HE HOLDS UP AN OVERFLOWING ASHTRAY.

ANDREA: It was just...

JOSS: Just what?

ANDREA: Just the waiting. It made me edgy. I'm sorry.

JOSS: I apologise, too. I couldn't help saying it. Darling, if we're going to have a relationship, I think we've got to get it clear from the start. I may not always be able to arrive on the dot. I may not be able to arrive at all sometimes. I hope it won't be too often. It's not easy for you, but there it is. Not much I can do about it.

ANDREA: I'll get used to it.

ROB: I've got a lot of responsibilities. It's not an easy job designing for film. I've got to be available It's not like your job, nine to five and no pressures.

ANDREA: No pressures, did you say? There's a fair emotional wear and tear, in counselling you know.

JOSS: Yes, of course there is. I just meant the time factor and having to fight for your ideas. It's hard to explain. All creative work's difficult and having sell it to other people

makes it worse... you're up there is its coming right, but if it's not, well, it's pretty devastating. Does this sound awful? I must sound like a fair shit, but better to explain now, before we run into real difficulties.

ANDREA: I don't want to pressure you, believe me. I want us both to feel free. Just to trust each other... that's all.

JOSS: You made me feel a bit guilty about your smoking.

ANDREA: You're making too much of it. I was just worried... slipped into the old habit. I'll get it licked. You'll see.

JOSS: Sure. I know you will. You mix a good drink.

ANDREA: Thanks.

JOSS: Aren't you drinking?

ANDREA: Yes, of course. And was the trip good? Did you get some good ideas?

JOSS: I thought my ideas were coming on nicely, but the whole concept was wrecked by this new director with his preconceived notions. But I don't want to bore you with all that.

ANDREA: I'm interested in your work, Joss.

JOSS: Great. You've got this place remarkably ship shape.

ANDREA: You should see the rest of it.

JOSS: I can see you're coping. I knew you would. How does it feel to be liberated?

ANDREA: Good. Just a twinge occasionally when I miss the old chains. But I can see it's going to be the life.

JOSS: And Emerald?

ANDREA: She seems to be taking it all in her stride... on the surface at least. It's bound to have its repercussions, and I want her to see as much of Rob as they both want. She's had Fiona for the weekend and they shut themselves up for hours talking, which is a good thing.

JOSS: I like Emerald. She seems to know exactly where she's going and heads off for it like a young tigress.

ANGELA: She's obsessive, if that's what you mean,

JOSS: Obsessive... another word for success very often.

ANGELA: I won't argue the point. But that's not the whole story

JOSS: No, don't let's get analytical. Let's just take the gifts the gods provide with open hands and big plastic bags. Must be fun to have a daughter.

ANDREA: Yes, it's good.

JOSS: I've often thought I'd like children. You know I have this dream to find a tiny island off the coast, there are some you know, especially up north, and live there on the land, grow things, meditate, leave all this behind. Raise kids there, swim, build my own sail-boat. How would that suit you?

ANDREA: I'm not sure, but I think I could adapt. It would be worth a try.

JOSS: We must keep it in mind. It can be our private dream.

ANDREA: Of course there is Emerald.

JOSS: We'll build her an airstrip. Think. No radio, no TV, no...

ANDREA: That reminds me. There was a call for you here. A woman. She wouldn't leave her name, but she obviously expected you to be here. How did she get my number?

JOSS: That would be Belinda. I gave it her. I hope you didn't mind. I told her not to ring before eight. I thought I'd be back by then.

ANDREA: Who is Belinda?

JOSS: Does that really matter?

ANDREA: All right. I won't ask.

JOSS: Belinda's one of my assistants on the job. She probably wanted to know what was the work schedule for tomorrow.

ANDREA: But why ring here? Couldn't it wait?

JOSS: Because I usually spend Sunday nights with her. That's all.

ANDREA: You spend Sunday nights with her as a regular thing? You mean you sleep there?

JOSS: Yes. Is that a crime?

ANDREA: Of course not. I just didn't know.

JOSS: Would you like the whole story?

ANDREA: If you want to tell me.

JOSS: Well here it is. Belinda and I have been seeing each other for a year or more. She has a lover, he's a very successful director, Juri Killenski. You may have heard of him. "Palace of Dreams". Have you see it?

ANDREA: Yes, I think I did.

JOSS: Well, Juri's in the States... gone to direct there. Belinda's lonely... misses him of course. So we got together. I see her most weekends unless either of us is working. From Friday night. But we both keep weekdays free... I'm not promiscuous. I never have been.

ANDREA: So, it's Mondays to Fridays for me, is that it?

JOSS: To put it bluntly, yes. If you want it, that is. I can't really give Belinda up suddenly, you'll appreciate that. It's been a good relationship, we satisfy each other's emotional needs pretty well. Of course as soon as Juri gets back it will all end. They'll probably go to Europe together anyway.

ANDREA: Maybe I should think about it.

JOSS: Don't think too hard. It's not a permanent affair.

ANDREA: And when Juri come back, will it really be over? You're not deeply committed to Belinda?

JOSS: If you knew Belinda, you'd see there'd be no point in being deeply committed to her. It isn't on the cards, I promise, you. When Juri comes back, it's finished... for good.

ANDREA: **(Slowly)** I think I can accept that.

JOSS: I like the way you said that. A rational woman at last. Relationships come and go, but you could be forever. You know that?

ANDREA: I only know I'm not sure of anything.

JOSS: Who is? We'll work it out together. You'll see.

SCENE 10

- ANDREA'S FLAT. THE SOUND OF CELLO PRACTICE IN THE NEXT ROOM. SCALES, ARPEGGIOS, EXERCISES, THEN A SINGLE PIECE, STOPPING AND REPEATING SECTIONS.

MRS. BLOEM: **(To audience)** I'm one of those nameless people. You may have heard me called Mrs. Bloem, but that's not how people think of me. I'm just the baby sitter. I can hear them "Oh, what time is it? The baby sitter should be here". Or: "Please ring the baby sitter. We'll need her on Friday." I'm not a person to them, I'm a commodity. I never really get to know the folk I sit for in the ordinary way. As soon as I put my head through the door, they're off. The taxi's at the door or someone's double parked. And when they come back, it's "Oh how tired I am, I'm just dropping... sorry we're late. Here's your money. Was everything all right? Did you find the biscuits? Forgive me, I'm just flaking out. See you next time. Thank you for everything, Mrs. Bloem."

No one's ever asked about me. I could be anyone, anything. But indirectly, I know them. Nothing tells you more than someone's house. I always clear the ashtrays for her. Look at this one. That tells it's own story. And the bathroom... full of perfume and steam and these... **(Picks up pill packet on the counter)** Stress. Had them prescribed for me once, when Mother was very bad and I wasn't getting any sleep. **(She puts them on a high shelf)** Why do I choose this life? Not much choice really, not at the moment. Suits me though. I get away in the evenings. Mother settles down, reads a little, writes her diary in bed... that takes a while and then she's off to sleep. I can't really leave her for long in the daytime, so I couldn't work even if I wanted to, and I don't hanker after it any more.

We've very few friends and there's really nowhere for me to go in the evenings and this makes a change. It's good to be in someone else's house. I sort of live here in a way, belong,

somehow, not the same as a visitor. While I'm here, it's mine. All this is mine. I make decisions. There's no secrets, not from me. I could read her letters, look in the drawers, take out her clothes... have a shower. But of course, I don't. I am in a position of trust and I'm not a curious person. Just to sit here, and feel the atmosphere, that tells me most things. I like it here. It's my second world. So very different from my first one.

Some people think I'm psychic. I'm not really. It's just being in someone's home, among all their intimate possessions. I just sense things about them. I don't have to be told. I don't take on many families. And now it's just this one. I like to get to know people well, so during the day I can imagine what they're doing. Of course they know nothing about me. They have never seen how I live or where. They don't know how I think or feel... just a telephone number 7372155 like someone in gaol... a face, a number and locked up at night! I never watch TV, I sometimes read, not much. The time goes very fast once the child's in bed. I make coffee, if it's a good brand, but I never touch the biscuits. Bought for me specially, I shouldn't wonder, can't see her eating Yo-Yo's.

It's four years now since I've been sitting for her. Once or twice a week. Of course they didn't go out much together anymore. He was off every night. I never saw him much but he was full of fun, made me laugh. She had her own friends and meetings, the theatre, a movie, not late. But now it could be one o'clock, two o'clock and the office in the morning. I don't mind, I can sleep in and it's good money.

And Emerald. She's a wonderful girl. I've seen her grow up like she was my own. She was eight when I came... didn't like me... used to another much younger sitter, teenager really. I think she thought I was very dull, very old and very dull. I was only in my mid thirties. But now we're friends. I look forward to all our talks before she goes to bed. We've a lot to talk about... oh yes, you'd be surprised how well we get on. I can't imagine life without her now. Though she'd forget me soon enough or would she? I often wonder. Childhood memories stay with you for a long time. I remember so many of my first class at school, their names, what they looked like, their voices. They're clearer to me than people I knew when I was grown up. A silent class now used to be so noisy. Margaret Evans, teacher's pet, James Walsh, skinny, buck teeth... Mick Andronov, never said anything, James Heron, always sniffing, Pat Williams, red

hair, cheeky... Vic Antonello, fat, in the front row, ate salami. Never saw any of them again but they're there in my mind, frozen forever. And my first teacher Mrs. Klemperer, striped green blouse, green pleated skirt, patent shoes with little bows, very red lipstick and a gold bangle with a little enamel heart on it. Whoever was Mr. Klemperer? We never thought there was one.

She just existed for us in that classroom with the chalky blackboard and the dust floating in the sunlight. So maybe Emerald will remember me like I remember them. One thing's clear. She won't want a baby sitter much longer. Meantime I'm not sitting for anyone else. This is enough to keep me going. Later, well, I'll meet that one when I come to it.

SCENE 11

– EMERALD AND MRS. BLOEM.

EMERALD: That's my practice done. Now we can talk.

MRS. BLOEM: Homework?

EMERALD: Done it.

MRS. BLOEM: Everything ready for morning?

EMERALD NODS.

EMERALD: What did you bring me?

MRS. BLOEM: I gave you them.

EMERALD: I don't mean the cookies.

MRS. BLOEM: I can't bring things *everytime*.

EMERALD: You can. You can.

MRS. BLOEM: All right, Here you are.

SHE OPENS HER BAG AND GIVES EMERALD A NEWSPAPER CUTTING WHICH SHE SCANS WITH GREAT CONCENTRATION.

EMERALD: Is that her?

MRS. BLOEM: Yes.

EMERALD: Eva von Rontigen. Wow! Now translate.

MRS. BLOEM: "Eva von Rontigen, peace time aviatrix, winner of the Berlin-Vienna trophy in 1934 has thrown herself into the war effort and is the only woman piloting fighter planes. No, she is not in the Front Line, she ferries the newest Messerschmitts as they come off the... er... the, the assembly lines to the training camps of our intrepid airmen. Pictured left is pretty Eva surrounded by cheering airmen as she arrives at the airfield. Right: Eva is toasted in the officers' mess. Eva is a true daughter of the Fatherland. Before the war she refused an offer to appear in Hollywood films which would have brought her millions and a life of luxury. Eva said: "My first duty is to Germany and to flying."

EMERALD: Let me see her. **(Looks again hard)** She's cool. You don't look much like her, do you?

MRS. BLOEM: No, I'm more like my father.

EMERALD: Have you got photos of him?

MRS. BLOEM: At home. Mother's got some.

EMERALD: He was a pilot too, wasn't he?

MRS. BLOEM: Yes and a famous one too.

EMERALD: Was he one of the flying aces?

MRS. BLOEM: Yes, he was a real daredevil, they say.

EMERALD: Did he know the Red Baron?

MRS. BLOEM: I don't think so. The Red Baron was in World War I.

EMERALD: Have you got a photo of him in uniform?

MRS. BLOEM: My mother has, somewhere...

EMERALD: I'd give anything to see it.

MRS. BLOEM: I can't bring it. She keeps it on her bedside table in a silver frame.

EMERALD HANDS THE CUTTING BACK REVERENTLY. MRS. BLOEM FOLDS IT CAREFULLY AND REPLACES IT IN AN ENVELOPE.

- EMERALD: Thanks for bringing it. Why didn't your mother teach you to fly?
- MRS. BLOEM: I didn't want to.
- EMERALD: You must be mad. If it'd been my mother I'd have made her.
- MRS. BLOEM: She never flew in Australia. It was all to do with the war. And then her back injury. She'd never have got an Australian licence.
- EMERALD: How did she get hurt? Did she crash?
- MRS. BLOEM: Yes. But she would never talk about it. She wanted to forget all that. She said the injury was an old skiing fall.
- EMERALD: Was she a champion skier too?
- MRS. BLOEM: No. Just that her family used to go on skiing holidays when she was young. Lots of people ski in Germany.
- EMERALD: Did she teach you to ski?
- MRS. BLOEM: Why, yes. We went sometimes up to the Snowies.
- EMERALD: I'd like to ski. Do you think you could you teach me?
- MRS. BLOEM: I suppose so. If there was some snow!
- EMERALD: Some planes land on snow, don't they?
- MRS. BLOEM: Yes. In Finland they had fighter planes on skis.
- EMERALD: Think of that! Flying on skis! That must be the best.
- MRS. BLOEM: Getting on for bedtime. Will I make you some cocoa?
- EMERALD: M'm. Please, Mrs. Bloem.
- MRS. BLOEM: I'll bring you some German chocolate next time if I remember.
- EMERALD: Is it nicer?

MRS. BLOEM: I think so. I don't care much for cocoa.

EMERALD: I'm going to learn German next year. We can choose - French, German, Italian and some drippy old things like Japanese and Indonesian. I've chosen German so you can help me. You will help me, won't you? Then one day I can come and see your mother and talk to her.

MRS. BLOEM: She speaks English.

EMERALD: When she writes in her diary, is that in English?

MRS. BLOEM: No, that's in German.

EMERALD: I don't know what she finds to put in it. We had to keep a diary for English. It was *awful*. I mean, you couldn't put anything true in it or else our teacher would have had a fit. But your mum. If she's in bed all the time, what can she put in it?

MRS. BLOEM: It's a funny diary. It's not about today. It's a diary about Berlin in the war. She remembers it all so clearly. It's clearer to her than Australia today. She writes down everything that happened to her. Day by day. She seems to remember *every* little detail.

EMERALD: Ooh, that's weird. It's scary. But I'd like to read it. Is it all about flying?

MRS. BLOEM: I think so. I haven't seen it all.

EMERALD: I think that's wonderful... but scary.

MRS. BLOEM: Let's not get scary. How's your music going? You sound as though you know that piece quite well.

EMERALD: I've got to. It's for an exam.

MRS. BLOEM: Do you like it?

EMERALD: It's all right.

MRS. BLOEM: Is your teacher pleased?

EMERALD: Sometimes.

MRS. BLOEM: If we had a piano I could play the accompaniment.

EMERALD: My teacher plays so loud, I can hardly hear my soft bits.

MRS. BLOEM: Accompanying is a great art.

EMERALD: Did you learn the piano a long time?

MRS. BLOEM: About nine or ten years.

EMERALD: Did you go to music school?

MRS. BLOEM: Yes, for a while.

EMERALD: Can you play anything else?

MRS. BLOEM: Only the mandolin.

EMERALD: What's that?

MRS. BLOEM: A bit like a guitar, only smaller and not so many strings. You see them in old pictures. Angels play them.

EMERALD: Have you got a mandolin at home?

MRS. BLOEM: Yes. Several.

EMERALD: Bring it next time.

MRS. BLOEM: Then you'll have to sing. You have to sing to the mandolin.

EMERALD: You can teach me some German songs. Promise?

MRS. BLOEM: If it's a weekend. You can't sit up singing on week nights. Come on... Finish your cocoa.

EMERALD: Say "goodnight" in German.

MRS. BLOEM: Gutte nacht, schlafe gut und traume suss.

EMERALD: Can you teach me, Mrs. Bloem?

MRS. BLOEM: Schlafe gut..

EMERALD: Schlafe gut.

MRS. BLOEM: Schlafe..not slafe.

EMERALD: Schlafe..schlafe gut.

MRS. BLOEM: Du auch. Now you go off. (**EMERALD goes muttering**)
Schlafe gut und traume süss, mein Schatchen.

SHE TURNS OUT THE MAIN LIGHT LEAVING ONLY A LAMP ON. SHE SINGS TO HERSELF VERY SOFTLY, A GERMAN LULLABY.

SCENE 12

- OLD WRITING DESK AND TWO CHAIRS. MUSIC ON A RADIO OR CD PLAYER.

ANDREA: You know I don't like you coming here.

ROB: If I come to the flat I might find you in bed with...
whatshisname.

ANDREA: Joss.

ROB: *Joss.*

ANDREA: Also we've done a lot of talking already. It's all quite clear.
Finalised.

ROB: Finalised? That's where you're *wrong*. It's clear for you, but
not for me. Not over... not by a long chalk.

ANDREA: I've nothing more to say.

ROB: How's Joss treating you?

ANDREA: No comment.

ROB: Emerald. I want to see more of her. She *is* my daughter.

ANDREA: I'm not stopping you. I've asked her to ring you up.

ROB: She *never* does.

ANDREA: That's her choice.

ROB: I don't believe you. It's my opinion that you've been
poisoning her mind against me.

ANDREA: Bullshit, Rob. You're paranoid. We don't talk much about
you as a matter of fact.

ROB: I believe you. You'd like to shut me out, wouldn't you? Forget I exist.

ANDREA: That's all in your head. She's free to see you, whenever you care to arrange it.

ROB: I've tried before. She makes excuses. There's a school sports day... Mrs. Bloem's coming... she's got a cold.

ANDREA: These things actually do happen, you know.

ROB: Well it's not good enough. I can only stand a certain amount. One day I'll just come round and take her with me, when you get back, she won't be there.

ANDREA: Please. You can't be serious. There's no point in getting melodramatic. I can't force her to go out with you against her will.

ROB: She was ready enough at first. We had some good times, Andrea, up the coast, swimming and then to a movie.

ANDREA: That was fine. And then you took them to an X- rated movie and then a party where they both got drunk and someone gave Fiona a joint and her mother said she was *never* to go out with you again.

ROB: It won't happen again. It was just that once.

ANDREA: I believe you. But she just doesn't want to go. Leave it for a while, Rob. She'll come around.

ROB: Maybe we could all go out together... to a movie... have dinner.

ANDREA: I'm not ready for that yet. One day maybe...

ROB: Faithful to Joss. Very touching.

ANDREA: He doesn't come into it.

ROB: What do you advise your clients, m'm? Get together with your husband. Try to sort things out. Be willing to accept compromise? Don't harbour resentments. I've heard you.

ANDREA: That kind of talk doesn't help.

ROB: Why don't you throw the cards in? Marriage guidance. Crap. You're the last person to guide anyone. Why don't you ditch the whole fucking shit bag and do something decent for a living?

ANDREA: I happen to be trained for this. My personal life is something quite apart.

ROB: If your clients could hear you now, they wouldn't think much of your advice.

ANDREA: If you've nothing else to say, I'm rather busy and I've an appointment coming up. **(Telephone rings)** Please ask them to wait.

ROB: You got that secretary to ring you, didn't you? Give him five minutes and then ring.

ANDREA: I did not. It's a perfectly genuine appointment.

ROB: All right. But this isn't the end. We're not divorced yet. The law's on my side... and if ever I meet your mate Joss don't be surprised if I push his face in.

ROB GOES. ANDREA PICKS UP THE TELEPHONE.

ANDREA: Give me three minutes and then send them in. Thanks.

SCENE 13

- GERMANY 1937. EVA IS 24 YEARS OLD.

EVA: **(To audience)** Such a lot has happened in the last few years. I never thought life could be exciting. The biggest thrill was when I was selected to work as a test pilot. Next thing, I was given the job of testing the new dive brakes. I had to do this in front of the top Luftwaffe officers and the Air Ministry. I don't know how I got through those tests, but lucky for me those brakes worked! Of course, this is a real advance. Now even in a vertical dive, an aircraft has more stability and can decrease speed. It went so well that Hitler has made me a Flight Captain! And the new brakes are going to be fitted to military machines. There's some talk about my joining the military. Oh if only I was allowed to! That's my dream.

Anyhow, if I can save lives by test flying this makes me feel I'm helping our great land. It's a big responsibility, but I accept it. At last, Germany can get back her self-respect and her proper place among the nations... Our aircraft factories are working again, and our armament factories. It's good to see them smoking away in the Ruhr. Hitler has worked a miracle. No more idle hands. Of course we must still make sacrifices, all of us. We're not there yet. There's always a price to pay. And if some of our old freedoms have gone, we must accept this until the work is done. At least we can hold our heads high again.

One of the highlights of this year was being part of the helicopter team. I demonstrated this machine too. Professor Focke who designed it was there and all the high-ups. After this flight I was given the Military Flying Medal. No woman has ever had this. Mother said I mustn't get big headed. I won't. General Goering was there. He wants me to demonstrate the helicopter to the world by flying it inside the New Exhibition Hall in Berlin at our big trade fair next year. I only hope I don't go through the roof. Easy enough... but one little slip! If there's a big crowd there, and there will be, I'm certain, at the end I'll give the Nazi salute!

Another wonderful thing has happened. I've met an Airforce officer I'm really attracted to. He seems to like me too. Dreams, perhaps... I wonder. I'll be working with him on a special course soon. It might involve going to Italy. Mussolini's keen to see some of our aircraft in action. But it's not Mussolini I'm thinking about.

SCENE 14

- ANDREA'S FLAT SOME TIME LATER. SHE IS READY WITH A SUITCASE TO GO OFF FOR A WEEKEND. MRS BLOEM ARRIVES ALSO WITH A SMALL BAG AND A MANDOLIN IN A CASE.

ANDREA: Hello. How are you?

MRS BLOEM: Good.

ANDREA: You can put your things in the study. I've made up a bed in there for you.

MRS. BLOEM: Thank you.

SHE PUTS HER CASE DOWN.

ANDREA: **(Calls)** Mrs. Bloem's arrived. **(EMERALD runs in)** You can help her with her things.

EMERALD: Come on. I've made a special place for you to put everything, the photos and books. Where's your mandolin?

MRS. BLOEM: Here!

EMERALD: Oh goody, goody. I can't wait.

ANDREA: There's plenty of stuff in the fridge. Em knows. She helped me get it in. Lots of fruit. Make anything you like. I hope you'll be comfortable.

MRS. BLOEM: I'm sure I shall.

ANDREA: Joss should be here any minute. In fact he's late. I wonder what's holding him up.

MRS. BLOEM: The holiday traffic's very heavy. I had a very slow trip in the bus.

ANDREA: Yes, that's it. I hadn't thought of that. Em, Mrs. Bloem might like some tea.

EMERALD: She likes coffee better. I'm good at making coffee. What about you Mum?

ANDREA: Oh, I don't suppose I'll have time to drink it.

EMERALD: It won't take a minute. Sit down. He's not here yet.

SHE FILLS A COFFEE MAKER. THEN TAKES MRS. BLOEM 'S CASE TO THE STUDY. LIGHTS DOWN TO MARK PASSAGE OF TIME. ANDREA SITS WITH AN EMPTY COFFEE CUP. SHE LIGHTS A CIGARETTE. THERE IS A FAIRLY FULL ASH TRAY. THE DOOR OPENS AND JOSS ENTERS. ANDREA RUNS TO HIM. THEY EMBRACE.

ANDREA: Oh Joss! I thought something had happened to you. That, or you'd stood me up. I'm all ready. Just a second. I'll get my bag.

SHE HANDS HIM THE CASE. HE HOLDS IT AWKWARDLY AND THEN PUTS IT DOWN.

JOSS: Wait a moment. Sit down. I've something to tell you.

ANDREA: Can't it wait till we're on our way?

JOSS: Sorry. It's got to be now. Something has happened.

ANDREA: You don't mean to say?

JOSS: It's really bad. Sit down.

ANDREA: What? What is it?

JOSS: I don't know how to tell you. It's about Belinda.

ANDREA: Oh no!

JOSS: I know you'll be sore. But this time I can't help it. Juri's had a bad accident.

ANDREA: Where? Is he here?

JOSS: No. He's in Los Angeles. In hospital.

ANDREA: Why doesn't she get on the next plane and go?

JOSS: She will, of course. But there isn't a plane immediately.

ANDREA: When does it go?

JOSS: Monday, six a.m.

ANDREA: Well?

JOSS: I'll have to stay with her and put her on that plane. She's in a awful state. Quite incapable of doing anything for herself.

ANDREA: But why must it be you? Why not someone else from the film set? She must have friends.

JOSS: She wants me.

ANDREA: Of course. Have a drink.

JOSS: Great. I could use one. I'm sorry.

ANDREA: Christ, I've got the baby sitter here and everything. If you knew how much organisation went into all this. We had to find someone to stay with her mother.

JOSS: I'm terribly sorry. We'll do it another time. I promise. And nothing will go wrong. It's just that Belinda's got so dependent on me. I don't know what would happen if I let her down. You know what the word hysterical means?

ANDREA: Hyster – a womb. Reacting from the vagina.

JOSS: That's something you never do, thank God. It's good to find someone you can trust to be reasonable.

ANDREA: Look where it's got me. A weekend with the baby sitter, Mrs. Bloem...

JOSS: Darling, I'll make it up to you. Monday morning she'll be off. Maybe she won't come back.

ANDREA: What happened to Juri?

JOSS: Crashed his car, thinks he's another James Dean. He's pretty smashed up. It's bad for her. I only hope she makes the trip all right on her own.

ANDREA: Give her some sleeping pills.

JOSS: I just hope it's not bad news at the other end. She might not survive that.

ANDREA: She will. Sounds like a survivor to me.

JOSS: You don't know her. She's incredibly sensitive and frail.

ANDREA: I've seen them.

JOSS: I know you feel disappointed. But if you could see her, you'd understand. Anyway, darling, I better get back. I'll see you Monday night.

ANDREA: Thanks for coming and not just phoning.

JOSS: I didn't want to do that. Now you understand, you'll forgive me.

HE KISSES HER AND GOES. ANDREA SITS NUMB. MRS. BLOEM ENTERS.

ANDREA: Something's happened. A friend of Joss is in trouble... an accident. We won't be able to get away.

MRS. BLOEM: So you'll be staying home then?

ANDREA: Yes, I'm afraid so.

MRS. BLOEM: Don't worry. I'll go back home. That's all right.

ANDREA: But your mother... and her friend...

MRS. BLOEM: It doesn't matter. Mother won't mind. The friend can stay if she wants. There's plenty of room.

ANDREA: What can I say?

MRS. BLOEM: Say nothing. These things happen. I'll get my things and call a taxi.

ANDREA: Stay and have supper with us.

MRS. BLOEM: Thank you, but I'd better get back before mother goes off to sleep. They might be frightened if I came in late and I wasn't expected.

ANDREA: I feel so terrible.

MRS. BLOEM: It's all right.

EMERALD COMES IN AND LOOKS AT BOTH OF THEM.

EMERALD: Is something the matter?

ANDREA: I'm not going, dear. That's all.

EMERALD: But... what about Mrs. Bloem?

MRS. BLOEM: I'm going back home.

EMERALD: But you can't. We'd got everything fixed up. Oh no. We were going to "No Highway in the Sky" tomorrow with Fiona and... and... to the museum and Mrs. Bloem was going to teach me the mandolin.

ANDREA: I'm sure she will some other time.

MRS. BLOEM: Of course. I won't forget. I'll go down now and get a taxi.

EMERALD: **(Screaming)** Shit! You can't go now. You can't. We got it all planned. **(She runs to MRS. BLOEM and grabs her hand as she turns to go)** *You can't go, you can't...*

ANDREA: Emerald please! Let Mrs. Bloem go!

EMERALD: *Why? Why is it off? I suppose it's that rat Joss.*

ANDREA: There's been an accident. I'll tell you all about it later.

EMERALD: Is it him? Is he dead? I hope he is!

SHE SLAMS OUT OF THE ROOM.

ANDREA: Mrs. Bloem, please take this. **(She gives her an envelope)** I had it ready. Please, you must. You've gone to so much trouble.

MRS. BLOEM: I don't like...

ANDREA: Please. It will make me feel better.

MRS. BLOEM: Thank you then. **(She takes it. EMERALD comes back with her baggage and dumps it at her feet)** Aufwiedersehn, Emerald. Schlafe gut und traume suss.

EMERALD: Sorry. Here's your mandolin. Schlafen zie woll. I'll take your things down.

MRS. BLOEM SMILES AND PICKS UP HER CASE.

ANDREA: Wait. I'll call a cab.

EMERALD: Mum, mum, please let Mrs. Bloem stay. It's a weekend. Then we can go to the movie.

ANDREA: Look, Em. She'll come next weekend.

EMERALD: **(To MRS. BLOEM)** You said you could. You got that friend for your mother. **(To ANDREA)** Let her just stay for tonight. She can go home tomorrow, after the movie. Please.

ANDREA: I don't know how you feel about this, but if you'd like to stay you're very welcome. Em seems set on it.

EMERALD: You must, you must. Come on...

MRS. BLOEM: If that's what you'd like..

ANDREA: Please stay. Supper won't be long.

MRS. BLOEM: I had tea before I came. I'll take these, Emerald. I'll just read in my room for a little while. I'll come back soon for coffee.

SHE PICKS UP HER CASE AND BAG AND GOES.

EMERALD: The pig! The pig! Just like him to muck it all up.

SHE KICKS A CHAIR.

ANDREA: Come on. We'll make supper. Now tell me. What's all this "schlafe zie woll" about?

EMERALD: She's teaching me German. It means sleep well and sweet dreams. I'm going to learn it next year. She's going to help me with the talking part.

ANDREA: A very useful person all round.

EMERALD: She is. She's good at music. If you could get us a piano she could help me with my pieces. Then I could be top in music. Couldn't we have a piano? Just a little one, an old one?

ANDREA: There's not much room here for it. But I don't know. I didn't know I was hiring a language department and a school of music when I got Mrs. Bloem in.

EMERALD: I'm hungry.

ANDREA: Okay. I'll cook something. You choose.

EMERALD: Steak, chips, ice cream... we've got strawberries, haven't we?

ANDREA: I'm sorry about the weekend. We can still go to the movies.

EMERALD: You wouldn't like it. It's a very old film about flying... old, old and black and white.

ANDREA: I know. James Stewart. I used to love him.

EMERALD: No, I told Fiona just Mrs. Bloem was coming.

ANDREA: Tell you what. I'll take you for a flip in a plane tomorrow. One of those little ones that go up the coast. Maybe you can sit next to the pilot.

EMERALD: **(Stunned)** Oh Mum, mum! Do you *really* mean it? That will be... be...

ANDREA: Or a helicopter over the bay.

EMERALD: No, no. Not a chopper, a little plane. Oh mum, you *are* a darling. Can we take Fiona?

SCENE 15

- ANDREA'S FLAT. SUNDAY NIGHT ABOUT NINE-THIRTY. EMERALD AND ANDREA ARE WATCHING A TV PROGRAMME. IT'S THE END AND ANDREA SWITCHES IT OFF WITH THE REMOTE.

ANDREA: That's it. They made it to Gander.

EMERALD: In that fog. No landing lights. Shit.

ANDREA: Off to bed now, darling...

EMERALD: Night mum.

ANDREA: What's that you said to Mrs. Bloem?

EMERALD: Schlafe gut and traume suss.

ANDREA: Schlafe gut, bonne nuit and buona notte.

EMERALD: What's that?

ANDREA: Good night in French *and* Italian.

EMERALD: Do you know those?

ANDREA: Just a little.

EMERALD: I only want to learn German. I'll just say goodnight to Mrs. Bloem. See you.

SHE GOES AND ANDREA PICKS UP A BOOK. THE TELEPHONE RINGS.

ANDREA: Oh hello! How's things going? How's the patient? **(Long pause)** M'm... uh huh... so... She's off tomorrow as

planned? What? I don't believe it... You are going with her? What the hell for? No, I don't understand. How long do you propose to stay My God! Are you crazy? There comes a time in every woman's life when she speaks from the vagina. Let me say this and say it once for all. If you get on that plane tomorrow I never want to see you again. Never. Just look for a job in Hollywood and stay there.

SHE PUTS THE RECEIVER DOWN. SHE PICKS UP A LARGE VASE, LIFTS IT HIGH, THEN CONTROLS A DESIRE TO SMASH IT. SHE PUTS IT DOWN WITH EXAGGERATED CARE. SHE SITS DOWN AND AFTER A STRUGGLE WITH HERSELF, STARTS CRYING. EMERALD RUNS IN.

EMERALD: What's the matter, mum? Are you sick?

ANDREA: **(She pulls herself together with a big effort)** No, it's all right, Em. Just something upset me.

EMERALD: That was Joss phoning just now, wasn't it? He said something rotten. He's just a pig. All men are pigs.

ANDREA: All right, darling. I'm all right. I'll make some coffee. See? I'm okay now. Night... night. School in the morning.

EMERALD: Don't worry, mum. Tell that shit to get lost. I'll look after you.

ANDREA: I know you will, darling.

EMERALD: Just tell him to piss off on skates.

ANDREA: **(Smiles)** I did. Night.

EMERALD: You're sure you're all right?

ANDREA: Sure. I'll just have some coffee and go to bed too. Go on now. See? I'm all right.

EMERALD GOES. ANDREA TAKES DOWN A WHISKY BOTTLE AND POURS HERSELF A LARGE ONE, DRINKS IT FAST. SHE POURS ANOTHER AND SIPS IT. SHE LOOKS FOR THE BOTTLE OF PILLS. REACHES UP TO THE TOP SHELF AND TAKES A COUPLE AND WASHES THEM DOWN WITH WHISKY. SHE SITS WITH HER FEET UP AND PUTS THE PILLS IN HER POCKET. MRS. BLOEM ENTERS.

MRS. BLOEM: I'm sorry. I fell asleep. Can I make you some coffee?

ANDREA: I've got one. Thanks anyway...

MRS. BLOEM: Do you mind if I make some?

ANDREA: Of course not. Help yourself. **(Pours herself another drink)**
Like a whisky first?

MRS. BLOEM: Thanks, a small one. I'll do it. **(She pours herself a whisky)** I'm sorry you've had your weekend spoiled. You must be very tired.

ANDREA: It's all right. I'll just have a few drinks and sleep it off.

MRS. BLOEM: I wish I could help you.

SHE GOES TO THE BENCH AND MIXES HER COFFEE.

ANDREA: I'll cope. **(MRS. BLOEM comes and sits by her)** Christ! How many times have I said that? I'll cope. Might as well make a tape. First to mother when father hit the bottle. She used to collapse like a squashed marshmallow. Then Rob. I'm the one who's always there. The reasonable one. Coping. We all do it, don't we? Bet you've done a bit of coping in your time.

MRS. BLOEM: I suppose I have.

ANDREA: Bloody punching bags. That's what we are.

MRS. BLOEM: It does seem like that sometimes..

ANDREA: How do you make out, baby sitting? Do you do a lot of it?

MRS. BLOEM: I only sit for you these days.

ANDREA: Funny. You've been coming here for how long? Three years?

MRS. BLOEM: Four...

ANDREA: *Four* years... and this is the first time I've ever talked to you.

MRS. BLOEM: Baby sitting's like that. Not time for chatting. It's mostly hello *and* goodbye!

ANDREA: You seem to get on very well with Emerald.

MRS. BLOEM: I've known her a long time... since she was eight, remember.

ANDREA: She's getting very rude these days... insolent.

MRS. BLOEM: It's the age. She'll grow out of it. She knows a lot for her age.

ANDREA: Too much. It's being with grown ups. Have another drink?

MRS. BLOEM: No, thanks.

ANDREA: **(Pours herself another drink)** Just have a few drinks and then I'll sleep all right.

MRS. BLOEM: You look really tired. Why don't you turn in?

ANDREA: I am tired.

MRS. BLOEM: Your work must be tiring.

ANDREA: True. It's bloody getting on top of me. Down at the Womens' Crisis Centre today. Social workers send for me when they can't work it out. Some of those women... you should see them - zombies. You should hear them. Weep all over my desk... Enough to take the varnish off.

MRS. BLOEM: Can't you take a break? You really need it.

ANDREA: Not till Christmas. **(Pause)** You should see their homes. Dys... dysfunctional we call them. Bloody crap places. Women bashed about. Men half-pissed, kids freaked out. The great Australian family. They have this pathetic belief it's all about love. Half of them blame themselves. They don't love enough. More love. That's it... pour it out... ladle it out... He needs her, her kids need her... need love. But he doesn't change.

SHE POURS ANOTHER DRINK.

MRS. BLOEM: Let me help you get to bed. You'll feel better in the morning.

ANDREA: If he pisses off, find another one. He'll want all that love. Got to give it someone or it will pour out of the door, down the street. Streams of love. Floods. Up to the neck. **(Laughs)** Got to give it someone or it'll drown you. Drown all alone.

Alone's worse... worst of all. Sex? Oh, yes, yes, yes. That feels good... more obsessed you are the better. Nothing like a little starvation to make you appreciate a meal... any snack that's handy. Waiting for it... afraid even. That's better still, that's dynamite. It's got to be love. **(Pause)** We're all the same. Don't think I'd recognise love if I saw it.

SHE DRINKS.

MRS. BLOEM: **(Takes the bottle)** Do you want me to put this away?

ANDREA: No, no. Leave it. Won't drink any more. Had too much already. Had enough... love. Got to get some sleep. Oh yes, love can kill you all right. Anorex... exia, diabetes... cancer, you name it... suicide... all that... deadly... killer.

MRS. BLOEM: Come on, let me get you into bed.

ANDREA: Sorry. Making an exhibition of myself.

MRS. BLOEM: You'll forget it all in the morning.

ANDREA: You go to bed. I'm sleeping here. **(MRS. BLOEM takes ANDREA'S shoes off, puts a cushion under her head, gets a blanket and covers her. she turns off the light and goes. ANDREA sits up, takes the pills from her pocket, swallows another couple and takes a swig to wash them down)** Sleep now... sleep it off.

SCENE 16

- GERMANY 1938. EVA IS IN LUFTWAFFE UNIFORM VERY SMART. SHE WEARS A LITTLE SPRAY OF ROSES PINNED ON THE LAPEL. SHE SMILES HAPPILY.

EVA: This is going to be the shortest, but perhaps the most *important* entry in my journal. Today Kurt and I got married.

SCENE 15

- ANDREA'S FLAT THE FOLLOWING MORNING. ANDREA LIES ON THE SOFA AS IN THE PREVIOUS SCENE. EMERALD HURRIES IN HALF DRESSED.

EMERALD: Mum! Wake up, it's late. Mum! **(She lifts her arm and it falls back. Screams)** Mum! Wake up! Mrs. Bloem! Come quick! It's Mum. She won't wake up. **(MRS. BLOEM runs in her dressing gown and goes to ANDREA. She picks the pill packet up off the floor)** Is she dead?

MRS. BLOEM: No, no, dear. She's breathing. Just sit down by her and hold her hand. I'll phone the paramedics. **(She goes to the telephone)** Ambulance. Flat seventeen, twenty-two Grove Lane, Mosman. I think it's an overdose. **(She roles her onto her side and gets a wet cloth and bathes ANDREA's head and neck)** They'll be here very soon.

EMERALD: Is she... is she going to die?

MRS. BLOEM: **(Puts her arms round emerald)** No, dear. The paramedics will help her. She'll be all right. You're shivering. Get your dressing gown on. She turns on a heater. **(At the telephone)** Is that Mr. Stevens? Mr. Stevens, your wife has had an accident... could be an overdose. No. Go straight to the hospital. **(EMERALD comes back)** I've called an ambulance... Emerald is all right. I'll stay with her.

EMERALD: Did you call Rob?

MRS. BLOEM: Yes. He's going to the hospital. The ambulance is coming. Sit by the heater.

EMERALD: **(Sits by ANDREA)** Mum... Mum... don't die.

SHE TOUCHES HER FACE GENTLY.

MRS. BLOEM: She won't die. She's just very tired. Come on, I'll make you a drink.

EMERALD Is there some cocoa left?

MRS. BLOEM: I think so.

SCENE 17

- AFTERNOON OF THE SAME DAY. ANDREA'S FLAT.

EMERALD: Did you see her?

ROB: Yes Em...

EMERALD: Is she all right?

ROB: Yes, she's sleeping.

EMERALD: Can I see her?

ROB: Yes, well... not much point now. Maybe tomorrow.

EMERALD: **(Pause)** Won't she wake up today?

ROB: Probably not. Need's a good night's sleep... pretty tired, you know. You've had a rough time too. Never mind. I'm here now. **(Pause)** You'd better start packing your gear, mate, and we'll get moving. **(EMERALD makes a move)** Come on, Mrs. Bloem will help you.

EMERALD: I can stay here. Mrs. Bloem said she could stay the night. Can you give me some money Dad?

ROB: Sure. How much do you want?

EMERALD: A lot. So I can go in a taxi with Mrs Bloem to see Mum.

ROB: I don't suppose Mrs. Bloem can stay here indefinitely. Hasn't she got a mother or something?

EMERALD: It's only for tonight. Please ask her.

ROB: I'd rather you came with me, Em...

EMERALD: I know she will. I asked her before. Please Rob. All my things are here. And Fiona's coming tomorrow after school.

ROB: I don't like leaving you.

EMERALD: Please Rob. **(Calls)** Mrs. Bloem! It's only one day and Mum will be back.

PAUSE. MRS. BLOEM ENTERS.

ROB: Can you stay? Em seems really set on it. It's just for tonight. I'll come round after work and see everything's all right.

MRS. BLOEM: I can stay.

EMERALD GOES TO HER AND SHE PUTS A PROTECTIVE ARM AROUND HER.

EMERALD: You see, Dad, we'll manage.

SCENE 18

- THE HOSPITAL. ANDREA LIES PROPPED UP IN BED. JOSS SITS BESIDE HER. SHE IS ASLEEP. SHE OPENS HER EYES AND SEES HIM.

ANDREA: Didn't go after all?

JOSS: I went, but I came back on the next plane... on the direct flight on Wednesday.

ANDREA: But it's Monday, isn't it?

JOSS: No, darling, you've missed one or two days.

ANDREA: Oh... I only meant to get a good night's sleep. I must have taken too many.

JOSS: Well, you're all right.

ANDREA: It was the whisky. Too much whisky. I was too tired. How did you know?

JOSS: Mrs. Bloem rang me.

ANDREA: Mrs. Bloem?

JOSS: Yes, so I came down straight away. You've been unconscious a long time. I've been really worried.

ANDREA: I'm very tired.

JOSS: I want you to come back to my flat with me as soon as they let you out.

ANDREA: No, no.

JOSS: We'll see. When you're strong again. I'll take care of you.

ANDREA: Where's Emerald?

JOSS: She's coming again soon. She's with Mrs. Bloem.

ANDREA: Mrs. Bloem... that's right. She came for the weekend. Poor Mrs. Bloem. She brought her mandolin. She had to go home, to her mother.

JOSS: Em's staying at Mrs. Bloem's house for a while. It's nearer to the hospital and she wanted to go.

ANDREA: That's all right. She'll look after her.

JOSS: I would have taken her. I wanted her to come to me.

ANDREA: She's better there. Is she worried? Tell her I'm okay.

SHE CLOSSES HER EYES.

JOSS: Andrea. **(She turns to him)** It's all my fault. I should never have gone.

ANDREA: What? And left poor Belinda...

JOSS: I knew it the minute I got there. Poor Belinda! Belinda rushed to the hospital, to Juri's bedside. She moved in, stayed with him day and night. Suddenly she was a... a tower of strength.

ANDREA: I can imagine.

JOSS: So. Well, I got the next plane home. When I got back there was a message from Mrs. Bloem to phone the hospital and you were in a coma.

ANDREA: Coma. Oh shit. I was very tired. I remember I had a bad head. Went up in a little plane with Em. She was so excited. Then your phone call... I nearly broke a Chinese vase. Rob's mother gave it us. I was so mad. I wanted to throw things about.

JOSS: I had a talk with the doctor here. I told him you were very much in control... all this wasn't like you. He said maybe if you gave way more, this wouldn't have happened. People with too much control suddenly snap.

ANDREA: Snap! Snap!

JOSS: You should give way to your feelings more...

ANDREA: I will, I will... I feel sleepy now. Think I'll sleep.

JOSS: I love you Andrea. I think things will be better. I'll make up for it. We'll start again.

ANDREA: Start again? How many times have I heard that in my life. "Start again"... **(Smiles painfully)** Too difficult.

JOSS: Forgive me darling. I'll get a bigger flat... we'll go away... I'll get leave and...

ANDREA: I'm going to sleep. Sclafen-zie woll.

SHE DRIFTS OFF TO SLEEP. ROB COMES TO THE BEDSIDE WITH A LARGE ELABORATE BOUQUET.

ROB: Andrea... They told me you were conscious. You don't know how worried I've been.

SHE OPENS HER EYES TO SEE EACH OF THE MEN ON EACH SIDE ON THE BED.

ANDREA: Oh.

ROB: Who's this?

ANDREA: Meet Joss...

ROB: The cause of it all. I'm amazed you dare show your face here.

JOSS: I think it would be better if I came back later. I don't want to start an argument.

ROB: Fight.

JOSS: What you will. But I may say that you, as far as I can see, have a great deal to answer for.

ROB: Anytime, mate. Anytime.

A NURSE HURRIES OVER TO THEM.

NURSE: Only one visitor at a time and please do not upset the patient or I shall ask you to leave.

JOSS: I'm going now darling. I'll be back.

HE BEGINS TO WALK AWAY.

ROB: Did you bring these?

HE PICKS UP A BUNCH OF FLOWERS FROM THE TABLE AND THROWS THEM AFTER HIM

ANDREA: Did you have to do that?

ROB: I don't want that man to upset you any more. From now on I'm going to look after you.

ANDREA: Not now, Rob. I'm too tired to think about it.

ROB: Of course you are. Don't worry anymore. I'll make all the decisions. Just leave it to me.

ANDREA: We'll see.

ROB: As soon as they let you out you're coming back home. No more hassles. It'll be all right. You'll see.

ANDREA: It was all an accident. I was just too tired. Wanted to sleep it off.

ROB: I know love. You didn't mean it... we've got too much to share with each other.

ANDREA: Have you seen Emerald?

ROB: She's fine. She's been down here with me several times. But it upset her to see you unconscious. I've been every day, holding your hand, talking to you.

ANDREA: Have you?

ROB: Haven't been to work for days, haven't had a proper meal... nothing but Chinese takeaways.

ANDREA: Poor Rob.

ROB: It's all been worth it to see you better. You'll have to rest a lot. Maybe we could all have a holiday... go to Bali, Hawaii, or something.

ANDREA: Maybe.

ROB: You know I didn't mean half I said.

ANDREA: No?

ROB: And you didn't. I'm sure of that.

ANDREA: Are you? Let's talk some other time. I'm so sleepy. I think it's the injections. I'm dropping off. Schlafen-zie woll.

ROB: What did you say?

BUT ANDREA IS ALREADY ASLEEP. HE PUTS HIS BOUQUET IN THE VASE AND TIPTOES OUT. HE PASSES THE NURSE ON HER WAY OUT AND BLOWS HER A KISS.

SCENE 19

- THE HOSPITAL. THE LIGHTS ARE STRANGELY DIM. ANDREA IS ASLEEP. ROB AND JOSS COME IN VERY QUIETLY HOLDING MONSTER BOUQUETS. THEY ADVANCE TO THE BED AND ANDREA SITS UP.

ROB: Andrea. Forgive me I want you to come back... back... back...

JOSS: Leave him, Andrea. Come to me. He's no good, no good.

ROB: You must come home to me. We're married. You're my wife, wife... wife...

JOSS: Lover... we're lovers. I'm your lover. I love you. Love... love... lovers

ROB: Don't listen I love you more... more.

JOSS: I need you more... more...

ROB: More.

JOSS: More.

ROB: More.

JOSS: More.

ROB: More

JOSS: Love.

ROB: Love.

JOSS: Love.

ROB: More.

JOSS: More.

ROB: Love.

JOSS: More.

ROB: More.

ANDREA SCREAMS. THE MEN MOVE INTO THE SHADOWS.

ANDREA: Get them out! Get those men out of here. Nurse! Nurse! I don't want *anymore* flowers. Tell them. No more flowers!

SCENE 20

- LIVING ROOM OF MRS. BLOEM'S HOUSE. COMFORTABLE, OLD FASHIONED. PHOTOGRAPH OF WW1 AIRMAN IN FRAME ON SMALL TABLE. ALSO PHOTOGRAPH OF YEAR OLD BABY. STANDARD LAMP. MRS. BLOEM SITS ON WING CHAIR. EMERALD SITS ON THE FLOOR EATING BISCUITS AND DRINKING CHOCOLATE. MRS. BLOEM SINGS TO THE MANDOLIN.

MRS. BLOEM: Sah ein knabe ein Roslein stein
Roslein auf der Heiden.
War so jung und morgen-schon
Lief er schnell,es nah zu seh'n
Sah's mit vielen Freuden.
Roslein, Roslein, Roslein roth,
Roslein auf der Heiden...

EMERALD: Go on. The next verse.

MRS. BLOEM: Knabe sprach: Ich breche dich,
Roslein auf der Heiden.
Roslein sprach:Ich steche dich
Dass du denkst an mich.
Und Ich will nicht leiben.
Roslein, Roslein,Roslein roth,

Roslein auf der Heiden.

Und der wilde Knabe brach's
Roslein auf der Heidden.
Roslein wehrte sich und stach
Half ihr doch kein Wen und Ach.
Musst'es eben leiden.
Roslein, Roslein, Roslein roth.
Roslein auf der Heiden.

- EMERALD: I like that. It's got a lovely song. What do the words mean?
- MRS. BLOEM: It's about a little boy who saw a lovely rose in the hedge and tried to pick it. But as he was breaking it off he got a nasty scratch.
- EMERALD: Which are you most sorry for, the boy or the rose?
- MRS. BLOEM: Well both really. They both got hurt.
- EMERALD: But the rose would die, wouldn't it? And he got off with a scratch.
- MRS. BLOEM: True.
- EMERALD: Maybe he got blood poisoning and they had to chop his arm off.
- MRS. BLOEM: Maybe.
- EMERALD: Did your mother teach you that song?
- MRS. BLOEM: Yes.
- EMERALD: I like your mother. She's going to show me her photograph album tomorrow, if she's up to it...
- MRS. BLOEM: And what will you say?
- EMERALD: Danke schon, Gnadige Frau.
- MRS. BLOEM: Fabelhaft!
- EMERALD: Will you teach me "Lili Marlene"?
- MRS. BLOEM: Why that old song? How do you know it?
- EMERALD: You hear it in old movies about the war. I like the tune.

MRS BLOEM: It doesn't go too well on the mandolin.

EMERALD: You can try. Do you know the words?

MRS. BLOEM: Most of them.

EMERALD: Come on then. Sing it please.

MRS BLOEM: “Underneath the lantern
by the barrack gate
darling I remember
the way you used to wait
'twas there that you whispered tenderly
that you loved me
you'll always be
my Lily of the Lamplight
my own Lili Marlene...”

EMERALD: That's cool (**Looks around**) Who's that lovely baby in the photo?

MRS. BLOEM: That's my little boy.

EMERALD: Yours? You never told me? Where is he?

MRS. BLOEM: With his father.

EMERALD: Oh I didn't know you had... you had... there was a Mr. Bloem.

MRS. BLOEM: Of course. But he's not here now... it's a long story. But I left him and he went back to Germany and took Dieter with him.

EMERALD: Was he German?

MRS. BLOEM: Yes.

EMERALD: What did you say the baby's name was?

MRS. BLOEM: Dieter.

EMERALD: That's a funny name, but nice... Is he big now?

MRS. BLOEM: He will be fifteen this month, I think.

EMERALD: Didn't you ever see him again?

MRS. BLOEM: No.

EMERALD: Oh how terrible.

MRS. BLOEM: It's a long time ago. Come on now. I'll teach you a song.

EMERALD: I think one of the things I like best about this house is that here are no men here.

MRS. BLOEM: Bedtime for you now.

EMERALD: Sing me one more verse of "Lili Marlene", then I'll go.

MRS. BLOEM: Orders came for sailing
somewhere over there
all confined to barracks"
was more than I could bear
I knew you were waiting in the street
I heard your feet
but could not meet
my Lili of the Lamplight
my own Lili Marlene.

EMERALD: Go on. There's some more.

LIGHTS DIM EXCEPT ON THE TWO PICTURES.

MRS. BLOEM: "Resting in the billet
just behind the line
even though we're parted
your lips are close to mine
there where the lantern softly gleams
your sweet face seems
to haunt my dreams
my Lili of the Lamplight
my own Lili Marlene..."
(To EMERALD) Come on now. What did I teach you?

EMERALD: Schlafe gut und traume süss.

MRS. BLOEM: Du auch. **(Kisses her. EMERALD goes MRS. BLOEM picks up the child's photograph)** Schlafe gut und traume süss, mein Schatchen, du fehls mir so.

SCENE 21

- GERMANY 1942. EVA IS SITTING IN A CHAIR IN A HOSPITAL.

EVA: **(To audience)** I've had plenty of time to write in this journal of mine, but somehow I haven't the heart to go on with it. However, today I intend to start again. So much has happened. I suppose I should start with my crash. The first accident I have ever had.

Test piloting is never a safe business. That'd be obvious to anyone. In wartime it's more dangerous, because it's urgent. No time to wait for safety modifications. Of course, I'd done a lot of risky things before, but up to date cable cutting was the worst.

The engineer came up with a cutting device which he put on the wing tip. There was a fender on the plane which pushed the cable along the wing. Then the slicer cut the cable. Not easy. The head of the Ministry watched my first try. I cut the cable all right, but it sliced through two of the propeller blades as a bonus. Metal went flying everywhere. A tense moment. I was pretty scared. But I managed somehow to land intact. My boss was on his way to see Hitler, and he told him about it. Result, Hitler awarded me the Iron Cross, second class. Great moment.

At home they went mad with joy... sent a car to Berlin and drove me back in triumph. Flags in the streets. Flowers everywhere. You'd think I'd won the war single-handed.

But the next test was the dreaded one. The ME 163 rocket plane. I'd been up before with it twice. But the third time something went wrong. It was a fearsome machine at the best of times, belching forth sheets of flame. It seemed to hurl itself up, reaching 30,000 feet in ninety seconds. The din was terrifying, deafening. It was meant for London. But it never got there.

At 400 feet it got completely out of control. It rolled and bucked, spinning madly. Next thing I knew I'd got it down somehow. It plunged to earth. And that's all I remember.

I've been in hospital six months. I had terrible wounds to my face. I lurched forward and hit the gunsight. Not a pretty sight. But the doctors have done their best.

They tell me I'll be getting out soon. But to lie here useless, while Germany is fighting a life and death struggle. That's worse than physical pain. I must, I will get back to flying. I wanted to fly into the clouds...

Hitler filled my room with flowers and he gave me the Iron Cross, first class this time. But I wasn't in a state to enjoy it. I want to be back. I've got to be. Kurt is on the Russian front. One of the ministers wants me to tour the Russian front, so if that comes off I might get to see him. The idea's that it could help morale. It would help my morale, that I can say.

Things aren't going well. London didn't fall as we'd expected. Nobody thought a decadent nation like that would fight. Now the rocket planes are doing a lot of damage. But no matter how hard we hit them, they just don't give in.

While I've been lying here I've tried to design a rocket that will be more effective. The trouble with the V 1 is, of course, that no one can control where it lands. The first ones were random. Now it's adapted to being released from a control plane, but even so the target can't be pin pointed.

My idea - and I've written to Hitler about it, is to design a piloted rocket. Of course it's first flight would be it's last. The pilot would be blown to pieces with it. No landing gear. But I know there'd be volunteers. Many of them. I'd volunteer myself, but I don't think they'd let me go Hitler himself has reserved the right to make the final decision. But give me the chance. Just give me the chance to get up into the air again. I'd find the target. One glorious flight. One final crash. What could be a better death?

SCENE 22

- MRS. BLOEM 'S SITTING ROOM. MRS. BLOEM IS SITTING ALONE LISTENING TO MUSIC ON THE RADIO. SHE ANSWERS A DOORBELL AND LET'S ANDREA IN.

MRS. BLOEM: Come in Mrs. Stevens. Emerald's all packed up and ready to go. She's just though there talking to mother. **(Calls)** Emerald! Your mother's here! They've struck up a great friendship in the last few weeks. In fact mother hasn't talked so much for years.

EMERALD BURSTS IN AND RUSHES TO ANDREA'S ARMS.

EMERALD: Oh, Mum, Mum. I thought they'd never let you out of that rotten place.

ANDREA: It's all over now, darling... We can go home.

EMERALD: What about Joss?

ANDREA: He won't be there.

EMERALD: And Rob?

ANDREA: Just the two of us.

EMERALD: That's good.

ANDREA: Are you all ready? Well, let's be off.

MRS. BLOEM: Now you're here, won't you stay for a while? Have a cup of coffee?

EMERALD: Please do, Mum. I'm just in the middle of something special. Mrs. Bloem's mother's been telling me about flying the M.E. 109. It's so exciting. She's just got it up to 36,000 feet and I've got to know what happened.

ANDREA: What's she talking about?

MRS. BLOEM: It's my mother's diary.

EMERALD: Mrs. Bloem will tell you all about it. I won't be long. *Please!*

MRS. BLOEM: I'll make some coffee.

SHE GOES OUT TO PUT ON THE PERCOLATOR AND ANDREA LOOKS AT SOME PHOTOGRAPHS ON THE WALL. SHE RETURNS.

ANDREA: Your mother was a flyer, Em tells me.

MRS. BLOEM: Yes, she was in the war in Germany. She never really told me much about the war... being in Australia and being German, it was a subject everyone avoided. We were lucky enough to come here in the first place, and she felt the less said about Germany the better.

EMERALD: Is she writing a book?

MRS. BLOEM: It's not a book, exactly. It's her journal. Apparently she kept a journal, mostly about flying, from the time of her first lesson, right through the war.. Of course in Berlin, in the last struggle, everything was lost. She was in an American prison for months afterwards.

ANDREA: No wonder Em's fascinated. All she thinks about is the day she can take up a plane.

MRS. BLOEM: A few years ago mother seemed to be losing her memory... she's very frail, and spends most of her time in bed. Then suddenly, she told me she wanted to keep a journal. Of course I encouraged her... anything to keep her occupied. And this is the result.

ANDREA: It sounds a wonderful idea. I wish I could read it.

MRS. BLOEM: She speaks almost perfect English. In fact there was hardly a word of German spoken in the house when we came here. But the diary's all in German. She remembers every detail it seems.

ANDREA: That often happens. The short term memory goes but the long term seems to have almost perfect recall.

MRS. BLOEM: Your daughter's the favoured one. No one else has been let near it.

ANDREA: Em can't read German. Perhaps that's why.

MRS. BLOEM; She's learning fast and mother translates for her.

ANDREA: I'm sure she appreciates it. Anything to do with planes. I'm absolutely ignorant on the topic.

MRS. BLOEM: She's not the only one to benefit. Mother has been a lot more alert since Em came. I hope she'll come back and visit.

ANDREA: I don't know how I can begin to thank you. I really don't know what I should have done without your help. There was Rob and Joss. They both offered, but you can imagine how I felt about that. Both of them lead irregular lives, to say the least, and Rob would use Emerald as a lever to get me to go back to him.

MRS. BLOEM: Well, it's good to see you fit again and all those worries in the past.

ANDREA: I don't know that they're all in the past. Worries have a nasty habit of following you into the future, or at any rate into the present.

MRS. BLOEM: You'll be going back to your flat, I suppose?

ANDREA: Oh yes. I shan't be working straight away. I've taken a bit of leave to give me time to settle and get things going.

MRS. BLOEM: A very good idea. I'm sure you need it. And of course, if ever you feel the need to be alone, you can always send Emerald down for the weekend.

ANDREA: That's a very kind offer, Mrs. Bloem. I might take you up on it.

MRS. BLOEM: As a friend, of course. She's almost become part of the family.

ANDREA: I think this has been good for her in some ways. Helped her get over the initial shock.

MRS. BLOEM: Oh yes, she's much more relaxed now. Been keeping up her music. She's quite talented, you know.

ANDREA: I'm not musical. I don't know where she gets it from. But she enjoys it.

MRS. BLOEM: And I've enjoyed playing with her. We've got an old piano here... and she's learnt a few songs.

ANDREA: I can see it's the ideal environment for her.

MRS. BLOEM: Not ideal. But at least she feels comfortable here.

ANDREA: She'll miss it all when we're back in the flat with me working all day and only that smelly hamster for company.

MRS. BLOEM: There's always Fiona. **(They laugh)** Must you go back straight away? Would you care to stay to tea with us? It wouldn't be very much, but I have to cook for mother anyway. I'd like it if you could.

ANDREA: I really can't impose on you any more.

MRS. BLOEM: You're not imposing. It would be a pleasure.

ANDREA: To tell the truth, I'm dreading going back to that chilly little flat. You know how places feel when they've been shut up.

MRS. BLOEM: Miserable, stale... especially in the evening. In the morning with the sun streaming in, that's different.

ANDREA: That's true.

MRS. BLOEM: And the beds need airing, windows opening.

ANDREA: I'm glad I've taken leave. I'll be able to give it a good cleaning out.

MRS. BLOEM: I don't think you should exert yourself too much. Go easy for a while. You need looking after as well as Em.

ANDREA: I'll be fine in a few days, fine.

MRS. BLOEM: I'll just tell Emerald you'll staying for tea. **(She goes out and ANDREA looks at a photograph in a frame standing on a table. MRS. BLOEM returns.** She's delighted. Mother's just got to an exciting part, it seems.

ANDREA: **(Picks up photograph)** That's a beautiful boy.

MRS. BLOEM: My son. His father took him back to Germany.

ANDREA: Is he there now?

MRS. BLOEM: I think so.

ANDREA: Don't you know?

MRS. BLOEM: Not for sure. His father left me. And he took Dieter, his name's Dieter, with him.

ANDREA: You mean without your consent? Didn't you have custody rights?

MRS. BLOEM: His father is German. He was never naturalised.

ANDREA: But didn't you try to get him back?

MRS. BLOEM: Of course I did. I did everything... lawyers, family court... appeals. But it was no good... he's a German citizen now.

ANDREA: But there must be some recourse. Have you still got the documents?

MRS. BLOEM: Oh yes. There's a *whole* box full of them.

ANDREA: You must let me look at them.

MRS. BLOEM: It won't be any use.

ANDREA: When did you see him last?

MRS. BLOEM: Four years ago. He had just had his tenth birthday.

ANDREA: Things do change. I've had some experience in family law. Promise me you'll show them to me.

MRS. BLOEM: I will, but...

ANDREA: You must. And you must never give up hope.

MRS. BLOEM: I have no money. **(Pause)** I'll get the coffee.

ANDREA PICKS UP THE PHOTOGRAPH AGAIN AND PUTS IT DOWN WHEN MRS. BLOEM RETURNS WITH A TRAY.

ANDREA: You know I really don't think we should stay for tea. It would make us late. Better get it all done in the light.

MRS. BLOEM: If it's late you could always stay the night.

ANDREA: Oh no. That's too much trouble.

MRS. BLOEM: I'd like you to. There's two spare bedrooms. This is a *very* large house.

ANDREA: **(Looking around)** It looks immense.

MRS. BLOEM: Old, unfashionable, but very comfortable. Cool, a nice garden.

ANDREA: It's a lovely place.

MRS. BLOEM: There's a whole upstairs flat with a bathroom and everything. I sometimes thought I'd find someone, with a child, perhaps, so there's be someone in the house with mother when I go out.

ANDREA: That shouldn't be hard. If you really want to let it, I think I might find you a good tenant... Zelda, at work, she's a single mother. She has a good job, permanent and a little boy, a good child, I don't think he'd disturb your mother.

MRS. BLOEM: I'm not sure about a boy... I'll let you know.

ANDREA: You know, I really think we should be on our way. Could you call Emerald?

MRS. BLOEM: **(Calls)** Emerald! Your mother's ready to go, dear.

EMERALD HURRIES IN.

EMERALD: *Go!* You said we could stay tea!

ANDREA: I know darling. But we'll be so late getting back. I mean it. Truly.

EMERALD: Well just a few more minutes. Not long...

ANDREA: No. And Mrs. Bloem's mother must be tired. Come on. We must get back. There's a lot to do, Emerald...

MRS. BLOEM: You can come again any time.

EMERALD: Good. I can come after school. **(To ANDREA)** On Wednesdays, you never get home till after six...

ANDREA: No darling. It's much too far.

EMERALD: Mum! It isn't. I can do my music here and I've got to know what happened.

ANDREA: No Em. I've said no. Don't argue.

EMERALD: Well I'll come on weekends.

ANDREA: I want you home on weekends.

EMERALD: Oh Mum! There'll be Joss and Rob hanging around and...

ANDREA: There'll be lots of things we can do together.

EMERALD: What things?

ANDREA: You'll see. Look, You're making a scene. Just get your bag.

EMERALD GOES.

MRS. BLOEM: She'll get over it. **(EMERALD comes back and dumps her bag with a thump)** Shall you want me next week?

ANDREA: I'm not sure. I'm not planning to go out for a while. I'm going to be very busy. Before all this happened I was offered a grant to study in the United States for a few months. I refused it at the time, but I think it might be a good idea to take it up. If I do, there'll be a lot of work to do first... papers to prepare and..

EMERALD: America! Mum! What are you raving about? We can't go to America. We *can't*.

ANDREA: It'd be a great adventure for you.

EMERALD: Where would I go to school? With all those Yankees. I wouldn't have any friends. They'd stare at me. They'd laugh at me. They'd all be different.

ANDREA: You'd soon make friends.

EMERALD: I would not. They'd think I was some sort of freak.

ANDREA: We could go on wonderful trips.

EMERALD: You go. I could stay here. I could go into boarding.

ANDREA: Don't be ridiculous. Of course I wouldn't leave you behind.

EMERALD: **(Takes MRS. BLOEM'S hand)** You'd have me, wouldn't you?

PAUSE. ANDREA SUDDENLY REALISES HOW MUCH OF HER DAUGHTER SHE HAS LOST TO MRS. BLOEM.

EMERALD: I wouldn't be any trouble, Mrs. Bloem... not much, anyhow.

PAUSE. THE TWO WOMEN CONFRONT EACH OTHER.

MRS. BLOEM: You wouldn't want to miss a chance like that, would you? If you go to Washington you could see all the old planes in the Smithsonian Museum... the Apollo Rocket's there too..

EMERALD: **(Turns away)** I'm going to sit with your mother.

SHE GOES. PAUSE.

MRS. BLOEM: If I'm the cause of any of this, I'm sorry. I didn't invite it. I won't deny I'm very fond of Emerald. I'd miss her, of course. You can't care for child for four years without giving a good deal of yourself... **(ANDREA looks at her. Pause)** I never took advantage of it. I know my place. Emerald talked to me, of course and I'll tell you now, I grew to love her. Of course she wasn't aware. I was always professional. **(Pause)** Ask her. I never gave her a kiss, though sometimes I longed to. She was the only... the only... bright thing...

MRS. BLOEM TURNS AWAY. PAUSE. ANDREA WATCHES HER UNDECIDED WHETHER TO COMFORT HER OR LEAVE.

ANDREA: Mrs. Bloem... **(MRS BLOEM struggles to control her feelings)** Mrs. Bloem... If you're free on Friday, please come and sit for us.

MRS. BLOEM TURNS BACK TO ANDREA KNOWING SHE HAS BEEN ACCEPTED.

SCENE 23

- EVA IS SITTING IN AN AMERICAN GAOL IN BERLIN. SHE STARES IN FRONT OF HER. THERE IS A TRAY OF UNTOUCHED FOOD.

EVA: **(To audience)** So... this is how it all ended. My journal's lost, so I can't make a last entry. But there would be little point in making it anyhow. It's all finished... my life, my country, my flying. I shall *never* fly again.

When I think over the last twenty-four hours it seems like a bad dream. But it's no dream. I'm here, sitting in an American prison. What will they do with me? Execute me? I'm a prisoner of war, I suppose, but who's going to worry about that in this last mad chaos.

Of course we all knew the end would come. No city could hold out against that last shattering bombardment. But our orders were to defend it to the last drop of German blood. Our orders came directly from the Fuehrer, and only he was responsible.

I suppose I can count myself lucky. I was outside Berlin on that last day of hell fire. All communications were down and the last we heard of the Fuehrer he had gone to ground, under siege in the Chancellery. No possibility of further orders.

When Capt von Gerard contacted me with his wild plan, it seemed the only alternative to giving in. Someone he said, must contact Hitler and tell him to give the order to stop. He had an aircraft, a fighter, ready, but he knew he'd never get within miles of the city. Such planes as were still flying were being brought down by the pitiless barrage.

His plan was to fly to a small airfield where he knew there was a light aircraft. There was just a chance that the two of us could get through.

He wanted me to fly it. He thought I was better with tiny planes. Perhaps I was. Anyway if we were brought down as we almost certainly would be, he would have a better chance of surviving and getting to headquarters.

By some miracle we made it. By some greater miracle we got the little plane in the air. We dodged the flak till we were a mile from the city. Then of course, we were hit. By another miracle we crash landed and were unhurt.

We ran through the maelstrom. Nothing I had seen of the war was like this. We got to the Chancellery. Down below Hitler sat with his little group, Himmler, Goering with his wife and children, Eva Braun and the others. He told us of his suicide plan. But he still seemed incapable of giving the order to stop the carnage.

He offered us poison. Von Gerard looked at me. I shook my head. To attempt a rescue was impossible. "Come on, Eva," he said: "We'll give ourselves up." He took my hand and we climbed out of the underground vault together. Where he is now, I have no idea. What will they do with me, I have no idea either. I lived to fly and now that has gone forever. Kurt is dead and I am pregnant. What's the good of a child that Kurt will never see? What is there left for me?

LIGHTS DIM OUT. IN THE BACKGROUND WE SEE SHADOWS OF MRS. BLOEM 'S MOTHER SITTING UP IN BED, WITH EMERALD SITTING BESIDE HER.

THE END

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