

Tales of Liberation Libretto Rebecca Simpson, music Andy Pape

Extract 1

Situation: Denmark during the last year of World War II. In the Vesterlund household, Vesterlund has reluctantly accepted the presence in hiding of Hannah, a refugee Polish Jew. His two children Karin and Jannick are unaware she is in the house, though Karin has met her once before.

Dawn. Library and Staircase. Late August. VESTERLUND is attending HANNAH; bringing food, removing slops. KARIN comes down the stairs, almost sleep-walking.

KARIN:

...beats, it beats, it beats, it beats, it...
blood in my head
blood in my ears

...birds, no birds, no trains, no birds, no...
why do I wake
just before dawn?

...beats, it beats, it beats, it beats, it...
night after night
creak on the stair

...trains, no trains, no birds, no trains, no...
blood in my head
blood in my ears

...beats, it beats, it beats, it beats, it...
is there a noise?
is it my head?

...beats, it beats, it beats, it beats, it...

(VESTERLUND hands HANNAH wrapped food. They communicate quietly.)

VESTERLUND:

Here, Hannah.

HANNAH:

Thank you, Mr. Vesterlund.

VESTERLUND:

I'll bring cooked food this afternoon.

HANNAH:

Thank you.

(KARIN, who has woken fully, walks into the library where she discovers VESTERLUND closing the bookshelf.)

KARIN:

Father! What are you...?

VESTERLUND:

Karin!

KARIN:

Father,
you were talking
to someone.

VESTERLUND *(regaining his composure; remembering prepared excuse):*

Karin, good morning, my love.

You're up early! I was running through something out loud

I don't want to forget. Now, don't tease me,

say I'm becoming a babbler.

"Poor old father, poor old man!"

(VESTERLUND attempts to kiss her "Good morning".)

KARIN:

No! Let me see!

How does this open?

Let me see!

VESTERLUND:

Karin!

That's enough!

KARIN:

Don't lie to me father!

I run this house;

I have a right to know who is here!

(A knocking is heard from behind the bookshelf.)

HANNAH:

Mr. Vesterlund. Please open up.

(VESTERLUND opens compartment. HANNAH extends a hand in greeting, a gesture KARIN ignores.)

KARIN:

You!

Extract 2

JANNICK executes a dream-state, (anti-) war dance.

JANNICK:

Division, division.

Tanks and armoured cars,
planes and falling bombs.

Skulls under faces,
limbs changing places.

Division, division.

Life's just a prison.

Who let this happen?

Where did it all begin?

Who takes decisions
that lead to war?