

BERLIN DIARY: (Schlüterstraße 27)

By Andrea Stolowitz

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draft: 8_24_17

TIME:

1939-48

The present

SETTINGS:

Berlin, New York City, Oregon

CHARACTERS:

Max: 58 years old in 1939-48. He never ages. He speaks English with a German accent, German without an accent.

Andrea: 35 years old in the present. She speaks German with an American accent.

Various Other Characters

ACTORS:

One male actor

One female actor

SETTINGS/SCENE:

This world is fluid and cued in and out of scenes with language and projections. There is much sound and video and little scenery or props.

LANGUAGE/CHARACTER:

Each scene begins with the female actor reading the first line of text. The actors alternate speaking with each character heading. The male actor often plays Max and the female actor often plays Andrea but not always. Sometimes, depending on the character heading the actors will switch roles within the same scene. The actors have an equal chance of playing any of the other characters and should therefore agree between themselves on a unified speaking and acting choice for the characters they share. This fluidity of identity is important as it creates the malleability of time and place and the rhythm of the language and story.

SUMMARY:

In 1936 Dr. Max Cohnreich escapes Berlin, Germany and arrives in NYC settling there with his immediate family. In 1939 he writes about his experiences in a diary intended for his as yet unborn grandchildren. In 2015 his great-granddaughter Andrea Stowitz travels to Berlin to use the diary to explore the life he describes and the relatives she never knew. The parallel lives of the characters create a narrative about the search for home and family which operates at the border of reality and memory and the intersection of national history and private lives.

A play about remembering and forgetting.

SCENE 1: There is a slide projector, large cork board and white board, blackboards and surfaces to pin papers are all over. As the play continues the tracking of the story is seen through the projections of characters, papers, maps, texts. At the beginning the stage is empty.

ANDREA: It's June 15th,

ANDREA: 2006.

ANDREA: I'm Andrea

ANDREA: Stolowitz. I'm -

ANDREA: teaching at Duke when I get the letter.

REBECCA: Dear Ms. Stolowitz recently
a diary-

Slide: The diary

REBECCA: Recently your mother Peggy Stolowitz
donated

REBECCA: a wonderful diary, written in 1939 by her grandfather,
Dr. Max

REBECCA: Cohnreich to the United States
Holocaust Museum. I hope you enjoy it

REBECCA: and please let me
know if there is anything I can do
for you in the future.

ANDREA: Sincerely,
Rebecca L. Erbelding, Archivist,

Slide: Rebecca Erbelding.

REBECCA: United States Holocaust Museum Archives.
100 Raoul Wallenberg Place, SW,
Washington, DC 20024
2126.

Slide: Google map

ANDREA: We move here suddenly
because the last house we live at, 604
Gattis Street, Durham, NC
27705

*Slide: 604 Gattis on the
Google map.*

ANDREA: is the target of
a drive-by shooting.

ANDREA: A transcription error on the side
of the gang is what the police said.

ANDREA: They mean to hit the house next door but they write

ANDREA: the address down wrong.

ANDREA: They write

ANDREA: our address.

REBECCA: Please let me know if there is anything
I or the US Holocaust Museum
can do for you.

ANDREA: I'm putting my son to bed. I'm bending over
to kiss him good night. Pop.
Pop.

ANDREA: Something comes through the window. I
throw myself on top of him. He wriggles.
Pop. Pop.

ANDREA: We wait.

REBECCA: Your mother, Peggy Stolowitz, thought you
might want to have a copy of this diary.

ANDREA: A car screeching away-

ANDREA: A moment.

ANDREA: A moment.

ANDREA: My son wriggles underneath me

ANDREA: I yell out to my husband.

ANDREA: I wait.

ANDREA: He answers.

ANDREA: You run to check the baby swing.

ANDREA: She's in there. She's
sleeping.

ANDREA: She didn't even wake up.

ANDREA: You could have found her in there swinging away not sleeping but -

ANDREA: Don't say it.

ANDREA: You're dizzy. Nauseous.

ANDREA: The room pulsates.

ANDREA: Spins.

ANDREA: You can't breathe.

ANDREA: The police come.

ANDREA: They sit you down.

ANDREA: Head between your knees they say.

ANDREA: Breathe. Breathe. Breathe.

ANDREA: Everyone's fine.

ANDREA: Everyone's fine.

ANDREA: Everyone's fine.

ANDREA: We all move to the back room.

ANDREA: Far from the windows at the front of the house.

ANDREA: My son can't sleep.

ANDREA (sings): Hush-a-bye
don't you cry
Go to sleep my little baby.
When you wake you shall have
All the pretty little horses.

ANDREA: We decide to move.

ANDREA: But you don't know if you'll have a
job next year. Remember?

ANDREA: I'm worried about my job and
My agent,

ANDREA: who also represents Mamet
and Letts

ANDREA: is dropping me.

REBECCA: Dear Ms. Stolowitz, recently your mother gave
a wonderful diary

REBECCA: written by her grandfather, Dr. Max Cohnreich,
to the United States Holocaust Museum.

Slide: Max Cohnreich

ANDREA: Wait.
I have other plays in process.

ANDREA: I didn't mean that thing with your assistant.

ANDREA: Good luck with your work he says.

MOM: Dear Andrea,

ANDREA: The e-mail is written in all caps. From my mother.

MOM: Read please this attached from the person
At the Holocaust Museum. They want the diary.

ANDREA: I think a museum is a great place for it. The best place.

MOM: I know. You don't want to have to deal with it when I'm dead.

ANDREA: Wait a second no one said anything about-

MOM: And when I'm dead there will be no one left to remember.

ANDREA: There's Rebecca Erbelding. She'll remember.

MOM: Who?

ANDREA: Rebecca Erbelding.
The archivist at the Holocaust Museum. She'll remember. At the Holocaust museum they "never forget".

MOM: That's not funny.

ANDREA: Anyway. Who's dying? No one's dying.

REBECCA: Ms. Andrea Stolowitz, eight one four Berkeley Street, Durham, North Carolina 27705

ANDREA: No one's dying.

REBECCA: As you know there are fewer and fewer living victims and witnesses

REBECCA: which makes the original documents of that era all the more important.

ANDREA: We move. And my job is extended so we can pay the rent.

ANDREA: I get this large envelope in the mail. At first I think it's from my agent.

REBECCA: I hope you enjoy it.
Please let me know if there's anything I can do for you in the future.

ANDREA: I look at the pages.

ANDREA: High gloss colored copies of
minuscule script.

ANDREA It's impossible to read. It's so small.

ANDREA: It hurts my eyes.

ANDREA: And it's half in German.

REBECCA: There are so few original
documents from this era.

ANDREA: I put it on the shelf above my desk.

ANDREA: Very high up.

ANDREA: Later we move away
To Oregon to 3971 South East
37th Ave., Portland OR
97202.

Slide: google map

ANDREA: I'm unpacking. I
see the diary.

ANDREA: I put it on the same shelf high above my desk.
I can't read it.

ANDREA: And you don't even open it

ANDREA: Until

ANDREA: Until you have to.

ANDREA: Until eight years later.

MAX (German accent):

January 1st, 1939
"To my dearly beloved grandchildren.
I dedicate this film of my life.

MAX: "I dedicate this film of my life."

MAX:

"I dedicate this film of my life."

Scene 2. On the Phone. NYC/Oregon

ANDREA

So thanks for making the time.

DAVID

Sure. Sure. No Problem.

ANDREA

That's my uncle I'm talking to.

ANDREA

In New York.
David.

ANDREA

I wanted to ask before I left because you know of the difference in time. And everything.

DAVID

Right.

ANDREA

It could be hard to call later. I mean I'll have SKYPE and all that -

DAVID

Can you hold on for a second Andrea?

ANDREA

Sure.

She waits. Sounds of outdoors.

DAVID

Sorry. That was Nancy.

ANDREA

Say hello. From me. Us. All of us.

DAVID

Of course.
So what can I do for you?

ANDREA

I guess I called because I wanted to ask
I'm not sure how to put this -

DAVID

I know. Nancy told me. You know this sort of thing, this type of thing is really her field.

ANDREA

Yeah.

DAVID

You're breaking up. Can you speak louder and into the phone?

ANDREA

Yes.
I mean I said yeah.
Is this better?

DAVID

Now there's an echo.

ANDREA

Better?
I guess I always wanted to ask...

DAVID

For trauma to be passed on there needs to be some kind of event.

ANDREA

Right-

DAVID

And just because something happened doesn't mean it was a traumatic event. Lots of things happen.

DAVID

I'm sorry Andrea because I feel like that's not what you want me to say.

DAVID

I feel like you want me to say there was some terrible trauma.

DAVID

There just wasn't you know.
Everyone made it here alive.

DAVID

Everyone escaped.
The diary is a nice tribute to that.

ANDREA

Right - I -

DAVID

I'll be clear here. I don't believe in what you're doing. I mean what you're trying to prove.

ANDREA

I'm not trying to prove anything -

DAVID

Any kind of problems you're experiencing well they're not related to the family history. You're looking for something in the past but there's nothing there.

ANDREA

Right, it's just that have you ever wondered-

DAVID

So I'm sorry this won't fit into your theory of...whatever your theory is.

ANDREA

Right.

I don't really have a theory.

I was just wondering why I mean,

trying to understand why we have such a small family.

And of the ones we have why no one really gets along.

Or talks to each other. And hasn't for

a while. Cuz it's a little weird you

know.

DAVID

I don't know about that Andrea. Lots of families are "weird". And small. And we're talking now.

ANDREA

Right.

DAVID

I mean don't get me wrong. I think the diary will be terrific source material. It's a truly fascinating resource. And an important family heirloom.

DAVID

Your mother and Claire I am sure can tell you that. They actually fought over it for a while. Over who should get to keep it.

DAVID

There was some bad feeling.
Now that your mother donated it to the
Museum they've probably worked it out.
I'm sure you'll be able to use those
memories and ideas in it to make something very artistic.
Maybe like *Driving Miss Daisy* or *Sundays
with Morrie* --

ANDREA

Tuesdays.

DAVID

or something.

Wailing sirens from the NYC side.

DAVID

It's just my grandfather's diary is just not going to explain
anything, and this is really my view, because there's nothing to explain.
I'm sorry.

Pause.

DAVID

You know the Tolstoy quote right? All happy
families are alike. All unhappy
families are unhappy in their
own way.

ANDREA

Yeah.

DAVID

Families are unhappy.
It doesn't mean there's any reason for it.
There's nothing to find out. OK?

ANDREA

OK.

DAVID

Now have a great time in Berlin. And go eat a cream puff at Cafe Kranzler for me.

Beeping.

Shit Andrea, the cappuccino maker is backing up.

Beeping

Gotta go.

Talk soon.

ANDREA

Bye.

DAVID

Bye.

ANDREA

Bye.

Sound of phone dial tone.

MAX

Sunday January 1, 1939

"You like to leave something for your grandchildren to remember you by.
Happens you can't leave them a million dollars

MAX

and I don't know anything they'd get more comfort out of than --- lying in bed
and reading a story."

SCENE 3. Driving the I-5.

ANDREA: I'm on the entrance ramp of the I-5

ANDREA: pushing the dial button

ANDREA: trying not to be sideswiped by an 18 wheeler.

ANDREA: *ringing*
Sometimes I wonder what would happen if I just took this hairpin entrance curve a little too fast. Or just at slightly the wrong turning angle. 1 degree off.

ANDREA: I imagine this as I'm holding the steering wheel, trying to be steady.

ANDREA: It's exactly an hour from the parking lot of the college where I teach to my house. Most of it on the freeway.

ANDREA: I often think of quitting.
ringing

ANDREA: Some days I just can't stomach being excited about the American Theater. It feels somehow dishonest to encourage anyone to go into this line of work.

ANDREA: I often believe it's some kind of pyramid scheme into which I'm obliged to recruit people otherwise the whole system will break apart.

ANDREA: Kind of like the one that brought down Albania.
ringing

ANDREA: But the truth is, I need the money.
ringing

LILLIAN: Hello. You have reached the voice mail of Lillian Lathrop. Please leave your message after the beep.
the highway

ANDREA: And then all of the sudden I don't know what to say.

ANDREA: Hey Cuzzie.

ANDREA: I'm screaming into the headset. The car vibrates as I accelerate.

ANDREA: Just leaving you another message.
I'm leaving on Tuesday. For Berlin.

ANDREA: I think you remember that
I got this grant to do a project, well
write a play, based on our great-grandfather's
diary. For the year. Lucas and the kids are coming too of course.

swerving, screech

ANDREA: Fuck you, you ass wipe!

ANDREA: Sorry. I'm driving home from Salem. Anyway -
sorry we missed each other on the weekend.

ANDREA: I mean we were there. At the big rock. On the
coast. And Eric came and your kids and then his
brother and wife and their kid.

*Video image of moving car fades into
Haystack Rock with the Pacific
stretched behind it.*

ANDREA: Fucking crowded today on the I-5.

ANDREA: Anyway yeah. I'm sorry you couldn't make
it. It would have been nice to see you. Eric says
you were at the pizza place in town. You
just didn't...couldn't make it down to the beach.
I wanted to say goodbye. Before I left.

ANDREA: And then I guess you guys got into a fight.
And then it seemed like the quarter mile from
the restaurant to the beach was an impossible distance.

ANDREA: Kind of like across a huge ocean. Like the ocean was
between us and not across from us, you know?

ANDREA: So I'm sorry we missed each other.

Video of the I-5 flying by.

ANDREA: Anyway I guess I just wanted
to talk to you. See if your grandmother
might have said anything about the diary ever.
Or my great-grandfather.

ANDREA: Anyway. I'm sure the diary will tell me everything I need.

ANDREA: but if you have any thoughts you could,
well you could
call me.

ANDREA: Just wanted to touch base before
I land in Berlin. Yeah.

ANDREA: Well hope to see you soon.

ANDREA: Sorry we didn't find each other
on the beach.

ANDREA: Hopefully next time.

ANDREA: Hopefully next time.

Sound of phone being hung up.

MAX: Meine Liebe Enkel,
So at least der Anfang ist really Englisch und es
müsste actually be in Englisch weil diese
memories eines Grossvaters are thought of and written down für
euch, for you. Und weil eure Müttersprache, or better, your native
language, ja Englisch sein wird, I hope you will understand me
because your parents were once Germans too and you will learn so
much German that these language mistakes in this book becomes no
puzzle to you.

MAX: That these language mistakes becomes no puzzle to you.

MAX: That these language mistakes becomes no puzzle to you.

SCENE 4. Central Synagogue Berlin

ANDREA

It's August 15th 2014 --

ANDREA

We've been in Berlin for 17 days. I'm at a

ANDREA

conference that has the longest acronym on the planet-

ANDREA

WFJHCS&D.

ANDREA

It's been mostly at the Hilton Hotel. But not today.

ANDREA

World Federation for Jewish Holocaust Child Survivors

ANDREA

I've been invited --

ANDREA

and their Descendents.

To give a seminar about the play. The one I came to Berlin to write.

RENE

(too loud)

My god this is going on forever.

ANDREA

And now I'm at the top of the central synagogue in Berlin at the fifth hour of a meeting that was supposed to be two and a half hours -

RENE

The Nazis didn't succeed in killing us
so now the claims commission is trying to do it.

Beat

That was a joke.

A crazy laugh.

ANDREA

Uh-

RENE

But what do I care if I get a heat stroke up here?
I'm old.
What are you doing here?

ANDREA

Here?

RENE

At this thing.
You're the only one under fifty.

ANDREA

I don't know.
They invited me.

RENE

Because you're young.

ANDREA

I guess so.

RENE

They want the 3rd generation to be involved.
They are afraid that when we die everyone will forget.
So they invited you.

ANDREA

Oh.

RENE

Yes it is so.
What else are you doing here?

ANDREA

I'm sorry?

RENE

Berlin is far. You came all the way over here for this?

ANDREA

No. I -

RENE

Yes?

ANDREA

I'm writing a play.

A what? RENE

A play. ANDREA

For the stage? RENE

Yeah. ANDREA

...You any good? RENE

Well-- ANDREA

You had your work performed ever? RENE

Yes. ANDREA

Oh. Like in a real theater? RENE

Yes. ANDREA

And you make a living from this? RENE

Sometimes. Well mostly. ANDREA
I teach too.

Agh. I see. RENE

Now, as we speak, I'm having a reading in New York. ANDREA

You get paid for that? RENE

Not usually. For readings I mean. ANDREA

RENE

I see.

ANDREA

But you kind of have to do it because maybe they'll give you a commission or something later.

RENE

And that's what you're doing here?

ANDREA

What?

RENE

Working on a play?

ANDREA

Yes.

RENE

About?

ANDREA

A diary.

RENE

Well does it have juicy secrets at least?

ANDREA

Secrets?

RENE

Yeah like in Anne Frank. We find out things. Secret things.

ANDREA

And he smiles at me in a piercing way.

ANDREA

I'm wondering if he can tell that up until now I have only skimmed the diary for major details.

ANDREA

For grant writing. To fund the project.

ANDREA

You only skimmed the first seven pages.

ANDREA

A close reading is coming.

ANDREA

(to RENE)

Really. He's forthcoming about everything. As a diary writer my great-grandfather seems interested in revealing more than concealing.

RENE

Uh-huh.

ANDREA

And he smiles again. It's so bloody hot in here.

ANDREA

And then he leans in

ANDREA

and whispers

RENE

There are always secrets.
I have to go give my testimony
now. They always put me up after her because I'm funny. Well as funny as I
can be. She tells the Mengele story and makes 'em cry;
I make 'em laugh. I don't know how I do it.
The story is not funny but I make some jokes on the beginning.
Well you know, you're a playwrighter.
You got to make 'em laugh first. Then they can cry.

ANDREA

It's so hot up here.

ANDREA

Members of the Bundestag are fanning themselves with their programs.

ANDREA

He smiles at me.

RENE

Always the same story about the fire. The barn. We're locked in there. I
escape.
Only I escape.
So many years later and I still do not know why
only it is I who escapes.

ANDREA

I'm staring at him. He's walking away. He turns back and smiles.

RENE

Good luck with the play.

ANDREA

Good luck with the play.

SCENE 5:

MAX: January 8, 1939
Today is the birthday of my only sister
Griseldis Anker nee Cohnreich who is living now in
Tel-Aviv, Palestine. Gordonstr. 14.
*Slide: Google map,
Gordon St. 14*

ANDREA: I am back at home staring at the building across the way. There's a man
smoking a cigarette.

ANDREA: He waves. Is he watching me or am I watching him?

ANDREA: Is he in shorts or is he standing on his balcony in his underwear?

ANDREA: I've noticed that Germans sometimes treat underwear like outerwear.
You wave back.

ANDREA: I'm thinking of Hitchcock's REAR WINDOW. You write down

ANDREA: Griseldis Anker nee Cohnreich

ANDREA: on the family map you're making.
Slide: family map

ANDREA: Here.

MAX: She left Germany in 1934 with her husband Heinrich
with whom I had a very strong friendship.
We families visited always each other at least once a week as we lived
quite close to one another.

ANDREA: They visited.

ANDREA: They visited.

MAX: I established my medical practice in October 1908 at
Schlüterstraße 27.

MAX: Griseldi's son and his young wife are now living today in
Haifa, Palestine.

*Slide: Google map from Berlin to NYC
to Gordonstr. 14 Tel-Aviv to Haifa.*

MAX: Yesterday we got the first letter from your great-grandmother Helene Heitinger nee Lychenheim from Rio de Janeiro where she arrived as an emigrant of nearly 72 years. She joins in Rio her only son Werner (your great-uncle) who is a painter, especially for horses.

ANDREA: Helene Heitinger. Werner Heitinger. Berlin to Brazil. 1939.

Slide: Brazil, Tel-Aviv, NYC, Berlin on the map.

ANDREA: Mom?

ANDREA: I'm on the phone.

ANDREA: Waiting.

MOM: Hello.

ANDREA: Did he ever see his sister again?

MOM: What?

ANDREA: Did Max ever see his sister Griseldis again? The one who went to Israel? Or what about the ones who went to Brazil?

MOM: Andrea?

ANDREA: Yes.

MOM: It's the middle of the night here.

ANDREA: Oh...I...shit. I miscalculated the time difference.

MOM: It's OK. What is it you wanted to ask?

ANDREA: No it's OK. I'll call tomorrow.

MOM: Well you already woke me up.

ANDREA: Sorry.

MOM: OK.

ANDREA: Did your grandfather ever see his sister again? The one who went to Israel.

Or his nephew Wolfgang. Or all the others?

MOM: My grandfather died in 1949.

ANDREA: I know that.

MOM: I don't think he did. No. I'm sure he didn't.

ANDREA: What about your mother, Eva? Did she ever visit her Aunt or cousins?

MOM: I remember her sending packages to them. With sugar. When I was small. Or maybe the packages of sugar were for a cousin somewhere else. Maybe Yugoslavia? Or Sweden?

ANDREA: But you never met them?

MOM: No.

ANDREA: None of you? Not Claire, not you, not David?

MOM: No. I think mother may have visited once in the 50s. But I can't be sure.

ANDREA: Oh.

ANDREA: I wait.

MOM: Andrea?

ANDREA: Yeah.

MOM: Something else?

ANDREA: Did you know he and his sister lived near each other in Berlin. And that Werner lived with Helene. And that they all saw each other. Hung out. Visited. That kind of thing?

MOM: They did?

ANDREA: Yeah.

MOM: No. No, I didn't know that.

ANDREA: They used to see each other once a week. At least.

MOM: How's the play going?

ANDREA: I don't know.

MOM: Oh. I'm not sure why you had to go to Berlin to write a play.

ANDREA: Mom.

MOM: Sorry. Sorry.

ANDREA: OK.

MOM: Alright. Bye.

ANDREA: And she's about to hang up

ANDREA: but there's always that lingering on the phone with my relatives.

ANDREA: That lingering when you're about to hang up but before anyone does.

ANDREA: It's like we're all scared, somehow genetically scared that this could be the last time we ever talk to each other.

ANDREA: But we are there now, in that pause, before everyone has gone to Brazil or South Africa or Palestine, when there's still time to shout --

ANDREA: And I'm shouting across time -

ANDREA: wait --

ANDREA: And of course she's there. Because she's been waiting too.

*sound of phone disconnecting.
Or Skype.*

SCENE 6:

ANDREA: Sitting in the apartment.

ANDREA: Everyone else is at work. Or school.

ANDREA: It's fall. The grape vines on the building across the way are completely red now. They remind me of the ones in Oregon. On the highway. The I-5. The one I drive on to go to Salem. To teach. At the job that feels like a pyramid scheme.

ANDREA: Insomnia is present.

ANDREA: I have talked to the Apothekerin.

ANDREA: Female pharmacist.

ANDREA: She's recommended trying to

ANDREA: relax.

ANDREA: I try to explain that I can hear everyone else breathing.

ANDREA: She recommends ear plugs.

ANDREA: I might have to go to a doctor.

ANDREA: I'll admit it. I don't like doctors.

ANDREA: Which is odd for someone like you who's a bit of a hypochondriac.

ANDREA: I'm doing my close read of the diary.

ANDREA: Scouring for clues. Anything.

MAX: June 23rd, 1940
Zum 50th Geburtstag von Hermann Weigert nach einer Haemorrhoiden Operation, lange verworfen, die Dr. Rosens ausführte

ANDREA: A poem to Hermann Weigert after his long postponed hemorrhoid surgery conducted by Dr. Rosen.

MAX: Wenn sich der Mensch auch noch so “weigert”
Und denkt sich “Herr man” wird verrückt
Und wenn des Hintern Krampf sich steigert
So oft man sich zum Stühlgang bückt

ANDREA: When a man can’t decide
And thinks to himself “I’ll go crazy”
And when his ass pain increases
So often that he must always run to the toilet

MAX: Wenn die verfluchten Haemorrhoiden
Mit stacheldraht das Loch versperr’n
Dann wünscht man endlich: Gebt mir Frieden,
Bedienen Sie sich, meine Herr’n.

ANDREA: When the damned hemorrhoids
seal your asshole with barbed wire
That you wish finally, “Give me peace”
Help yourself my good man

MAX Das ist mein Wunsch zum heutigen Tage
Für Hermann Weigert, Piles befreit;
Der 50 Jährige, frei vom Plage,
Genieß bis Hundert Friedens zeit!

ANDREA That is my wish for today
That Hermann Weigert, free of hemorrhoids
Will be fifty years free of plagues and enjoy for
the birthday of 100 years, peaceful times.

ANDREA: OK.

ANDREA: It’s maybe not quite what I expected.

ANDREA: Maybe next time you’ll actually read the primary source material

ANDREA: Before you write grant applications claiming it is the basis for your
work.

ANDREA: Yeah.

ANDREA: I feel like my gums are receding.

ANDREA: I talk with my mother on the phone.

ANDREA: I tell her it's all going great.

ANDREA: I talk with my new agent.

ANDREA: I tell her it's all going great.

MAX: My dear little cryers and other readers of this book, be patient with me.

MAX: I couldn't foresee that I myself would one day sail over the Atlantic Ocean, not as a tourist who is traveling for pleasure, but as an emigrant in order to leave behind me for good all the disappointments of Europe

MAX: and to begin a new American life, while my parents are still lying below the headstone in the Weissensee cemetery of Berlin, Germany.

Slide: Weissensee Cemetery, Berlin.

MAX: Jacoby Cohnreich.

ANDREA: Martha Cohnreich.

CLERK (RUSSIAN ACCENT):
Spell please Cohnreich.

ANDREA: I'm in a tiny office at the Weissensee cemetery.

CLERK: Spell please Jacoby.

ANDREA: The leaves swirl and the birds caw.

ANDREA: J-A-C-O-B-Y

ANDREA: I'm trying to locate the headstone mentioned in the text.

ANDREA: The air is crisp. Cold almost. Fall.

ANDREA: The fatigue creeps and pulsates

ANDREA: behind my eyes

ANDREA: Every time I blink I imagine that perhaps I'm sleeping just for a few seconds.

ANDREA: The clerk is scrolling down with the mouse.

CLERK: You're sure with a "y"?

ANDREA: Yes.

CLERK: Not an "i".

ANDREA: No.

CLERK: Also not Isidor. And not Marcus, Nathan, Leopold? Not Minna? You are sure?

ANDREA: What?

CLERK: You are not accidentally mistaking the name?

ANDREA: No. Jacoby. With a "y". And his wife Martha.

ANDREA: And he's typing on the computer and nodding and making notes. And then he sighs. He picks up the phone. He talks quietly to someone.

ANDREA: I look around the office.

ANDREA: Windows facing the outside.

ANDREA: People going by. A couple with a baby.

ANDREA: An old man with flowers.

ANDREA: A tour group.

ANDREA: And then a second clerk comes into the office.

ANDREA: And goes over to the computer.

CLERK2: Jacoby with a "y"?

ANDREA: Yes.

CLERK2: And why do you wish to contact him?

ANDREA: I pause. Because I think I must have heard him wrong. Maybe this is a dream. But if it's a dream, what language are we speaking?

CLERK2: Please...Mrs...What relevance is he of to you?

ANDREA: Uh -
I ask if we can speak German.

CLERK2: We are speaking German.

ANDREA: It's true we are speaking German. But they are not Germans.
We are two non-Germans speaking German. Words are coming out of my mouth.

CLERK2: Please, slower. Of what relevance are these people to you?

ANDREA: I explain the relationship.

CLERK2: So they are your family.

ANDREA: Yes.

ANDREA: And then the two of them start pulling out papers

ANDREA: and highlighters and maps.

ANDREA: The first one is handing me some papers.

CLERK1: You see here is the cemetery.

ANDREA: He points to the map.

CLERK1: You will to walk along until you come to section N7.

ANDREA: He hands me another map. He highlights it.

CLERK: You will go within here to the second row.

ANDREA. He's drawing in pen. He pulls out another map.

CLERK: And this map for the row as you can easily see. Seventh stone.
They are buried together.

ANDREA: Together?

CLERK: Platzmangel. Damals.

ANDREA: Platzmangel?

CLERK: No room. At that time.

ANDREA: I take the maps. They go back to looking at the computer.

ANDREA: They're scrolling down.

ANDREA: I'm walking out.

ANDREA: You stop. In your tired brain niggles a thought.

ANDREA: Who are the others?

CLERK: The others?

ANDREA: The others you mentioned.

CLERK: Well this you must know if they are your family.

ANDREA: How many are there?

CLERK: How many?

ANDREA: Cohnreich names.

CLERK: I am sorry I can not tell you that. Data protection.

ANDREA: More than ten?

ANDREA: One clerk is looking at the computer. They are both ignoring me.

ANDREA: The first clerk goes to the back room. The second clerk looks at me. He stares. I blink. And then slowly he nods. And then he turns back to the screen. The first clerk comes back. No one says anything. Am I asleep?

ANDREA: Is this a dream?

ANDREA: It's a movie.

ANDREA: But no, if it were a movie something would be happening and I'm just standing here and they are doing what clerks do. The clock ticks.

ANDREA: Maybe I am in an Iranian movie.

ANDREA: The first clerk gives me the email address of the librarian who can approve my request to see the records that can tell me who is buried there. The second clerk tells me that I will have to pay for it. Geneology research is not free.

ANDREA: I tell them I'm a playwright.

ANDREA: I have a DAAD grant. I'm working on a project.

ANDREA: They shrug.

ANDREA: You see I'm trying to understand what happened.

ANDREA: Why there is no one. And why of the ones we have no one gets along.

CLERK1: Tell it to the librarian.

ANDREA: And then they both turn back to the screen.

ANDREA: And then you're walking

ANDREA: I'm walking past headstones and headstones

ANDREA: some upright, some falling over.

ANDREA: I stop to look.

ANDREA: Verschollen. 1943.

ANDREA: Verschollen?

ANDREA: I know that word.

ANDREA: It's what the library says when a book is lost. Where is it that people can disappear like library books?

ANDREA: Perhaps they are all together the lost people and lost books and lost socks. Perhaps the verschollene are all together reading books no one can find in mismatched socks.

ANDREA: Who goes to the cemetery anymore anyway? It's a burden of an old time.

ANDREA: You pass the couple with the baby. They smile. “Very peaceful here” they say to each other.

ANDREA: I finish with map one. I’m in section N7.

ANDREA: You walk forward, map two in front of you. You look like a tourist.

ANDREA: I look around to see if the other Cohnreich names are in this section. They are not.

ANDREA: It’s not a library. They don’t shelve all the authors together. Even if the books are verschollen.

ANDREA: Map 2.

ANDREA: You’re walking.

ANDREA: Really I’m stumbling. The ground is uneven. Trees growing out of tombstones. Weeds everywhere. I’m off the main path now.

ANDREA: Third map. And I look up. And there it is.

ANDREA: The headstone that’s mentioned in the diary.

Slide: photo of headstone

ANDREA: So it is true after all. Some part of me doubted it. But it’s really here.

ANDREA: Oh ye of little faith.

ANDREA: I walk around it. Weeds all over. I grab them and pull.

ANDREA: It hurts. I look at my hands.

ANDREA: Stinging nettle.

ANDREA: I found them. My great great grandparents.

ANDREA: It’s a long time ago.

ANDREA: And I’m standing on top of the gravestone and my hands are burning and there’s no one around me.

ANDREA: Maybe you’re in a Polish movie.

ANDREA: And I stand on the grave and pour
 water over my hands.

ANDREA: And I think

ANDREA: May the suffering of each generation decrease.

ANDREA: May the suffering of each generation decrease.

SCENE 7:

ARCHIVIST: Hello and welcome to the center for the study of Berlin.

MAX: Feb 21, 1939
Today at noon I brought Evchen to Park East Hospital to get her child there. This is seven blocks from her apartment 112 E. 90th St. to 112 E. 83rd St.

Slide: google map of addresses

ANDREA: Last night I finally went to sleep. A full night's sleep.

MAX: She was as courageous and charming as ever.

ANDREA: And today I found this archive -

ANDREA: They have these books —

ANDREA: These address books —

MAX: 7:00 PM: Everything is alright as telephone calls assure me.

ANDREA: From Berlin. From the 1920's and 30's.
And you can request them.

MAX: When Mutti arrived here at 8:00 PM, I hurried to the hospital, where I arrived at 8:35 o'clock.

ANDREA: And they bring them to you.

MAX: But Evchen worked quicker:
At 8:27 PM On Tuesday Feb 21 1939 she gave birth to a fine and healthy American girl who will be named Claire Helen, our first grand child.

ANDREA: The actual books. Not a microfiche.

ARCHIVIST: We also have them on microfiche should you be desirous of microfiche.

ANDREA: I look in the books from 1928, 1931, 1934, and 1939.

MAX: Her weight is almost 8 lbs
Her eyes are clear, bright, deep brown
Her hair dark, (addendum 1946: though it has changed to blond)

MAX: Her complexion, the color, quality of the skin, particularly of the face (I have not seen more) is satisfactory.

MAX: The weather forecast was:
Cloudy and colder with rain turning to snow tonight and possibly continuing to tomorrow morning, then partly cloudy and moderately cold.

ANDREA: I'm looking up the all the people mentioned in the diary.

MAX: Your father sends telegrams to Paris and Amsterdam (his brothers), to Rio de Janiero (Heitingers) and Tel-Aviv (my sister Griseldis Anker).

ANDREA: And suddenly the names, the names that have been in the diary.

MAX: Griseldis Anker. Tel-Aviv.

ANDREA: I find in 1934 at Kantstraße 129.

ANDREA: Helene and Werner Heitinger

MAX: Rio de Janiero. 1939.

ANDREA: are in the 1931 address book at Hewaldstraße 5.
That's right near me in Schöneberg.

MAX: my niece and nephew Puppi and Gunther.

ANDREA: Wielandstr. 18. In 1939.

MAX: 1939. They are waiting to emigrate.

MAX: My cousin Betty Stein. South Africa. 1936.

ANDREA: Berchtesgadenerstr. 5.

MAX: My cousin Siegfried Blochert

MAX: Who taught me to ride a bicycle when I was
15

ANDREA: Santiago de Chile

MAX: 1941.

ANDREA: In 1940, Fasanenstraße 65.

MAX: Herr Siegfried Cohnreich -

ANDREA: Wittelbacherstr. 13

ANDREA: And now

MAX: Und now

ANDREA: And now

ANDREA: I have this map. This crazy google document.

Slide: google map with 21 addresses

ANDREA: This bike route from my house to all these addresses.

ANDREA: Walter Cohnreich -

ANDREA: If it's 1931 he and Betty Stein live on the same block.
It's around the corner from my house.
I live here.

ANDREA: Lindauer Str. 11

ANDREA: And on and on, Ernst at Wielandstr. 18, Rosa at Renterstraße 83, Fritz at Xantener Str. 19.

MAX: When I was 13 years old and became a Bar-Mitzvah we had guests of over 100 people from the family and we all gathered on this day in Berlin, in the Koenig von Portugal hotel in the Burgstraße 12.

ANDREA: And I'm biking through Berlin. And the weather's fine.
And I'm not tired.

MAX: This new child, this new legacy of all of you, you little cryers is the start here of the favorable new American life of our family after all the disappointments of Europe.

MAX: And now, I shall go attend to the newest one-day-old member of our family,
Claire Helen,
by visiting her in the hospital today.

ANDREA: And off I go.

MAX: Und off I go.

Scene 8:
Cafe in Mitte.
Paul is from S. Africa.

ANDREA: ...

PAUL: I was asleep for ten years.

ANDREA: "Where's the exit" I'm thinking.

PAUL: In my twenties. I was a graduate student. I was out with friends. I got attacked by a swarm of bees.

ANDREA: I smile politely. He's just handed me a seven page family tree. I have to listen.

PAUL: The next week I got bitten by a poisonous spider. We have a lot of them in South Africa. And then my body seemed to go into overload. And then I slept 23 hours a day for ten years.

ANDREA: He insists that all the Cohnreiches are related. He showed me the link on the family tree. He said, if they're a Cohnreich they are related. He does this for a living. He's a professional genealogist. I'm a hack.

PAUL: My mother had all sorts of specialists around to the house. My situation was becoming more critical. Finally she found a doctor in the United States. He looked at the test results. The spider and bees were a coincidence. Like when your windscreen wipers break and your car battery goes dead. A red herring.

ANDREA: I found him during my 14 day free trial on ancestry.com. He's my fifth cousin once removed.

PAUL: I had a congenital vitamin D processing disease. The doctor insisted that unless I came to the US I would die. My mother arranged for the travel. I was in intensive care. The treatments themselves could be life threatening. I had the first treatment. I improved. I had a second treatment. Again dramatic improvement. I was scheduled for a third treatment.

ANDREA: I'm nodding. I want to get the family tree home and compare it with the phone book entries.

PAUL: The doctor was very old.
He had a heart attack in the intensive care unit while tending to his patients.
Since all the patients were unconscious, because it was an intensive care, no one could shout out for help.

ANDREA: Maybe there are more apartments to visit. More relatives to see. Ok they're long since dead, but still. I've made a 5 K jogging route from my house past seven relatives' apartments. I wave hello every time I jog by.

ANDREA: Hello! Great great uncle Walter! So nice to see you.

ANDREA: I imagine I drop in to say hi. They're of course happy to see me.

PAUL: And he died there. Between the beds.
My health began to deteriorate again.
My mother found another team of doctors in Tel-Aviv who performed the same treatment.
I moved to Tel-Aviv. I will soon have my final treatment.
They are writing articles about me.
Sometimes when I tell people that I was asleep for ten years
They say they're jealous. They say
"God, I wish I could sleep for ten years.
I'm so tired." They actually say that.
Can you believe it?

ANDREA: I tell him I can't sleep.

ANDREA: He says we're complementary relatives. One can't sleep and the other can't stay awake.

ANDREA: I'm glad I found him on ancestry.com

ANDREA: He turns to me again -

ANDREA: We smile at each other.

PAUL: We smile at each other.

ANDREA: I'm still smiling.

PAUL: She's smiling at me.

ANDREA: We pause.

PAUL: Oh, by the way, I wanted to ask you, do you know what happened to Helene?

ANDREA: Helene?

PAUL: Helene Heitinger, your great-great grandmother. I can't find her in the records.

ANDREA: Yes. I've been to her apartment in Berlin. A lovely old building near the Rathaus Schöneberg, which is weird because I live right there too. I can jog past her apartment. I wave when I go by and sometimes I look up into her balcony and -

PAUL: So you know what happened to her?

ANDREA: Yes, of course. She went to Rio de Janeiro. In 1939. With Werner. Her son. They lived together. Well actually he went ahead and she

MAX: She joins in Rio her only son Werner (your great-uncle) who is a painter, especially for horses. We are very happy that the two of them are together again as they used to live together in Berlin too.

ANDREA: I tell him about the diary.
I'm happy to be able to tell this guy something in exchange for the family tree. And I hate being indebted to people.

PAUL: That's a good story.

ANDREA: Yes.

ANDREA: All of my family made it out alive.

ANDREA: He's looking at me strangely.

PAUL: But the reason I was asking

ANDREA: But the reason I was asking he says

PAUL: Was because I wanted to know if she shared the same fate as her sister.

ANDREA: Her sister?

PAUL: Hedwig.

ANDREA: Hedwig?

PAUL: Hedwig Guth.

ANDREA: Why don't I know this? Why isn't she mentioned? Hedwig Guth. There's no Hedwig Guth in the diary.

PAUL: Yes. She's...

ANDREA: She's my great-grandmother's Aunt. That might not seem so extraordinary but the guy writing the diary is married to my great grandmother. So it's his Aunt. By marriage.

ANDREA: And I ask

ANDREA: But she didn't live in Berlin did she?

PAUL: Oh. Yes. She definitely did. Her whole life.

PAUL: And I tell her.

PAUL: Which I'm sorry to do because it seems like she hadn't known. But I didn't know there were people who nowadays didn't know.

ANDREA: Hedwig Guth, he says:

PAUL: Deported 1942 Theresienstadt. 1943 killed. Bergen Belsen.

ANDREA: I'm staring at him.

ANDREA: You're dizzy. Nauseous.

ANDREA: The room pulsates. Spins.

PAUL: She's staring at me.

ANDREA: Breathe.

PAUL: I'm glad to know that Helene did not share the same fate as her sister.

ANDREA: Breathe.

ANDREA: And I take a sip of water.

ANDREA: And I thank him.

ANDREA: I go outside. Dizzy.

ANDREA: Head between your knees.

ANDREA: Breathe.

ANDREA: Breathe.

ANDREA: Everything is not fine.

ANDREA: The street spins and pulsates.

ANDREA: How many more Hedwig Guths are there?

ANDREA: And what kind of diary is this anyway?

MAX: Feb. 26th 1939

My Dear Grandchildren:

Mrs. Florence Tim,

my friendly teacher in English,

is prevented this week from giving me the usual night school lessons.

I write her the following poem:

My dear Mrs. Flo Tim:

What is love without a dream

What is the coffee with no cream

What is the flower with no scent

What is a whiskey that's not blent

What is the i without the dot

What is the shoe string with no knot

What is a worker with no boss

What is a gambler with no loss

What is a castle with no ghost

What is the breakfast with no toast

What is a garden with no sun

What is a sweetheart with no fun

What is a champagne that does not spark

New York without the central park

What is an orange with no peel

What's Roosevelt with no "New Deal"

What's Rockefeller with no center

What's the center with no renter

What is the beer without its foam

What is the Pope without his Rome

What makes my temper harsh and grim

What makes my body thin and slim
What fills my glass not to the brim
That is a week without Flo Tim

Blackout.
End of Act I.
Intermission.

ACT II
Scene 9.

ANDREA: Hello?

DAVID: Andrea? Good to hear from you.

ANDREA: Thanks.

ANDREA: It's my uncle. David.

ANDREA: In New York.

DAVID: How's Berlin treating you?

ANDREA: Great. Great.

DAVID: How's the play? You're halfway done with the year.

ANDREA: Plodding along. I'm not actually writing yet.

DAVID: Right. Right.

ANDREA: Yeah.

ANDREA: Yeah.

ANDREA: So I wanted to ask, you know, did Omi, I mean your mom. I mean Eva.

DAVID: Yes. I know who you mean.

ANDREA: Right. Did she ever you know, talk about her aunt. In Berlin.
Hedwig.

DAVID: Hedwig?

ANDREA: Yes.

DAVID: No. I don't think so.

ANDREA: Nothing?

DAVID: Not that I can remember, why?

ANDREA: I stop.

ANDREA: Why?

ANDREA: Why?

ANDREA: For some reason I hadn't considered this.

ANDREA: Well.

ANDREA: Well.

ANDREA: Well.

ANDREA: And then I go for it.

ANDREA: I tell him.

ANDREA: There's a long pause.

ANDREA: I wait. And then -

DAVID: I don't think this can be true Andrea. I never heard anything about it.

ANDREA: It's true I say. I know it is.

ANDREA: And there's more silence.

ANDREA: Well I just thought you should know.

ANDREA: I mean just to know.

ANDREA: Right?

DAVID: I'd be interested to see the documents if you don't mind.

ANDREA: The documents?

DAVID: If you have them handy.

ANDREA: He's testing me. Thinks I'm making up that she was deported and killed and that we never knew.

DAVID: When you get a chance of course.

ANDREA: Sure. Sure.

DAVID: Well thanks for calling.

ANDREA: And we pause.

ANDREA: And we pause.

ANDREA: And we're both quiet.

ANDREA: But we're there. I can hear him breathing.

ANDREA: And then.

ANDREA: And then...

sound of telephone being hung up.

SCENE 10:

ANDREA: I read the diary obsessively now.

ANDREA: It's so cold I don't go outside.

ANDREA: I'm convinced I will find something out.

ANDREA: Something that will tell me what I want to know.

ANDREA: I have sources

ANDREA: and resources.

ANDREA: #1 The Diary.

ANDREA: #2 The 1931 Address Book of Berlin

ANDREA: #3 The Family Tree, compliments of Paul.

ANDREA: #4 The Central Database of the Shoah Victims' Names.

ANDREA: And today. Today. I have to cross-link the names on the family tree
and in the address book

ANDREA: with the Shoah database.

ANDREA: From that information

ANDREA: I'll see which ones lived.

ANDREA: And maybe the diary will mention any of these people. Dead or alive.

ANDREA: I'm nervous.

ANDREA: It's sleeting outside.

ANDREA: I pour some whisky.

ANDREA: And I go through the lists.

ANDREA: Name on Tree, Name in Phone book, alive or dead.

ANDREA: I'm moving on notating, searching, looking.

ANDREA: I drink more whisky.

ANDREA: I print out.

ANDREA: There are 32 Cohnreich relatives living in Berlin in 1931. They are cousins, aunts, uncles, step-parents.

ANDREA: I have the names.

ANDREA: I pour more whisky.

MAX: August 27th 1939

MAX: I have not opened this, my diary, since over six weeks.

MAX: The reason was that I am in a bad temper and in such a condition I am not able to enjoy anything. I cannot play the piano, I cannot write, I cannot go to a museum. I am without pluck and fervor. But what are the reasons?

ANDREA: Fritz Cohnreich on Xantener Strasse. I type in his name. I wait for the endlessly long data base to crunch the name. He's not there. He's not in the database. He makes it out alive.

ANDREA: Elsa Cohnreich. She makes it.

ANDREA: This isn't as bad as I thought. We are 2 for 2.

ANDREA: And then I see.

ANDREA: I see.

ANDREA: I see.

ANDREA: There's an advanced search function.

ANDREA: I can search by last name. And location.

ANDREA: I type in Cohnreich. I type in Berlin.

ANDREA: It crunches the numbers. Slowly. I wait.

ANDREA: It strikes me as odd that no one did this before. I mean from my family.

ANDREA: Maybe it's not weird.

ANDREA: You have 32 relatives in Berlin and you never bother to find out what happened to them? After the Holocaust?

ANDREA: Fine.

ANDREA: I'm still waiting.

ANDREA: Maybe it's only Hedwig.

ANDREA: Still loading. I'm looking obsessively at the names and birth dates.

ANDREA: If they're old already I feel like it's OK if they die.

ANDREA: I mean not OK really but if some have to die, I'd prefer not the children. Not the young ones.

ANDREA: It's like I'm rooting for some.

ANDREA: And out come the results.

ANDREA: 20 people.

ANDREA: 20 people from Berlin who were my relatives disappeared. Died.

Slide: Illuminated names on family tree

ANDREA: How could that be?

ANDREA: I look at the list. I look at the names.

ANDREA: Some families just aren't close.

ANDREA: I always wanted a close family.

ANDREA: I have a secret.

ANDREA: How can I tell them this?

ANDREA: What's past is past.

ANDREA: These events are so long ago.

ANDREA: No longer influential.

ANDREA: But still. Shouldn't I tell them? Wouldn't they want to know? Shouldn't someone know?

ANDREA: Someone does know.

ANDREA: No.

ANDREA: Yes.

ANDREA: Yes.

ANDREA: You.

ANDREA: You know.

ANDREA: It doesn't matter if -

ANDREA: I'm just saying that someone knows.

ANDREA: I take another sip of whisky.

ANDREA: I don't want to know.

ANDREA: I don't want to be the one to know.

ANDREA: I go outside.

ANDREA: I hop on my bike.

ANDREA: I feel sick.

ANDREA: My wheels are spinning out when I use the brakes.

ANDREA: Lots of genocides happen. This isn't special. You're not special.

ANDREA: I fall.

ANDREA: My heart beats, thumping away in there, the adrenaline pumping from my encounter with the pavement.

ANDREA: I'm biking faster now. The sleet has changed to snow.

ANDREA: Cushions the falls better.

ANDREA: Schlüterstraße 27.

ANDREA: It's Max's address.

ANDREA: I stand under a street lamp in front of the building.

ANDREA: The snow is dumping down heavily now.

ANDREA: Everything around me is surrounded by swirling white.

ANDREA: I can't drink any more whisky.

ANDREA: The world is tilting and spinning but I have both legs on the ground.

ANDREA: Did you know? I lob the question to him across the snowy sidewalk of seventy years...

ANDREA: Why did you leave me with this information?

ANDREA: Why are you making me the one?

ANDREA: You should have told them. You made them think nothing happened.

ANDREA: Nothing did happen. Nothing happened.

ANDREA: I want to lie down on the sidewalk. I'm tired.

MAX: One of the reasons for my internal dissonance is my bad business in the practice. I am afraid of the future and I fear that I can not reach my goal, material independence. I will never achieve that here.

ANDREA: I turn the corner where it's quieter.

ANDREA: I'm lying down. The snow is falling on my forehead.

MAX: Second the situation with family matters.

ANDREA: I squint my eyes and watch the snow falling down. Cold is creeping through my coat.

ANDREA: The whiskey bottle is gone.

ANDREA: I must have left it somewhere.

ANDREA: I don't even know how much I drank of it. I'm lying down cushioned by piles and piles of snow.

MAX: Third, the great intolerable heat and humidity. The New York summer is quite unbearable.

MAX: My dearest ones, I leave you with the quotation that I think is correct

MAX: “He who forgets what he cannot change is happy”.

MAX: He who forgets what he cannot change is happy.

MAX: He who forgets what he cannot change is happy.

Scene 11:

MOM: Hello?

ANDREA: Mom?

MOM: Andrea?

ANDREA: Yes.

MOM: How's the play going?

ANDREA: I haven't told her about the dead relatives from Berlin.
I'm not sure how to say it.

ANDREA: "By the way, you know how you thought no one from our family died in
the Holocaust? Well. Sorry. That's wrong".

ANDREA: And obviously no one else cares. This is not important for anyone.

ANDREA: So I haven't told her.

ANDREA: The play's going fine I say.

MOM: You sound sick.

ANDREA: I am.

MOM: Oh. Well have some matzoh ball soup. Don't suppose they have that there
now do they?

ANDREA: I'm so sick I can't even get excited about this.

MOM: You sound awful.

ANDREA: I don't tell her about the five Israeli specialty food shops that have
popped up around Berlin. All providing the Germans and non-Germans
alike with matzoh ball soup.

ANDREA: I don't tell her that young Israelis are moving here in droves.

ANDREA: Berlin is the new utopia for Jews.

ANDREA: A break from the war zone that Israel is.

ANDREA: Jews from all over are here.

ANDREA: Berlin.

ANDREA: Some are getting their citizenship.

ANDREA: Everyone's parents are pissed.

ANDREA: *"How can you go back there"*

ANDREA: Or *"I would never go back to where I was kicked out"*

ANDREA: What gets me are the facebook comments on my posts

ANDREA: Saying

ANDREA: *We can never forget.*

ANDREA: Like coming back here is forgetting?

ANDREA: Betraying something unspoken about being a Jew?

ANDREA: But don't you see we are all screaming across time...we feel comfortable here.

ANDREA: The ghosts of the past provide comfort.

ANDREA: I have more family here than anywhere else, even if they are dead.

ANDREA: I don't tell her I'm sick because I fell asleep outside Schlüterstraße 27 in the snow and drank too much.

ANDREA: I don't tell anyone that. Not my husband. Not the pharmacist.

ANDREA: What secretly bothers me is maybe.

ANDREA: Maybe.

ANDREA: that I'm crazy. Or going crazy.

ANDREA: Crazy people rationalize falling asleep in the snow when they drink too much.

ANDREA: Or alcoholics.

MOM: I can't wait to read the play. I know everyone from the family will want to.

ANDREA: Great.

ANDREA: Uh-oh.

MOM: So what's going on?

ANDREA: I guess I just wanted to know if I read you a list of names if you'd perhaps recognize anybody.

MOM: What kind of list?

ANDREA: I read her the list.

ANDREA: She doesn't recognize any names.

MOM: Sorry.

Sound of phone hanging up.

Scene 12. SKYPE Call.

ANDREA: Hello?

CLAIRE: Andrea?

ANDREA: Hello?

CLAIRE: I can't -

ANDREA: And then

ANDREA: the screen unfreezes

ANDREA: and suddenly-

ANDREA: we see each other.

ANDREA: For the first time in a very long time.

ANDREA: Claire.

ANDREA: Claire Helen Lowenherz.

ANDREA: The first American grandchild.

ANDREA: She looks like a nice lady. A little like my mom.

ANDREA: You can tell they are sisters.

ANDREA: And her face a bit like David's.

ANDREA: I'm asking about her memories. Of her grandfather.

CLAIRE: I was nearly nine when he died.

CLAIRE: I remember my grandmother Alice too. His wife.

CLAIRE: She died when I was three and a half.

CLAIRE: I remember lying in their bed during a thunderstorm.

CLAIRE: And he had a magic pocket watch.

CLAIRE: If you blew on it.

ANDREA: It opened.

ANDREA: My mom mentioned it too. We're silent.

CLAIRE: I learned later it was a button on the top of the fob that he pushed. But I thought it was magic.

ANDREA: This is my Aunt Claire.

ANDREA: We haven't spoken in twenty-two years.

ANDREA: It's complicated. I wouldn't say there are hard feelings between us. There aren't.

ANDREA: But it's good to see her. I mean I have an Aunt and here she is. Alive.

ANDREA: I haven't told her yet. The big news. About the cousins. About the ones who died.

ANDREA: And I want to read her the list of names.

ANDREA: I'm trying to go slow this time.

CLAIRE: What else can I tell you about him?

ANDREA: What do I say?

ANDREA: Well...

ANDREA: I'm wondering if he well, if he mentioned any of his cousins.

CLAIRE: Cousins?

ANDREA: from Berlin.

CLAIRE: I don't think he had any cousins.

ANDREA: We smile.

CLAIRE: Do you have any other questions.

ANDREA: We pause. What about the family? I mean what's your assessment.

CLAIRE: Mine?

ANDREA: Yes. We wait.

CLAIRE: I don't know what I should say to her.

CLAIRE: I don't understand this family.

CLAIRE: I don't understand why we're not close. Why we don't speak. Why we were never close. I was close with my grandfather. But that's it.

CLAIRE: It's very strange Andrea.

CLAIRE: It's like we have no one.

CLAIRE: It's some kind of curse. I mean if you believed in curses.

CLAIRE: Like there's this thing that sits on us from generation to generation.

CLAIRE: Dysfunction.

CLAIRE: Generation after generation.

ANDREA: I don't say this.

ANDREA: I don't say it.

ANDREA: I want to.

ANDREA: The diary. The family history in it. It doesn't point to a curse.

ANDREA: The early Berlin days seem familial.

ANDREA: Max had over 100 relatives at his Bar Mitzvah at the Koenig von Portugal hotel.

ANDREA: I never have more than five relatives in a room at one time. But then -

ANDREA: Back then -

ANDREA: The front door opens. Noises.

ANDREA: It's my kids.

ANDREA: I ask.

ANDREA: She's nodding.

ANDREA: I stand them proudly in front of the screen.

ANDREA: They all stare. The kids look at me questioningly.

ANDREA: A long pause.

CLAIRE: Hi.

CLAIRE: I'm your great-aunt.

CLAIRE: Claire.

ANDREA: They smile. They say their names.

ANDREA: She asks them how they like Berlin.

ANDREA: They say something.

ANDREA: They glance at me.

ANDREA: I nod. They ask her where she lives.

ANDREA: And they are saying goodbye.

ANDREA: They run off to the park to play ping-pong.

ANDREA: They have ping-pong tables in the parks here.
I explain. It's a great little sport. Fun. Free. In the parks.

ANDREA: We stare.

ANDREA: I ask her if I can read her a list of names.

ANDREA: I do.

ANDREA: Anything?

ANDREA: She's shaking her head. I read on.

CLAIRE: Sorry.

ANDREA: I nod. Suddenly she volunteers --

CLAIRE: I remember a Tante Flora.

ANDREA: Flora?

CLAIRE: Yes. She was old. She lived with my grandparents. With Max and Alice.

CLAIRE: Yes, now that you are asking I remember.

CLAIRE: She lived in the back room. Behind the curtains.

ANDREA: She lived there?

CLAIRE: Yes. You should ask your Mom.

CLAIRE: She'll remember.

CLAIRE: Yes. Tante Flora.

ANDREA: My mind is reeling. Flora? Who's Flora?

ANDREA: The problem with the address book records is a lot of people.

ANDREA: Women.

ANDREA: Aren't in them.

ANDREA: Did Flora come to the bar mitzvah?

CLAIRE: I'm glad you are working with the diary. I love that book.

ANDREA: I smile. I want to go figure out who this Flora person is.

ANDREA: Track her down on the family tree.

ANDREA: Check in with Paul.

CLAIRE: It was mine you know.

ANDREA: Flora, Flora, Flora.

CLAIRE: Well not mine but I had it.

ANDREA: If I weren't on SKYPE I'd be pulling out some of the documents.

CLAIRE: Your mother borrowed it, circulated it to family members, and never gave it back. I have no idea where it is today.

ANDREA: I thought I wrote it to her. I'm sure I did.

ANDREA: We peer into each other via Skype.

ANDREA: It's in the Holocaust museum.

ANDREA: And I tell her about how its been donated. Although I am pretty sure she knows this already.

ANDREA: So it's safe. In perpetuity.

CLAIRE: I would like to read the diary again.

ANDREA: I tell her I know the archivist.

ANDREA: I tell her she can be provided with high quality colored copies.

ANDREA: I smile.

CLAIRE: I want to hold the book.

ANDREA: I tell her she can. It's in the archive at the Holocaust Museum.

ANDREA: In DC. Not far from her house.

ANDREA: She can drive there in 45 minutes.

CLAIRE: I can't go there.

CLAIRE: I went one time and then I had nightmares for weeks.

CLAIRE: I can't go back there.

ANDREA: I tell her how the archive is separate.

ANDREA: She won't have to go to the museum.

ANDREA: She says she can't go.

ANDREA: I offer to send the PDF.

ANDREA: No she says.

CLAIRE: I suppose what's gone is gone.

ANDREA: I suppose what's gone is gone.

CLAIRE: It was nice talking to you Andrea.

CLAIRE: Good luck with your project.

CLAIRE: It was nice to meet your kids.

CLAIRE: Maybe —

CLAIRE: Maybe someday we'll all see each other for real.

(Sound of SKYPE hanging up)

ANDREA: And she's gone. Her face frozen on the screen.

Scene 13:

ANDREA: We've been on vacation.

ANDREA: Somewhere warm.

ANDREA: Tenerife.

ANDREA: Nice to get out of Berlin where the dog shit still sits in frozen clumps on the sidewalk.

ANDREA: Berliners don't adhere to scoop laws.

ANDREA: I'm stuck.

ANDREA: The diary ends. Nothing more in it. Just dedications of poems to people I don't know.

ANDREA: I'm missing something. Something clear.

ANDREA: I re-read everything.

ANDREA: There must be a clue.

ANDREA: But if there is, I sure can't find it.

ANDREA: I need a drink.

ANDREA: I'm flipping through the papers and books and notes.

ANDREA: I pull out the family tree from Paul.

ANDREA: More tiny print.

ANDREA: And then

ANDREA: on page seven

ANDREA: I see something.

ANDREA: A name I recognize.

ANDREA: Weigert?

ANDREA: Weigert?

ANDREA: Wasn't he the guy —

ANDREA: Diary pages are flying

ANDREA: The guy in the...

ANDREA: There...

ANDREA: Wenn sich der Mensch auch noch so "Weigert"

ANDREA: Und denkt sich "Herr man" wird verrückt...

ANDREA: Holy shit.

ANDREA: Hermann Weigert. The hemorrhoid poem.

ANDREA: Weigert's in the family tree because...

ANDREA: on page 7...

ANDREA: He marries an M. Cohnreich...

ANDREA: And that's how Max knows Weigert.

ANDREA: But who's M. Cohnreich?

ANDREA: No M. Cohnreich in the address book.

ANDREA: Not in the Shoah data base.

ANDREA: I return to the hemorrhoid poem.

ANDREA: Who is this guy? Whose asshole is Max writing about?

ANDREA: The key to everything is in this guy's asshole.

ANDREA: I say this over and over to anyone who asks about the play.

ANDREA: I say, the key to the project is locked in Hermann Weigert's asshole.

ANDREA: It's hard to assess people's reactions after that.

ANDREA: I look out across at the neighbors.

ANDREA: Now that it's getting warm again they are out more.

ANDREA: Them and their assholes.

ANDREA: We pretend not to see each other.

ANDREA: I go back to my files and books.

ANDREA: I google Weigert.

ANDREA: A wikipedia entry. I skim it.

ANDREA: Due to his Jewish ancestry...resigned from his post at the Berlin State Opera...

ANDREA: 1942 joined the staff of the [Metropolitan Opera](#) in New York City.

ANDREA: At the Met he became the primary vocal coach to Astrid Varnay

ANDREA: whom he married in 1944.

ANDREA: Poor M. Cohnreich.

ANDREA: I google US immigration documents. Searchable by name.

ANDREA: 1935. M. Cohnreich comes to the US with Weigert.

ANDREA: She travels back and forth three times.

ANDREA: In 1939 she travels back to the US from Germany for the last time.

ANDREA: on the passenger manifest

ANDREA: M. Cohnreich

ANDREA: travels with...

ANDREA: her mother.

ANDREA: Her mother?

ANDREA: F.

ANDREA: F. Cohnreich.

ANDREA: I flip to page two of the manifest.

ANDREA: Flora.

ANDREA: Tante Flora.

ANDREA: And the address they list

ANDREA: is 1425 University Avenue, Bronx, NY

ANDREA: Max's address.

ANDREA: I check the tree. I find where Flora should be.

ANDREA: She's Max's cousin.

ANDREA: They are in the US. In New York. The city I grew up in.

ANDREA: and I've never heard of these people.

ANDREA: And suddenly while I've been agonizing about all those who died

ANDREA: I forgot.

ANDREA: You forgot.

ANDREA: I forgot to think about

ANDREA: Those who lived.

ANDREA: The ones who lived.

SCENE 14:

ANDREA: It's spring.

ANDREA: Everyone's happy.

ANDREA: I'm not.

ANDREA: Finding the dead people was easier. I found them in the address book or on the family tree.

ANDREA: Dead people don't move from place to place

ANDREA: Dead people don't cross borders.

ANDREA: Dead people don't change their names.

ANDREA: Dead people don't have petty squabbles.

ANDREA: Dead people don't stop talking to one another.

ANDREA: Dead people aren't worried about what people think of them.

ANDREA: Dead people don't hide.

ANDREA: The live family is messier.

ANDREA: I go meet a guy I found on the internet. He's digitally mapping every Jew who was displaced in Europe during the Nazi regime. I send him a \$10 donation and a note on facebook.

ANDREA: Three facebook exchanges later we realize we're both in Berlin and set up a time to meet.

ANDREA: His name is Roderick.

ANDREA: Roderick is one of these people who knows everything and everyone.

ANDREA: I'm telling him the story of my research.

ANDREA: I'm telling him I'm stuck. I'm telling him I know some of my relatives left but that I don't know how to find them.

ANDREA: I've been googling. I've turned up nothing.

ANDREA: They must have all changed names or married and divorced. And then some went to other countries, but where?

ANDREA: Then Roderick leans over to me.

ANDREA: and turns his face to the side.

ANDREA: He's whispering

ANDREA: about special archives.

ANDREA: Ones not on my radar.

ANDREA: He pronounces it carefully.

ANDREA: Landesamt für Bürger und Ordnungsangelegenheiten (LABO)

ANDREA: State Office for Citizen and Official Matters

ANDREA: Abt. I - Entschädigungsbehörde
Opfer des Nationalsozialismus

ANDREA: Department One -- Restitution Office
Victims of National Socialism.

ANDREA: It's on Fehrbellinerplatz he says. Right near the that field.

ANDREA: The one with the Thai food?

ANDREA: He nods.

ROD: If your relatives claimed restitutions, and don't get your hopes up because not everyone did, you'll be able to see an address for someone from the family perhaps as late as the 1980s.

ANDREA: My hopes are up.

ANDREA: I come from a long line of complainers.

ANDREA: If anyone would claim restitutions it's my people.

ROD: I'll get you the email of the archivist.

ROD: She and I used to have a thing but it all turned too complicated you know.

ROD: Commitment. Aaagh.

ROD: And don't let those archivists push you away.

ROD: They can be real bullies.

ROD: They can smell fear.

ROD: And they will attack.

ANDREA: I smile. A nice day in Berlin. Roderick tells me about his new girlfriend and his band.

ANDREA: And we drink our cappuccinis and sit in the sun and eat cake from a cafe near my house called Kuchenkultur which when I come back three weeks later will be closed.

ANDREA: But for now, none of that has happened yet and we are just here, drinking coffee in the sun.

SCENE 15:

NORBERT: I am really very very sorry.

NORBERT: On behalf of all the Germans.

NORBERT: I'm sorry about what happened to your family.

ANDREA: I smile.

ANDREA: I'm surrounded by files.

ANDREA: It's like the attic room of every document that every one of my relatives ever had.

ANDREA: And the archive will be kept forever. Well until all paper and digital files and everything else passes away.

NORBERT: I am an independent researcher. I am currently researching a Jewish family here in Berlin who owned a newspaper.

NORBERT: No relation to me though.

NORBERT: My parents were just unfortunately your ordinary Germans.

NORBERT: I know that doesn't have a good connotation. I also have a scanner you can use. If you need it.

ANDREA: A scanner?

NORBERT: Yes.

ANDREA: You don't mind if I use it?

NORBERT: I will help you.

ANDREA: This guy seems to have a lot of time on his hands.

ANDREA: And I really could use help.

ANDREA: I am completely overwhelmed.

ANDREA: I ordered files for every relative's name from the tree, alive or dead. Anyone who filed a claim would have a folder and that folder would have information.

ANDREA: About 3/4 of the names came back with a positive file match.

ANDREA: I hand him a pile.

ANDREA: And we work.

ANDREA: Names. Berlin Addresses. International addresses in the countries they emigrated to. Names of children.

ANDREA: Deportation dates. Next of kin.

ANDREA: International tracing service records confirming deaths in concentration camps.

ANDREA: Those alive claiming on the behalf of those who died.

ANDREA: I carefully pull out onion skin original testimonials:
lost property

ANDREA: lost furniture

ANDREA: travel costs

ANDREA: uncompensated labor

ANDREA: interrupted educations, loss of parents, loss of children, loss of health. Days in prison with food or without.

ANDREA: Correspondences go back and forth.

ANDREA: Doctors notes

ANDREA: Divorce proceedings.

ANDREA: Letters, letters, letters. Back and forth.

ANDREA: Frau So and so is now ten years older than when she first applied in 1953.

ANDREA: Now she is very much in need of this money.

ANDREA: She is suffering from a severe nervous disorder

ANDREA: relating to the 32 days she was held in prison

ANDREA: We urge for a speedy handling of these affairs

ANDREA: Roderick is right. Letters go through the mid '80's.

ANDREA: That's not even history.

ANDREA: I remember 1985.

ANDREA: I'm pulling out papers. Norbert is scanning.

ANDREA: We pull papers, scan, and refile.

ANDREA: Papers.

ANDREA: Papers.

ANDREA: Papers.

ANDREA: I am not alone.

Scene 16

ANDREA: It's 3AM.

ANDREA: Everyone's asleep. I can hear them breathing.

ANDREA: I have a pile of papers in front of me. All the scanned files. The family tree. The diary.

ANDREA: Printouts from the Berlin address books. Photos of apartment buildings.

ANDREA: Maybe this will be in the play.

ANDREA: Plays don't write themselves.

ANDREA: I think I'm quite aware of that situation.

MAX: October 14, 1948

ANDREA: I'm going back through the diary. It ends with his will.

MAX: These are a few comments and some more detailed explanations in order to palliate your imminent tasks, my beloved ones.

MAX : Last will and testament of Max N. Cohnreich will be either here in this desk or one of you will know where else it will be.

MAX: If they could be present at the funeral, I mean if the sent word about my decease would reach them in time, then please inform the following persons:

ANDREA: A long list of people.

ANDREA: You recognize some.

ANDREA: I'm going through everything I've scanned.

ANDREA: I'm tired.

ANDREA: Drink more coffee.

ANDREA: I wish I could sleep.

ANDREA: I'm making a computer file for each person. Basic

information, name, where they live, how they were affected
how much money they received.

ANDREA: The files all show the last address in Berlin. The date they left. Or were deported. Date of death. Documents proving death. I update my map. I update the tree.

ANDREA: This process used to be called “Wiedergutmachen”.

ANDREA: Means “to make good again”.

ANDREA: Somewhere along the way everyone realized there is no way to make it good again. So now it’s called restitution. I wonder what would happen in the US if we paid restitution. Native Americans? Slavery? Japanese-Americans? Cold hard cash.

MAX: Perhaps some other names will pass my mind later

MAX: Now to what you’ll find in my apartment

MAX: if and when you look for buried treasures

ANDREA: A long list of items.

ANDREA: I keep cataloging and reading. Every name gets a file, every file gets data.

ANDREA: Eventually I realize I am going to be able to figure out where everyone went and what they changed their names to.

ANDREA: Australia. Brazil. South Africa.
Israel. Argentina.

ANDREA: The United States.

ANDREA: An impossible archive.

ANDREA: It’s mostly in German.

ANDREA: Who am I doing this for?

ANDREA: Why?

ANDREA: For the families of the people I don’t know?

ANDREA: For the families of the people Max knew but didn't tell anyone about?

ANDREA: File. Sort. Arrange scans. Upload to dropbox.

ANDREA: I paid for a premium drop box subscription for this.

ANDREA: Three cousins of Max are in New York in 1946. And they have kids.

ANDREA: Why don't I know this?

ANDREA: Why have I never heard about this?

ANDREA: I feel like I should tell someone.

ANDREA: My Mom. David. Claire.

ANDREA: Does anyone care?

ANDREA: I'm googling.

ANDREA: I'm landing on Facebook pages of my third cousins.

ANDREA: One of them

ANDREA: looks kind of...boring. And rich.

ANDREA: And balding.

ANDREA: Google and facebook start spitting out pictures of relatives I didn't know I had.

ANDREA: I'm finding where they work. What their emails are.

ANDREA: I'm searching the white pages. Google maps.

ANDREA: One of them went to the same high school as me in New York, just six years earlier. I'm looking at her picture.

ANDREA: I always wanted a cousin.

ANDREA: Obviously no one wants to be in contact.

ANDREA: Otherwise we would be.

ANDREA: Maybe they don't know about you.

ANDREA: Maybe they don't want to.

ANDREA: You don't know.

ANDREA: You don't know.

SCENE 17: EA

FR. KRAUTZ: Sit down please, Frau Stollowitz.

ANDREA: It's Frau Krautz the archivist that Roderick knows. His ex-girlfriend. She's back from vacation.

ANDREA: She called me yesterday. They found Max's restitution folder.

ANDREA: At first they told me they didn't have it.

ANDREA: But that was just a transcription error on the side of the archivist.

ANDREA: They wrote the case number down wrong on the request form.

ANDREA: She drove to the off-site document storage facility and picked up Max's file.

ANDREA: She's apologizing that it took so long.

ANDREA: She hands me the folder.

ANDREA: Thank you.

ANDREA: Danke.

ANDREA: And she walks me down to the reference room where I can make myself comfortable.

ANDREA: It's empty. No other appointments for today. Just me.

ANDREA: I open the folder and she closes the door.

ANDREA: The first thing I notice. Which is unbelievable. Because I had been going on what's in the diary

ANDREA: is that his address is not Schlüterstraße 27.

ANDREA: The application lists his last German address as Schlüterstraße 53. He must have moved.

ANDREA: I feel stupid.

ANDREA: I got drunk and almost died in the snow in front of the wrong building.

ANDREA: Ok. Schlüterstraße 53.

ANDREA: I sit in this somewhat small, sort of run down archive reading room.

ANDREA: I look into the tiny courtyard of this wing of the building.

ANDREA: An office worker is outside having his cigarette.

ANDREA: He doesn't notice me.

ANDREA: Hours have gone by.

ANDREA: Is this what a life adds up to in the end?

ANDREA: What you're worth in dollars and cents?

ANDREA: What about family? How do you measure the value of family?

ANDREA: Frau Krautz comes in.

ANDREA: There's a second folder.

ANDREA: It's thin.

ANDREA: She's handing it to me. She's saying she knows I'll be leaving soon.

ANDREA: Going home.

ANDREA: And she leaves.

ANDREA: I open it.

ANDREA: It's Max's official last will and testament.

ANDREA: So here it is.

ANDREA: It's pretty much identical to the other one.

ANDREA: At first.

- ANDREA: Its language is more official and it's signed by three witnesses.
- ANDREA: One is Flora Cohnreich. Her signature bold and clear. Tante Flora. Former mother-in-law to Weigert.
- ANDREA: He asks for an obit in the Aufbau.
- ANDREA: He asks to have Mahler's adagiatto from the 5th symphony played.
- ANDREA: And then
- ANDREA: And then
- ANDREA: A paragraph that was not in the diary copy though the two documents have the same date.
- ANDREA: A paragraph that he left out of the diary.
- MAX: Paragraph D:
It would be very nice if all my beloved ones would meet on my birthday anniversaries and one of my grandchildren would read a chapter from my diary (in desk)
- ANDREA: A shiver goes down my spine. It's like he's speaking to me from beyond the grave.
- ANDREA: Why me?
- ANDREA: You wanted to know.
- MAX: My dear ones: you see each other so rarely, and I saw you all so seldom together that I would be happy to know, now you will be together and enjoy yourselves and perhaps talk about Papi and Grandpa and spend some time with each other.
- ANDREA: I'm staring at the file.
- ANDREA: He wanted us to spend time together.
- ANDREA: But we didn't do it.
- ANDREA: Why? In the face of all the death in Europe why couldn't we see each other in New York.

ANDREA: How could we have not made the effort?

SCENE 18: Max

ANDREA: ...

MAX: My darlings,

Today sat five old mourning women at my side in the subway, all of them in dignified black clothes and one in a cape.

Surely a husband had died.

Such is life and you will one day realize the truth of the bible saying "Let the dead bury the dead!"

Dear ones, life goes ahead. Let's get along.

I was told that all my odds and ends, these little trifles in this book are without interest for my future readers, you small rascals, Miss Claire Helen and you other little beloved cryers who will complete my family.

I will better try now to describe the most important event not only of my own experience but of my generation, that event which has influenced the life and welfare of all of us,

But the sun lights and warms the earth today so wonderfully that it bothers me just now to speak about such a gloomy topic.

My dearest children and honorable readers, please give me still a brief reprieve, a short delay that I could remember a more agreeable time, a better and nicer past.

Scene 19: Plane

ANDREA: It's August 4th 2015.

ANDREA: I'm at 39,000 feet.

ANDREA: In the belly of the plane are four boxes, two suitcases, and two duffles.

ANDREA: In the cabin are:

ANDREA: Four carry-on suitcases, wheeled variety

ANDREA: Four shoulder bags, backpacks really

ANDREA: Two children, mine

ANDREA: And one husband.

ANDREA: They're all happy.

ANDREA: Plugged in to movies or devices. Or sleeping.

ANDREA: I'm not feeling well.

ANDREA: Bad fish in Reykjavik I think.

ANDREA: We've been on vacation for the week in Iceland.

ANDREA: On the way home to Portland. From Berlin.

ANDREA: I look out the window.

ANDREA: Crazy to be so high.

ANDREA: The world's big out there.

ANDREA: Everyone probably thinks that.

ANDREA: I never said I was an original thinker.

ANDREA: I feel slightly dizzy, wedged into the seat, woozy from the fish in Iceland.

ANDREA: I sent the letters. In case you were wondering.

ANDREA: The night before I left Berlin.

ANDREA: To everyone I found on google.

ANDREA: My cousins.

ANDREA: And their descendants.

ANDREA: Australia. Brazil. South Africa.
Israel. Argentina. Chicago. New York.

ANDREA: I'd gone back and forth about it.

ANDREA: Families are hard.

ANDREA: What if I don't like them? Or they don't like me?

ANDREA: What if we are in opposition about politics.

ANDREA: Or religion.

ANDREA: Really the big worry is that they'll think that I want something from them.

ANDREA: But you do, don't you?

ANDREA: I don't know.

ANDREA: They'll get a letter from across the world from a long lost relative and they'll think, "what does she want".

ANDREA: So I offer them something. I send a photo of the apartment building of their relative and the cover page of the relative's restitution file.

ANDREA: I describe the contents. I write down the drop box link so they can read more if they want.

ANDREA: I'm writing them to give them information about their families.

ANDREA: That's why I obsessively scanned everything from those files, though I didn't know it then.

ANDREA: Some part of my brain must have known it.

ANDREA: I'm trying to turn history upside down.

ANDREA: To undo the undone.

ANDREA: To set things on the right path

ANDREA: A correction maybe.

ANDREA: I look down at the water.

ANDREA: The letters won't be faster than me.

ANDREA: Maybe they're even traveling trans-Atlantically with me.

ANDREA: Maybe they're somewhere down there, near the water.

ANDREA: Maybe they'll come by boat.

ANDREA: Do letters do that anymore?

ANDREA: I stare down at the ocean.

ANDREA: It's really blue down there.

ANDREA: I stand up and feel wobbly. Claustrophobic.

ANDREA: I head towards the front of the plane.

ANDREA: Just want to stretch my legs.

ANDREA: And as I stand there, waiting in the mid section of the plane
I look out the windows on both sides

ANDREA: All around, everywhere, it's all just blue, everywhere blue.

ANDREA: The ocean around me. The sky.

ANDREA: And the room starts to pulsate.

ANDREA: And spin.

ANDREA: I feel dizzy.

ANDREA: Breathe.

ANDREA: Breathe.

ANDREA: I look over at them.

ANDREA: The ones here.

ANDREA: The ones in the plane.

ANDREA: The ones who have been traveling with me all along.

ANDREA: My daughter waves at me.

ANDREA: They all look up.

ANDREA: Steady.

ANDREA: Steady.

ANDREA: Breathe.

ANDREA: I head back to my seat.

ANDREA: And as I plunk down

ANDREA: I close my eyes.

ANDREA: Everything is spinning.

ANDREA: My husband touches the back of my head.

ANDREA: My daughter squeezes my hand.

ANDREA: I sit up.

ANDREA: My son leans in

ANDREA (*sings*): Hush-a-bye, don't you cry,
Go to sleep my little baby.
When you wake you shall have
All the pretty little horses.

ANDREA: And in this moment

ANDREA: as I float mid-air

ANDREA: between Germany and America,

ANDREA: between Berlin and New York,

ANDREA: between now and then

ANDREA: The wide expanse of the Atlantic unfolds beneath me

ANDREA: And the past

ANDREA: is the present

ANDREA: is the future.

*Sound of plane accelerating into the future.
Blackout.*

END OF PLAY

