

THE BUBBLE-GUM TREE

Cast:

The "Ossis":

East German Dance Company:

Comrade Petra Freidel (choreographer).....early/mid twenties
Katja ("the Little Mermaid").....late teens
Sven ("the Prince").....late teens
Markus ("the Prince's companion").....late teens
Julia ("the Princess").....late teens
Karolin ("the Sea-Witch").....late teens
Marta ("Daughter of the Air").....late teens
Florian("the King").....late teens/early 20s
Jurgen (Senior dancer).....early 20s
Monika (Senior dancer).....late teens/early 20s
Claudia (Senior dancer).....late teens/early 20s
Ulrike (junior).....mid-late teens
Thomas (junior).....mid-late teens
Lena (Senior dancer, Inga's older sister).early 20s

Pioneers:

Leader (Comrade Hempel).....early-mid 20s
Inga (Lena's younger sister).....11
Rosa (Lena's friend).....11-12
Sabine.....11-12
Lea.....11-12
Ute.....11-12
(+ extra pioneer/dancers)

Stasi Officers:

Officer 1 (Comrade Weber).....mid 20s
Officer 2 (Comrade Neubert).....early mid 20s

Beate (a young girl).....10 or younger

The "Wessis"

West Berlin High School students:

Henning.....15-16
Tanja (Henning's younger sister).....13-14
Silke (Tanja's new friend).....13-14
Daniele (the same).....13-14
Gabriele (the same).....13-14
Klaus.....15-16
Stefan.....15-16
Jorg.....15-16
Karin.....14-15
Anja.....14-15

PROLOGUE.

AV Projection: original black and white newsreel footage of the Berlin Wall going up, and East Berliners trying to jump to freedom from upper storey windows, accompanied by excited narration and dramatic music.

Images and sound fades.

SCENE 1

AV Title: "Flat 4, Apartment Block 7, Keibelstrasse, East Berlin."

Grubby flat. Inga, asleep in bed. Beate (ghostly, her voice echoing) appears nearby, out of the shadows.

BEATE

(to audience)

She only lets me out at night, and even then she doesn't want to. In the day I'm hidden, but at night, when she's asleep, she can't help herself. She hears echoes, voices, they make her shout out sometimes. Her sister, Lena, can hear her in the next room. Sometimes Lena asks if she's talking to an imaginary friend. She's not, she's trying to get me to go away. But I can't go away- I sit in the corner of her mind like a broken doll, or a spider. As soon as she knows I'm there, the dreams start. Tonight's dream is of a fairy-story Daddy used to tell. The Little Mermaid. Just now she can hear Daddy's voice, true and clear, just as it was before she found herself forgetting what it sounded like. He's closing the book, saying: "I bet you'd like to be a mermaid, wouldn't you, Inga." And then Lena, who's younger in the dream- Lena says Inga's not graceful enough to be a mermaid. Lena knows about being graceful- she wants to be a ballet dancer when she's older. And now Inga's watching Daddy leave the room, she wants him not to, she shouts out, but he goes anyway, and the light disappears behind the closing door-

SFX of echoing door slamming shut. Ominous underscore.

BEATE (CONT'D)

-and she feels herself becoming a mermaid, sliding under water. But it's not like the story, it's different.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Music, sea SFX. As she speaks dancers appear like ghosts around her in shadow, moving as if underwater. Inga sits up, listens to Beate, becomes lifted, manoeuvred by the dancers, who express and realise physically what Beate describes.

BEATE (CONT'D)

It's dark and cold and frightening.
She's swimming, and it's night, she can swim down, into the depths, but there are shadows, sometimes a shadow bumps against her leg, and she looks down and sees an giant eye, empty and staring. Then it flicks away into the blackness.

She and Inga stare at each other. SFX of alarm clock. Dancers pull away. Petra appears.

PETRA

Thank you!

Other SFX fade. Lights change, bed-room, girl, Inga, disappear, dancers snap into real time, relax, stretch, as if having finished a section of dance.

PETRA (CONT'D)

Better, that time. Fractionally. Markus, still too slow on your entr'chats. Leon come further forward on the crosses, you're blocking Monika. Ulrike, look at me, what are your arms doing? Nothing, exactly. There are reasons for having arms. Inexperience is no excuse. Improve please. By this evening.

ULRIKE

Sorry, Comrade Freidel.

PETRA

I haven't time for sorry. Thomas, step forward.

He does so.

PETRA (CONT'D)

I understand that being young and new to the ballet corps can be a confusing time. However, let me ask you a simple question- When dancing with a partner of the opposite sex, which part of her is it traditional to look at?

Pause

PETRA (CONT'D)

It's not a trick question.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FLORIAN
(under, but audible)
 Thomas... her tits.

Sniggering from others.

PETRA
 Thank you, Florian. Thomas, answer the question.

THOMAS
 Her... eyes, Comrade Freidel?

PETRA
 Well done. Try and avoid staring at their more fleshy protruberances if you can. And try not to dribble.

Stifled laughter from the others.

PETRA (CONT'D)
 Sven, here, in his short time with us, has achieved the ability to restrict his dribbling to the breaks between dancing. Well done, Sven.

SVEN
 Thank you, Comrade Freidel.

PETRA
 Now's your opportunity, Sven.
(up)
 Ten minutes!

The dancers start to exit.

PETRA (CONT'D)
 Anyone misconstruing the meaning of the phrase "ten minutes" will not perform this evening. Understood?

SOME DANCERS
 Yes, Comrade.

SCENE 2

AV Title: "Outside the East German State Opera, Unter Den Linden, East Berlin."

SFX street traffic. Portico and steps of Opera building. Dancers appear, sit smoking, drinking Tea.

THOMAS
(entering, to girls)
 I wasn't really staring, you know- I'm sorry-

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARKUS

Don't worry about it. They're flattered. They love being stared at.

MONIKA

Florian always stares at us.

CLAUDIA

Florian's an animal.

KAROLIN

They're all animals, bless them.

Inga, Rosa (in School/Pioneer uniform) enter.

INGA

(to Lena)

Hey, Lena? Are you coming? We're going to miss the bus.

Lena approaches.

LENA

I've got a performance. Didn't I tell you?

INGA

No. What performance?

LENA

I'm sure I told you. Command performance, invites only. Important Wessis, Americans, that kind of thing.

INGA

You didn't tell me.

LENA

You'll be all right, won't you. You've got the bus fare?

INGA

Yes.

LENA

Well then. There'll be something in the fridge, ham or something. If Tante Maria smells of drink, just go straight to your room and lock the door. Talk to your secret friend, ok?

Rosa looks up. Pause. Florian appears.

FLORIAN

Our gorgeous Comrade Leader is waiting.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LENA
*(standing, stubbing out
 her cigarette)*
 Wish me luck, then. Might meet a
 handsome Prince tonight. Then we could
 go and live in his castle. Couldn't we.

INGA
 Why are you talking to me like I'm a
 baby?

Pause

LENA
(cool)
 I'll be late, so don't wait up. Stick
 to the street lights when you get off
 the bus, all right?

Lena and the other dancers exit.

INGA
(quiet)
 I haven't got a secret friend, that was
 just a joke...

Pause

ROSA
 Listen. I've got something to show you.

INGA
 What?

ROSA
(exiting)
 Come with me.

INGA
(following)
 What about the bus?

ROSA
(off)
 It's on the same route, one stop!

SCENE 2

AV Title: "Cultural Attache's residence, West Berlin."

*A well appointed teenage girl's bed-room. Gabriele, Daniele
 and Silke apply make-up to each other. Tanja demonstrates
 ballet moves to her friends.*

TANJA
 This is first position... second...
 plie.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She reaches out her arm slowly.

TANJA (CONT'D)

This is called "Allonge", when you do this. You have to do it gracefully.

GABRIELE

You look really good.

(to Daniele)

Don't you think?

DANIELE

Yeah. Really.

SILKE

Like, you know, a professional? Can someone do my nails?

TANJA

That's what I want to be. When I'm older. Do you think I could? Not being silly.

DANIELE

What, like a ballerina?

TANJA

Uh-huh.

SILKE

You could so be a ballerina.

GABRIELE

Definitely.

SILKE

Completely.

TANJA

Thanks. I mean I know I could. I'm not being, you know, whatever- I just really think I could.

DANIELE

You really could.

GABRIELE

Definitely.

SILKE

You could be one now.

TANJA

I could, couldn't I. You know when you've just got it. You know, inside.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DANIELE

You've definitely got it.
(to Gabriele)
 Hasn't she.

SILKE

Completely.

GABRIELE

Totally.

SILKE

(looking at her nails)
 I way love this colour.

DANIELE

There's a dance club at school, you should join it.

GABRIELE

Yeah, Frau Jacob takes it, on a thursday, in the hall.

SILKE

(over)
 Thursday in the hall.

TANJA

Yeah, not being funny, or anything, I'm just not sure if it would be, you know-good enough for me? Not being silly. I went to this special place, when we were in Hamburg. For like, the ones who were really good? I need to find something like that in West Berlin. Daddy said he'd make inquiries.

Pause

TANJA (CONT'D)

He's taking us to the East in a bit. Some Embassy function or something. Like a party.

GABRIELE

That's nice.

TANJA

They're putting on a ballet display. East German State Opera. He said he'd take me and Henning. I nagged him for like an hour.

SILKE

Who's Henning?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

TANJA

My incredibly ugly and annoying older brother. Trust me, don't even go there.

DANIELE

You'll need to put on a gas mask. In the East. The Ossis don't have deodorant. Can't afford it.

GABRIELE

They reek.

TANJA

Really?

SILKE

And their breath. You got to keep away. Like a metre, minimum.

TANJA

Seriously?

GABRIELE

Seriously.

TANJA

Don't they have tooth-paste?

SILKE

It's like chalk, or something.

GABRIELE

Everything they eat is out of tins. Like dog-food. My Dad said.

DANIELE

Everything's completely old, and like, out of date. All the clothes are really bad. But if they try to leave, you know, climb over the wall, or whatever, they put them in prison, or shoot them or something.

GABRIELE

There was this one, right, they shot him, as he was running across and he fell down in the death strip.

TANJA

The what?

SILKE

The death strip. Between the wall and the barbed wire. On the Ossi side. It's this strip of sand so the guards can see if there are foot-prints or not.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

GABRIELE

Anyway, this guy gets shot, and no one went to get him. Each side was too afraid the other side would shoot at them. He just lay there on the sand till he bled to death. People filmed it. It looked like he was sunbathing. On a beach. You know, 'cos of the sand. He was eighteen.

Pause

TANJA

But the ballet's really good, isn't it. In the East. That's what Daddy said.

GABRIELE

Maybe. No one knows.

Henning enters.

HENNING

Dad says it's time to get ready.

TANJA

Excuse me? You're meant to knock. This is, like, private. Girls only.

HENNING

(ignoring her)

He's given you enough time to have a full-blown make-up crisis, but only if you start slapping it on right now.

TANJA

Really funny.

(to the others)

Sorry about him. My brother. Thinks he's really clever.

HENNING

(exiting)

I am really clever.

TANJA

No, you're just really sad.

SCENE 3

AV Title: "Outside The American Embassy, Unter Den Linden, East Berlin."

A street corner, high railings, a linden tree. Street SFX. Inga and Rosa enter. Rosa looks through railings.

INGA

What is it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROSA
This.

INGA
What? What are you looking at?

ROSA
America.

INGA
What?

ROSA
In there. American Embassy. They've just opened it. If you're in there, it's legally like you're in America.

INGA
Do they have American food?

ROSA
Probably. Sweets and coca-cola and everything.

Pause

INGA
That must be who my sister's dancing for.

ROSA
Is she famous?

INGA
I don't think so. She wants to be.

ROSA
I'd like to be a ballerina.

INGA
She says you get arthritis when you're thirty.

ROSA
Are you going to be one?

INGA
She says I'm not graceful enough.

Pause

ROSA
Still, it must be fun having a ballerina to look after you.

INGA
She's not my mum.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ROSA
But she looks after you, doesn't she.

Pause

INGA
Kind of. Not really.

ROSA
Who does look after you, then?

INGA
My Aunt. Maria.

ROSA
I thought... your sister said-

INGA
(quickly)
Sometimes she's ok.

Pause

ROSA
Don't you get lonely.

INGA
Sometimes. Everyone does.

Pause

ROSA
*(brightly changing the
subject)*
So, are you coming to Pioneers
tomorrow? It's graduation. They'll be
giving out certificates.

INGA
Not to me, they won't.

ROSA
You were just unlucky last time.

INGA
You think.

Inga stands, looks through the railings up at the tree.

INGA (CONT'D)
I'd like to climb that tree.

ROSA
You'd have to climb the railings first.
You'd be arrested. That's American soil
in there.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

SFX of bus.

ROSA (CONT'D)
(relieved)
 That's my bus. Yours'll be along soon.
(as she exits)
 Don't forget about Pioneers!

Inga sits on her own. SFX of wind in trees.

TANJA
*(off-stage, other side of
 the railings)*
 Henning! There's a nest, look! In the
 tree trunk! Henning! Where are you?

*Inga jumps up, moves into shadow. SFX of approaching
 footsteps.*

HENNING
(from off)
 We're going to be late-

TANJA
 See if there are eggs. Or chicks. Just
 quickly.

HENNING
 You see.

TANJA
 My nail varnish isn't dry.

Pause

HENNING
 No, nothing. Empty. Come on.

*Sound of footsteps receding. Inga reappears. SFX of bus
 approaching.*

SCENE 4

**AV Title: "East German State Opera, Unter Den Linden, East
 Berlin."**

*Theatre. A graceful piece of ballet/dance comes to an end.
 Applause SFX. Segues to-*

SCENE 5

State Opera, changing room. Dancers changing.

MARKUS
 Personally, I thought I was fabulous.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JURGEN

Did you see how bored they looked.

MARKUS

They weren't bored, they were awe-struck. Who's got fags?

MONIKA

Did you see how fat they were? That's what happens if you live in the West too long.

KAROLIN

All Americans are fat. It's written into their constitution.

KATJA

There was one old guy, really staring at me. Creeping me out.

MARKUS

What, worse than Thomas? Was he dribbling?

THOMAS

I wasn't dribbling, I swear-

MARKUS

Thomas can't help it, can you Thomas.
(to Florian)
At least he's not a screamer.

FLORIAN

Who are you calling a screamer?

SVEN

You're all screamers.

MARKUS

Takes one to know one.

JURGEN

Girls, please-

KAROLIN

I'd take Thomas over some wrinkly perv any day.

SVEN

Hey, Thomas, you're in.

THOMAS

Great.

KAROLIN

(to Thomas)
Thanks for the enthusiasm.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

THOMAS

No- I didn't mean-

MONIKA

Bless him! You're confusing the poor baby.

MARKUS

Who was young Thomas staring at anyway?-
We never found out-

THOMAS

I wasn't-

CLAUDIA

(grabbing Ulrike)

This little ballet dancer here.

ULRIKE

(smiling)

Stop it-

MONIKA

That's so sweet!-

KAROLIN

Can I be bridesmaid?-

CLAUDIA

They're so in love, look at them!-

ULRIKE

No we're not! No one's getting married.

MARKUS

Wouldn't you girls like some Wessi
sugar-daddies? Drive you places and buy
you ice-cream?

MONIKA

As long as I could have a boy on the
side-

CLAUDIA

A Wessi boy, obviously-

KATJA

I'd rather eat my ballet shoes.

FLORIAN

Let me let me. I've got a thing about
girls' shoes. I like to sniff them.

JURGEN

You've got a thing about everything.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

FLORIAN

Just 'cos I've got more testosterone
than you, gay-boy.

CLAUDIA

Why are you all so obsessed with who's
gay?

JURGEN

No one's gay.

THOMAS

There was a directive from Chairman
Honecker. No gays in the DDR.

FLORIAN

Which is ironic seeing as he's famously
gay himself.

Beat

JURGEN

(quiet, angry)

Are you an idiot?

(to Ulrich)

And you, arse-wipe.

(indicating Florian)

Don't mistake him for someone clever.

THOMAS

Sorry.

FLORIAN

It's a joke-

JURGEN

Don't involve me in your jokes. All
right. They're never funny.

FLORIAN

All right. Jesus.

(loud)

I take it back! Whoever's listening, I
take it back!

(to Jurgen)

Happy?

THOMAS

Would they really put bugs in here? In
a changing room?

FLORIAN

Of course not, Uncle Grumpy-pants is a
little bit paranoid.

MARKUS

You'll grow to love him over time.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

SVEN

Not in a gay way, obviously.

JURGEN

(quiet)

You haven't got a clue. None of you.

Pause

MARKUS

Well that's killed the mood. Why has nobody given me a fag? It's a simple enough request.

KATJA

I'll give you a fag if you shut up.

FLORIAN

(to Katja)

Hey, Katja, if you snog me, I'll shut up too.

KATJA

Ugh. In your dreams.

(to Lena)

Are you coming? Apparently there's soft drinks upstairs.

JURGEN

No schnapps, then.

JULIA

Do you want us to wait?

LENA

You go, I'm nearly ready.

MARKUS

Come on arse-wipes, polite faces for the Yankees.

KATJA

Can someone make sure we don't get groped.

MARKUS

(exiting)

We'll form a protective ring-

FLORIAN

(exiting)

If anyone's doing any groping, it's going to be me.

(grabbing Claudia)

Ha!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

CLAUDIA
(exiting)
 Get off, idiot!

By now all the dancers except Lena have left. Henning enters.

HENNING
 Sorry. I was looking for the- sorry.

He turns to go, stops. Pause.

HENNING (CONT'D)
 I- I thought you were all really good,
 by the way. I mean not by the way. I
 mean "by the way" means you've said
 something already which I hadn't. Like
 if we'd already had a conversation.
 Stupid. I just meant- you know... by
 the way. Sorry.

Pause

LENA
 You're German.

HENNING
 Yes.

Pause. Henning doesn't know whether to go or stay. Lena takes out eye-liner and a compact mirror, applies eye make-up.

HENNING (CONT'D)
 I don't really- get ballet. I mean I
 don't mind it. My sister's mad on it.
 All she does. You know. Around the
 house. All those- moves. You know- like
 you do. Only not as good. Obviously. I
 mean *she's* not as good. Obviously.
 You're much better. You know, loads.

Pause

LENA
 Right.

Pause

HENNING
 Sorry. You're probably getting changed
 or something.

He turns to go.

LENA
 Are you from the West?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

HENNING
(turning back)
 Yes.

LENA
 Which part?

HENNING
 Hamburg originally. Now we're in West Berlin. Just over the wall. My dad's been made um- Cultural Attache- something. Ha. Boring. That's why I'm here. I'm going to be working in the American Embassy in the summer. The one they've opened down the road. You know, like a placement. Filing or something. Boring. Ha.

Pause

LENA
 How old are you?

HENNING
 Eighteen.

Pause

LENA
 And in reality?

Beat

HENNING
 Sixteen. How about you.

LENA
 I'm very old. Nearly dead.

HENNING
 You don't look any older than me.

LENA
 That's where you're wrong. I'm ancient.

HENNING
 What do you mean? Tell me- really. How old are you?

Pause

LENA
 Doesn't matter.

HENNING
 All right, I'll guess, then-

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

LENA
(*sharp*)
Don't.

Pause

HENNING
All right. Whatever, sorry.

Pause

HENNING (CONT'D)
(*turning*)
Anyway, I'd better be-

LENA
Is it nice, then?-

HENNING
What?

Beat

LENA
West Berlin. I used to go there when I was young, but then... the wall, you know. I can't remember what it looks like.

HENNING
It's all right, I guess. Tiergarten's nice. I've not been there long-

LENA
Is it nicer than over here?

HENNING
I- I don't-

LENA
Do you have bubble gum? In the West?

HENNING
Yes. Of course. Don't you?

LENA
Only if your father knows someone in the party. You know, high up.

Pause

HENNING
I could get you some. Next time I'm here.

LENA
Mm-hm.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (8)

HENNING

You'd have to give me your address.

LENA

I don't think so. We'd both get into trouble.

HENNING

Why?

LENA

Trust me.

HENNING

Just for bubble-gum? That's crazy.

LENA

Ask your father. He'll explain.

Pause

HENNING

I could leave it for you. Somewhere.
Like a spy.

She looks at him. Beat.

LENA

(quiet)

A what?

HENNING

(sudden, excited)

I know!- I know the place. I was there earlier. At the Embassy. It's only two blocks down from here. There's a tree. A huge linden. In the corner of the Embassy gardens, right next to the railings. There's a hole in the bough, big enough to fit your hand in. There was an old nest in it- My sister thought there might be eggs in it, so I took it out, but it was abandoned. It's a perfect hiding place. You can reach in from the street. Through the railings. Just- you know, make sure no one's looking, tie your lace or something- reach in, bingo.

Pause

LENA

(a half smile)

You like playing at spies?

Pause

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (9)

HENNING

Do want some bubble-gum or not?

Tanja's voice, from off.

TANJA

Henning! Are you down there? Daddy says it's time to go!

HENNING

(calling)

Coming!

(to the Lena)

My sister. Pain. I'll be back next week. With bubble-gum. Check the tree in a week's time- Saturday. I dare you.

TANJA

Henning!

He exits.

SCENE 6

AV Title: "Stasi Operations Post, Karl Marx strasse, East Berlin."

A Stasi listening centre near the Embassy. Stasi Officer 1 sits at a desk wearing head-phones. Stasi Officer 2 enters, puts some food in front of Stasi officer 1, then sits at his own desk.

STASI OFFICER 1

(re-winding a tape-machine)

This is interesting.

STASI OFFICER 2

What?

STASI OFFICER 1

Listen.

He passes head-phones. We hear an SFX section of conversation from previous scene, between Henning and Lena, verbatim.

STASI OFFICER 2

(putting down head-phones - SFX stop)

Where's that?

STASI OFFICER 1

Lower changing room, State Opera. Six-thirty-eight this evening. Seems to be just two of them.

Stasi Officer 2 listens again.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STASI OFFICER 2
Good, isn't it. The quality.

STASI OFFICER 1
Work of art. Worth all the work. You
can hear their armpit hair rustling.

STASI OFFICER 2
Should we transcribe?

STASI OFFICER 1
Of course.

STASI OFFICER 2
What's the event, again?

STASI OFFICER 1
Ballet with string quartet, champagne
and "amuses-bouches". Apparently the
West German Cultural Attache's daughter
is keen on dancing. We thought we'd
show the imperialists how it's done.
This must be the brother talking.
(*checks a sheet*)
Henning Kreuzer. Little panting dog.

STASI OFFICER 2
Who's *she*?- One of your lady-friend's
protegees?

STASI OFFICER 1
Must be a senior dancer. One of the
tasty ones, I reckon. I bet little
Henning Kreuzer wants to give her more
than just bubble-gum.

STASI OFFICER 2
Ha. So- transcribe. I guess?

STASI OFFICER 1
I just said. But- don't send it up just
yet. We'll sit on it for a bit. See if
grows into something better. Alert Two-
Nine-Seven. Watch that tree. Keep an
eye.

STASI OFFICER 2
(*checking through papers*)
Who's Two-Nine-Seven?
(*finding a name on a list*)
Two-Nine-Seven. Of course, the ballet
dancer.

STASI OFFICER 1
Poof.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

STASI OFFICER 2

Right.

STASI OFFICER 1

I mean in the sense that they're all poofs. Two-Nine-Seven's good, though. Very sensitive Unofficial Co-worker. Easily scared. Frightened of his father.

STASI OFFICER 2

Why?

STASI OFFICER 1

His father doesn't know he's a poof.

Pause

STASI OFFICER 2

Why don't you just talk to your girl-friend? She must have her ear to the ground.

STASI OFFICER 1

They're too scared of her. Status thing. I'm sure they know about her relationship with me. Better to use someone who can be confided in. Like a nice, frightened poof.

Pause

STASI OFFICER 2

She's something, your girl-friend.

STASI OFFICER 1

Don't I know it. She's wearing me out.

STASI OFFICER 2

Really?

STASI OFFICER 1

Haven't slept for weeks.

STASI OFFICER 2

Really? Lucky dog.

Stasi Officer 2 starts to transcribe, stops.

STASI OFFICER 2 (CONT'D)

Is this worth it? They're only kids.

STASI OFFICER 1

She's not. Listen to her. She's playing with him. She's the one who mentioned bubble-gum. If that's not planting a seed I don't know what is.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

STASI OFFICER 2
But they haven't done anything wrong.

STASI OFFICER 1
Not yet. But- You know. Hormones. Might get juicy.

Pause

STASI OFFICER 2
Are you a pervert?

STASI OFFICER 1
Of course. Perk of the job. Anyway, we need a result. You know Maiyer? You know he nailed that novelist.

STASI OFFICER 2
I wish he'd stop going on about it.

STASI OFFICER 1
He's off the desk. Up three levels. Commendation from Mielke.

STASI OFFICER 2
You're kidding. Since when?

STASI OFFICER 1
Last week. He's getting a new flat.

STASI OFFICER 2
That's just luck. He got lucky. He even admits it.

STASI OFFICER 1
We have to make our own luck. Says so in the rules. So transcribe.

Pause. Stasi Officer 2 fiddles with the head-phones.

STASI OFFICER 1 (CONT'D)
Aren't you a pervert?

STASI OFFICER 2
(thinking)
I don't know. I don't think so.

STASI OFFICER 1
Why are you here, then?

STASI OFFICER 2
(cautious, as if being tested)
Well... because I...
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

STASI OFFICER 2 (CONT'D)

I suppose because if some people won't accept the principles of marxist-leninism voluntarily, then... for the good of the state-

STASI OFFICER 1

(abrupt)

Yeah, yeah. Right. Good.

He eats something.

STASI OFFICER 1 (CONT'D)

Absolutely right.

SCENE 7

AV Title: "Flat 4, Apartment Block 7, Keibelstrasse, East Berlin."

Grubby flat. Lena enters, puts a blanket over Inga who's asleep in a chair. Lena exits. Beate appears in the shadows.

BEATE

In her dream, there's an island in the middle of the sea. She can swim around it, she can swim right up to it, but she can't climb out of the water, she can't breathe the island air, or walk in its forests or its fields. The cliffs are like a fortress wall, rising out of the waves. If she gets too close, she'd be dashed to pieces.

Dancers appear, ghostly, as in the first scene. Music, SFX.

BEATE (CONT'D)

Now the sea's becoming calm, she hears music from the island, floating over the water, she sees lights. She listens and watches for a moment. Other mermaids join her, in a row, treading water, their wet hair shining in the moonlight, lank against their pale skin. And then the mermaids turn, and without speaking or looking at each other, they swim away. But she keeps looking, and suddenly she thinks she sees a figure on a cliff-top, she waves, and shouts, the figure turns towards her, she flaps and beats the water and shouts louder, her voice rising into a beautiful song, but her sisters are pulling her back under, into the cold, her song becoming a stream of silent bubbles.

Pause. Inga looks over at Beate.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEATE (CONT'D)

Some dreams you don't wake up from.

SFX of alarm bell. The flat disappears. Dancers transform to real time, stretch, chat, tie shoes. Petra enters. Ballet dancers spring to attention. Pause.

PETRA

Good.

The dancers relax. Pause.

PETRA (CONT'D)

So, Comrade dancers. Cause for excitement. Since our display for the Embassy people, there has been a request- a very unusual request- that our next production will be given a special airing outside of the State Opera House. I wonder if any of you can guess where this venue might be?

Pause

THOMAS

(raising his arm)

Leipzig?

PETRA

Closer to home.

SVEN

Potsdam.

PETRA

Closer still.

Pause

PETRA (CONT'D)

All right, then. What do you think about a visit to West Berlin?

Pause. Astonishment among the dancers.

PETRA (CONT'D)

Apparently the request came from the new West Berlin Cultural Attache. His agenda remains unclear. It's possible he wishes to dilute our ideological systems. Perhaps they simply think that they will be able to laugh at us, for whatever reason.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PETRA (CONT'D)

However, Comrade Mielke himself has personally instructed me that we should call this bluff and give a demonstration to the West of our artistic and physical superiority that they will never forget. This has been discussed at the highest level. Chairman Honecker himself has ratified this decision. Think of that, each one of you. It will almost certainly be televised. So. Our leaders have granted us the privilege of carrying out a mission. We will not let them down.

Pause

PETRA (CONT'D)

As a company we will cross the Brandenburg Check-point under armed escort in a sealed coach. We will arrive in time for a technical rehearsal, followed by an evening performance. We will return to the East immediately after the performance. During our stay, no one will, at any point, be allowed to leave the theatre, or have any interface whatsoever with any westernized Germans. That includes anybody with relatives in West Berlin. I assume there are no questions.

Pause

SVEN

But- Comrade Freidel- Forgive me- you haven't told us what piece we're to be performing.

Beat

PETRA

(suddenly discomfited)

Of course. It's... a new interpretation of a classic fairy-tale, Hans Christian Andersen, some of you might have heard of it... The Little Mermaid- a charming... simple piece- a love story, nothing more. But beautiful. We shall be casting in due course. So... Four weeks, and then we perform.

Pause. She recovers.

PETRA (CONT'D)

(to the dancers)

You all look like planks of wood.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

PETRA (CONT'D)

Close your mouths. I can smell nicotine
from over here. Stand straight.

*The dancers position themselves as for the start of a long-
practised drill, whispering to each other.*

PETRA (CONT'D)

Silence!

FLORIAN

I love it when you're angry, Comrade.

PETRA

What did you say?

Pause

FLORIAN

Just a joke, Comrade.

PETRA

(to a pianist)

Thank you. Left arm! Ready?

*(as the piano music
starts, loud, over)*

And reach. Higher.

SCENE 8

AV Title "Rote Muhle Cafe, Saarbruckerstrasse, East Berlin."

*Cafe. Petra sits at a table. Stasi Officer 1 enters with two
drinks, gives one to Petra, sits. She drinks. He looks at
her. Pause. She notices him looking, stops drinking, smiles,
embarrassed, looks down.*

STASI OFFICER 1

Every time I see you, you look more
beautiful.

PETRA

(smiling, quiet)

Stop it.

STASI OFFICER 1

(smiling)

Why? What?

PETRA

You don't mean that.

STASI OFFICER 1

Of course I mean it. Why shouldn't I
mean it?

PETRA

Because you're all talk.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STASI OFFICER 1

Well now you mention it, what else can I do *but* talk.

PETRA

(smiling)

That's enough-

STASI OFFICER 1

If you let me stay overnight, I could do all sorts of things other than just talk.

PETRA

I told you, that's *enough*.

STASI OFFICER 1

When, then?

PETRA

I don't know-

STASI OFFICER 1

Just an idea- Months?- Years?-

PETRA

I said, I don't know- Soon-

STASI OFFICER 1

When soon? Soon-soon, or soon-never?

PETRA

Somewhere in between.

Stasi Officer 1 makes a joky noise of exasperation.

PETRA (CONT'D)

(coy)

Don't you love me for myself? Not just, you know, for *that*?

STASI OFFICER 1

Of course I do. I love you every way it's possible to love someone.

Pause. Stasi Officer 1 sits back, looks around.

PETRA

Promise?

STASI OFFICER 1

Yeah, of course, I promise.

PETRA

You don't look like it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

STASI OFFICER 1
What do mean, I don't look like it?-

PETRA
Sometimes.

STASI OFFICER 1
What, you're saying what, I don't look
at you right?- what are you-

PETRA
Sometimes you look at other people-

STASI OFFICER 1
What other people?

PETRA
I don't know, girls-

STASI OFFICER 1
What girls?

PETRA
I don't know. When I meet you outside
the theatre and the dancers are
leaving. The pretty ones.

Pause

STASI OFFICER 1
Listen. It's my job. To look at people.
Not just pretty ones, I look at
everyone, you only notice me looking at
the pretty ones because you're
paranoid. It's what I'm trained to do.
It's not something you can just switch
off. I wish I could. But you know- when
the state called, I answered. Sorry if
that makes me less than perfect for
you.

PETRA
Of course it doesn't-

STASI OFFICER 1
In a war you either stand up and fight
or you don't, I can't help my
conscience, it's how I am, there are
people with easier jobs-

PETRA
All right. I'm sorry-

STASI OFFICER 1
If you want, I'm sure you can find
someone else- an book-keeper or
something-

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

PETRA
I said I'm sorry.

STASI OFFICER 1
Well, then.

Pause

PETRA
Oh. Did you hear? I'm in your war, now.

STASI OFFICER 1
What? Oh- yes. The ballet. Big a
commission for a little girl. Going to
attack the West with tutus. What's the
piece?

PETRA
The Little Mermaid. And there'll be no
tutus. I'm going to prove that the East
can be modern.

STASI OFFICER 1
But it's a fairy story, right? I'm sure
I used to know it. Ages ago. What's it
about?

PETRA
You'll find out.

STASI OFFICER 1
You could read it to me. You know? Bed-
time story. I could lie back on your
pillow-

PETRA
Dieter-

STASI OFFICER 1
In your bed-

PETRA
I said stop-

STASI OFFICER 1
Both of us. Together. Entwined.

Pause

STASI OFFICER 1 (CONT'D)
Just talking.
*(producing a sheet of
paper)*
By the way, here's a list of possible
bad apples. I assume you haven't cast
it yet.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

PETRA
(taking the sheet, a small smile)
 Are any of them pretty?

Beat

STASI OFFICER 1
(returning the smile)
 Possibly.

SCENE 9

AV Title: "Pioneer meeting, Heinrich Voss Oberschule, Normannenstrasse, East Berlin."

Comrade Hempel stands at a table with a few sad cakes and jugs of squash. Pioneers stand to attention.

COMRADE HEMPEL
 Before we start, a quick announcement. The State Opera has put out a request for any Pioneers who are interested in dancing to attend an open audition on thursday at four o' clock at the State Opera House on Unter Den Linden. This is to participate in a minor capacity in their Autumn Production. There is no specific need for previous ballet training, but good physical strength, coordination, and an enthusiastic attitude are essential.

Pause

COMRADE HEMPEL (CONT'D)
 And now, the most important matter. Here is the list of those who have gained enough badges of honour to graduate to the Free German Youth.

She consults a list, and prepares some certificates.

COMRADE HEMPEL (CONT'D)
 So. Would the following please step forward: Rosa.

Rosa steps forward. Comrade Hempel hands her a certificate and shakes hands.

COMRADE HEMPEL (CONT'D)
(to Rosa)
 Well done.

ROSA
 Thank you, Comrade.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

COMRADE HEMPEL

Lea.

A girl steps forward, the same occurs.

COMRADE HEMPEL (CONT'D)

(to Lea)

Well done, Lea.

LEA

Thank you, Comrade.

COMRADE HEMPEL

Sabine.

(to Sabine)

Well done.

SABINE

Thank you, Comrade.

COMRADE HEMPEL

Ute

(to Ute)

Well done.

UTE

Thank you, Comrade.

COMRADE HEMPEL

You may applaud.

Applause.

ROSA

But Comrade, what about Inga?

COMRADE HEMPEL

She's... not on my list, I'm afraid.

ROSA

Why not?

INGA

It's fine.

ROSA

But she's done all the badges-

COMRADE HEMPEL

Perhaps... if, if she applies yourself more diligently to her socialist duties in future, she will not find herself left out, as she has been today.

ROSA

More diligently?-

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

COMRADE HEMPEL
(quickly)
 The matter is closed.

ROSA
 But-

COMRADE HEMPEL
 Are we clear?

Pause

COMRADE HEMPEL (CONT'D)
 Before we have our celebration party,
 we will say the oath. Stand!

The children stands.

COMRADE HEMPEL (CONT'D)
 Together!

ALL
(reciting)
 We, the members of Pioneer Group twenty-
 nine, of the German Democratic Republic
 do solemnly make this oath, that we
 will staunchly support the cause of the
 working class in its battle for the
 construction of a socialist society,
 and that we will honourably and
 unwaveringly follow the commands of
 Chairman Honecker and the laws of the
 Young Pioneers.

Pause

COMRADE HEMPEL
 Good. So.
(indicating the table)
 Help yourselves.

*As she busies herself with the party the children talk,
 unheard.*

ROSA
 You should have graduated too. She's
 got it in for you.

SABINE
 She didn't get her badges, did she? If
 you don't get the badges you don't get
 the certificate.

ROSA
 But she did get her badges.
(to Inga)
 You did, didn't you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

INGA
(to Rosa)
Doesn't matter.

SABINE
My dad said he'd give me thirty Ostmark
when we got into the Free German Youth.

ROSA
Thirty?

SABINE
Aren't you getting anything?

ROSA
Yes. Maybe... I don't know.

SABINE
Is your dad stingy? Or are you poor?

ROSA
We're not poor-

SABINE
Sounds like it.

ROSA
We're not poor, we're going to
Intershop on the weekend. My whole
family.

SABINE
Seriously? How come?

ROSA
My dad's been having these meetings.

SABINE
What meetings?

ROSA
I don't know. High up people. But it
means we can shop at Intershop and have
coffee and grapes and stuff.

SABINE
I've had grapes.

ROSA
No you haven't.

SABINE
Once. I swear.

INGA
What were they like, then? What did
they taste like?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

Pause

SABINE
It was a long time ago-

Pause

SABINE (CONT'D)
They're small, though, aren't they.
I've definitely had some.

INGA
So what are you going to buy with your
thirty Ostmark?

SABINE
(*cornered*)
I don't know... lip-stick.

INGA
Lip-stick? Where from?

SABINE
I don't know, I haven't thought about
it, have I. Just 'cos you didn't
graduate.

Pause

ROSA
Who's going to do that audition thing?
For the ballet.

SABINE
I am. Obviously.

ROSA
(*to Inga*)
That's what your sister does, isn't it.
(*to Sabine*)
She's one of the Prima Ballerinas.

SABINE
Really? That's not what I heard-

INGA
She's just a senior-

SABINE
(*looking at Inga*)
It's funny how one person can be really
good at something and the other really
bad at the same thing. You know, in the
same family.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

ROSA

(to Inga)

It doesn't matter, you should go in for it too. I bet your sister could get you in.

SABINE

But that would be unfair.

ROSA

So? It matters, who you know. Like with my father.

(to Inga)

And anyway, if they make an announcement in *Pioneers* that means you sort of... *have* to do it. Doesn't it.

INGA

Sabine's right. I'm not good enough. My sister says it's not worth it anyway, anyway. She says they have to do the same boring pieces over and over again. Nobody takes any notice. It's not like they're going to be famous and go to America or anything, is it.

Pause

SABINE

Why would your sister want to go to America?

INGA

I don't-

SABINE

My dad says they sell little girls, there. Younger than us. Like slaves.

ROSA

No they don't-

SABINE

Only a traitor would want to go to America.

(indicating Inga)

Her parents were traitors. I heard my parents talking. They said.

Beat

ROSA

Really?

(to Inga)

Is that true?

Pause

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

INGA
No. They weren't.

SABINE
My dad said.

INGA
He's lying, how does he know-

SABINE
Everyone knows-

INGA
No they don't-

SABINE
(to Rosa)
She lives in a flat on Keibelstrasse.
(to Inga)
Don't you. Why do you think you live in
such a dump? It's 'cos of what your
parents did-

INGA
They didn't do anything-

SABINE
Her dad got taken away. Then her mum
tried to escape, and she got shot.

INGA
Shut up!

SABINE
That's why you didn't get your
certificate-

INGA
I said-

SABINE
That's why your sister's never going to
be a top ballerina. It's 'cos you're
traitors. It's in your blood. They'll
take your sister away, one day. If she
keeps moaning.

Pause

SABINE (CONT'D)
You'll be all on your own. And then,
one day, they'll come for you too.

Inga turns away, approaches Comrade Hempel.

INGA
Excuse me, Comrade Hempel.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

COMRADE HEMPEL

Yes?

Pause

INGA

I... I just wanted to ask, why... exactly I didn't get my certificate.

Beat

COMRADE HEMPEL

I'm not going to get involved with-

INGA

But I got my badges. Didn't I? Just like the others.

COMRADE HEMPEL

It's not simply a question of... of ticking boxes, there's... there's a question of attitude- I, I really haven't got time for a debate-

INGA

Did someone tell you not to give me a certificate?

Beat

COMRADE HEMPEL

How- what sort of question is that?- How dare you... imply-

INGA

I don't mind. It's not your fault if they did. I just want to know.

Pause

COMRADE HEMPEL

You will... you will not- challenge me like this- It is not... your place to say such impertinent things to someone in my position.

INGA

I'm not being impertinent-

COMRADE HEMPEL

That's enough. Thank you. You are no longer a member of this Pioneer troop. You are officially expelled. Do you understand?

Pause

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (8)

INGA
I didn't mean to-

COMRADE HEMPEL
I said, do you understand?

Pause

INGA
Yes, Comrade.

COMRADE HEMPEL
Officially. Expelled.

Pause. Inga stares at Comrade Hempel.

COMRADE HEMPEL (CONT'D)
Well? Why are you standing there,
staring at me? Off you go.

Pause

INGA
When I started Pioneers I thought you
were old. But you're not old. Are you.
You're young.

Pause

COMRADE HEMPEL
Get out.

SCENE 10

AV Title: "Menzel Oberschule, Adlerstrasse, West Berlin."

*Cafeteria in West Berlin school, Klaus, Stefan, Henning,
Karin, Anja at a table. Tanja, Gabriele, Daniele and Silke
cross, laughing, chatting. Klaus leaps up.*

KLAUS
(to Tanja)
Hi!

TANJA
(vaguely)
Hi.

She and her friends giggle at him, move away.

KLAUS
(to Henning)
How old's your sister? No offence.

HENNING
Um... thirteen?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JORG
(staring at her)
Popular, isn't she.

HENNING
I guess.

KLAUS
Uh-huh? She, er... you know, seeing
anyone? No offence, or anything.

HENNING
I don't think so.

STEFAN
(to Klaus)
What- Are you seriously considering
asking her out? You?

KLAUS
(to Klaus)
Why shouldn't I?
(to Henning)
No offence.

HENNING
No, it's- fine-

STEFAN
You haven't got a hope-

KLAUS
Says who?

STEFAN
(to Henning)
Your sister's not blind, is she?

HENNING
What?

KLAUS
(to Stefan)
Shut up.

STEFAN
Have you seen how hot she is?
(to Henning)
No offence.

HENNING
It's fine.

KLAUS
I'm not saying I want to ask her out.
(to Henning)
No offence-

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HENNING

It's-

STEFAN

What then?

KLAUS

I don't know- just- in case she's
lonely.

JORG

Lonely?

KLAUS

Being new and everything.

A peal of laughter from Tanja, Gabriele, Daniele and Silke.

JORG

*(staring)*Doesn't look lonely, does she. She
looks quite confident to me.

KLAUS

Confident people are often shy
underneath.

STEFAN

Are they. Really.

KLAUS

*(to Henning)*What's she, you know, interested in?
Like, you know, hobbies and stuff.

HENNING

Ballet.

Beat

KLAUS

Ballet.

STEFAN

*(to Klaus, with irony)*Well that's a coincidence, isn't it.
'Cos you're mad keen on ballet, aren't
you.*(to Henning)*You can tell by looking at him, can't
you.

KLAUS

Shut up-

STEFAN

He lives and breathes ballet-

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

KLAUS
You're very funny-

STEFAN
It's like an illness.

JORG
(to Klaus, surprised)
Is that true?

STEFAN
That was irony.

KLAUS
How do you know I don't like ballet?

STEFAN
Since when have you liked ballet?-

KLAUS
How do you know?

STEFAN
Because... because it's obvious.

KLAUS
Obvious? You making a judgement?

STEFAN
I-

KLAUS
Just 'cos I don't look like someone
who's interested in ballet, doesn't
mean I'm not interested in ballet.

STEFAN
When was the last time you went to the
ballet?

KLAUS
I- My parents don't go, do they. How
can I afford a ticket?

STEFAN
All right then, name a ballet dancer.
Name one. Go on. Presumably you've read
books and stuff.

Pause

KLAUS
That one. You know. Rudolf...
something, the one who defected.

HENNING
Nureyev.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

KLAUS

Him.

STEFAN

You only know him 'cos he was in the papers.

KLAUS

So?

STEFAN

You're so full of-

KLAUS

You don't have to know names to be interested in something.

JORG

It helps, though.

KLAUS

Shut up, Jorg-

JORG

I know the name of every actor in every James Bond film- you know that English secret agent-

KLAUS

Great-

JORG

Test me- Ask me any-

KLAUS

Jorg, please-

JORG

Just one-

KLAUS

Jorg, shut up-

STEFAN

So when have you seen any ballet?

Pause

KLAUS

On the telly.

STEFAN

The *telly*?-

KLAUS

Yes. Why not? It's on the telly, isn't it. Sometimes. Ha!

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

KLAUS (CONT'D)
(a strange fencing move)
 Touche!

STEFAN
 Idiot.

Pause

JORG
(to Henning)
 Do you like ballet?

HENNING
 Not really.

JORG
 Right.

Pause

HENNING
 I met a ballet dancer, though. The other day. She was... nice. In the East.

KLAUS
 The East?

HENNING
 It was some... cultural thing. For the Embassy staff.

STEFAN
 Did she have all her teeth?

HENNING
 I-

KLAUS
 Was she hot?

HENNING
 I- I don't know. Maybe.

KLAUS
 I bet she was hot.

STEFAN
 Their teeth fall out 'cos they can't afford dentists. My dad said.

KLAUS
 Who cares about teeth, if she's hot.

HENNING
 I think she had teeth. She didn't smile much.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

JORG

How come she was even talking to you?
They're not allowed, are they?

HENNING

I was lost, I was looking for the loo.
I sort of bumped into her. And we had a
conversation.

JORG

What about?

HENNING

Nothing really.

KLAUS

Ballet dancers are hot. That's a given.

Pause

HENNING

(sudden)

I've got to get some bubble-gum.

STEFAN

What for?

Pause

HENNING

No reason.

KLAUS

So she was hot, then.

HENNING

I guess.

KLAUS

Nice. What's your sister called? No
offence.

HENNING

Tanja.

KLAUS

Tanja. Nice.

Tanja passes with entourage. Klaus stands, follows.

KLAUS (CONT'D)

(to Tanja, exiting)

Hi. I was just talking to your brother
about ballet.

TANJA

Really?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

KLAUS

Yeah, it's my- thing, you know. I'm going to set up a company when I'm older. My dad's sorting out some investment, you know. Contacts and stuff. You know?

STEFAN

(likewise exiting)

He's a close friend of Rudolf Thingy.

JORG

(following)

Have you ever seen James Bond? You know- the English secret agent-

GABRIELE

Shut up, weirdo.

JORG

I was just asking.

Pause. Karin and Anja are left at the table. Pause.

KARIN

Hi.

HENNING

Hi.

Pause

ANJA

Don't mind them. They can't help it.

HENNING

It's fine.

Pause

HENNING (CONT'D)

Is it weird here? I mean, do you find it weird?

KARIN

What, at this school? Everybody's weird at this school.

HENNING

No, I mean in West Berlin. With the wall, and everything.

Pause

KARIN

I don't know. I don't really think about it that much.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (8)

HENNING

It feels like a prison.

ANJA

My dad says the Ossis are the prisoners. He says West Berlin's a fortress. An island fortress. And the DDR's the sea. With all these people drowning in it.

Pause

HENNING

Right.

KARIN

I've got some bubble-gum here. If you want.

HENNING

What?

KARIN

You said you wanted some bubble-gum.

HENNING

Oh- No. It's- I need a whole packet. It's a- present.

KARIN

Oh, right.

Pause

KARIN (CONT'D)

Anyone special?

Pause. Henning looks from one to the other.

HENNING

Can you keep a secret?

SCENE 11

AV Title: "Flat 4, Apartment Block 7, Keibelstrasse, East Berlin."

Grubby flat, just before dawn. Lena sits at a table stirring something in a mug. Empty chocolate wrapper near the mug. Inga enters.

LENA

Hi.

INGA

Why are you up so early? It's still dark.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LENA
Couldn't sleep.

Pause. Lena takes out a compact mirror and a stick of eye-liner, starts to apply it.

INGA
How's Tante Maria?

LENA
Out of it.

INGA
Was she drunk last night?

LENA
What do you think?

INGA
Did she hit you again?

Pause

LENA
Doesn't matter.

INGA
I hate her.

LENA
She can't help it. She doesn't want us here.

Pause. Inga notices the chocolate wrapper.

INGA
Did you finish that chocolate bar?

LENA
I don't know- maybe-

INGA
It was meant to be for me.

LENA
It was two pieces-

INGA
It was for break-time.

LENA
I'll buy you another.

INGA
No you won't.

Pause

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

INGA (CONT'D)

Anyway, it'll make you fat. Ballet dancers aren't allowed to be fat, you'll be fat and you'll have to stop being a ballet dancer-

LENA

I said I'm sorry-

INGA

No you didn't.

Pause

LENA

All right then, I'm sorry. Ok?

Pause. Inga turns away, sulking quietly.

LENA (CONT'D)

Tell you what. I'll get you some bubble-gum. To make up for the chocolate.

Beat

INGA

What? How?

LENA

Ask no questions.

INGA

You're lying.

LENA

Am I?

Pause

INGA

Real bubble-gum?

LENA

Uh-huh.

INGA

I don't believe you.

LENA

Wait and see, then.

Pause

INGA

Will you steal it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

LENA

No.

INGA

Please don't steal it-

LENA

I'm not going to steal anything-

INGA

Think what would happen. If you got caught, they'd take you-

LENA

No one's doing any stealing. A friend-said he'd get me some. That's all.

INGA

What friend?

LENA

Just someone. Someone friendly.

Pause

INGA

Do you promise?

LENA

(with irony)

On the honour of the Socialist Youth Movement of Pioneers.

Pause

INGA

I've never had bubble-gum.

LENA

Well now's your chance.

Pause

INGA

I didn't graduate.

LENA

What?

INGA

To the Free German Youth.

LENA

Next time.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

INGA

That's what you said last time. Anyway, I asked why and Comrade Hempel threw me out. So there won't be a next time. The others said it was 'cos of who we were. Mum and dad.

Lena puts down make-up, holds out her arms.

LENA

Here.

Inga crosses, sits on Lena's lap, leans in. Pause.

LENA (CONT'D)

Listen. Do you... do you remember a story, a fairy-tale? The Little Mermaid. Didn't... didn't dad have a book, some Danish bloke, an old book. You know, before. I'm sure he used to read it to me. I can't remember.

Pause

INGA

Hans Christian Andersen. It's in a box under my bed.

LENA

Do you know it?

Pause

INGA

Yes.

LENA

What's it about?

INGA

It's about a mermaid who falls in love with a handsome Prince, and she asks this sea-witch if she can give up being a mermaid so she can grow legs and be with the handsome Prince. But the deal is, she can never, ever go back to being a mermaid and if she falls in the sea she'll get turned into scummy foam. Anyway, she gets her legs, but when she walks it's like walking on knives and she loses her voice too, and the Prince ends up marrying someone else by mistake. And then the sea-witch tells her that if she sticks a knife into the Prince a drop of his blood will turn her back into a mermaid.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

INGA (CONT'D)

But she can't bring herself to do it,
'cos she loves him, and so she throws
herself into the sea, but because she's
been good she doesn't get turned into
scummy foam, she gets taken to heaven.

Pause

INGA (CONT'D)

Why do you want to know?

LENA

We're doing it. State ballet. We're
taking it to the West.

Beat

INGA

The West?

LENA

That's right. One performance. Some big
theatre in West Berlin. TV cameras. How
about that?

Pause

INGA

(staring)

That's your next show, then? The Little
Mermaid?

LENA

I just said. Why, what?

INGA

There was this- thing... doesn't
matter.

LENA

What thing?

INGA

Doesn't matter.

LENA

Tell me.

Pause

INGA

Apparently... they're looking for kids
to be in it. You know. They said, in
Pioneers.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

LENA

You want to be a fish in a ballet? Or a crab? Right at the back, scuttling around?

INGA

We'd be in it together, then, wouldn't we.

Lena looks away.

LENA

I suppose.

INGA

I'm not good enough, though, am I. I'm not graceful, am I, not like you.

Pause

INGA (CONT'D)

They said you didn't need to know ballet, or anything.

Pause

LENA

(abrupt)

It's up to you.

INGA

Don't you want me to do it?-

LENA

(rising, tipping Inga off her lap)

I said it's up to you, come on, it's getting light, go and have some breakfast.

SCENE 12

AV Title: "East German State Opera, Unter Den Linden, East Berlin."

Rehearsal room. Dancers waiting in a state of nervous anticipation.

KATJA

I wish they'd just get this out the way.

CLAUDIA

It's Lena's turn for a lead.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KATJA

I just want to know who I'm playing,
that's all.

MARKUS

Patience, child.

FLORIAN

(to Lena)

Hey, Lena, I've decided it's you I'm
going to marry.

KAROLIN

(to Lena)

You lucky thing.

MARKUS

You can't marry her. She's damaged
goods.

FLORIAN

That just makes it more exciting.
Damaged means crazy, crazy means up for
anything in the bed area.

MONIKA

I don't think she's interested,
Florian.

FLORIAN

*(lying down in front of
Lena)*

See how I prostrate myself. I grovel at
your feet. Kick me somewhere
interesting.

CLAUDIA

You're so weird.

FLORIAN

Yes. Yes I am. In a good way. Please
kick me.

Lena turns away.

FLORIAN (CONT'D)

She didn't kick me.

JURGEN

I'll kick you.

FLORIAN

Not the same.

JURGEN

I'm really dying to kick you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FLORIAN

Only she will ever be allowed. My heart is set, I will not be diverted. Have you seen how large my biceps are? Look-I'm a God.

(flexing, to Markus)

Look. Feel that.

MARKUS

Go away.

FLORIAN

You see?- Jealous. Just because your arms are like bits of string. Pitiful.

Pause

ULRIKE

Shouldn't she be here by now?

MARKUS

The excitement is killing me.

KAROLIN

But we're going to the West. That's exciting, isn't it?

Pause

JURGEN

In what respect is it exciting?

Pause

KAROLIN

Just... because it's the West.

MARKUS

Do you mean the lair of the enemy.

MONIKA

We're not seeing any of it. We're going to be locked in, aren't we. So... I don't know.

KAROLIN

But they'll be watching us, won't they. Westerners.

JURGEN

And?

KAROLIN

I- I don't know.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JURGEN

Is their critique of our performance more important than that of an Ossi audience?

KAROLIN

No- I didn't mean that.

JURGEN

What did you mean, then?

FLORIAN

Come on. Get off her back. We've all thought about it, haven't we.

JURGEN

Thought about what?

FLORIAN

You *know* what.

Beat

FLORIAN (CONT'D)

I bet there's not a single person in this room who hasn't thought about taking a little unauthorised trip around West Berlin after the show and maybe not coming back. There's no wall around the theatre is there. No barbed wire, no machine gun nests. Just windows and doors.

LENA

They'll be guarded. Won't they.

FLORIAN

I'm just saying there'll never be a better opportunity.

JURGEN

Don't you think you better shut up.

FLORIAN

Why, are you going to denounce me?

JURGEN

You'll get us all put away.

FLORIAN

We're a bunch of kids in a rehearsal room. No one's listening.

Pause

LENA

Are you really going to try and jump?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

Pause

FLORIAN

I don't know. Maybe. Are you?

Petra enters, dancers snap to attention.

PETRA

So are we ready?

FLORIAN

Always ready for you, Comrade.

PETRA

Your attitude has been noted.

FLORIAN

Thank you, Comrade. It's just because I love you.

PETRA

I doubt my boy-friend would be pleased to hear that.

FLORIAN

You mean I have a rival? Does he have biceps like mine?

PETRA

No, but he does have a brain. So. The Little Mermaid. Ready? Quiet, please. Corps de ballet: Thomas, Ulrike. Coryphee: Jurgen, Monika. Claudia. Named parts: Karolin - Sea-Witch, Sven - Prince, Markus - Prince's equerry-

MARKUS

Equerry? What's an *Equerry?*

(indicating Sven)

How come *he's* the Prince?- I'm way more handsome- *and* senior-

MONIKA

Yes, but have you seen him dance?-

MARKUS

Oh please, why don't you just ask him out right here?-

PETRA

(loud)

Moving on. Katja - the little mermaid, Julia - the hand-maiden and Princess, Marta - Daughter of the Air, Florian - the King-

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

FLORIAN

I don't believe it. I'm always the old
git. Why me?

MARKUS

Because you have no talent.

FLORIAN

How can an old King have biceps like
these?

MARKUS

You'll have a lovely cloak to hide them
under.

FLORIAN

Wow, thanks-

PETRA

Thank you! Finally, Lena, you will be
the Sea-Witch's assistant.

Beat. Dancers exchange glances.

LENA

(quiet)

The what?

PETRA

The Sea-Witch's assistant.

LENA

Who's the Sea-Witch's assistant?

PETRA

She- helps with potions, you know...
she's a... a dark character, there's
fun to be had-

LENA

How much dancing does she do?

Pause

PETRA

I'm not-

LENA

How much dancing?

PETRA

I haven't actually decided-

LENA

It's nothing, isn't it-

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

PETRA

There are lots of considerations-

LENA

I'm a senior dancer, I dance better than anyone here- You know that- everyone knows that-

PETRA

As I was trying to say-

LENA

(over)

Why am I never given a lead?

Pause. Lena moves to exit.

KATJA

You'll get one next time-

LENA

(exiting)

Shut up.

Pause

PETRA

So. That concludes the casting.

She puts a sheaf of papers down.

PETRA (CONT'D)

Please take a rehearsal schedule each. We will begin with the Corps after lunch.

SCENE 13

AV Title: "Outside the American Embassy, Unter Den Linden, East Berlin."

Street as in Scene 3. Traffic SFX. Lena walks quickly across stage, stops. Stands with her back to railings, leans back. Looks around, hesitates, reaches behind, through the railings and up. Retrieves a packet of bubble-gum. As this happens we hear a click of a camera, and see a number of projected stills of her actions. She goes to exit, stops. Quickly takes out a packet of cigarettes, rips off some card, takes out her stick of eye-liner, writes something on the card, looks around once more, inserts the card into the tree hiding place. With this last action there are more camera clicks and another sequence of stills. She goes to exit.

INGA

(calling from off)

Lena! Lena, wait!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LENA

What are you doing here?

INGA

I was on the bus. I saw you.

LENA

What do you mean you saw me? Saw me what?

INGA

I don't know, having a cigarette, or something, the bus was moving, what do you mean?

LENA

Nothing. Nothing- where are you going?

INGA

I've got that audition. At the State Opera. I can walk the rest of the way, I've got time. You can come with me if you want.

Pause

LENA

You're doing it, then.

INGA

I can if I want. You can't stop me.

LENA

Just- don't blame me if you end up disappointed.

Pause

INGA

(indicating bubble-gum)
What's that?

LENA

What? Oh. Here.

She throws the bubble-gum at her, goes to exit.

INGA

Aren't you going to wait for me? See how I get on.

LENA

We've run out of food. I'll see you at home.

Pause

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

INGA

Aren't you even going to wish me luck?

Pause

LENA

It's got nothing to do with luck. Or ability, for that matter.

She exits.

SCENE 14

AV Title: "East German State Opera, Unter Den Linden, East Berlin."

A dance audition for youngsters. Several boys and girls line up, including Inga and the Pioneers. Most (except a couple, including Inga) are dressed appropriately for dance. Petra stands with a clip-board.

PETRA

Next.

Lea runs across. Performs a jetee, stands to one side.

PETRA (CONT'D)

Next.

Sabine does the same, and so on, until all have crossed, Inga less than competently. Pause. Petra finishes checking through her list.

PETRA (CONT'D)

(calling out)

One, four, five, seven, ten. You will go. The rest will stay.

The numbered children depart. Inga remains.

PETRA (CONT'D)

(holding out some sheets to the remaining children)

Please take a sheet each. You'll be expected at eight o'clock this Saturday morning. Any late-comers will be expelled. Further to that, for future reference- lateness, lack of concentration, poor attitude, laziness, noise or talking during rehearsals will all lead to immediate expulsion. There are no second chances in the State Opera. You are extraordinarily privileged to have been selected.

Pause

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETRA (CONT'D)
*(indicating they can
 leave)*
 Thank you.

The children depart, in silence, leaving Inga.

PETRA (CONT'D)
 Can I help you?

INGA
 I- I just wanted to make sure, you
 definitely want me.

PETRA
 What?

INGA
 I wanted to make sure you didn't call
 out the wrong number or anything.

PETRA
 Why would I do that?

Pause

INGA
 Do you know my sister-

PETRA
 Do you want to be included or not?

Pause

INGA
 Yes.

PETRA
 Well, then. Let's have no more silly
 questions.

SCENE 15

**AV Title: "Flat 4, Apartment Block 7, Keibelstrasse, East
 Berlin."**

Grubby flat. Inga waits, fiddles, paces. Lena enters.

INGA
 Guess what.

LENA
 Why are you still up?

INGA
 I said guess what.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LENA

What?

INGA

I'm in your ballet.

Beat

LENA

What?

INGA

I'm going to be a fish. In the Little Mermaid.

LENA

They let you in? But- that doesn't make sense. Did they know you're my sister?

INGA

I don't know. Did you say anything?

LENA

Of course not. It wouldn't have helped.
(*confused*)
Why would they let you in?

Beat

INGA

Thanks.

LENA

I didn't mean-

INGA

I suppose you can't help being jealous.

Beat

LENA

Jealous?-

INGA

In case I turn out to be a better ballet dancer than you.

Pause

LENA

That's right, I'm jealous. Jesus. You have no idea about anything, do you.

INGA

They made us do a jete. I did it really well, better than you could-

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LENA

Just- go to bed. It's late, go to bed.

INGA

I don't want to go to bed. You're not mum. You can't tell me what to do.

LENA

Don't you dare talk about mum.

INGA

Tante Maria is my guardian, not you.

LENA

How much does she look after you? How often can she even see straight? Who gets the shopping? Her or me?

INGA

You eat my chocolate. You can't even be happy for me when something goes right.

LENA

Nothing goes right. Ever. Don't you get it?

INGA

You hate me, don't you. You wish I wasn't here.

Pause

LENA

I said go to bed.

INGA

(exiting)
Thought so.

SCENE 16

AV Title: "Menzel Oberschule, Adlerstrasse, West Berlin."

Cafeteria. Henning, Karin and Anja sit close.

KARIN

Well?

Henning look around.

HENNING

I got a message back.

KARIN

What?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HENNING

In the tree. I left the bubble-gum, and when I went back to see if it had gone, there was this message.

He takes out a scrap of cigarette packet.

ANJA

What does it say?

HENNING

It says- "Get me out of here."

Pause

KARIN

Let me see.

HENNING

(giving her the message)

What do I do?

ANJA

We need to tell someone.

KLAUS

(entering with Stefan and Jorg)

Tell someone what?

Klaus snatches the message from Karin.

KARIN

Give it back, you idiot, that's private.

KLAUS

(reading)

"Get me out of here."

(up)

What's this? This looks like a cry for help.

(to Henning)

Who wrote this?

Pause

STEFAN

What's the big secret?

SCENE 17

AV Title: "Stasi Operations Post, Karl Marx strasse, East Berlin."

Officers 1 and 2 looking through documents.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STASI OFFICER 2
(checking his watch)
He's late.

STASI OFFICER 1
Two-Nine-Seven? You know what these artistic types are like. He's probably sticking all the photographs in a nice album. Apparently he's got evidence of her putting a message in the hole. He said she used her eye-liner to write it, which suggests something spur-of-the-moment.

STASI OFFICER 2
A thank you note?

STASI OFFICER 1
Maybe.

STASI OFFICER 2
That's enough to bring her in, isn't it? Just consorting?- Surely.

STASI OFFICER 1
Not yet. I've got a feeling about this one. So has Two-Nine-Seven.
(checking through folder)
Her father was put away for counter-espionage, died of a heart-attack whilst in custody, her mother tried to escape in sixty-four. Didn't make it. I think it might run in the family. She lives with her younger sister and some drunk relative on Keibelstrasse. Ballet career's going nowhere. Obviously. Two-Nine-Seven says she's fairly bitter. Pretty, though.

STASI OFFICER 2
Why didn't Two-Nine-Seven get the note? Or at least read it? He could have put it back.

STASI OFFICER 1
The little sister turned up. He says he went back later for the note but it had gone by then. The boy must have taken it. And whatever our ballet dancer took out of the tree, the kid's now got.

STASI OFFICER 2
Bubble-gum, presumably?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

STASI OFFICER 1

Maybe. He says he's pretty sure there's more to it than just bubble-gum, though, from the way she's behaving. This could be worth a couple of commendations, if we get it right.

STASI OFFICER 2

So how do we play it?

STASI OFFICER 1

Carefully. Maybe we need to get to know the little sister. They love to yack, don't they, little girls.

A knock.

STASI OFFICER 1 (CONT'D)

That's him.

Stasi Officer 2 opens the door. Florian enters.

STASI OFFICER 1 (CONT'D)

Two-Nine-Seven. Good to see you. Take a seat. Your father keeping well?

FLORIAN

(quiet)

Very well. Thank you.

INTERVAL