

[1] Another Sunrise

Libretto by Gene Scheer

A sleepless night. Krystyna Żywulska enters humming a melody and makes her way to a tape recorder and microphone on a table. She stares at the machine a moment then turns it on.

KRYSTYNA

This is Krystyna Żywulska. Sonia Landau, the nice Jewish girl from Łódź...

(She turns off the machine.)

What the hell am I doing? 4 a.m. My God. "Just turn it on and talk," she says. So easy! "Whatever pops into your head." So easy! You know what's easy to say, Professor? Nothing. You know just what I should say, Professor? Nothing. I have a nice home and a nice life. I don't need to say anything more. Oh hell.

(She turns the recorder on again.)

This is Krystyna Żywulska. Is it my real name? Professor, please. In my life, when it comes to such topics, there is nothing true. Here is what I can tell you: Krystyna Żywulska was born in 1918. Krystyna Żywulska was not a Jew. Krystyna Żywulska was a political prisoner in Auschwitz-Birkenau. A survivor.

Let's be clear: the words of a survivor are like stars in the sky. They illuminate only a tiny piece of the past.

Look up. Look up.

No matter what is spoken of the night

There will always be more darkness than light.

Hm. That's not bad.

So, I can't sleep. And all night, this tune, over and over...

It was always in my head but I never found the words. And there were always words. Words for tunes we all knew. Words we could sing together. Words while we worked in the Effektenkammer. Where we took their possessions, wrote down every item with precision, before they were marched in line next door to the ovens. Next door. Amid the screams and cries, the stench, I could always find words. Always words. But not for this tune.

(She turns off the machine.)

This stupid machine. I hate it. You hear that? A survivor is not a hero. A survivor is a survivor. But that word. That word.

(She turns on the machine.)

Professor, describe something – *anything*. The moment it is spoken, it is changed. No matter how clear the words. Listen:

That canyon is deep.
That canyon is a mile deep.
That canyon is so deep, when a rock hits bottom
I cannot hear the echo.

"What happened in Auschwitz?" This is a stupid question. What words can capture those echoes?

A transport arrives at 4am, this one from Holland. A thousand women, just like my own transport the year before. But now I have a position in the camp. The women must line up for inventory, but there is chaos, confusion. They run in circles, crying: "Where is my mother?" "Where is my child?" "Where are we?" "Auschwitz? Oh, God!"

And Magda tells me: "Krysia, hit them! Get them in line now! Beat them, Krysia! Get them to mind you. Do it, Krysia! Do your job now, or go back to the fields and die there with your poems." I cannot move or breathe. The

women look at me, eyes wide, desperate. I look away. Magda says: "What will it be, Krysia? You or them?"

And I feel my arm rise. Feel my fist grow strong. I hear my voice say: "I will beat you. Hit you. Get into line! I will break you, kick you, if you don't mind me." Brava, Krysia. Brava. You will not be one of the dead today. Brava. You did not die.

My name is Krystyna Żywulska. Krystyna Żywulska lives. But nothing of her past exists as of today.

(She ponders turning off the machine, but stops herself.)

Zosha is dying while prisoners next door play waltzes for the SS. The length of a waltz is the time that I have to fulfill her last request. A cup of hot water is all that she asks. Forbidden. But, Zosha's the last of my friends from our transport a year ago. I must try. So I run and steal a cup of hot water. She sips, smiles and says: "Thank you, Krysia." Closes her eyes and whispers: "There are no words, Krysia. There are no words." Then the waltz ends and I leave her.

Look up. Look up...

Professor, not long ago I took my mother and husband to Auschwitz. I was in a fever to show them everything. Look! Here is where Zosha died, here was our barracks. Over here. Here were the ovens next door to the *Effektenkammer*. There. Over there was... And over here was...

My husband says: "Krysia, nothing is there. Only grass. What happened exists only in your head now."

And I thought: "Why did I come?" A museum for tourists. It sickened me. Day trippers with packets of sandwiches.

Sometimes, often, I feel so cut off. I look at this machine, the reels spinning round and round, and think of something endlessly hovering, circling. Held in a path, unable ever to spin away. Unable ever to come down.

(She turns off the machine and hums the tune again.)

For some melodies, there are no words.

(She rewinds the tape all the way. Removes it from the machine and throws it into the garbage. After awhile, she threads a new tape into the machine and turns it on again.)

This is Krystyna Żywulska. I just saw another sunrise.

(She turns off the machine.)

THE END

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Farewell, Auschwitz

Lyrics by Gene Scheer

Based on Polish lyrics by Krystyna Żywulska (1914-1993) written when she was imprisoned at Auschwitz-Birkenau.

[2] Prologue: For Maria

For our dear Maria on her name day
From all of those with whom she shared the good and the bad
And whom she helped to endure
We dedicate this song.

[3] Soldiers

I do not need millions
just paper and a pencil.
(And poetry, above all poetry.)
Letters are the only soldiers we need.

An alphabet of warriors standing
Shoulder to shoulder.
Do not forget us
when you get older.
An alphabet of warriors
Like us, standing

Shoulder to shoulder
Threaded with the marrow of memory
Into lines of defense.
Shoulder to shoulder.
Do not forget us
when you get older.

[4] Diamonds

Soon, soon I will take you away.
Look what has happened!
Fate has given me so many diamonds
They're falling out of my pockets
And now I have pictures of you
In hundreds of gold lockets.

Soon, soon I will take you away.
But, not yet. Today is not the day.
A bit longer longer we have to wait
Oh, haven't we been blessed by fate!

Soon, soon I will take you away.
But, not yet. Not yet. Not yet.

[5] In The Cards

I sat in the barracks playing solitaire.
It was forbidden. I did not care.
Lost in the cards, I did not see
When Janda suddenly came up to me:
"You'll have to pay for this, you fool!
You know the rule!
Thirty minutes, kneel on the ground.
You'll be watched by the guards."
I remember being amazed
I had not seen this coming in the cards!

[6] Irenka

Irenka, why are you crying?
Is it because somebody took your chair?
Irenka, are you crying because it isn't fair?
Are you crying because all your dreams lie in tatters?
Or is it because wanting just a chair
Is all that matters?

[7] Miss Ziutka

Miss Ziutka types so quickly.
Miss Ziutka types so perfectly.
With each stroke her longing starts to disappear.
How does typing make happiness seem near?
Oh, Miss Ziutka!
With each stroke she holds her child
Who only cries from joy.
It's here that Miss Ziutka is in complete control.
Miss Ziutka remains the captain of her own soul.
In the striking of every key,
Miss Ziutka thinks she's almost free.

[8] The Sun and the Skylark

First Woman:
The sun is warming me
As it did before.
It gives all of itself
just as it did before the war.

Second Woman:
Last night, I heard a skylark sing
The same song she has sung for ages

A song of flight
A song of hunger
Of love
Of freedom
Not of cages.

[9] Farewell, Auschwitz

Take off your striped clothes,
Kick off your clogs.
Stand with me,
Hold your shaved head high.
The song of freedom upon our lips
Will never, never die.

Is it something from which you wake?
A nightmare or a fairytale?
No! It really happened.
No!
We were there.
We were there.
We were there.

Five chimneys belching smoke.
On burning flesh and blood we'd choke.
Yes! It really happened.
Yes!
We were there.
We were there.
We were there.

Farewell, Auschwitz
And savage Birkenau
When winter winds blow
through the empty barracks
Our song will linger
And everyone will know.

Take off your striped clothes,
Kick off your clogs.
Stand with me,
Hold your shaved head high.
The song of freedom upon our lips
Will never, never die.

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For a Look or a Touch

Lyrics by Gene Scheer

Based on entries from Manfred Lewin's journal in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington DC; and interviews from the film Paragraph 175, directed by Rob Epstein & Jeffrey Friedman, copyright Reflective Image, Inc. Used by permission.

[10] The Voice

A void consumes me.
My spirit and body are suddenly lame.
Terror fills the time that follows.
Will each new day be the same?

Often I feel utterly abandoned
See myself on the edge of an abyss,
And I become dizzy as I look down,
With blood-drained cheeks that you would kiss.

Suddenly from the darkest depths,
A loving voice echoes and seeks me out.
I look down and ask: "Who is calling?"
And I hear a voice that ends all doubt.

It is the voice of a sanctified power,
The sacred place where fears dissolve.

The unyielding blessing, the generous heart
The voice of souls in perfect resolve.

[11] Golden Years

Wild! Free!
We are wild! We are free!
Topsy turvy, joyful Berlin.

You are free! You are wild!
Topsy turvy child of Berlin.
Golden years. Golden years.

Give me a look or a touch and I'll know.
A wink or a nod or a glance.
We don't need words. Just stand very close.
Let's not miss out on a chance for love tonight.

A look or a touch and I'll know you're the one.
A grin or a smile.
Just for a while, tonight or a lifetime,
Let's not miss out on a chance for love right now.

Dance with me.
This is the Schwanenberg,
hottest spot in Berlin.
Meet and greet and eat and cheat and swing.

What a band! What a crowd at Schwanenberg!
Take my hand, dance all night at Schwanenberg!
Let's have a laugh now. Let's have some fun.
Shout: "Police!"
Then watch 'em pull their skirts up and run!

Everybody's running around.
Screaming!
Laughing!
Giddy from the joy of this town
And these Golden years. Golden years.

While we are young, wild and free let's keep dancing.
Let's not miss out on a thing.
And if we should find we're of the same mind,
A look or a touch could lead to a precious night of love.

"Police!"

[12] A Hundred Thousand Stars

One by one. One by one.

A hundred thousand stars, love,
Have fallen from the sky.
A hundred thousand dreams gone
A hundred thousand sighs
A hundred thousand whispers
Promises and lies
The constellations change
Our stories rearranged
And darkness fills the sky.

A hundred thousand stars, love,
Have vanished from the sky.
A hundred thousand candle flames
Flicker out and die.
Our laughter in the night, love,
When you would hold me tight, love,
Like shadows on a wall
Nobody will recall.

Who will remember when starlight filled the skies?
As I will always remember how it filled your eyes.
Every star had a name.
Every one was a light.

What is that I hear love?
A train is passing by.
Another star has vanished,
Stolen from the sky.
Hush, my love! Hush, my love!

You must not be afraid now
This will not be the end.
A hundred million stars will be born
To fill the sky again.
You never are alone, love,
I swear I'm by your side.
There's very little light.
Aufwiedersehen, adieu,
Good night, my love.
Good night.

[13] The Story of Joe

Horror and savagery are the law.
I am a silent, obedient shadow.
Dead to myself. Dead to the world.
A silent, obedient shadow.

Lined up for roll call,
They pull out Joe,
A loving friend, 18 years old.
Good boy. He's a good boy, Joe.

What has he done?
What is his crime?
His jacket bears a pink triangle.
Be still. Just keep in line.
Be a good boy, Joe. Be obedient, Joe.

They strip him naked,
Put a bucket on his head,
Then sic their dogs on him.
They bite his body,
Tear at his thighs,
Blood everywhere.
His screams and cries
Amplified by the bucket on his head.
Ah! Ah!

Goodbye, Joe.

And on the speakers
They play a waltz.
Back to work.
Silent, obedient shadows.

[14] Silence

(A wordless melody)

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