

“IF THIS IS A MAN”
by Primo Levi
adapted for radio
by George Whalley
from the original
“Se questo è un uomo”
and from a translation
by Stuart Woolf

TECHNICAL NOTE

This is a story told in the first person by Primo Levi. His account of the events has three facets to it: sometimes it is purely and simply narrative; sometimes it is descriptive, of scenes or customs or conditions; sometimes it is reflective, pondering the meaning of the tale. These three facets are indicated respectively by assigning his account variously to LEVI (N), LEVI (D), and LEVI (R), and it is intended that each be perceptibly differentiated from the others by having its own special microphone pick-up. To some extent the categories overlap, and the degree of difference between them varies from one content to another: these shades of difference should be reflected by discreet modification of the pick-ups, as may seem most suitable in any given context.

PRODUCTION NOTE

The layout of this typescript is unlike the usual layout of a radio script. The narrative commentary is typed continuously on the even-numbered pages: the action and dialogue are typed continuously on the odd-numbered pages; the intention is that the even-numbered and the odd-numbered pages should be played simultaneously, creating a counterpoint between the narration and the events. This intention can be realised equally well on either stereophonic or monaural radio: but in the latter medium the use of stereo tape is advisable, so that the narrative and the events can be recorded on separate channels; this gives the producer an exact control over them, both singly and together, which he could not achieve with one-track tape. It will be found that the most convenient way of controlling the two elements in getting them off paper onto tape is by binding the script into a ring-binder, so that it takes on the form of a book: the even-numbered and odd-numbered pages will then lie open opposite each other, and the counterpoint between them will be visible at a glance.

CAST, LISTED IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER OF LANGUAGESDUTCH

Walter, a Dutch Jew speaking a few words of Dutch and Yiddish, but mainly English with a Dutch accent.

FRENCH

Charles, a schoolteacher from Lorraine

Arthur, a peasant from the Vosges region

GERMAN

Blockältester

Fritsch, the commandant of Auschwitz

Interrogator

Nurses I and II

SS Officer

Steinlauf, formerly a sergeant in the Austro-Hungarian army in World War I, now a prisoner in Auschwitz

GERMANS I – IV: variously guards and prisoners

HUNGARIAN

Doctor (mainly English with Hungarian accent)

Somogyi (" " " " ")

Hungarians I and II

ITALIAN (i.e. ENGLISH)

Diena (fully fluent, though the name is perhaps Albanian)

Primo Levi (must also command at least a smattering of French and German)

Voices I – VI (Voice I must also be able to speak fair German)

Women I and II, both mothers of small children

JEWISH AND POLISH (ALL YIDDISH ROLES ARE IN THE YIDDISH OF POLAND)

Boy, aged about 16 (Yiddish)

Chajim (English with Polish accent)

Galician (Yiddish in the dialect of Galicia)

Kuhn (Hebrew – must be able to chant a prayer)

Mischa (Yiddish)

Nogalla (")

Nurse III (Polish)

Poles I and II (Polish)

Resnyk (French with a Polish accent)

Schmulek (Yiddish)

Towarowski (French with a Polish accent)

Yiddish I – III

RUSSIAN

Soldiers I and II

SPANISH

Barber* (fluent Spanish plus bad German, and bad English, both with a Spanish accent)

* If possible extra barbers should be cast speaking other languages than those listed above and, in particular, languages unlikely to be understood by an Italian – such as Arabic, Finnish, Greek, and Ukrainian, for instance, all of which were available for the first production.

CASTING NOTE:

Close scrutiny will show that most of the roles are small and a good deal of doubling and even tripling is possible. Production is feasible with fewer than thirty players, and most scenes can be rehearsed and taped with less than a dozen players on call.

ANNCR: CBC Wednesday Night presents “If this is a man” by George Whalley, a meditation for radio adapted from the Italian book “Se questo è un uomo” by Primo Levi and from a translation of it by Stuart Woolf. This book is about Auschwitz and its concentration camp: the author was himself imprisoned there, and his writing is an attempt to find the meaning of that experience, to probe its effect on the individual man. His reflections on the events form the main part of the book (and of the broadcast), but the events themselves are the substance on which he reflects; and on the broadcast they will be re-enacted as nearly as possible as they happened.

One of the chief features of Auschwitz life was the loss of contact between fellow men, there being no common language but pidgin German: the guards spoke German among themselves, various other European languages were spoken within the various national groups of prisoners, and Yiddish was a lingua franca for a majority of the Jewish prisoners, though not for those from Italy, who mostly did not know it; Levi himself, for instance, was able to carry on halting conversations in French and German, but was chiefly confined to Italian for purposes of communication, speaking it with his fellow-Italians and with a few others who spoke Italian – at various levels of fluency. On the broadcast this confusion of tongues is reproduced: the only translation has been the use of English as a substitute for Italian (thus turning Levi’s commentary into English, along with all Italian dialogue); everything which was said in other languages in real life, has been left in those languages in the radio version.

MORE...

LEVI (R): You who live secure now in warm houses
 And turn home in the evening to friendly faces,
 And savour fire, and food and drink: Consider
 If this is a man – this creature toiling in the mud,
 Blind with fatigue, scrabbling for a crust of bread,
 So at a whim's or a brute's mercy, you
 Could kill him outright with a yes or no,
 And leave his body sprawling by the gate...
 Consider, you who live secure, if this is a man.

ANNCR: (CONT'D) For the listener whose only language is English, we believe that this use of foreign languages will not prove a hindrance: the sense of what is said in them is nearly always evident either from the context or else from Levi's comments on it; and when it is not thus evident, when for a moment we grope in the bewilderment of alien and incomprehensible speech, then in a sense we can enter briefly into part of Levi's experience: for this isolation was a real part of what he was made to suffer; and what he suffered, what all the concentration-camp prisoners suffered, was a deliberate attempt to exile them from the community of mankind, to destroy their identity, to reduce them from men to things. Levi himself was thus, for a time, reduced; he conjures up that harsh past into the softer present, evokes that faceless anonymous figure which was himself and everyman (and could have been you, or me), and asks, of himself (and you, and me), the question he cannot shirk: "If this is a man".

ANNCR: "If this is a man", Primo Levi's personal account of annihilation.

LEVI (N): I, Primo Levi – twenty-four years old – not used to the world, being a Jew – terribly inexperienced. But I somehow took the road to the mountains and joined a partisan band. We lacked everything we needed – contacts, arms, money, experience, leaders – and were swamped by a flood of outcasts from the plains who came looking for somebody to provide arms, or protection, or a hiding-place – or (most of them) a fire or a pair of boots.

One dawn three Fascist militia companies, looking for a much more dangerous group, stumbled on us by accident – and broke into our refuge at dawn – like ghosts – with the snow falling – they took us down to the valley. That was in the middle of January 1944.

INTERROGATOR: (FADE UP) Take him away. Next prisoner. Name?

LEVI: Levi – Primo Levi.

INTRG: Race?

LEVI: Italian citizen – by birth –

INTRG: Religion?

LEVI: Jewish.

INTRG: (ANGRILY) Not of Italian race, then. Jewish. Italian citizen of Jewish race. Political affiliation?

LEVI: None.

INTRG: Why were you in the mountains?

LEVI: Skiing – hunting – with some friends –

INTRG: As a Jew you are not allowed to go about the country. Did you know that?

LEVI (D): (IN OVER BOARD-FADE AT (L) OPPOSITE) Fossoli near Modena – a huge camp built to hold allied prisoners of war from the Western Desert – now a detention camp with only about 150 Italian Jews in it when I arrived. (2) Soon there were about 600 – mostly entire families captured by the Nazis or betrayed to the Fascists; some had given themselves up “to be in conformity with the law”. But many had been tricked into coming – had been told they would be “resettled”, and were told to bring their tools and everything valuable they possessed, and an extra working suit: they would need these things in their new homes, they were told.

LEVI (N): (4) On February 20th a squad of German SS men arrived. They inspected the camp with contemptuous care and publicly upbraided the Italian commissar for the bad kitchens, for the lack of wood for heating, for the lack of medical facilities. (5) Then on the morning of the 21st we learned that next day the Jews would be leaving – all the Jews, without exception – (6) even the children, the old people, the sick. We were told to prepare for two weeks of travel.

LEVI: (WITH COOL IRONY) I have read the proclamations...

INTRG: (BOARD FADE) Take him away. Next prisoner...(1)...Name?

VOICE I: Dreyfus – Renzo Dreyfus.

INTRG: Race? (OUT UNDER LEVI OPPOSITE)

SOUND: (2) FROM FURTHEST DISTANCE SS TRUCKS AND MOTORCYCLES APPROACH AND PULL UP OFF MIKE

GERMAN I: (OFF) Alles ‘raus. SOUND: SS MEN DISMOUNT FROM TRUCKS

GERMAN I: (OFF) In zwei Gliedern. SOUND: SS MEN FORM UP IN TWO RANKS

GERMAN I: (OFF) Rechts um. SOUND: SS MEN EXECUTE RIGHT TURN

GERMAN I: (OFF) Abteilung marsch. SOUND: (3) SS MEN MARCH TO FOREGROUND

GERMAN I: (ON) Abteilung halt. SOUND: SS MEN HALT (4)

GERMAN I: Wegtreten. SOUND: SS MEN DISMISS (FADE, OUT BY (5))

ALL GERMANS: AD LIB CONVERSATION OF DISMISSED MEN (BOARD FADE, OUT BY (5))

CAST & SOUND: (6) (FADE UP) MURMUR OF PRISONERS IN OPEN AIR. HOLD BG NEXT DIALOGUE AND THEN FADE, OUT BY (1) ON PAGE 14

LEVI: Where are we going?

GERMAN II: Where? Wohin? Who are you to ask questions?

WOMAN I: (SOFTLY) Tomorrow? Tomorrow?

LEVI: Yes, tomorrow – in the morning.

- LEVI (R): An order has been posted: For every person missing at the roll-call, ten will be shot.
- LEVI (D): (1) And night came, and it was such a night that you'd think no human being could see it with his own eyes and go on living. Not one of the guards – neither Italian nor German – had the courage to come and see what people do when they know they have to die.
- Each took leave of life in whatever way best suited him: some praying, some hopelessly drunk, some in a last blaze of sex. But the mothers stayed awake, preparing with tender care the food for the journey; washed the children and packed the luggage; and when everything was ready they unloosened their hair, took off their shoes, placed the Yahrzeit candles on the ground and lighted them according to the custom of their fathers, (2) and sat on the bare ground in a circle all night at their lamentation, praying and weeping... (3)
- LEVI (N): (4) (VERY QUIETLY) We collected in a group and listened, and felt growing within ourselves a grief that was new to us – our own grief welling up and crying out, becoming the ancient grief of the people that have no land, a hopeless grief renewed century after century. (5)

WOMAN I: But why? Why?

VOICE I: I have spoken to the Polish refugees. They say going away is bad.

SOUND: HEBREW LAMENT STARTS AT (2) BG

SOUND: (3) LAMENT CONTINUES FOR A FEW BARS WITHOUT VOICE-OVER BUT STILL BG AND THEN AT (4) CONTINUES BEHIND LEVI

SOUND: (5) LAMENT RUNS TO CONCLUSION STILL BG. PAUSE. DISTANT COCK-CROW

LEVI (R): Dawn came on us like a betrayal: as though the sun – this sun now dawning - had joined forces with our enemies in the plan of our destruction. All our emotions, monstrosly heightened by sleeplessness, flowed into an uncontrolled panic. It is better that no record remain of what was said then, of what done: it is better that there be no memory...

CAST & SOUND: (FADE UP) PRISONERS ARE READY TO BE ASSEMBLED

GERMAN I: Alles, in zwei Gliedern, antreten lassen. Los, los! Namen verlesen.

GERMAN II: Fall in. Form two lines. Quickly, now. Don't waste time.

CAST & SOUND: THE PRISONERS ASSEMBLE IN TWO LINES

GERMAN II: Answer to the names when called. Answer "Heil Hitler". You there, stand up straight. Now: -

Abel, C.

VOICE II: Here.

GERMAN II: I said answer "Heil Hitler", swine. Abel, C.

VOICE II: Heil Hitler.

GERMAN II: Abrams, L.

VOICE III: Heil Hitler.

GERMAN II: Adler, M., with child. (BOARD FADE DIALOGUE, OUT BY (1) ON PAGE 19

WOMAN I: Heil Hitler.

GERMAN II: Bernardi, G.

VOICE IV: Heil Hitler.

LEVI (R): (2) Sechshundert und fünfzig Stück – six hundred and fifty head – (3) men, women, children; young, old, healthy, sick – packed into buses and driven to the railway station of Carpi. (4) The train is waiting, with an armed military escort. Here we received the first blows: it is so new, so utterly senseless, that we feel no pain – only a profound amazement: to strike a man without anger! (5) to strike a woman without hatred! to strike (6)...

LEVI (D): (7) Six hundred and fifty head – people: twelve freight cars. Mine is small: only 45 people. (8) And here, before our very eyes, under our feet, is what we have so often heard of and never believed: the notorious transport trains that never come back – every detail: the trucks closed down tight and locked from outside; (9) men, women,

MORE...

GERMAN II: Dreyfus, R.

VOICE I: Heil Hitler (1)

(PAUSE. THEN BOARD-FADE UP NEXT DIALOGUE)

VOICE V: Heil Hitler.

GERMAN II: Zulick, L., with wife, three children.

VOICE VI: Heil Hitler.

GERMAN II: Zullo, Francesca.

WOMAN II: Heil Hitler.

GERMAN II: (TO HIS OFFICER) Apell beendet. Alles in Ordnung.

GERMAN I: Gut. Wieviel Stück?

GERMAN II: Sechshundert und fünfzig Stück.

GERMAN I: (BOARD FADE) In Ordnung. (2) Sechshundert und fünfzig Stück.

CAST & SOUND: BOARD FADE, OUT BY (3). AT (4) SNEAK IN STATION SCENE: THE TRAIN IS WAITING AND 650 GUARDED PRISONERS ARE BEING LOADED

GERMAN II: (5) Man los, man los, rein – verdammt noch mal!

SOUND: (6) GUARD STRIKES WOMAN PRISONER

WOMAN I: CRIES OUT AND THEN SUBSIDES, MOANING (7)

SOUND: (8) LOADING OF PRISONERS HAS ENDED. DOORS ARE SLAMMED TO (9)

SOUND: (9) TRAIN MOVES OFF BUT DOES NOT GATHER SPEED

LEVI (D): (CONT'D) and children packed together without pity, like cheap merchandise, worse than cattle, for a journey to nowhere, to nothingness. This is not a story: we are here; we are in this train; we are going to make this journey.

LEVI (N): The train moves a little way out of the station and stops. (1) Nothing happens. We wait and wait. The train does not move again until evening. (2) Now we know where we are going – I forget how – we are going to Oswicim – Auschwitz. We do not recognise the name – but someone knows for sure and tell us: this much is certain: Oswicim.

Through the air-vent and the slit in the door, we can see the names of the towns – familiar at first and nostalgic – Verona; then the tall pale cliffs of the Adige Valley; then Trento, Bolzano; (3) and after the Brenner Pass, the Austrian names: Innsbruck, Salzburg, Linz, Wien, Retz (4)...

At every stop we clamour for water, or even a handful of snow; but nobody ever hears us, and if anybody comes near the train, the escort drive them away. Our thirst is terrible; we shake with the cold. (5) What keeps us alive? The cold, the thirst, the indescribable discomfort, the dull memory of the blows – these keep us from despair. (6) We have no will to live; we are not resigned. Few are capable of that sort of strength anyway: and we are only an ordinary sample of common humanity. (7)

SOUND: (1) TRAIN STOPS

SOUND: (2) TRAIN STARTS OFF AND THIS TIME REALLY GETS GOING

SOUND: (3) TRAIN SLOWS DOWN AND HALTS AT (4)

CAST: AD LIB CLAMOURING FOR WATER, PETERING OUT BY (5)

SOUND: (6) TRAIN MOVES ON, ON A DIFFERENT SURFACE

WOMEN I & II: AD LIB BEGGING FOR WATER. HOLD BG. THEN BOARD-FADE, OUT BY (1) ON PAGE 22

LEVI (N) (FROM (1) TO (2) ADD A TOUCH OF LEVI (R) MIKE): Two young mothers, nursing their children, groan all night and all day, begging for water. (1) The hours of darkness are nightmare without end... Few men know how to go to their death with dignity: few know how to remain silent or to respect the silence of others...there are futile disputes, curses, kicks, blows blindly delivered in the seething and offensive darkness... (2)

Then all the names of the towns are Czech names – Bratislava, Trencin, Zilina, Cadca – utterly foreign... Then Polish names – Stary Sacz, Sucha, Wadowice... Nobody tries any more to communicate with the outside world. (3)

By the evening of the fourth day the cold is intense. The train runs through an endless black pine forest, climbing all the time. The snow is deep. It seems to be a branch line: the stations are small and deserted. (4) The train moves slowly and stops often. The darkness comes down. After a long halt in open country, the train stops for the last time in the middle of what seems a dark silent plain. (5) The rhythm of the wheels is silent; every human sound is silent. On both sides of the track rows of red and white lights shine as far as we can see; but there is no sound of any people. We wait in the cold, and say goodbye to our neighbours – saying goodbye to life. We no longer feel anything. We are no longer even afraid...

(SHORT PAUSE)

CAST: (1) ADLIB SUBDUED AND SPORADIC IRRITABILITY. HOLD. THEN BOARD-FADE, OUT BY (2)

SOUND: (2) CROSS-FADE TO SAME TRAIN ON DIFFERENT SURFACE

SOUND: (3) CROSS-FADE TO SAME TRAIN CLIMBING. AT (4) TRAIN IS ON LEVEL BUT MOVING SLOWLY. AND QUITE SOON IT STARTS TO SLOW DOWN, STOPPING BY (5)

SOUND: CRASH OF THE FREIGHTCAR DOOR OPENING, FOLLOWED BY THE MORE DISTANT SOUND OF OTHER DOORS SIMILARLY SLAMMED OPEN, CONTINUING BEHIND NEXT DIALOGUE.

LEVI (N): A vast platform lighted by reflectors. Beyond it a row of trucks. The platform swarming now with shadows, silent, or whispering only. A dozen SS men stand indifferent. Then they move among us, with faces of stone, rapidly interrogating us in bad Italian...

GERMAN III: Alles 'raus! 'raus, 'raus! Bewegung! Gepäck mitnehmen. Alles auf 'n Bahnsteig.

GERMAN IV: Alles 'raus. In zwei Gliedern antreten.

VOICE I: He says: Climb down on the platform. Bring all luggage.

Everybody line up – in two ranks.

CAST & SOUND: THE MURMUR AND MOVEMENT OF A NUMBER OF PEOPLE. THE SOUND OF THINGS BEING THROWN DOWN. THE OCCASIONAL WHISPER OF A NAME OR A QUESTION. A CHILD STARTS CRYING. CONTINUE TILL WE LEAVE STATION IN TRUCK AT END OF SCENE

GERMAN III: How old?

VOICE II: Forty-five.

GERMAN III: Healthy?

(VOICE II: (GOING OFF) After that trip?!

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(GERMAN IV: Age?

VOICE III: Thirty-four.

GERMAN IV: The girl?

(VOICE III: (GOING OFF) Eleven.

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(GERMAN V: Sick?

VOICE IV: Huh?

GERMAN V: You are sick?

VOICE IV: Oh yes, very very sick.

LEVI (R): (1) There are sounds: they come to my ears. Yet it is as silent as an aquarium... A dream sequence...

LEVI (R): (2) Who can blame these SS men? (WITH QUIET IRONY) It was the soldiers' simple everyday duty. (3)

(GERMAN V: (IN OVER LAST AND GOING OFF) This way, then, this way. (1)

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(GERMAN VI: Stand here. Come over to this line.

CAST & SOUND: SOME PRISONERS SHUFFLE TOWARDS GERMAN VI

GERMAN III: (OFF) Stand back from there.

VOICE VI: (OFF) But my luggage – I want to get my luggage.

GERMAN III: (OFF) Luggage afterwards.

GERMAN IV: (SLIGHT OVERLAP) This side. Come this side.

VOICE V: But this is my wife. I want to stay with her.

GERMAN IV: Together again afterwards. (GOING OFF) This side now.

WOMAN I: (SLIGHT OVERLAP) Sick, perhaps. But I cannot leave the child.

GERMAN V: Good. Good. Stay with child.

VOICE I: (CLOSE ON) Francesca, darling. Be calm. It will be alright. Think of me. I will think of you.

WOMAN II: (CLOSE ON) Renzo, I'm so frightened. Don't leave me.

VOICE I: (CLOSE ON) Oh darling...goodbye... (THEY EMBRACE)

GERMAN VI: (COMING ON) Schwein! Weg von da!

SOUND: GERMAN VI KNOCKS RENZO DOWN

VOICE I: REACTION WITH ABOVE

WOMAN II: STIFLED CRY WITH ABOVE (2)

CAST & SOUND: CONTINUE ADLIB UNDER LEVI OPPOSITE

GERMAN VI: Weiter, weiter! Los, los! Women and children on this side. MORE.

LEVI (N): (1) In less than ten minutes all the fit men had been collected together in a group; and another smaller group of the young fit women. In that rapid summary choice each of us had been judged capable or not of working for the Reich. What happened to the others – the women, the children, the old men, the sick people? The night swallowed them up. Ninety-six men entered the men's camp of Oswicim – Auschwitz; twenty-nine women from that convoy entered the women's camp of Monowitz-Buna. The others – more than five hundred? In an instant our women, our parents, our children disappeared. We saw them for a short while as an obscure mass at the other end of the platform; then we saw nothing more. (2)

None of them was alive two days later.

(3) And out of the darkness came two groups of strange individuals, moving into the light of the lamps. They walked in groups of three, in a large circle around us, never coming near; and silently began to busy themselves with our luggage, and to climb in and out of the empty freightcars. They wore ragged striped jackets and forlorn comic caps on their heads. They walked with an odd embarrassed step, their heads hanging bobbing in front, their arms rigid. Even by night, and at a distance, they looked filthy. We looked at each other without a word. Tomorrow, we knew, we should look like these men and behave like these grotesque creatures. (4)

GERMAN VI: (CONT'D) Old people come here. (1)

CAST & SOUND: ADLIB DIVISION INTO GROUPS AND REMOVAL OF GROUPS OF WOMEN, CHILDREN, OLD, AND SICK. REMOVAL COMPLETE BY (2)

CAST & SOUND: (3) FROM DISTANCE SEVERAL SLAVE-LABOURERS APPROACH, WITH SHUFFLING STEPS. ADLIB THEIR VOICES AS THEY WORK. THEY MAKE HOLLOW SOUNDS INSIDE THE FREIGHTCARS, AND THROW DOWN BUNDLES. PRISONERS AND BUNDLES ARE LOADED INTO TRUCKS. LOADING COMPLETE BY (4)

CAST & SOUND: CROSS-FADE FROM STATION SCENE TO INTERIOR OF TRUCK INTO WHICH LEVI AND HIS FELLOW-PRISONERS HAVE BEEN LOADED

LEVI (N): (1) We are thrust into the waiting trucks – thirty to a truck – and are driven roughly through the dark, guarded by a young German bristling with arms. At a certain point he switches on a flashlight and turns to us one by one... (2)

LEVI (N): (2) The journey takes twenty minutes. (3) Then the truck stops in front of a large gate; and above it a sign, brilliantly lighted: (4)
ARBEIT MACHT FREI
(TO HIMSELF) “Arbeit macht frei” – Work gives Freedom – freedom...

We climb down and are herded into an enormous empty room, poorly heated. (5)
We have a terrible thirst: we have had nothing to drink for four days. There is one tap, dripping: above it the sign WASSERTRINKEN VERBOTEN (6)

SOUND: (1) TRUCK STARTS UP, MOVES OFF CHANGING GEARS, GATHERS MOMENTUM, AND BUMPS ALONG AT SPEED. HOLD BEHIND NEXT DIALOGUE

GERMAN IV: (INGRATIATINGLY) Habt Ihr Geld bei Euch? 'ne Uhr oder Gold, ja? Alles mir geben – verstehen? Ich aufheben. Ihr könnt's nicht brauchen. (ADLIB FURTHER IN THE SAME VEIN IN BROKEN ENGLISH)

CAST: REACT TO ABOVE, SOME POLITELY AND WITH DIGNITY, SOME IN A SURLY WAY, SOME WITH OUTRIGHT INDIGNATION, AND SOME WITH NERVOUS LAUGHTER. REACTION GROWS, THREATENS TO GET OUT OF HAND, AND IS ABRUPTLY CUT OFF BY NEXT.

GERMAN IV: (SHOUTING TO RESTORE ORDER) Ruhe! Ruhe!... Silence!

SOUND: STILL AT BG LEVEL THE TRUCK IS HEARD BY ITSELF FOR A FEW SECONDS AND THEN (2) CONTINUES BEHIND LEVI OPPOSITE. AT (3) STARTS TO PULL UP QUICKLY, AND STOPS BY (4)

CAST & SOUND: (5) INTERMITTENT MOVEMENT AND MURMURING, SOUND OF WATER DRIPPING FROM A TAP IN A BIG ROOM

VOICE I: (6) (IRONICALLY) It is forbidden to drink the water.

VOICE IV: It can't be. It's a joke. They know we're thirsty.

LEVI: Forbidden? Why forbidden? I'm drinking.

SOUND: LEVI TURNS ON TAP, TAKES A MOUTHFUL OF WATER, AND SPITS IT OUT VIOLENTLY

LEVI (R): (1) Hell must be like this. A huge empty room; and a dripping tap; and we are tired, standing on our feet, two crowded to sit. We suffer the tortures of thirst and the foul brackish dripping swamp-water puts a rough razor's edge to the torture. And we wait for something that will certainly be horrible. And nothing happens – nothing happens – nothing continues to happen. At last somebody sits down on the floor: it is cold, and he springs up again quickly.

The time passes – drop by drop – infinitely slowly. We are not dead yet – I think.

(PAUSE) (2)

LEVI: (EXPLETIVE, THEN) It's filthy! Sewer water! Swamp water!

SOUND: TAP TURNED OFF. (1) DRIPPING CONTINUES

CAST & SOUND: (2) A DOOR OPENS. SHUFFLE AND SIGH OF REACTION

SS MAN: (COMING ON) Sind das die Neuen?

GERMAN IV: Jawohl, Herr Hauptmann.

SS MAN: Gut. (TO PRISONERS, IN AN INSULTINGLY INDOLGENT TONE) Wer kann Deutsch?

VOICE I: (WITH NERVOUS AND INGRATIATING QUICKNESS) Ich kann Deutsch. Ich – Renzo Dreyfus. I understand. I will interpret.

SS MAN: Gut. Du kannst übersetzen. Also sage Ihnen: (HE DICTATES CALMLY AND DELIBERATELY, WITHOUT FORCE OR MENACE) Ihr seid jetzt in Auschwitz...

VOICE I: We are now in Auschwitz...

LEVI (R): (1) Stolen? (2) Stolen by whom? (3) Why should our shoes be stolen? (4)

SS MAN: Das Motto in Auschwitz ist "Arbeit macht Frei".

VOICE I: He says that "Arbeit macht Frei" – work makes freedom.

SS MAN: Ihr sollt in fünf Gliedern mit zwei Metern Abstand von Mann zu Mann antreten.

VOICE I: He says we are to form rows of five – with intervals of two yards between man and man.

SS MAN: Danach zieht sich jeder nackt aus. Wollene Sachen auf die rechte Seite – das andere Zeug auf die linke...

VOICE I: We are to undress, taking off all clothes, and arrange the clothes in a special manner – the woollen garments on one side (the right) and all the rest on the other side...

SS MAN: Und selbstverständlich die Schuhe ausziehen...

VOICE I: We are to take off our shoes as well...

SS MAN: (INTERRUPTING GRAVELY IN SOLEMN JEST) Aber passt gut auf dass sie nicht gestohlen werden.

VOICE I: (INCREDULOUSLY, TRANSLATING WORD FOR WORD) But pay great attention that the shoes are not stolen.

CAST: A MURMUR IN REACTION, WITH THE WORD "STOLEN" PROTRUDING FROM IT INTERMITTENTLY. REACTION ESTABLISHES ITSELF FOR A FEW SECONDS BEFORE LEVI BEGINS (1) OPPOSITE, AND CONTINUES BEHIND LEVI, WITH "STOLEN" AGAIN AT (2) AND (3), PETERING OUT BY (4).

LEVI: (TO DREYFUS, WITH OUTRAGED VIGOUR) And what about our documents – papers – the things in our pockets – our watches?

- LEVI (R): I have never seen old men naked before – I cannot control a poignant feeling of disgust... (1)... The door slammed shut in the wind, but the SS Officer opens it again (2) and stands with his back against it, smoking truculently. A freezing wind comes in through the door. He watches with detached interest the way – in our nakedness – we writhe away from the cold, one behind the other, sidling and touching, crowding down the nausea of physical revulsion in order to escape from the bitter wind.
- LEVI (N): Four men come in with razors (3), four men in striped jackets and trousers with numbers sewn on the front – well-favoured men with weight on them, not like the ghosts we saw last night at the station. (4) We ask them many questions, as though we had found people of our own kind; but they speak a language totally incomprehensible; they catch hold of us and in a moment we are shaven and shorn. Our faces look startled and naked without the hair. (5)

- VOICE II: Renzo – what about that? What about our papers and watches? Ask him.
- VOICE I: Und andere Sachen – Dokumente – Uhren – was damit?
- SS MAN: (AFTER A BRIEF PAUSE, CONTEMPTUOUSLY) H'm! (HE SPITS. THEN, TO GERMAN IV) Fein, Feldweibel: übernehmen Sie Wache. (GOING OFF)
- GERMAN IV: Jawohl, Herr Hauptmann.
- SOUND: SS MAN LEAVES
- GERMAN IV: (OVER EXIT) Zu fünfen – zwei Metern Abstand – hier... hier. Weg mit 'n Schuhen.
- CAST & SOUND: PRISONERS TAKE UP POSITIONS IN RANKS, UNDRRESS, AND THROW DOWN THEIR SHOES: CONTINUE TO (2). AT (1) DOOR SLAMS SHUT AND AT (2) IT IS OPENED AGAIN BY SS MAN. WHEN IT OPENS THE SHOE THROWING IS OVER AND THE SHUFFLING OF THE PRISONERS IS QUIET ENOUGH TO HEAR A COLD WIND. WIND CONTINUES TO (3)
- SOUND: (3) FOUR BARBERS ENTER. EXIT SS MAN. DOOR IS SHUT.
- CAST: ADLIB OF PRISONERS QUESTIONING BARBERS AND OF BARBERS SAYING THEY DON'T UNDERSTAND IN LANGUAGES NOT UNDERSTOOD BY THE PRISONERS, ENDING AT (5)
- SOUND: (5) ANOTHER DOOR IS OPENED

LEVI (N): Another door is opened; we are herded through and stand, our feet in water – naked, shorn, unregarded. Everyone asks questions and nobody answers. If we are naked, standing in water in a shower room, it means we will have a shower. If we are to have a shower it is because we are not going to be killed. Then why do they keep us standing, our feet in water, waiting – with nothing to drink? And nobody explains anything, and we have no shoes, and no clothes; and we have been travelling for five days and have had nothing to drink and cannot even sit down; and stand – naked – our feet in cold water. (1)

LEVI (R): (2) But it's all a game – all a cruel mocking game to humiliate us. They are sneering at us. Obviously they are going to kill us. To make us think we're going to live is a bait, to tempt us into hope; and then they'll laugh at us. Anybody who believes they're not going to kill us is crazy. I wish they'd hurry.

MORE...

GERMAN III: (OFF) Hier lang. Los, los. Wie Ihr seid.

CAST & SOUND: THE PRISONERS SHUFFLE BAREFOOT INTO THE NEXT ROOM. WHEN THEY ARRIVE THEIR FEET SPLASH IN WATER. A FEW OF THEM TENTATIVELY WASH, WITH CAST MURMURING OR QUIET ACCORDING TO CONTEXT. THIS ATMOSPHERE CONTINUES TILL ELECTRIC BELL RINGS BELOW, JUST BEFORE SHOWER IS TURNED ON, LATER IN THE SCENE

YIDDISH I: (1) Voo zeinen di froien un kinder?

YIDDISH II: Un vawss vellen zay tun itzt?

(YIDDISH III: Vie lang darfen mir varten daw?

(VOICE III: But where are the women, Primo? What have they done with them? My wife, my daughter – do you think they're like us at this moment – naked, standing with their feet in cold water, waiting?

LEVI: I don't know...I don't know...

VOICE III: But where? And when will we be able to see them again?

LEVI: (GENTLY) I don't know – I don't know at all. We'll see them again, never fear – certainly we'll see them again. But I have no idea where they are now – or what they are doing with them... (2)

CAST: ADLIB ANXIOUS CONVERSATIONS LIKE ABOVE, GETTING LOUDER AND LOUDER

LEVI (R): (CONT'D) Perhaps it'll be over soon – perhaps in this very room, when they get tired of watching us naked, dancing from foot to foot in the cold water, trying every now and then to sit down on the floor in the water. But we cannot sit down; and there are two inches of cold water.

LEVI (CROSS FROM (R) TO (N), COMPLETING CROSS BEFORE END OF CUE): And we walk about senselessly – and talk – everybody talks to everybody else – and nobody listens... (1)

CAST: MOUNTING CONFUSION FOR A FEW SECONDS, BUT OBEDIENT SILENCE WHEN ORDERED BY SS MAN

SOUND: SS MAN OPENS DOOR, ENTERS, AND SLAMS DOOR

SS MAN: Ruhe da!

SOUND: WATER SOUNDS CAN BE HEARD AGAIN NOW VOICES HAVE CEASED TO COVER THEM

SS MAN: Nun meine Herren, Ruhe bitte. Das ist hier keine Judenschule. Ich hoffe Sie verstehen. Übersetzen Sie, Herr Rabbiner.

VOICE I: (WITH LITTLE ZEST) The officer says: We must be quiet. (SHORT PAUSE, THEN WITH EXTREME DISTASTE AND SHAME) He says... (PAUSE)... he says, this is not a rabbinical school.

VOICE II: Ask him what we're waiting for.

VOICE III: Ask him where our women are.

VOICE V: Ask him how long we are to stay here.

VOICE VI: Renzo, ask him why –

VOICE I: No, I do not want to ask. I cannot ask. Don't ask me to ask him...

LEVI (R): (1) (VERY QUIETLY) We are silent now, and ashamed of our silence. It is night still. Will the day ever come?... Why do we wait so long?... (2)

SS MAN: Was will er?

VOICE I: Oh, nichts, Herr Offizier.

SS MAN: Gut. Aber vergessen Sie nicht, Ruhe ist das Beste für Sie.

SOUND: SS MAN OPENS DOOR, LEAVES, AND SLAMS DOOR BEHIND HIM

CAST: A LITTLE MURMUR PETERING OUT TO NOTHING (1)

SOUND: WATER SOUNDS CONTINUE BEHIND LEVI OPPOSITE AND CONTINUE ALONE BUT STILL BG FOR A FEW SECONDS BEYOND (2); THEN DOCTOR STEALTHILY OPENS DOOR, ENTERS, SHUTS DOOR, AND APPROACHES

DOCTOR: (COMING ON) Én azért jöttem, hogy fogadjam Önöket.

VOICE I: Sie wollen sprechen zu uns? Ich kann Deutsch übersetzen.

DOCTOR: (HEAVY HUNGARIAN ACCENT) Thank you no. Not interpret. I will speak myself – directly – how you say? in your mother tongue?

VOICE IV: Where are we? Can you tell us that?

DOCTOR: At Monowitz, near Oswicim – Auschwitz to the Germans – in Upper Silesia.

VOICE IV: Is it a... detention camp?

DOCTOR: A work camp – Arbeitslager. It is named Monowitz-Buna. All prisoners work in a factory – there are about ten thousand prisoners – the factory makes kind of rubber called “Buna” – so the camp is also called “Buna”.

VOICE III: What about our clothes? And our shoes?

DOCTOR: You will be given shoes and clothes.

VOICE II: Our own?

DOCTOR: No, not your own – other shoes, other clothes – like these – like my clothes – striped; like my shoes – broken...

VOICE VI: But why do we stand here in the water, naked?

DOCTOR: You are waiting for a shower, and to be disinfected. It is the rule. It takes place immediately after reveille – after the camp rousing. One cannot enter the camp without being first disinfected – that is the rule.

VOICE V: Will we have work to do? Perhaps in the factory?

DOCTOR: Certainly there will be work. Everyone must work here. There is, of course, work and work. I work as a doctor, for example. I am Hungarian, studied in Italy. I am dentist for the camp. Sometimes my work is not very... attractive.

LEVI: For how long are you here?

DOCTOR: Four and a half years in camp. A year and a half in Buna – ever since it was opened.

VOICE VI: Why are you here? Are you Jewish – like us?

DOCTOR: (CLEARLY, BUT WITHOUT BRAVADO) No. I am a criminal.

VOICE III: But where are the women? Shall we see them soon?

DOCTOR: (EVASIVELY) The women? The women are well. They will not suffer – now. You will perhaps see them again soon –

VOICE III: But how? Where?

- DOCTOR: I cannot say. There are many things we do not know – many things we do not expect – many things we must not ask. Also there are many customs, and these we must study with great care. (HE CONTINUES WITH HEAVY IRONY, BUT IT IS MORE DIRECTED AGAINST HIMSELF THAN HIS LISTENERS) Every Sunday there are concerts and football matches. He who boxes well can become a cook. Those who work well get prize coupons to buy tobacco and soap with. The water – you noticed? – the water is not drinkable: instead a coffee substitute is distributed each day – but nobody drinks it much because the soup – we live on the soup – the soup is watery enough to quench thirst, if you drink to quench thirst.
- VOICE IV: Thirst – can't you get us water to drink?
- VOICE I: We have had nothing to drink for five days!
- LEVI: Please get us some water – somehow...
- DOCTOR: I am sorry – truly sorry. I cannot get you water. I have come to see you secretly, against the orders of SS. You have still to be disinfected. (IRONICALLY) Until then you cannot suffer the privilege of entering the camp. Until then nobody is allowed to speak to you. I am not allowed to speak to you. I like Italians – I have lived in Italy – I have still (how do you say?), I have still “some heart” – a little.
- VOICE VI: Are there other Italians in camp then?
- DOCTOR: (EVASIVELY) Some – a few. I don't know how many – now. But you will excuse me. (GOING) I must go or they'll catch me...

LEVI (N): There is no time to understand. (1) They throw to us unrecognisable rags for clothes, broken-down boots with wooden soles. And we are in the open again, (2) in the blue icy snow of dawn, barefoot, naked, clutching the rags of clothing in our hands, with a hundred yards to run to the next hut... (3)

LEVI (TRANSITION FROM (N) TO (R): When we finish dressing, everyone stays in his own corner.

LEVI (R): We dare not lift our eyes to look at each other. There is no mirror, nowhere to look; each of us sees his own image before his own eyes, in the hundred livid frightened faces, in the hundred wretched and squalid bundles of rags. At a stroke we have been transformed into the phantoms we saw yesterday. We have no way to express this profound offence, the annihilation of a man. It is not possible to sink lower than this. Nothing belongs to us any more: they have taken away our clothes, our shoes, even our hair. If we speak, they will not listen to us; and even if they listen to us they cannot understand.

MORE...

SOUND: THE DOCTOR OPENS THE DOOR AND LEAVES, SHUTTING THE DOOR BEHIND HIM. AFTER A MOMENT AN ELECTRIC BELL RINGS LOUDLY AND GOES ON RINGING

CAST: MURMUR WHICH FOLLOWED DOCTOR'S EXIT IS SILENCE BY BELL

SOUND: BELL STOPS RINGING AND WATER RUSHES OUT OF THE SHOWERS

CAST: CRIES AND CONFUSION

SOUND: DOOR OPENS

GERMAN III: (OFF) (SHOUTING TO MAKE HIMSELF HEARD) Los, los! Wascht Euch, und ordentlich.

CAST & SOUND: BABBLE DIMINISHES. WASHING SOUNDS. AT (1) START CROSS-FADE TO NEXT, COMPLETING IT BY (2)

CAST & SOUND: (2) WIND, FOOTSTEPS RUNNING ON SNOW: HOLD BRIEFLY, THEN FADE OUT AT (3)

LEVI (R): (CONT'D) And finally, they even take away our names. Häftling, they say: Prisoner. They give us numbers. The number is tattooed on the left arm. The operation is swift, skilful, and painful. Each man will carry his number until he dies. We have been baptized.

And I am Häftling Nummer 174517 – eins sieben vier fünf siebzehn. Can I ever learn the sound in German? – eins sieben vier fünf siebzehn – or for short, just fünf siebzehn...

LEVI (R): (PACE THIS CUE SLOWLY, ACCORDING TO NOTE OPPOSITE) Fünf siebzehn... I – Primo Levi – am fünf siebzehn...

GERMAN V: (WITH MENACING AUTHORITY) Nummer? Fünf siebzehn. Achtung! Hörst Du? Her kommen.

SOUND: GERMAN V STRIKES LEVI

LEVI: (GASPS WITH PAIN. THEN MURMURS BEMUSEDLY FROM THE BLOW) Fünf siebzehn... I am fünf siebzehn... (FIRST TWO WORDS AND LAST TWO WORDS TO CO-INCIDE WITH FIRST TWO WORDS AND LAST TWO WORDS OF LEVI OPPOSITE)

VOICE II: Why are we left in this hut...

VOICE IV: ... crazy with thirst...

VOICE I: ...forbidden to sit on the bunks...

VOICE VI: ... or even lean against them? Why?

CHARLES: Why? Pourquoi? Il n'y a pas de Pourquoi. Les autres sont au travail et ils reviendront le soir. Moi, je suis excusé aujourd'hui – je viens de sortir de l'hôpital.

LEVI: Will they at least give us our toothbrushes back?

CHARLES: Toothbrushes? Brosses à dents? Vous n'êtes pas chez vous.

LEVI (D): Hour after hour, the first long day of limbo draws to its end. Will they, in the end, give us something to drink? No, they turn us out of the hut, and place us in line again, and lead us to a huge square in the centre of the camp, and arrange us meticulously in squads. Then nothing happens: for another hour nothing happens... nothing...

(PAUSE)

VOICE V: Why do they keep saying “You’re not at home”? Why do they say “This is no health resort”?

CHARLES: (ALMOST GAILY) Il n’y a qu’une façon d’en sortir, c’est par la cheminée.

FRITSCH: (A HEAVY BRUTAL VOICE OVER P.A. SYSTEM, METALLIC IN SOUND) Ich mache darauf aufmerksam, dies ist kein Sanatorium zum Ausruhen: es ist ein Deutsches Konzentrationslager – ein Arbeitslager. Hier kann keiner ‘raus. Wem es hier nicht passt, der kann ‘raus, dort, durch den Hochspannungszaun. Juden in diesem Transport haben kein Recht länger als vierzehn Tage zu leben. Pastoren werden vielleicht einen Monat leben. Der Rest drei Monate. Wer hier ‘raus kommt, kann nur durch den Schornstein ‘raus.

LEVI: (QUIETLY) Why? Pourquoi? Why? Warum?

GERMAN VI: (WITH STINGING BRUTALITY) Warum? Hier gibt’s kein Warum.

(PAUSE)

LEVI (N): ... (1) Then one after the other, the squads of our comrades appear, returning from work; walking in columns of five with a strange, unnatural gait, like stiff puppets made of jointless bones. They walk scrupulously in time to the band. They arrange themselves like us in the huge square, according to a precise order. When the last squad is in place, the count begins: the count and then the recount: (2) for over an hour until the long checklists collected by a man in striped jacket are given to a group of SS men in full uniform. (3)

It is dark now, but the camp is brightly lighted with flood-lights. (4)

SOUND: (1) A BRASS BAND, PLAYING "ROSAMUNDE". STARTS TO BE HEARD AT SOME DISTANCE BUT NOT TOO SUBDUED, BACKTIMED TO END ON CADENCE AT (2)

GERMAN V: (3) (SPEAKING OVER METALLIC P.A.) Absperre! Absperre!

CAST & SOUND: PRISONERS DISPERSE. CROSS-FADE TO MUFFLED MURMUR IN HUT. COMPLETING CROSS-FADE BY (4)

BOY: (COMING ON) Fin vannen bist die? (HALTINGLY) Woher Du kommen?

LEVI: I am Italian – Italien. Are you a Jew? Du Jude?

BOY: Ja, a Yid fin Poylen. Mei numme is Schloyme. (HALTINGLY) Ich Schlome.

LEVI: How long have you been in the Lager? Wie lange Du hier?

BOY: Drei jahre. M'hot mir gebracht noch als kind.

LEVI: What is your work – dein Arbeit?

BOY: Schlosser... Schmidt.

LEVI: Schmidt? Oh, smith, yes... er... blacksmith. I'm a chemist. Ich Chemicker.

BOY: Chemicker gut.

LEVI (D): We still have a great many things to learn. First the topography of our Lager, our compound – a square about 600 yards long, surrounded by two fences of barbed wire, the inner one charged with high tension current. There are sixty wooden huts, or Blocks, ten of them still building; a group of brick kitchens; and huts with showers and latrines, about one for each six or eight blocks. Then there are Blocks reserved for certain purposes: for the Infirmary; for the “Prominenz”, the aristocracy of the prisoners; for the Aryan Germans, the politicals or criminals – “Reichsdeutsche”; for the Kapos or guards; and for the camp brothel, served by Polish Häftling girls, and reserved for the Reichsdeutsche.

MORE...

LEVI: Where is the water – Wasser? I’m terribly thirsty. Ich will trinken

BOY: Mir hawben nicht kein vasser. Dus vasser is nicht git. Es shtinkt. (HALTINGLY) Du nicht trink Wasser, meine Freunde.

LEVI: Why? Warum?

BOY: Geschwollen. Man vell ungeschvull’n fin daym vasser. (HALTINGLY) Du nicht trink. Du warten Nacht. (PAUSE, THEN FLUENTLY) Wie is dein mamme? (HALTINGLY) Mutter... wo Mutter?

LEVI: In Italy.

BOY: Italyen! A Yid in Italyen?

LEVI: Ja, Italian. But she disappeared – hidden, run away. Ich weiss nicht wo sie ist.

BOY: (GENTLY) Oh, hawb nich gevisst. Sei mir moychel. (HALTINGLY) Oh, tut mir leid. (BOARD FADE ON WHOLE CUE)

CAST & SOUND: SYNCHRONISED FADE WITH ABOVE, AND OUT (1). BEAT (2)

LEVI (D): (CONT'D) An ordinary living Block is divided into two parts: "Tagesraum" and dormitory. In the Tagesraum lives the head of the hut with his friends. In the other part – the dormitory – 148 bunks on three levels, fitted close to each other like the cells of a beehive, and divided into three corridors so as to use without waste all the space in the room right up to the roof. Here all the ordinary Häftlinge live, about 200 or 250 to a hut – so that there are two men in most of the bunks. The bunks are made of movable planks, each covered by a thin straw sack and two blankets. The corridors are so narrow that two people can scarcely pass; the total area of the floor is so small that the inhabitants of the Block cannot all stay there unless at least half are lying on their bunks.

In the middle of the Lager is the roll-call square – enormous – where we collect in the morning to form the working squads, and in the evening to be counted. Facing the square is a plot of grass, carefully mown: here the gallows are erected when necessary, and here the public punishments – beatings and floggings – are administered.

We soon learn that the guests of the Lager are divided into three categories – criminals, politicals, and Jews. All are dressed in stripes, and all are Häftlinge: but the Jews – and Jews form much the greatest majority – wear the Jewish star, red and yellow. The camp is commanded by SS men, but there are not many of them. They are usually outside the camp, and are not often seen. Our effective masters are the criminals – and any of the other two main categories (the politicals and the Jews) who are prepared to help them. These Prominenten, as they are called, have a completely free hand over us.

MORE...

- LEVI (D): (CONT'D) And we soon learn the language of the camp numbers:
- VOICE III: You must treat with respect the numbers from 30,000 to 80,000. There are only a few hundred left. They're the survivors from the Polish ghettos.
- VOICE VI: But if it's a business deal, watch out for the 116,000's or the 117,000's – the Greeks from Salonika: there are only about forty left, but they're very sharp; you have to watch out with them.
- LEVI (D): But the high numbers, these are objects of mirth – like “freshmen” or “conscripts” or “greenhorns”. The old hands can persuade the “high numbers” that leather shoes are distributed at the infirmary to all those who have delicate feet –
- VOICE IV: You can even persuade one of them to leave his bowl of soup “in your custody” while he runs over for a new pair of shoes.
- VOICE V: You can sell him a spoon for three rations of bread.
- VOICE II: You can send him to one of the most ferocious of the guards to ask if he can join the “Kartoffelschalenkommando” – the Potato Peeling Company.
- LEVI (D): We learn never to ask questions, always to pretend to understand, always to answer “Jawohl”. We have learned the value of food:
- VOICE IV: You must diligently scrape the bottom of the bowl, and hold the bowl under your chin when you eat bread so as not to lose the crumbs. Also it is not the same thing to be given a ladleful of soup from the top of the vat as from the bottom.
- LEVI (D): So we quickly learn which are the best places to try to reach in the line-up according to the capacity of the soup-vat.

MORE...

- LEVI (D): (CONT'D) We learn also that everything is useful:
- VOICE V: With wire you tie up your shoes, rags you wrap around your feet, with waste paper you pad out your jacket – illegally – against the cold.
- LEVI (D): But we have also learned that everything can be stolen – and that everything is in fact automatically stolen as soon as attention is relaxed for an instant.
- VOICE VI: To avoid this, you learn the art of sleeping with your head on a bundle made up of your jacket and all your belongings – everything from a bowl to shoes.
- LEVI (D): We learn further that the rules of the camp are incredibly complicated, and the prohibitions innumerable.
- VOICE I: You must not approach to within less than two yards of the barbed wire; it is forbidden to sleep with a jacket on, or without pants, or with a cap on the head; it is forbidden to use washrooms or latrines which are marked “Nur für Kapos” (“only for guards”) or “Nur für Reichsdeutsche” (“only for Aryans”).
- LEVI (D): We learn to go for the shower on the prescribed day, and not to go there on a day not prescribed. We are forbidden to leave the hut with jacket unbuttoned or with collar raised; forbidden to carry paper or straw under the clothes as protection against the cold; forbidden to wash except stripped to the waist.

Then there are the Rites and Ceremonies:

- VOICE II: Every morning the bed to be made perfectly flat and smooth.
- VOICE III: Every morning to smear the shoes (no matter how muddy) with machine grease provided for that purpose.
- VOICE IV: Every morning to scrape the mudstains off the clothes. Paint, grease, and rust-stains however are permitted.
- VOICE V: In the evening to undergo the control for lice and the control for the washing of feet.
- VOICE VI: On Saturday to have the beard and head shaved.
- VOICE I: On Saturday to mend or have mended one's rags.
- VOICE II: On Sunday to undergo the general control for skin diseases.
- VOICE III: On Sunday to undergo the control of buttons on the jacket, the prescribed number being five.
- LEVI (D): Then there are the matters of necessity:
- VOICE IV: When the nails grow long, they are to be bitten off. For the toenails, friction of the boots suffices.
- VOICE V: If a button comes off, it has to be tied on with wire.
- VOICE VI: If you go to the latrine or washroom, everything has to be carried along, always and everywhere. While washing the face, you must hold the bundle of clothes between the knees – any other way it will be stolen in an instant – and this imparts a peculiar posture while washing.

VOICE I: If a shoe hurts, you must go in the evening to the ceremony of the changing of shoes. You must be able to choose at a glance one shoe that fits – not a pair, but one shoe. Once the choice is made there can be no second thoughts and no changing.

LEVI (D): And shoes, we learn, are a matter of life and death. Death begins with the shoes. For most of us, the shoes are simply instruments of torture: after a few hours of marching they cause painful sores, and these quickly become infected. If the sores are bad the Häftling arrives last everywhere and receives blows everywhere for being last. If they run after him he cannot escape; his feet swell, and the more they swell, the more the rubbing of the wood and cloth of the shoes is a torture. In the end there is only the hospital: but to go into the hospital with “dicke Füße” – swollen feet – is extremely dangerous: it is well known, and well known particularly to the SS, that here in Auschwitz there is no cure for that complaint.
(1)

LEVI (R): Ausrücken – Einrücken: to go out – to come in; every day according to the rhythm of work and the seasons. To work, to sleep, to eat; to fall ill, to get better or to die – that too is the rhythm. All hours of light are working hours – eight hours in winter, twelve hours in summer. Rain or snow or the fierce winds from the Carpathians – these do not interrupt the work. Only darkness or fog stop the work because we might otherwise escape. (2)

SOUND: (1) SNEAK “ROSAMUNDE” BAND MUSIC AND HOLD BG

SOUND: (2) FADE BAND MUSIC. OUT SLOWLY

(PAUSE)

LEVI (D): And for how long? The old ones laugh at this question. They laugh but do not reply, the question having lost all intensity or point in the face of the far more urgent and concrete questions of the present and of the immediate future: How much will we eat today? Will it snow? Will there be coal to unload?

Here the past and the future are quickly obliterated. It is not so easy to hope as we had thought. A fortnight after my arrival I am already prey to the prescribed hunger, the chronic gnawing hunger that free men never know – the hunger that makes you dream all night and settles like a heavy disease in all the bones of the body. I have already learned not to let myself be robbed; and if I find a spoon lying around, or a piece of string, or a button that I can pick up without danger of punishment, I pocket them and consider them mine by right.

At the back of my heels I already have those numb sores that will not heal. I push wagons. I work with a shovel. Already my body is no longer mine: my belly is swollen, my limbs emaciated, my face bloated in the morning, hollow in the evening. Some of us have yellow faces, others grey. My body is no longer my body. I shiver in the wind. I turn rotten in the rain...

(PAUSE)

LEVI (N): Late on the evening of the first day I am assigned to Block 30 (1) and shown a bunk in which Diena is already asleep. He is exhausted; but he wakes up and makes room for me, and receives me hospitably.

CAST & SOUND: (1) SNEAK BG SOUND OF LEVI'S BOOTS ON WOODEN FLOOR AS HE COMES TO BUNK AND CLIMBS IN, AND SOUND OF RESTLESS MURMUR OF PRISONERS IN DORMITORY: CONTINUE MURMUR BEHIND NEXT DIALOGUE

LEVI (N): (1) “Ruhe!” – I do not know this word. Then I realise, “Quiet, keep quiet” (2) they are saying – and my inquietude deepens. (3)

LEVI: (QUIETLY, ALMOST WHISPERING) I am hungry.

DIENA: Yes, always we are hungry.

LEVI: When will they distribute the soup? Tomorrow?

DIENA: In the morning – before work.

LEVI: But how can I eat it? Can I eat it without a spoon?

DIENA: It’s possible.

LEVI: But where will I find a spoon?

DIENA: Buy it – with bread. There’s no other way.

LEVI: And will I have my own work? When will they send me to work? (HIS VOICE HAS NOW RISEN WELL ABOVE A WHISPER AND IS AN INSISTENT BUT LOW FULL VOICE)

DIENA: Everybody works who can walk. You will work. I don’t know what kind of work... Where do you come from?

LEVI: The train brought us from Carpi –

CAST: (INTERRUPTING SLEEPILY BUT ANGRILY) Ruhe! Ruhe! Ruhe! (1)
(CONTINUE “Ruhe!” AND ANGRY MURMUR TO END OF FADE BELOW)

CAST & SOUND: (2) START TO BOARD-FADE HUT SCENE, WELL DOWN BY (3), AND THEN OUT

LEVI (TRANSITION FROM (N) TO (R) SLOWLY): The confusion of languages plays a fundamental part in our disintegration. We are surrounded with a perpetual Babel; each is isolated in his own failure to understand: everybody shouts orders and threats in languages we have never heard before – but God help anybody who fails to understand instantly. No one has any patience: no one listens. We who are the latest arrivals instinctively collect in the corners, against the walls, afraid of being surprised, or caught unawares – afraid of being beaten for nothing.

Now I slip into a bitter and tense sleep – threatened, besieged, drawn into a spasm of defence. I dream that I am sleeping on a road, or on a bridge, or in an open doorway where many people pass to and fro... (1)

LEVI (N): (2) Reveille – suddenly – harsh – like a wound unexpectedly inflicted. (3) The entire hut shakes to its foundations; the lights go on; everyone bustles around in sudden frantic activity. They shake the blankets, raising a thick foul-smelling dust; they dress in feverish haste, and rush headlong half-dressed into the freezing morning air to get to the latrines and washrooms before they are crowded. Every instant of time must be saved: for there are only five minutes until the distribution of bread... (4)

SOUND: (1) LOUD ELECTRIC BELL AT BG LEVEL: ALONE FOR A FEW SECONDS TO (2), THEN CONTINUING BEHIND LEVI OPPOSITE AND OUT AT (3)

CAST & SOUND: (3) STIR OF PRISONERS RISING, WITH MUCH URGENT NOISE AND HIGH-PITCHED TALK: HOLD: A LITTLE BEFORE (4) NOISE AND TALK BOTH START TO DIMINISH, AND AT (4) THEY DWINDLE TO A VERY SUBDUED ACCOMPANIMENT TO NEXT DIALOGUE

- LEVI (R): (1) ... bread – the holy grey slab which seems enormous in your neighbour's hand, and in your own hand is so small as to make you cry.
- LEVI (N): This hallucination always occurs, day after day. To begin with, some of us discuss at great length our own open and constant misfortune, and the shameless luck of others. Finally we exchange our rations only to find the illusion turned upside down, and everybody – as before – discontented and frustrated. But bread is money; and for the brief moments after distribution of bread, while the debtors still remain solvent, the Block resounds with claims, quarrels, scuffles. (2)

- STEINLAUF: Brot
- ARTHUR: Pain
- HUNGARIAN I: Kenyer
- YIDDISH I: Broid
- POLE I: Chleb
- KUHN: Lechem
- WALTER: Brood
- BARBER: Pan
- RUSSIAN I: Khlyeb
- HUNGARIAN II: Bort, Búzát, Békességet
- POLE II: Chleb, Chleba naszego powszedniego (1)
- HUNGARIAN I: Mindennapi kenyertünket add meg nekünk ma
- RUSSIAN II: Khlyeb! Khlyeb nam nasooshchnay!

CAST & SOUND: UP TO NORMAL BG LEVEL: DISTRIBUTION OF BREAD,
DISCUSSION AND DISPUTES: HOLD

CAST & SOUND: (2) HOLD SOUND OF DISPUTES FOR A MOMENT, THEN CROSS-
FADE TO THE MURKY AND LIQUID SOUNDS OF THE WASHROOM

LEVI (N): And the washroom – badly lighted, full of draughts, the brick floor covered with a layer of mud, the water with a revolting smell and totally unfit to drink; and the walls covered with didactic drawings and notices:

LEVI (N): (1) After only one week of prison, I must confess that the instinct for cleanliness has vanished. Then wandering aimlessly around the washroom, I suddenly see Steinlauf stripped to the waist, scrubbing neck and shoulders with great diligence – though with little success, having no soap: Steinlauf, my friend, aged almost fifty, ex-Sergeant Steinlauf, veteran of the Austro-Hungarian Army, Iron Cross of the 1914-1918 War...

VOICE II: The Good Häftling – stripped to the waist, diligently soaping his shorn and rosy head, says “So bist Du rein” – “Like this you get clean”,

VOICE VI: but the Bad Häftling,
greenish in colour with a strong Semitic nose, bundled up in ostentatiously stained clothes, his cap on his head, dips a finger into the washbasin: “So gehst Du ein” – “Like this you come to a bad end”.

CHARLES: La Propreté, c’est la Santé.

VOICE III: “Eine Laus, dein Tod” – “One louse can be the death of you”.

VOICE I: (WITH DISGUST) “Nach dem Abort, vor dem Essen
Hände waschen, nicht vergessen”. (1)

STEINLAUF: (SEVERELY) Levi, why do you not wash?

LEVI: (PETULANTLY) Why should I wash? Would I be better off than I am for washing? Would I please anybody more by washing? Would I live a day longer? an hour longer? I'd probably live a shorter time, because washing is an effort – a waste of energy, a waste of warmth.

STEINLAUF: I wash. You are unwise not to.

LEVI: Don't you know that after half an hour with the coal sacks there'll be absolutely no difference between the two of us? – none? If they give me only ten minutes between reveille and work, I want to devote that time to something other than washing – to gather myself together, to weigh things up, or just to look at the sky and think that perhaps I'm looking at it for the last time. So washing is a waste of time –

STEINLAUF: (INTERRUPTING PEREMPTORILY) Listen to me: listen carefully. The Lager is a great machine for turning us into beasts: therefore we must not become beasts. If we are to survive, we must force ourselves to save at least the skeleton, the scaffolding, the framework of civilisation. We are slaves, deprived of every right, exposed to every insult, condemned to certain death. But we still possess one power – the power to refuse our consent – and we must defend that with all our strength if it is to last.

(WITH GREATER INTENSITY, BUT LESS RHETORICALLY: WITH THE PATIENT FIRMNESS OF A NURSE TO A CHILD) Therefore we must certainly wash our faces – without soap if need be; in dirty water if need be – and dry ourselves on our jackets. We must polish somehow our shoes – not because the rules require us to, but for our own

MORE.

- LEVI (N): (2) The days all seem alike and it is not easy to count them. For days now we have formed teams of two, carrying loads from the railway to the store – a hundred yards through the mud of the thawing ground. To the store, bending underneath the load; back again, arms hanging down at the sides, not speaking.
- LEVI (D): Around us everything is hostile. Fear drives the slaves: hatred drives the masters. Fear – hatred – all other forces are annihilated. Everybody is an enemy – everybody a rival.
- LEVI (N): Even my companion “Null Achtzehn” is an enemy (1) – a dangerous companion because he works too hard.
- LEVI (N): (2) We come back again to the pile of steel beams. Mischa and the Galician give incomprehensible advice and lift a steel support and put it roughly on our shoulders. Their job is the least tiring: so they show excessive zeal in order to keep that job – shouting at companions who dawdle, inciting, admonishing, driving the work at an unbearable pace. The social structure of the camp is based on this pervasive human law: the privileged oppress the unprivileged.

MORE...

STEINLAUF: (CONT'D) sakes – for the sake of dignity and propriety. We must also walk erect, without dragging the feet – not out of respect for the Prussian discipline, but so that we will remain alive – so as not to begin to die... (1)

CAST & SOUND: (1) BG CROSS-FADE WASHROOM SCENE TO OUTDOOR WORK
SCENE OF PRISONERS LOADING STEEL BEAMS, COMPLETE BY (2)

MISCHA: (1) A hoykher tzifer – a neier mensch.

GALICIAN: Vāāz ihm vie. “Null achtzen” is a naar. Nu, hoib es oif!

MISCHA: Nemm es du allayn – und hoib. Zay vellen es kayn mawl allayn nit makhen. (2)

GALICIAN: Nu, kim schoin. Hoib schoin!

LEVI (N): (CONT'D) This time it is my turn to walk in front. The support is heavy but very short, so that at every step "Null Achtzehn", from not keeping in step, treads on my feet from behind.

Twenty steps: we reach the railroad: there is a cable to climb over. The load is badly placed; something is not right, it seems to be slipping from my shoulder. Fifty steps – sixty steps. The door to the storehouse. Still the same distance again to walk, then we can put the load down. But I cannot go any farther: the load is now pressing entirely on my arm. I cannot stand the pain and exhaustion another instant. (1) I shout, and try to turn around, just in time to see "Null Achtzehn" trip and throw everything away from him. (2) I could have jumped back if I'd been as agile as I used to be. But I find myself on the ground, all my muscles contracted, my wounded foot held tight between my hands, blind with pain. The corner of the piece of iron has cut across the back of my foot.

"Null Achtzehn" stands with his hands in his sleeves, his face expressionless, not saying a word. (1) Mischa and the Galician shout things I cannot understand. Others arrive, taking advantage from the distraction to stop work. (2) The Kapo arrives, distributing kicks, punches, and abuse. I only receive two blows on the head: (3) they stun me but do no harm.

LEVI (N): (4) It is proved that I can stand: therefore the bone is not broken. I do not dare to cut the boot open for fear of the pain, and because I know that once the boot is off, my foot will swell and I won't

MORE...

LEVI & SOUND: FOOTSTEPS OF TWO MEN (ONE ON MIKE, ONE OFF) CARRYING BEAM: LEVI (ON MIKE) UNDER PHYSICAL STRESS

LEVI: (1) Hey! "Null Achtzehn"!

SOUND: (2) STEEL BEAM FALLS

LEVI: CRY OF PAIN AS BEAM HITS HIS FOOT

MISCHA: (1) (OFF MIKE, SHOUTING) Shtay oif. Shtell zikh! Shtay oif.

GALICIAN: (OFF, BUT NEARER) Hit zikh far'n Kāpo.

MISCHA: (COMING ON) Shtay oif af di físs – venn nit, macht men a sawf fun dir.

CAST & SOUND: (2) KAPO (GERMAN III) ARRIVES: KICKS, BLOWS, CONFUSION

GERMAN III: (3) Hoch mit Dir. Du da, Galicier, Du trägst, und Du kannst aufladen. (4) Marsch – Ran an die Arbeit – Los, los!

LEVI (N): (CONT'D) get the boot on again. The Kapo sends me to take the Galician's place at the pile. The Galician, glaring at me, takes my place with "Null Achtzehn". (1) But already work is almost over.

Soon we return to camp. I march as best I can, helped by "Null Achtzehn", now unaccountable tender. There is no roll call tonight. (2) I throw myself in my bunk. The pain has started again. I take off my shoe: it is full of blood, by now congealed and kneaded into the mud and rags of the cloth I found a month ago to use as a foot-pad – one day on the right foot, one day on the left. (3)

(5) After soup, I go to the "Krankenbau" – "Ka-Be" we call it – the Infirmary. (1) There are long delays and many humiliations... (6)

LEVI (R): "Arztvormelder"?... What does it mean? (START TRANSITION TO (N))

LEVI (COMPLETING TRANSITION TO (N)) What does it mean, I ask Chajim, my present bunk-companion. He is Polish, a devout Jew, learned in rabbinical law, my own age, a watchmaker by profession, and one of the few men here allowed the dignity of practising his own profession. I trust him blindly...

CAST & SOUND: (1) CROSS-FADE WORK SCENE TO PRISONERS BEING MARCHED BACK TO CAMP BY BAND, BACK-TIMED TO END AT (2): SEGUE MURMUR OF PRISONERS IN HUT, TO RUN BEHIND LEVI OPPOSITE TO (3), AND THEN FADE OUT (4)

CAST & SOUND: (5) SNEAK ATMOSPHERE OF INFIRMARY INSPECTION ROOM

NURSE I: (6) Nummer 174517. Kein Fieber. Offene Stelle, rechte Hacke. Nichts besonderes.

NURSE II: Lass mal sehen. So. Arztvormelder...

CAST & SOUND: CROSS-FADE TO MURMUR OF PRISONERS IN HUT

LEVI (N): And so it was next morning: (1) I was called out, after bread, to the roll-call square, with all the Arztvormelders of that day. My bowl and spoon were promptly taken away: stupidly I hadn't realised – and Chajim hadn't told me – that I could not take them to Ka-Be...

After standing and standing – standing for ten hours, naked for six of those hours and part of the time outdoors, I am examined – painfully – by the prison doctor:

LEVI (D): Block 23. Inside they take off my gown and sandals. I find myself naked, standing last again in a queue of human skeletons. This might easily be my last day – and this room the gas chamber that everybody talks about. But what can I do about it? I lean against the wall, and close my eyes, and wait.

CHAJIM: “Arztvormelder”? Report for doctor's examination – tomorrow - instead of work.

LEVI: It is a lucky wound then?

CHAJIM: Yes. It seems not dangerous. And you will be admitted to Ka-Be.

LEVI: For a little rest?

CHAJIM: For a discreet little rest, perhaps – if you are lucky – if you are wise. (BOARD FADE)

CAST & SOUND: BOARD FADE SYNCHRONISED WITH ABOVE, OUT BY (1)

CAST & SOUND: SNEAK ATMOSPHERE OF EXAMINATION ROOM UNDER END OF LEVI OPPOSITE

DOCTOR: Aufgenommen, Block drei und zwanzig.

NURSE I: Los, los. Steh' nicht rum.

CAST & SOUND: CROSS-FADE TO ATMOSPHERE OF BLOCK 23 WAITING ROOM

LEVI (TRANSITION FROM (D) TO (N) COMPLETE BY END OF CUE): My neighbour is obviously not Jewish – the blond skin, the face and body so huge - he could only be a non-Jewish Pole. His face isn't the face of those who suffer from hunger. He looks quite friendly. I try to ask him when they will let us go in. He turns to the nurse – a man almost his twin – (1) smoking in the corner:

LEVI (R): (2) (QUIETLY, WITH HORROR) They talk and laugh together as if I weren't here

LEVI (N): (3) Then one of them takes my arm – the Pole – and looks at the number.

LEVI (D): (4) Everyone knows that the 174-thousands are the Italian Jews – the well-known Jews who arrived two months ago: lawyers and the like, all with degrees – more than a hundred of them originally, but now only forty left... (5)

LEVI (D): (6) ... with two left hands. The Nurse points to my ribs and chest as if I were a corpse in an anatomy class. (7)

He refers to my eyelids and my swollen cheeks and my thin neck.

(SLOWLY, BUT RIGHT ON)

He stoops down and presses hard on my shin with his thumb,

MORE...

POLE I: (LAUGHING) Słyszales go? "Kiedy nam pozwolą wejść?"

NURSE III: (ALSO AMUSED) Jemu się zdaje, że on jest u siebie w domu. (2) Skąd on jest właściwie?

POLE I: Żyd, łrudno powiedzieć.

NURSE III: Tutaj jest chyba od niedawna – za tłusty jak na więźnia. (3) Popatrz no jaki ma numer.

POLE I: Sto siedemdziesiąt cztery tyżące, pięćset siedemnaśty. (4) Eins sieben vier fünf siebzehn.

NURSE II: Die die nicht wissen was Arbeit ist...

NURSE III: ... i jak pozwolić, by im chleb kradziono...

POLE I: ... i zeby ich popychano od rana do późnej nocy. (5)

NURSE II: Diese Tolpatschen! (6)

ALL THREE LAUGH

POLE I: (7) Popatřz no na jego oczy...

NURSE III: ... szyjé...

POLE I: ... poliezki...

NURSE III: ... tak. No a teraz spójřz na tamten ciekawy okaz...

LEVI (D): (CONT'D) and shows the other Pole the deep impression that his thumb leaves in the pale flesh, as if my leg were made of wax. (1)

LEVI (N): (2) Finally the door is opened, even for me, and I can go into the dormitory. (3) A hundred and fifty bunks in tiers of three: patients, two hundred and fifty. By a miracle I am placed in an empty bunk. Within ten minutes I am asleep in this nightmare of broken skeletons...

(PAUSE)

LEVI (D): (4) Ka-Be is a life of limbo. It is not cold; there is no work to do; unless you commit some grave fault, you are not beaten. Reveille is at 4 a.m., even for the patients. 5.30, distribution of bread, to be eaten in the bunk. 4 p.m., afternoon rest-time: then the medical visit. Evening ration served in bed. 9 p.m., all lights are turned off; (5) then silence.

MORE...

POLE I: Czy on żyje?

NURSE III: Zaczekajno. Trudno powiedzieć. (LAUGHS) (1)

POLE I: Ty, Żydzie, z tobą kaputt. Jużes gotów do pieca, co?

NURSE III: Du, Jude, kaputt. Du schnell Krematorium fertig.

NURSE II: You, Jew, finished. You soon for Crematorium ready, yes?

ALL THREE LAUGH LOUDLY

CAST & SOUND: LAUGHTER FROM OTHER PATIENTS: FADE SCENE DOWN (2), AND OUT (3)

SOUND: (2) A DOOR IS OPENED, AT LOW LEVEL

CAST & SOUND: (4) SNEAK WARD ATMOSPHERE, HOLD BEHIND LEVI OPPOSITE, OUT AT (5)

LEVI (D): (CONT'D) Here for the first time, reveille wakens me from deep sleep. As the bread is distributed (1) we hear, far from the windows, in the dark air, the band beginning to play: the prisoners – the “healthy” Häftlinge – are marching to work. We know the few tunes so well already that we don’t need to hear the actual melodies: a dozen tunes, the same ones every day, morning and evening: marches and popular songs dear to every German, played by a group of well-fed pretty girl-prisoners dressed in white and black. (2)

LEVI (R): (3) This music is the voice of the Lager. We shall never forget these tunes. These are the last things we shall ever forget. They are the physical expression of the resolve that others have taken to annihilate us first as men so that they can kill us more slowly at leisure afterwards. (4)

(WITH MOUNTING INTENSITY AND VOLUME, MATCHING CRESCENDO IN MUSIC) When the music plays we know our comrades, out in the cold, are marching like automatons. Every beat of the drum becomes a step, a habitual contraction of paralysed and exhausted muscles. The prisoners have become a single grey machine, precisely determined: they do not think: they do not desire: they have no will: they walk. (5) (THE INTENSITY SUBSIDES) And even we who are in Ka-Be, withdrawn for a time from that terrible necessity, sense with horror this departure and return from work, the going out and coming in, the hypnosis of the interminable rhythm that kills thought and even deadens pain. (6)

SOUND: (1) THE THUMP OF ONE OF THE MARCHES WE HAVE ALREADY HEARD, DISTANT

SOUND: (2) BAND FOR A MOMENT ALONE, APPROACHING: THEN (3) CONTINUE BEHIND LEVI OPPOSITE

SOUND: (4) BAND CLOSER STILL, REACHING PEAK AT (5)

SOUND: (5) BAND MOVES OFF AT SAME SPEED AT WHICH IT HAS APPROACHED

SOUND: (6) BAND FOR A MOMENT OR TWO FAINTLY, FAR OFF: THEN OUT

(PAUSE)

LEVI (N): I have two neighbours in the adjoining bunk. They lie all day and all night, side by side, crossed like the Fishes in the zodiac, so that each has the feet of the other beside his head. One is Walter Bonn, a Dutchman, civilised and well mannered. The other, a Polish Jew, an albino, has an emaciated and good-natured face. He is no longer young: his name is Schmulek: he is a smith.

CAST & SOUND: SNEAK WARD SCENE BG

LEVI: (QUIETLY) What is your illness, Walter?

WALTER: Körperschwäche – organic decay. It cannot be cured. It is dangerous to enter Ka-Be with this, I know. But my ankles swelled so much that I couldn't march to work – otherwise I would never have reported myself.

LEVI: Danger? But what danger? Everybody speaks of the danger of Ka-Be – in a roundabout way; but when you ask they won't answer. You tell me, Walter. Is it true what they say about selections, the gas-chambers, the crematoriums?

SCHMULEK: (WAKING SUDDENLY, SPEAKING SLEEPILY BUT STARTLED) Der oiven? Vawss iz geshen? Vawss kennst du mit lawzen a mensch schlawfen b'shawlem – az er schlauft schoin?

WALTER: Levi – der Italeyner – vayst nit vegem die selektsiehs, die krematoriehs, der koimen.

SCHMULEK: Gawr azoi. Der Italiener gloibt nit in die selektsiehs. Veiz mir dein tzifer.

WALTER: He says, "Show him your number".

LEVI (N): And all too soon I understand what Schmulek was hinting at – understanding it at Schmulek’s expense too. That very evening the door of the hut was opened (1) with a shout:

SCHMULEK: Hundert fir un zibtzig, finf hundert zibtz’n. Di tzifern hawt men awn gefangen mit akh-ts’n máwnet tzurik: un zay pāstn nawr far di Auschwitz laggern.

WALTER: He says these numbers started eighteen months ago, and apply only to the Auschwitz camps.

SCHMULEK: Es zeinen daw tzen toiz’nt itzt in Buna-Monowitz...

WALTER: There are now ten thousand in Buna-Monowitz...

SCHMULEK: ... in Auschwitz und Birkenau efsher dreissik toiz’nt sakh-hák’l.

WALTER: ... in Auschwitz and Birkenau perhaps thirty thousand all told.

SCHMULEK: (POINTEDLY, AND DIRECTLY TO LEVI) Wo sind die andere?

LEVI: Where are the others?

WALTER: The other hundred and thirty thousand or hundred and forty thousand...

SCHMULEK: (IMPATIENTLY) Er vill nix verstehen.

LEVI: (SHAMEFACEDLY) I try to understand... (SLIGHT BOARD FADE)

CAST & SOUND: MATCH THE SLIGHT BOARD FADE ABOVE, BUT RETURN TO NORMAL BG LEVEL AT (1)

SOUND: (1) THE DOOR CRASHES OPEN

GERMAN VI: Achtung! Achtung!

CAST & SOUND: THE MURMURING VOICES ARE SILENT. THE SS MAN, THE DOCTOR, AND A NURSE WALK THOUGH THE HUT SLOWLY, CHOOSING MEN FROM A LIST

LEVI (N): (1) I see it all clearly from above. He checks the number of the bunk, the number of the tattoo. (2) (3) There is the briefest inspection – a mere formality. The SS man draws a cross beside Schmulek’s number in his list, and moves on.

LEVI (N): (4) Next day, in place of the usual group of patients mustered to go out of hospital, two groups are lined up. The first have been shaved, their hair cropped; they have had a shower. (5) The second group leaves as they are – with long hair, without medical treatment, without a shower. Nobody says goodbye to this second group; and nobody gives them messages for healthy comrades outside. (6) Schmulek is one of this second group.

LEVI (D): In this discreet and composed manner, without display or anger, massacre moves through the huts of Ka-Be every day, touching here and there without warning, without reason.

LEVI (N): When Schmulek left, he gave me his spoon and knife, knowing that I didn’t have either. After the second group had been led away, Walter and I remained silent for a long time, and, when we came to speak, avoided each other’s eyes...

DOCTOR: (OFF) Wer noch?

SS MAN: (APPROACHING) Noch drei Nummern in dieser Reihe. Schwere Fälle. Nummer 121, 344: 143, 746: 23, 399... (ALMOST ON)

DOCTOR: (COMING ON) Ja, nicht gut – gar nicht gut – sowieso zwecklos. Der Nächster? (1)

SS MAN: (ON) Der hier auch. Nummer 153, 331. Bett 47, Mitte. (2) Schmulek. (3) Aufstehen da. Runter.

CAST & SOUND: AFTER A GLANCE AT SCHMULEK, DOCTOR AND SS MAN MOVE OFF: FADE SCENE OUT

(SHORT PAUSE)

CAST & SOUND: (4) FADE WARD BACK IN: SELECTED PATIENTS ARE LINED UP AND LEAVE THE WARD BEHIND (5) TO (6) OPPOSITE: WARD ATMOSPHERE CONTINUES

LEVI (D): (1) (SLIGHT FADE UP) ... among them fifty or more dysentery patients. These are checked every third day. They are lined up along the corridor. At the end there are two tin pots, and the nurse stands with a register, watch and pencil. Two at a time, the patients present themselves and have to show – on the spot and at once – that they still have diarrhoea. Each is given exactly one minute by the watch to prove it. The nurse watches impassive, chewing his pencil; one eye on the watch, one eye on the specimens presented to him. In doubtful cases he consults the doctor. (2)

LEVI (TRANSITION FROM (D) TO (R) BY END OF PARAGRAPH) But life in Ka-Be is not really this – not the crucial moments of the selections, nor the grotesque episodes of diarrhoea and the lice control, nor even the illnesses. Ka-Be is the Lager without its physical discomforts...

MORE...

WALTER: (WITH GENTLE INCONSEQUENCE) How do you manage to keep your bread ration so long, Primo?

LEVI: By careful cutting.

WALTER: Yes, cutting is important. I find best to cut the bread lengthwise: the longer the slice, the more easily the margarine can be spread.

LEVI: I'll try. At least here we don't have to hurry with it.

WALTER: Yes. Block 23, the Schonungsblock – this Nursery Block – this is the rest hut. Only the least serious patients are here: convalescents and the ones who need no attention... (SLIGHT FADE DOWN) (1)

CAST & SOUND: (1) CROSS-FADE FROM WARD TO CORRIDOR: A LINE-UP OF DYSENTERY PATIENTS: NURSE I CALLS NUMBERS AND PATIENTS STRAIN AND PRODUCE SPECIMENS: CONTINUE TO (2)

CAST & SOUND: (2) CROSS-FADE FROM CORRIDOR BACK TO WARD

LEVI (R): ... In the long empty days, whoever still has any germ of self-respect, feels his conscience stir and waken. We speak of other things than hunger and the work; we begin to consider what they have made us into, how much they have taken away from us. (1) In Ka-Be – enclosed in a relative peace – we discover how fragile personality is – much more fragile than life itself, and in much greater danger than our lives. If some message could seep out from us to free men, it would be this discovery of ours: the terrible fragility of the person. (2) We should then say: -

Consider too: these things happened:
Men were broken at the wheel, women broken to this mould.
This is true. And this is my word for it.
Carve my words in your heart, and say them to your children;
Say them to yourself at home or walking along a street;
In the act of going to bed, or getting up,
Remember – for your own danger's sake.

(PAUSE) (1)

LEVI (N): (2) “Discharged, cured” – after twenty days, when my wound was practically healed. (3)

MORE...

CAST & SOUND: (1) FADE DOWN WARD ATMOSPHERE. OUT BY (2)

CAST & SOUND: (1) FADE UP KA-BE WAITING ROOM: HOLD BG: FADE DOWN AT (2).
OUT BY (3)

NURSE II: Nummer 190, 003, vortreten.

DOCTOR: Gesund. Entlassen.

NURSE II: Nummer 174, 517, vortreten.

DOCTOR: Gesund. Entlassen. (2)

NURSE II: Nummer 182, 459, vortreten.

DOCTOR: Gesund. Entlassen. (3)

LEVI (D): The ceremony is simple. (1) You leave naked and face a painful and dangerous period of readjustment. You are given new clothes – that is, not the ones you used before – and have to adapt these quickly and diligently. You have to get a new spoon and knife – this takes effort and expense. Those who have no influence are never sent back to their former Block or to the Commando they have left. This is the most serious thing: you find yourself thrust into an unknown environment, with leaders whose characters are totally unknown to you and against whom it is therefore very difficult to guard yourself. Leaving Ka-Be, naked and only partly cured, a man is thrust into something like the darkness and cold of sidereal space. His trousers fall down; his shoes hurt; his shirt has no buttons. He searches for a human contact and finds only – backs turned on him. He is as helpless and vulnerable as a new-born baby; yet by the following morning he will have to march to work. (2)

LEVI (TRANSITION FROM (D) TO (N) BY END OF PARAGRAPH): To have a bunk-companion you trust is an advantage. It is winter now and the nights long. Since we are forced to exchange sweats, smells, and warmth under the same blanket, in a space little more than two feet wide, it is quite desirable that he be a friend.

LEVI (N): (3) But in my new hut in Block 45 I don't even know who my bunk-companion is. He doesn't work in my Commando. He comes into the bunk only at curfew time; wraps himself in the blanket; pushes me aside with a blow from his bony hips, turns his back on me and immediately begins to snore. Back against back, I struggle to regain a reasonable area of the straw mattress. But it is all in vain: he seems turned to stone in his sleep. Immobilised,

MORE...

SOUND: SNEAK BG THE MARCHING BAND. BACK-TIMED TO END AT (2)

CAST & SOUND: (1) HUT ATMOSPHERE AT NIGHT: HOLD TILL NEXT SOUND CUE

- LEVI (N): (CONT'D) half lying on the wooden edge of the bunk, I crouch in the dark, and look around and listen; and hear the sleepers breathing and snoring; some groan, some speak. Many lick their lips and move their jaws in their dream – the pitiless collective Tantalus dream of eating. You not only see the food – you feel it in your hands, distinct and concrete; you are aware of its rich smell; someone in the dream even holds it to your lips. But every time a different circumstance intervenes to prevent consummation of the act. The dream dissolves and breaks up into its elements, then reforms immediately and begins again, similar, but always subtly and tantalizingly different – and this without pause, for all of us, every night, for the whole of our sleep.
- LEVI (D): Then from eleven o'clock or so onward there is the constant movement to and from the bucket that stands beside the night guard. It is an obscene and indelible shame to us that every two or three hours we have to get up to discharge ourselves of the great quantity of water we have been forced to absorb during the day in the form of soup in trying to satisfy our hunger; that same water which by evening swells our ankles and puffs out the hollows of our eyes, deforming our faces. Then there is the rule that the last user of the bucket must carry it to the latrines and empty it; and it is also the rule that at night you can only leave the hut in night kit – shirt and pants – giving your number to the guard. The bucket has to be emptied about twenty times.

MORE...

LEVI (TRANSITION FROM (D) TO (R) OVER FIRST TWO SENTENCES): So our nights drag on. The sufferings of the day turn at night into shapeless nightmares of unimaginable violence. We try to extricate the various nightmare elements and drive them back, one by one, so as to defend our dreams from their intrusion. But in vain. As soon as we close our eyes, we feel our brain start up again, beyond control, knocking and humming, incapable of rest, fabricating phantasms and symbols of horror, terrifying premonitions moving in a grey fog of terror...

(PAUSE) (1)

LEVI (D): (1) We sleep so watchfully and warily that we seldom need the bell to wake us. (2) The lights go up. (3) The night guard calls out (4) – often with compassionate recognition (5) that we are already wide awake: (6) (7) “W stavac!” – “Turn to!” – “Rise and shine!” – can it be almost a caress? The hurricane starts again – the entire hut turned into frantic activity. The hut-sweepers appear, driving everyone out, hitting and shouting. When I have made my bed and dressed, I climb down to the floor and put on my shoes. The sores on my feet open again at once. A new day begins... (8)

LEVI (N): (9) After sharing a bunk in Block 45 with that first morose stranger, I slept with a long red-haired Pole from France. To have a tall bed companion was a misfortune; but I could see at once that Resnyk was not a bad person to have to share with. He spoke little and courteously; he was clean; he did not snore; he didn't get up more than two or three times a night, and always with great delicacy. In the morning he always offered to make

CAST & SOUND: (1) THE RISING BELL RINGS SHATTERINGLY TO (2) AND AT ONCE THERE IS THE STIR AND TURMOIL OF THE PRISONERS RISING

GERMAN IV: (3) Aufstehen! (4) Aufstehen! (5) W stavac! (6) W stavac! (7)

CAST & SOUND: (8) FADE DOWN SLOWLY AND OUT

(PAUSE) (9)

LEVI (N): (CONT'D) the bed – and did it quickly and well. Later in the roll-call square I saw that he had been assigned to my Commando and felt a certain fleeting pleasure... (1)

On the march to work, limping in our wooden shoes on the icy snow, we exchange a few words. I find out that Resnyk is Polish, but has lived in Paris for twenty years and speaks an incredible twist of French. He is thirty; but like all of us, you could take him for seventeen or fifty. (2)

He tells me his story. Today I have forgotten it; but it was certainly a cruel and moving story, a sorrowful story. So are all our stories, hundreds of thousands of stories, all different and all full of a tragic, disquietening necessity. We tell them to each other in the evening. They take place in Norway, Italy, France, Algeria, the Ukraine; they are simple and incomprehensible like the stories in the Bible – being perhaps themselves stories for a new Bible... (3)

CAST & SOUND: (1) THE BAND TAKING THEM OUT TO WORK AND THE SOUND OF MANY MEN MARCHING. OR SHUFFLING. APPROXIMATELY TO THE MUSIC.

CAST & SOUND: (2) BAND AND MAIN BODY OF MEN MOVE OFF AND GRADUALLY CEASE TO BE HEARD. LEAVING IN FOREGROUND ONLY SOUND OF LEVI'S COMMANDO SHUFFLING TO WORK

CAST & SOUND: (3) MARCHING OF LEVI'S COMMANDO CONTINUES FOR A FEW MOMENTS ALONE BEFORE NEXT

GERMAN IV: Arbeits Kommando 83 – Abteilung halt.

CAST & SOUND: LEVI'S COMMANDO HALTS

GERMAN IV: Still gestanden. Heute wird abgeladen, schwer abgeladen. Erstens Gleis legen – Zweitens Runterlassen. Du, Du, und Du, Ihr tragt schwellen da – Holst die Suppe. Die Andern rauf auf die Wagons. Wegtreten!

LEVI (N): (1) Today we have to unload an enormous cast-iron cylinder from a freight car: I think it's a synthesis tube and will weigh several tons. Meister Nogalla, the Polish superintendent, supervises this operation in person – rigid, serious, taciturn. Now the cylinder is lying on the ground. (2)

LEVI (N): (3) Our hearts sink – “carry the sleepers” – to build a path through the mud, and so push the cylinder by lever into the factory. The sleepers weigh over 150 pounds – they're pretty much at the limit of our strength. The strongest of us, working in pairs, can carry sleepers for a few hours. For me – I might last one journey, or two perhaps. (4) The sleeper is coated with snow and mud. At every step it knocks against my ear and the snow slides down my neck. After fifty steps I am at the theoretical limit of what I can stand: my knees bend, my shoulder aches as if squeezed in a vice, I have lost all sense of balance. At every step my shoes are sucked down by the greedy Polish mud. The monotonous horror that fills our days. I bite deeply into my lips. We know well that if you can get a small outside pain it will help mobilise the last reserves of energy. (5)

(6) We reach the cylinder and unload the sleeper. (7) In a twilight of exhaustion I try to take advantage of every second of waiting to recover some energy. I wait for the blow that will force me to begin work again. I cringe even at the thought. But the blow never (8) comes. Resnyk (9) touches my elbow. (10) We return as slowly as possible to the pile of sleepers. (11)

(PAUSE)

CAST & SOUND: COMMANDO DISPERSES TO WORK (1),
AND WORK SOUNDS BEGIN, CONTINUING THROUGH SCENE

NOGALLA: (2) Bohlen holen. Alles Bohlen holen. (3)

CAST & SOUND: (4) LEVI AND RESNYK LIFT AND CARRY A SLEEPER, SWEARING
AND MUTTERING AND PANTING

CAST & SOUND: (5) THE SOUND OF THE WORK AND THE SHUFFLING MOUNTS
TO ALMOST FULL LEVEL (6) AND THEN, BEHIND LEVI OPPOSITE,
CONTINUES TO MOUNT TO FULL LEVEL (7): AT (7) THE SLEEPER IS
THORWN (OR DROPPED) DOWN AND WE HEAR THE RASP OF LEVI
AND RESNYK BREATHING EXHAUSTEDLY

RESNYK: (8) (VERY SOFTLY, AS THOUGH TO A CHILD) Lá, lá, Primo...
(9) Doucement... (10) Au travail!

CAST & SOUND: (11) LEVI AND RESNYK SHUFFLE SLOWLY AWAY, AND THE
WORK SCENE FADES OUT

LEVI (R): Consider
 If this is a man – this creature toiling in the mud,
 Blind with fatigue, scrabbling for a crust of bread,
 So at a mercy of a brute’s whim, you
 Can kill him outright with a yes or no,
 And leave his body sprawling by the gate...

(PAUSE) (1)

LEVI (N): At last after how many years and centuries of twilight gasping fatigue, at last like a heavenly (3) shooting star, like a super human and impersonal sign from heaven, (4) the mid-day whistle blows.

The usual things happen again. We all run to the hut and queue up with our bowls ready in a great animal hurry to swell our bellies with the warm soup. (5) As usual the Kapo mocks (6) (7) and insights us for our voracity and takes great care not to stir the pot since the bottom belongs, by notorious right, to him. Then the bliss of the belly warm and distended, the warmth of the stove. The smokers roll a miserly thin cigarette. Everybody’s clothes give out a dense steam smelling of a dog kennel or a sheepfold.

A tacit convention ordains (8) that no one speak now. Within a minute everybody is asleep, jammed elbow to elbow falling suddenly forwards and recovering with a stiffening of the back. Behind the barely closed eyelids, dreams breakout violently. The usual dreams. To be at home in a wonderfully hot bath. To be at home seated at a table. To be at home and tell the story of this hopeless work, of this never-ending hunger, of this slaves way of sleeping on your feet.

MORE...

CAST & SOUND: (1) FADE WORK SCENE BACK IN (2)

SOUND: (3) WORK SIREN STARTS TO BLOW, OUT BY (5)

CAST & SOUND: (4) CALLING OUT AND BREAKING OFF FROM WORK AND HURRYING TO HUT

CAST & SOUND: (6) IMPATIENT STIR OF LINE-UP, DISTRIBUTION OF SOUP

GERMAN IV: (6) Macht Euch weg da! Ihr Dreckschwein, Ihr verfressenen Wänster! Bist hungrig, was? Willst essen, was? Bist immer hungrig, willst immer essen. Hier ist kein Schweinetroog – nu mal langsam, langsam – sauf nicht so schnell – verschluckst Dich noch.

CAST & SOUND: (7) FADE, OUT BY (8)

LEVI (N): (CONTINUING, VERY SLOWLY) Then, in the bosom of the dream, (1) a painful nucleus condenses and grows until it crosses the threshold of consciousness... (2)

(4) (QUIETLY AND SLOWLY) ... “almost one o’clock. The words, like a swift and insidious carcinoma, spread across our sleep and kill our peace (5) and oppress us with foreboding. (6) Now we catch the sound of the wind blowing outside, and listen... (7)

(8) If we could face the wind as we used to – on equal terms – not the way we do now, like cringing dogs... (9)

(10) ... And our senses are taut now, with the horror of the signal that will come from outside, ordering us to go out into the wind again.

(SHORT PAUSE) (11)

LEVI (N): (12) At the door, Resnyk drops his head between his shoulders, pulls his cap over his ears, and lifts his face up to the low grey sky and the snow swirling inexorably in the wind. (13)

GERMAN IV (MUCH FILTER): (1) (VERY SOFTLY) Es wird bald ein Uhr sein...
 Es wird bald ein Uhr sein...
 (3) Es wird bald ein Uhr sein... (4)
 (MEDIUM FILTER) Es wird bald ein Uhr sein...
 Es wird gleich ein Uhr sein...
SOUND: (5) SNEAK WIND WITH
AUDIBLE GUST AT (6)
 (LITTLE FILTER) (7) Es wird gleich ein Uhr sein... (8)
 Es wird gleich ein Uhr sein...
 Es wird gleich ein Uhr sein...
 (NO FILTER) (9) Es wird gleich ein Uhr sein... (10)

NOGALLA: (CALLING FROM OUTSIDE) (11) Ein Uhr! An die Arbeit! Alles ‘raus!

GERMAN IV: (IN A QUIET, LEISURELY, ALMOST HUMOROUS VOICE, KNOWING HE WILL BE OBEYED) Alles ‘raus... Alles ‘raus.

CAST & SOUND: PRISONERS SHUFFLE OVER WOODEN FLOOR OF HUT TO GO TO WORK. DOOR OPENS AND WIND SOUND INCREASES: (12) PRISONERS LEAVE HUT

RESNYK: (13) Si j’avey une chien, je ne le chasse pas dehors...

CAST & SOUND: THE WIND CONTINUTES: THE MEN GO TO WHERE THEY FALL IN FOR WORK, FALLING IN AS ORDERED IN NEXT

GERMAN IV: Antreten marsch, marsch. Grade stehen da, Du Stück Hundefutter. Misststück!

SOUND: GERMAN IV STRIKES RESNYK

RESNYK: REACTION TO BLOW

GERMAN IV: Links um...

CAST & SOUND: COMMANDO TURNS LEFT

GERMAN IV: Abteilung marsch!

CAST & SOUND: THE COMMANDO MARCHES SHUFFLING AWAY TO WORK. FADE.
OUT BY (1)

LEVI (R): (IN OVER LAST OF FADE OPPOSITE) Is there any point in remembering this experience (1) – in trying to remember? I think so; because I think no human experience is without meaning. And what conclusion do we draw from the Lager? The only reliable one I can come to is that, in the face of a driving necessity and under extreme physical disability, many social habits and instincts are reduced to silence: but they are not taken away – not destroyed utterly.

In the Lager all men fall into one of two sharply differentiated categories: the Saved and the Drowned. Only one law is in force, an unjust law: "To him that hath shall be given: from him that hath not shall be taken away even that he hath".

Everybody recognises this law. If, by miraculous patience or savage cunning, someone finds a new way of avoiding the hardest work, or a new art that yields an extra ounce of bread, he will be esteemed for it: he will become stronger, and so he will be feared. The man who is feared is a candidate for survival.

MORE...

LEVI (R): (CONT'D) And the others? The "Muselmänner" – the muslimans, as we call them – the men in decay – the drowning men? There's no point in making friends with them. They have no distinguished acquaintances; they have no way of getting an extra ration; they don't work in profitable commandos; they don't know any secret ways of organising. And in any case, you know they're only here on a visit: in a few weeks nothing will remain of them but a number crossed out on a ledger, and a handful of ashes in some nearby field. They drag along, suffering in an opaque and intimate solitude; in solitude they die or disappear; they leave no trace in anybody's memory.

The Muselmänner – the Drowned Men – have no story: their path to nothingness is single and broad. But the paths to salvation are many, difficult and improbable. In 1944, out of the "low numbers" – that is, numbers 150,000 and below – less than a few hundred survive; and not one of the survivors is an ordinary Häftling, vegetating in the ordinary Kommandos, subsisting on the normal ration. The doctors have survived; and the tailors, shoemakers, musicians, cooks, young attractive homosexuals, friends or compatriots of some of the prison authorities – then there are the Prominents, the Kapos, Blockältester, and the like, all the pick of the strongest, most pitiless, most inhuman individuals, chosen specially by the SS to control us – then there are the Organisers and Combiners, the very few who are clever enough to organise their material advantage, and somehow command the indulgence and esteem of the powerful people in camp. This is clearly the rule of the Lager: whoever does not know how to become a Prominent or an Organiser or a Kombinator becomes a Muselman. In real life there is a third way; and the third way is, in real life, the rule. But a third way does not exist in Auschwitz.

LEVI (R): (CONT'D) This is not the picture we are usually given: of the way the oppressed unite, and how, if they cannot resist together, they will suffer together, finding unimaginable strength even in the mute brotherhood of suffering. That may be so in other times and other places – when the oppressor is not absolutely cruel and cynical. But in our days, in all those countries where foreign invaders set foot and stayed as tyrants, rivalry and hatred quickly sprang up among the subject people. In the Lager this principle was repeated, cruelly, on a monstrous scale, unfolding a logic of survival the direct contrary of all social and human value – contrary to all reason.

Each of us had to fight, each with his own strength only, to survive – struggling every day and every hour against exhaustion, hunger, cold, inertia; to resist enemies, to have no pity for rivals; to keep somehow the wits sharp, to build up patience, to strengthen the will, to draw upon those unsuspected resources that sustain families and individuals in cruel times. One way and another, we devised many ways of ensuring that somehow we should not die – as many different ways as there are different characters and desires. But almost every way involved the struggle of oneself against all others – many shameful aberrations, many compromises. To survive without renouncing any part of one's own moral world was something that only a very few superior individuals could manage – the real martyrs, the true saints. And we were a very ordinary sample of common humanity.

(PAUSE)

CAST & SOUND: FADE UP TO BG LEVEL (1) THE LAGER BAND AND AN ADLIB
MURMUR OF PRISONERS WITH HUNGARIANS CLOSEST TO MIKE

LEVI (N): (1) Throughout the spring, convoys arrived from Hungary: so that, after Yiddish, Hungarian became the second language of the camp. And by August 1944, we who had come into the camp five months before were now counted among the old ones. (2)

LEVI (N): (3) We heard news in the Buna yards: (4) that the Allies had landed in Normandy; of the Russian offensive; the unsuccessful attempt on Hitler's life. These gave rise to waves of violent but fugitive hope. Day by day everyone knew his strength was failing, his desire to live was melting away, his mind growing dim. Normandy and Russia were so far away, and the winter so near; hunger and desolation so real, and everything else so unreal that it didn't seem possible there could really exist any other world (5) than our world of mud and stagnant water; or any end to the sterile and stagnant time of our captivity. (6)

In August 1944 the bombing of Upper Silesia began: (7) it continued with irregular pauses and renewals throughout the summer and autumn until the final crisis approached. Broken by exhaustion, parched with thirst, we would return in the long windy evenings of the Polish summer to find the camp in confusion: no water to drink or to wash in, no soup for our empty bellies, no light to protect our piece of bread against somebody else's voracious hunger, no light to find shoes or clothes in the dark squalid turmoil of the Block. But as the Buna factory fell in pieces around us, all constructive work stopped; and the power of the slaves day by day showed itself

MORE...

VOICE V: (2) "When things change, they usually change for the worse". (3)

YIDDISH I: (4) Di Engländer hawben awngeskommen in Nawrmándye.

ARTHUR: Il paraît qu'ils avancent partout, les Russes.

HUNGARIAN I: Hitlert meg próbálták ölni...

GERMAN II: ... aber es hat nicht geklappt.

YIDDISH II: Der sawf kummt schoin.

VOICE IV: Winter is coming.

CAST & SOUND: (5) FADE CROWD MURMUR, OUT BY (6): FROM (5) TO (7) CROSS-
FADE TO AIR RAID – SIREN, THEN BOMBS AND GUNFIRE TO NEXT
SOUND CUE: FROM (7) TO NEXT CAST CUE. PRISONERS AD LIB
ALARM AND CONFUSION

LEVI (N): (CONT'D) more riotous and passively hostile. The Reichsdeutsche, the politicals, all the German people – the green triangles and the SS particularly – saw in our faces, or thought they saw, the mockery of revenge and the vicious joy of the vendetta: and their ferocity redoubled. For we were on the other side now, on the side of the sowers of death who had mastered the sky, who could fly over every defence, and carry slaughter every day into the unviolated homes of the German people. (1) Most of us bore the new danger and the new discomforts with unchanged indifference: not with conscious resignation, but with the opaque torpor of beasts so broken by blows that blows no longer hurt them. But a few people drew new strength and hope from the bombings. (2) And some days when we returned to the Lager, shuffling to the music of the band, we were made to march past the body of some man who had been caught trying to escape – the body brutally exposed, grotesquely mutilated... (3)

LEVI (N): (5) (WITH HORRIFIED IRONY) ... We were invited to think that the mutilations had preceded the slow death by hanging...

CAST & SOUND: (1) FADE AIR RAID AND VOICES, OUT BY (2): AT (2) SNEAK BAND MUSIC AND MARCHING. BACK-TIMED TO END AT (4)

GERMAN V: (3) (P.A. SPEAKER) Alle Kommandos, halt!

CAST & SOUND: (4) MUSIC AND MARCHING HALT

FRITSCH: Häftlinge. Dort am Tor könnt Ihr sehen was von einem Mann übrig bleibt der den Fehler begeht einen Fluchtversuch zu machen. Wir bestrafen vergehen dieser Art züchlich hart. (5) Ich glaube ich brauche nicht im einzelnen zu erklären wie wenig jeder Fluchtversuch aus dem Lager mit unseren Wünschen übereinstimmt. Ihr seid also gewarnt. Heil Hitler!

GERMAN V: Wegtretenlassen.

LEVI (TRANSITION FROM (N) TO (D) BY (7)) : (6) We fought with all our strength to hold off the coming of winter, clinging to all the warm hours. (7) For we know what winter means, we “old ones”; we were here last winter. The others will soon learn. It means that in the course of these months, from October until April, seven out of ten of us will die of the cold.

But one morning, like a hope suddenly vanished, winter is here.

And winter means another thing too:

LEVI (N): (1) The Poles picked up the news first; but they don’t generally spread it around, because to know something that others still don’t know can be useful. But in the days that follow that first whisper of news, the atmosphere of Lager and yard is filled with the word Selekcja: it hovers in the air, and rests on the tongue, acrid and hard like a crystal poison. Nobody knows anything definite, but everybody talks about it – even the Polish, Italian, and French civilian workers from outside – and we hear it from them secretly in the yard.

MORE...

CAST & SOUND: DISPERSAL OF ASSEMBLY. FADING (1): FADE COMPLETE BY (2)

POLE I: Selekcja...

YIDDISH II: Selektshes...

HUNGARIAN II: Válogatások... Válogatások lesznek hamarosan...

GERMAN II: Wann? Wer sagt das?

POLE I: Z całą pewnością. Dowiedzieliśmy się – zawsze się pierwsi dowiadujemy. (1)

YIDDISH III: In droiss’n vayss’n alle. Alle vayss’n, di Poilak’n di tzivile arbeter.

POLE I: Selekcja...

CHARLES: À qui le tour, cette fois-ci?

GERMAN II: Wieviel?

CAST: TILL (1) ON PAGE 130 ADLIB IN VEIN OF ABOVE CUES, OFTEN USING THE WORD “SELECTION” IN THE VARIOUS LANGUAGES SPOKEN

LEVI (N): (CONT'D) A few – a very few special favourites – have some physical means of avoiding the selection: they slip into Ka-Be with the appropriate ailment, never fatal. For the rest there is no defence. But we convince ourselves and each other, putting up defences of self-deception compulsively, showing each other (1) – in the latrines and washrooms – our chests, our buttocks, our thighs. Nobody refuses the charity of reassurance... (2)

LEVI (N): And I know I am lying in my own teeth. Bernardi – it's absurd for him to hope. He looks 60; he has enormous varicose veins; he is so far gone he hardly even notices the hunger any more. But he lies down on his bed, serene and quiet, reassured; and when somebody asks him the same question he asked me, he replies confidently in my own words...

CAST & SOUND: (1) CROSS-FADE TO WASHROOM SCENE WITH MURMUR OF VOICES

VOICE II: (2) You're all right. It certainly won't be your turn this time.

VOICE I: Du bist kein Muselmann.

VOICE IV: And is it my turn?

LEVI: If they question you, say you are 45. And don't forget to shave the night before, even if it costs you bread. And anyway: it may not be a selection for the gas-chamber – for the chimney – perhaps for a convalescent camp – who knows?

VOICE IV: Don't forget to shave the night before, even if it costs you bread. And anyway: it may not be a selection for the gas-chamber – for the Chimney – perhaps for a convalescent camp – who knows?

LEVI (D): The Germans apply themselves to these things with great skill and diligence. The discipline in the Lager and in Buna is in no way relaxed: the work, the cold, the hunger are enough to fill every thinking moment. (1)

LEVI (N): And Sunday comes – Arbeitssontag. (2) We work till one in the afternoon, then return to camp for the shower, the shave, the general control for skin diseases and for lice. And in the yards, as we stand or wander about, everyone knows – somehow, with mysterious certainty – that the selection will be today... (3)

CAST & SOUND: FADE WASHROOM SCENE AND MURMUR OF VOICES. OUT BY (1)

SOUND: (2) LAGER BAND. BACK-TIMED TO END AT NEXT SOUND CUE

POLE I: (3) Dziś rano przeprowadzono selekcję – w szpitalu...

VOICE VI: Thirty per cent. of the patients -

YIDDISH II: Fuftzik praw-tzent.

ARTHUR: Un des Polonais a dit que ce sera dans les sept pour cent – en tout...

WALTER: The Chimney was smoking again this morning -

HUNGARIAN I: Birkenauban –

GERMAN II: Schon zehn Tage, ununterbrochen.

WALTER: The selection is to make room for a huge convoy from Poznan –

YIDDISH III: Fun ghetto.

VOICE III: All the old ones will be chosen -

CHARLES: Mais ils ne vont choisie que les malades -

YIDDISH II: Alle spetzialist'n vet men arois-lawz'n -

STEINLAUF: Deutsche Juden augeschlossen –

LEVI (N): (1) At one o'clock exactly the yard empties in orderly fashion and for two hours the grey endless army files past the two control stations where, as on every day, we are counted and recounted, and where the bodies of malefactors are displayed; and past the girls' military band which (in neat white blouses and dark skirts) plays for two hours without interruption, as on every day, those marches to which we must match our steps, those marches which we shall never be able to forget. (2)

It seems like any other day: the kitchen chimney smokes as usual, the distribution of soup is already beginning. But then the bell rings – (3)

LEVI (N): (4) Everybody to the huts – so that nobody can avoid the selection; so that when those who have been selected leave for the gas chamber, nobody will see them go. (5)

As soon as we are all in, the Blockältester locks the door. We are ordered to undress completely – except for shoes. We are given each a card: name, profession, age, nationality. We stand, naked, with the card in hand, waiting for the commission to reach our hut. (6)

HUNGARIAN II: Ai alacsony számúakat nem fogják vinni -

VOICE IV: (WITH GREAT DELIBERATION) You may be chosen. I will be excluded.

VOICE II: (WITH IRONICALLY DELIBERATE CONFIDENCE) I will be excluded. (1)

SOUND: (2) LAGER BAND STOPS PLAYING

SOUND: (3) THE BELL RINGS

GERMAN V: (P.A. SPEAKER) Blocksperre! Blocksperre! Schnell! (4)

CAST & SOUND: THE PRISONERS CROWD INTO THE BLOCK

SOUND: (5) THE BLOCK DOOR IS HEAVILY SLAMMED (5) AND THEN LOCKED

GERMAN IV: Alles nackt ausziehen. Nur die Schuhe bleiben an. Die Karte in der Hand behalten – es ist strengstens verboten die Karte fallen zu lassen. Weiter machen.

CAST: LOW MURMUR OF VOICES TILL NEXT SOUND CUE

SOUND: (A LITTLE WHILE AFTER (6)) A VIOLENT BANGING AT THE DOOR: DOOR IS UNLOCKED AND FLUNG OPEN

LEVI (N): (1) The Blockältester and his helpers drive all the frightened naked people down the hut into the Tagesraum – a room 12 by 20 feet – until a warm compact human mass is jammed tight into the room, filling all corners perfectly and making such pressure that the wooden walls creak. You have to be careful to hold up your nose so that you can breathe at all; you must hold the card in the hand and not crumple or lose it.

Now the Blockältester opens the two doors that lead outside from the Tagesraum and the dormitory. Here in front of the two doors stands the arbiter of our fate – an SS subaltern: on his right the Blockältester, on his left the quartermaster of the hut. Each of us, as he comes naked out of the Tagesraum into the cold October air, has to run the few steps between the two doors, give the card to the SS man and go into the hut by the dormitory door. The SS man, in the fraction of a second between two successive crossings, with a glance at one's back and front, judges each man's fate, giving the card to the man on his right or to the man on his left. This is life or death for each of us: to the right, to the left. In three or four minutes a hut of two hundred men is "done"; in an afternoon they do the whole camp of 12,000 men.

MORE...

GERMAN VI: (ENTERING AND SPEAKING LOUDLY) Achtung! Platz machen. Zurrück da. Los, los in den Tagesraum – los, los. Marsch, marsch. (1)

CAST & SOUND: ADLIB EVENTS DESCRIBED OPPOSITE, WITH GERMAN VI AND BLOCKÄLTESTER IN CHARGE AND REST OF CAST AS PRISONERS: CONTINUE TILL (1) ON PAGE 138

LEVI (N): (CONT'D) Jammed into Tagesraum, I feel the pressure of human flesh gradually easing around me. In a short time it is my turn. Like everyone, I pass the SS man with a brisk elastic step, trying to hold my head high, my chest struck out, my muscles contracted and conspicuous. Out of the corner of my eye I try to look back; my card seemed to end on the right. As we come back into the dormitory one by one, and slowly dress, we see no point in sparing each other's feelings any longer, no point in superstitious scruples. Everybody crowds around the oldest men, the most emaciated, the most conspicuous Muselmänner. Now it is clear; the left side was the schlechte Seite. There will be some surprises, of course, some irregularities, some mistakes no doubt: but the selection is now over in our hut, and roughly speaking we know the result. (1)

The selection continues in other huts, so we are still locked in. But the soup-pots have arrived and the Blockältester decides to go ahead with distribution at once. A double ration will be given to those who have been selected: that is the rule...
(CROSS TO (D) ON LAST SENTENCE ABOVE)

CAST & SOUND: (1) SUBDUED MURMUR OF PRISONERS IN HUT, AND
DISTRIBUTION OF SOUP: CONTINUE TILL NEXT CAST & SOUND CUE

VOICE IV: COUGHS TO ATTRACT ATTENTION

BLOCKÄLTESTER: (PEREMPTORILY) Was willst Du? Du hast schon bekommen. Hau' ab!

VOICE IV: Bitte sehr –

BLOCKÄLTESTER: Ach, hau' ab! Du hast schon gehabt.

LEVI: He says you've had yours already.

VOICE IV: But I am entitled – entitled to a double ration. I was on the left. Everybody saw it.

BLOCKÄLTESTER: Der lügt wieder.

LEVI: He says you're mistaken.

VOICE IV: (GENTLY) Perhaps you would check the cards. I am entitled -

VOICE II: That's right: he was on the left -

VOICE I: Ja, es ist sein Recht.

BLOCKÄLTESTER: Ja, das stimmt. Da ist deine Karte.

LEVI: (VERY QUIETLY) He says your card agrees.

VOICE IV: Good.

SOUND: EXTRA RATION OF SOUP IS POURED

VOICE IV: (STILL GENTLY) Dankeschön... dankeschön...

CAST & SOUND: MURMUR OF VOICES PETERS OUT: THE PRISONERS SCRAPE
THEIR BOWLS IN SILENCE: HOLD FOR A WHILE ALONE BEFORE NEXT
CUE BEGINS, AND HOLD BG TILL END OF SCENE, FADING OUT
SIMULTANEOUSLY WITH KUHN

KUHN: (OFF MIKE) CHANTS HEBREW PRAYER, CONTINUING BG TILL FADE
AT END OF SCENE: HOLD FOR A MOMENT BEFORE NEXT CUE

LEVI: Listen, Alberto. What's that?

VOICE V: Old man Kuhn – praying.

RESNYK: Non, il ne prie pas: il ne fait que remercier -

VOICE V: Thanking God that he has not been chosen -

RESNYK: Remercier – mais pourquoi? Mon Dieu pourquoi?

LEVI (R): (WITH FIERCE INNER INTENSITY) Pourquoi? Why? Warum? Hier gibt's kein Warum. Kuhn is out of his senses. Doesn't he see Beppo the Greek in the next bunk – Beppo – twenty years old and going to the gas chamber tomorrow – and knows it – and lies there looking with fixed eyes at the light without saying anything, without thinking any more? Doesn't Kuhn understand that what has happened today is an abomination: and no prayer, no propitiation, no pardon, no expiation by the guilty, nothing at all within the power of man can ever clean it away – nothing?

If I were God, I would spit at Kuhn's prayer. (1)

LEVI (D): (3) When it rains we want to cry. It is November. It has been raining for ten days now and the ground is like the bottom of a swamp. Everything made of wood gives out a smell of mushrooms.

How many months have gone by since we entered the camp? How many since the day I was dismissed from Ka-Be? Or since the October selection? How many of us will be alive at the New Year? How many when spring begins? (4)

This is the last act: the winter has begun, and with it our last battle has begun. Any time during the day when we happen to listen to the voice of our bodies, or ask our limbs, the answer is always the same: our strength will not last out. Everything around us speaks of final decay and ruin. Half the laboratory bay of the factory is a heap of twisted metal and smashed concrete.

MORE...

KUHN: (1) BOARD FADE SLOWLY OUT
(END OF SCENE. PAUSE) (2)

SOUND: (2) FADE UP RAIN, UP TO BG LEVEL (3)

SOUND: (4) CROSS-FADE RAIN TO CHILL WIND

LEVI (D): (CONT'D) Long blue icicles hang like pillars from the tubes where the superheated steam used to roar. The Buna is silent now. (1) And when the wind is favourable, if you listen you can hear the continuous dull underground rumbling of the Russian artillery at the Front as it gets nearer.

Three hundred prisoners have arrived from the Lodz ghetto, transferred by the Germans in front of the Russian advance. They describe how the Germans liquidated the Lublin extermination camp over a year ago – in front of the Russian advance – four machine guns in the corners of the camp and the huts set on fire. (2) The civilised world will never know... how we waste away here in the snow and the wind until we are ready for the Chimney.

But the Russians will come. (3) The ground trembles with the bombardment day and night under our feet. The air is tense now: it tastes a little of - resolution. The Poles no longer do any work; the French walk with their heads high; the English wink at us and greet us on the sly with a V sign – and not always on the sly either.

But the Germans are deaf and blind, enclosed in their armour of obstinacy and wilful ignorance. They talk again about the date for the first production of synthetic rubber – February 1945. They repair damage, build shelters and trenches; they fight, they command, they organise, they kill. If you wound the body of a dying man, the wound will begin to heal, even if the whole body is to die within a day.

SOUND: (1) VERY VERY SOFTLY THE DISTANT RUMBLE OF ARTILLERY FIRE

SOUND: (2) FADE UP GUNFIRE SLOWLY TO NORMAL BG LEVEL BY (3)

LEVI (N): (1) It is nearly Christmas now. It is night, and snowing; it's not easy to keep our feet as we go – even more difficult to keep up the pace in line as we march back to camp from work. Every now and again someone in front stumbles and falls in the black mud: one has to be careful to avoid him, to keep place in the column, not to offer help. Once again the music of the band comes closer: again the ceremony of “Mützen ab”, caps off smartly as we pass in front of the SS officer, once again the words over the gate: “Arbeit macht Frei”... (3)

LEVI (N): (5) But the column has not broken up. We have marched into the roll-call square. Yet it is no roll-call. We see the harsh glare of the searchlight and the familiar outline of the gallows.

CAST & SOUND: CROSS-FADE FROM GUNFIRE TO LAGER BAND AND MARCHING (1). BACK-TIMED TO END AT (4): AT FIRST THE MARCHING HAS PRESENCE AND THE BAND IS DISTANT: BUT THE BAND GRADUALLY APPROACHES, ACHIEVING THE SAME PRESENCE AS THE MARCHING A LITTLE BEFORE (3)

GERMAN IV: (OFF MIKE) (3) Kommando 98, 62 Häftlinge, Stärke stimmt...

CAST & SOUND: BAND AND MARCHING CONTINUE FOR A MOMENT OR TWO, THEN NEXT

GERMAN V: (P.A. SPEAKER) Alle Arbeits Kommandos... Abteilung... Halt! (4)

CAST & SOUND: (4) BAND AND MARCHING HALT

(A MOMENT OF SILENCE) (5)

LEVI (N): (1) This ruthless ceremony is not new to us. I have already watched thirteen hangings. But they were for ordinary crimes – thefts from the kitchen, sabotage, attempts to escape. This is different. Last month one of the crematoriums at Birkenau was blown up. One of the special Commando – Sonderkommando – working at the gas chambers and ovens. But how? How could he do such a thing? We are humiliated, that at Birkenau, a few thousand yards away, a few helpless and exhausted slaves like ourselves, due to be killed when their work was finished, found strength to act, strength to ripen a plan, and bring to harvest the fruits of their hatred. (2)

LEVI (N): (IN QUIET AMAZEMENT) He cried out, across the darkness between us and the searchlight, under the gallows – cried out “I am the last one”. (MORE QUIETLY) I wish I could say that out of our great number – so many hundreds of us – a voice rose, one voice, a single sign of assent, a murmur even. There was no sound. We remained standing, an abject herd, bent and grey, our heads dropped, and did not even uncover our heads until the German

FRITSCH: (P.A. SPEAKER) Häftling 224, 621. Sie haben sich schuldig gemacht. Erstens, durch Zerstörung von Staatseigentum, Zweitens, den Anordnungen der Vorgesetzten nicht zu folgen, und Drittens, Sie haben gegen des Führeres Plan zur Reinhaltung der Arischen Rasse gehandelt. (1) (WITH MOUNTING ANGER AND INSOLENT) Was bildest Du Dir ein – Du verfluchter Schmarotzer – Dich über den Willen und die Ordnung des Reiches zu erheben! Wir werden es Dir schon beibringen – und wir werden es Euch allen noch beibringen – dass Ungehorsam und Überheblichkeit unnachsichtlich, mit der äussersten Härte und ohne Gnade bestraft werden. Du bist schuldig: das Ungehorsam und Überheblichkeit unnachsichtlich, mit der äussersten Härte und ohne Gnade bestraft werden. Du bist schuldig: das Urteil, Tod durch Hängen. Es gibt nur einen Willen, und das ist der Wille des Führers. Es gibt nur eine wahre Treue, und das ist Gehorsam. Wenn eine den Weisungen des Schicksals trotz, wird er das selbe Ende finden wie diesser verdammte Kretin den Ihr alle vor Euch seht. (2) Heil Hitler! Habt Ihr verstanden?

CAST: (A RELUCTANT, SLOW, CUMULATIVE, AND GRUDGING MURMUR) Jawohl... Jawohl... Jawohl... (CONTINUE TILL INTERRUPTED BY NEXT)

GERMAN III: (OFF MIKE, CRYING LOUDLY) Kameraden, Kameraden! Kameraden, ich bin der Letzte!

CAST: THE ASSEMBLY IS STUNNED INTO SILENCE

LEVI (N): (1) The trap-door opened; the body wriggled horribly... (2)

LEVI (N): (5) In our columns we were ordered to march, and so filed past the quivering body of the dying man.

LEVI (D): At the foot of the gallows, the SS men watch us pass. They have indifferent eyes. Their work is finished – well finished. The Russians can come now. There are no longer any strong men among us. The last strong man is now hanging over our heads. (6)

LEVI (R): To destroy a man is difficult, almost as difficult as to create one. Yet you Germans have succeeded. We are docile under your gaze. (7) You have nothing more to fear from us – no acts of violence, no words of defiance, not even a glance of condemnation...

(PAUSE)

LEVI (N): On January 11th 1945 I fell ill of scarlet fever and was once more sent to Ka-Be. A small isolation room, quite clean; ten bunks on two levels, a wardrobe, three stools, a closet seat – all in the space of 9 by 15 feet. Since there was no ladder for the bunks, a patient, when he got worse, had to be put in the lower bunks.

MORE...

GERMAN V: (P.A. SPEAKER) Mützen ab! (1)

SOUND: (2) THE BAND BEGINS TO PLAY, CONTINUING TO (7): AFTER A FEW BARS, (4)

GERMAN V: (P.A. SPEAKER) Alle Kommandos... Augen rechts... Einzelnd ausrichten... Vorbeimarschieren. (5)

CAST & SOUND: (5) THE PRISONERS MARCH PAST THE GALLOWS

CAST & SOUND: (6) FADE BAND AND MARCHING, OUT BY (7)

LEVI (N): (CONT'D) (1) I was thirteenth in the room. Four others had scarlet fever; there were three with diphtheria, two with typhus, and one with a repulsive facial erysipelas. The other two, incredibly wasted away, were suffering from more than one illness. I had a high fever.

On the fifth day the barber came – a Greek doctor from Salonica speaking the beautiful Spanish of his people. (2) When it was my turn I climbed laboriously down from my bunk... (3)

CAST & SOUND: (1) SNEAK IN WARD ATMOSPHERE

CAST & SOUND: (2) HEADSHAVING OFF MIKE, COMING ON BY (3)

LEVI: (3) (TO BARBER) Was neues?

BARBER: Hay que verlo. Hay que ver como corren los alemanes por todos partes.
(HALTINGLY) Morgen, alle Kamerad weg. Tomorrow, all people go.
(INSISTENTLY) Todos, todos. Mañana se van todos.

LEVI: (TO THE OTHERS) Did you hear that? Tomorrow they're going to evacuate the camp. Demain on évacuera.

CHARLES: Où ça?

ARTHUR: À pied?

HUNGARIAN I: Ha ök elmennek, nem tudunk mi se ittmradni.

HUNGARIAN II: Mi lesz velünk, betegen?

HUNGARIAN I: Ruha, meg cipő is kellene...

HUNGARIAN II: Ha együttmaradunk, még jóra is fordulhat a sorsunk...

CHARLES: Les maladies aussi?

ARTHUR: Et – ceux qui ne peuvent marcher?

LEVI: Je vais lui demander. (TO BARBAR) Where are they going? Are they going on foot? What about the sick people.

LEVI (N): (1) Outside, the camp sounded unusually excited. One of the two Hungarians went out and returned with rags he had looted somewhere. (2) They dressed feverishly. I tried to explain that they were too weak to walk. They looked at me without replying. (3) Their eyes were like the eyes of frightened cattle. (4)

(5) During the night of January 18th 1945, all the healthy prisoners left the camp. They must have been about 20,000, coming from the different camps in the Auschwitz-Birkenau complex. (6) They were travelling on foot in winter. Almost in their entirety, they vanished during the evacuation march. (7)

LEVI (SLOW TRANSITION FROM (N) TO (D) BY START OF SECOND PARAGRAPH):

(8) We stayed in our bunks, alone with our illnesses, crushed by an inertia stronger than fear. In the whole Ka-Be there were perhaps 800 people. In our room, since the Hungarians had left, there were now eleven, each in his own bunk, except for Charles, the thirty-two year old school-teacher from Lorraine, who shared a bunk with his friend Arthur, the small thin peasant.

The rhythm of the great machine of the camp slowed down and stopped: its life relentlessly faded and was now utterly extinguished. Helpless, entirely in the hands of fate, we lay, ill, outside the world, outside time.

BARBER: (HALTINGLY) Everybody, without distinction, is to have a triple ration of bread.

LEVI: And what will happen to us?

BARBAR: The Germans will probably leave you – to your fate.

LEVI: Will they kill us?

BARBER: (CHEERFULLY AND AMBIGUOUSLY) I don't think they will kill you. (1)

CAST & SOUND: (1) PRISONERS IN HUT ADLIB FURTHER ON ABOVE SUBJECT: BG THE EXTERIOR EXCITEMENT OF THE CAMP: AT (2) THE TWO HUNGARIANS ADLIB ABOUT TRYING TO LEAVE WITH THE OTHERS AND LEVI TRIES TO TALK THEM OUT OF IT BUT FAILS, ENDING BY (3): AT (4) CROSS-FADE WARD SCENE TO MUSIC OF DISTANT BAND (5)

SOUND: (6) START TO FADE BAND TWO BARS STILL FAINTLY AUDIBLE AFTER (7) THEN OUT (8)

(PAUSE)

LEVI (N): January 18th. This morning the last distribution of soup took place in the hospital. The central heating plant has been abandoned. Inside the huts a little heat still lingers on, but hour by hour the temperature has dropped. Outside it must be below zero. Most of the patients have only a shirt. Some SS men have stayed behind, and a few of the guard towers are still occupied. About midday an SS officer made a round of the huts, making a list of Jews and non-Jews: the matter seemed very clear.

In the afternoon I visited a neighbouring ward in search of blankets and brought back some quite heavy ones. Arthur, hearing that they had come from the dysentery ward, realised the danger.

Night came early. The electric light stayed on. We saw an armed SS man standing at the corner of the hut. (1) About eleven at night all the lights went out and the bombing started. The camp was hit, and two huts were obliterated; another two were burning fiercely – but they were all empty huts. (2) Dozens of patients came to our hut, naked, from a hut threatened by fire, and asked for shelter. Impossible to take them in. They begged and threatened in many languages. (3) We had to barricade the door. They eventually dragged themselves away, barefoot in the snow, (4) the snow melting in the heat of the fires. (5)

The Germans have left. The towers are empty.

(PAUSE)

SOUND: (1) BOMBING, FIRST DISTANT, THEN VERY CLOSE

CAST: (2) TUMULT AND SHOUTING IN VARIOUS LANGUAGES CLOSE OUTSIDE DOOR, GOING AWAY AT (3)

GERMAN II: Helft uns! Lasst uns rein!

VOICE VI: Let us in. Give us some fire. Help us. You must take us in.

GERMAN VI: Lass' uns rein, oder wir schlagen die Tur ein.

LEVI: (IN OVER ABOVE) Go away! We can give you nothing! You'll kill us if you come in – we have disease! Go away!

CAST & SOUND: FADE STARTING AT (3), SUBSTANTIALLY DOWN BY (4), OUT BEFORE (5)

LEVI (N): January 19th. Last night the two Frenchmen and I agreed that we must find a stove or freeze to death. Charles, Arthur, and I set out at dawn. (1) I felt ill and helpless: I was cold and afraid.

LEVI (QUICK TRANSITION TO (D) BY END OF FIRST SENTENCE): What we saw was like nothing I had ever seen or heard described. The Lager, scarcely dead yet, had already begun to decompose. No water, no electricity; broken windows; doors slamming in the wind, loose sheets of iron on roofs screeching, ashes from the fires drifting overhead. Ragged, decrepit, skeleton-like patients – all those anyway able to move – dragged themselves everywhere on the frozen ground, like an invasion of worms. They had ransacked all the empty huts in search of food and fuel; they had wrecked with senseless fury the grotesquely decorated rooms of the loathed Blockältesten. They had fouled everywhere, polluting the precious snow, the only source of water left in the whole camp. Around the smoking ruins of the burnt huts, groups of patients lay stretched out on the ground, soaking up the last warmth of the fire.

LEVI (TRANSITION BACK TO (N) QUICKLY): In the kitchen we gathered two sacks of potatoes and left Arthur to guard them. Finally Charles and I found a heavy cast-iron stove, still usable. (2) Charles loaded it on a wheelbarrow and left me to push it back while he went for the sacks of potatoes. He found that Arthur had fainted from the cold. Charles picked up both sacks and carried them to safety; then he took care of his friend. (3)

MORE...

SOUND: (1) BRING IN SOUND OF WIND, FOOTSTEPS, AND ALL THE WILD DESOLATE SOUNDS OF THE DESERTED CAMP: HOLG BG, THEN FADE OUT BY (3)

SOUND: (2) HEAVY STOVE BEING LIFTED ONTO WHEELBARROW, THEN CREAK OF THE BARROW BEING PUSHED AWAY: SOUND RECEDES, OUT BY (2)

LEVI (N): (CONT'D) Later we set up the stove, and mended the broken window, and lighted the stove. As the heat spread, Towarowski – a French Pole, 23, typhus (1) – proposed to the others that each of them offer a slice of bread to the three of us who had been working. And it was agreed. Only a day before such a thing would have been inconceivable. This really meant that the Lager was dead. It was the first human gesture to occur among us. From that moment can be dated the beginning of the process by which we who had not died slowly changed back from Häftlinge to free men. (2)

That night, in a darkness lighted only by the embers in our stove, Arthur and I sat smoking cigarettes made out of herbs from the kitchen. In the middle of this endless plain, frozen and full of war, we felt at peace with ourselves and with the world.

(PAUSE)

LEVI (N): January 20th. This morning after lighting the fire and heating potatoes for the others, Charles and I set out again to explore the decaying camp. We had enough food – potatoes – for two days only. For water we melt snow: this yields a blackish, muddy liquid which has to be filtered. (3)

The camp was silent. Starving spectres like ourselves wandered about searching – unshaven, with hollow eyes, greyish skeletons in rags. (4) In the kitchen we found two of them squabbling over the last handfuls of putrid potatoes: they were holding on to each other's rags, fighting with curiously slow uncertain movements, cursing in Yiddish between frozen lips. (5)

TOWAROWSKI: (1) Mes amis. Voilà – écoutez. Lévi et Arthur et Charles, vous tous, vous avez travaillé dur toute la journée, pas? Nous avons du pain – pas? Je propose alors que chacun d'entre nous donne une tranche de sa ration de pain a chacun de nos camarades qui ont peiné pour nous autres...

LEVI, CHARLES, ARTHUR: Ah non!... C'en est trop!... Vous ne devez pas... On ne le mérite pas... (FADE OUT LEVI AND OTHERS BY (2) OPPOSITE) | OTHERS: D'accord!... Mais bien sûr... Pour sûr... Ce n'est que juste.

SOUND: (3) SNEAK IN SOUNDS OF DOOR, THE WIND BLOWING, THE FOOTSTEPS OF TWO MEN SETTING OUT

CAST & SOUND: (4) TWO MEN FIGHTING QUIETLY AND INTENTLY, WITH ADLIB CURSES IN YIDDISH: HOLD BG AND THEN FADE, OUT BY (5)

LEVI (N): (CONT'D) (1) In the courtyard we found two large piles of cabbages and turnips, frozen so hard that they could only be separated with a pickaxe. We carried away 100 pounds – and a can of frozen water, perhaps twelve gallons. (2)

In the afternoon I went to the surgery. (3) Everything had been turned out by inexpert looters; not a bottle intact, the floor covered with a layer of rags, excrement, and medicine. A naked, twisted corpse. But here I found a car battery with a charge on it. (4) That evening we had light in our room.

LEVI (QUICK TRANSITION TO (D) BY END OF FIRST SENTENCE): (5) From my window, I see a large stretch of the road. For the past three days the Wehrmacht in retreat has gone by in waves: armoured cars, Tiger tanks camouflaged white; Germans on horseback, Germans on foot, Germans armed and unarmed. During the night we hear the grinding of their tracks... (6)

LEVI (D): (7) (SLOWLY) It seemed as though it could never end. (8) this retreat of a great army. (9)

(PAUSE)

SOUND: (1) WHEELBARROW AND FOOTSTEPS OF TWO MEN ON GROUND: TILL (2)

SOUND: (2) FOOTSTEPS OF ONE MAN ENTERING HUT: AT ONCE (3) THEY WALK ON BROKEN GLASS: HOLD TILL (4)

SOUND: (5) SNEAK MECHANISED ARMY PASSING BG: FADE AT (7) OUT AFTER (8) BUT BEFORE (9)

CHARLES: (6) Ça roule encore?

ARTHUR: Ça roule toujours. (7)

LEVI (N): January 21st. This dawn we saw the plain deserted and lifeless, white as far as the eye could see, lying under the flight of the crows, deathly sad. The Polish civilians have vanished: even the wind seems to have stopped.

(1) In order to make the first soup, Charles and I had to find a clean place for a kitchen. Every corner of the camp is invaded with indescribable filth. You can't move an inch without watching your step; to move about in the dark is unthinkable. We are suffering from the bitter cold; but we think with horror what would happen if it thawed – the disease spreading unchecked, the suffocating stench, the last hope of water gone. (2)

I woke all the patients in our room and told them (3) – in French and German (4) – that they must begin to be thinking about returning home, and that therefore certain things must be done and other things avoided. Discipline and hygiene were now of paramount importance; at all costs the diphtheria and typhu patients must not infect each other. (5)

(PAUSE)

LEVI (N): January 22nd. Charles and I today extended our explorations to the SS camp, outside the electric fence. The guards must have left in a great hurry: (6) on the tables we found plates of soup, now frozen, mugs of beer now transformed into yellowish ice, a chess board with a game in progress. We loaded ourselves with a bottle of vodka, various medicines, newspapers, magazines, four eiderdowns. (7)

MORE...

SOUND: (1) SOUNDS OF PREPARING TO COOK AND OF COOKING: TILL (2)

CAST: (2) STIR OF PATIENTS WAKING UP AND PAYING ATTENTION

LEVI: (3) Mes amis... (4) Kameraden... Il faut absolument que nous commençons maintenant à penser de notre retour chez nous. Wir müssen alle an die Zurückgehen nach Hause denken. Pour ça il y'a quelques choses de nécessaire: la discipline, l'hygiène, par exemple. Für das, müssen wir alle rein bleiben, und nicht... (FADE, OUT JUST BEFORE (5))

SOUND: (6) LEVI AND CHARLES POKING ABOUT IN THE MESS HALL, PICKING THINGS UP AND DROPPING THEM: TILL (7)

LEVI (N): (CONT'D) (1) Only this evening did we learn what happened about half an hour later. Some SS men, dispersed perhaps but armed, came into the abandoned camp and found eighteen Frenchmen installed in the dining-room of the SS mess. Methodically, with a single shot in the nape of the neck, they killed them one by one, and lined up the twisted corpses in the snow on the road. Nobody has the strength to bury them. (2) But by now there are beds in all the huts occupied with corpses as rigid as wood. The ground is frozen too hard for grave-digging. Many bodies are piled up in a trench, shamefully visible from our window.

(PAUSE)

LEVI (N): January 23rd. Our potatoes are finished. For days there has been a rumour of an enormous trench of potatoes somewhere outside the barbed wire. Some unknown pioneer has now found them.

(3) By this morning, when we arrived, a section of the barbed wire has already been beaten down and a double file of prisoners was going in and out through the opening. (4)

(5) Two very long ditches full of potatoes, covered with earth and straw to protect them. Nobody need die of hunger any more. (6)

(PAUSE)

BOY: (1) (FADE UP) ... du sennen gevayn akhtz'n Franzoys'n welleche hawben sich arein geklieb'n in di SS zimmerung, un hawben sich dort gemakh bakfayn. Si hawben dort gefinnen whisky, vodka, un euech ess'n, un si hawben sich dort euchgesetzt un genummen ess'n un trink'n. Plitzling sennen arein seks SS menner, tzereitst wie wilde chreies, eh nicht shtell'ndik kayn schumfrag'n. Hawben sie genumm'n ayn'm zu gefiert zu der tier en areingeyukht a quell in kop un sein kelpe aroiss gevorfen. Der nurch a tzvayt'n, a dritt'n, un a zoy ayn'm nuch dem anderung, un di ibrikeh hawben sich zugekopt nich seiendik bekoyekh apis zu tun... (USE ONLY ENOUGH TO LAST TILL (2) OPPOSITE, ENDING THERE WITH A FADE-OUT)

SOUND: (3) FOOTSTEPS, DIGGING AND SCRABBLING AT POTATO TRENCH;
FADE AT (5), OUT JUST BEFORE (6)

CHARLES: (4) Dis donc, Primo, on est dehors! (5)

LEVI (TRANSITION FROM (N) TO (D) BY (1)): January 24th. Freedom. The hole in the barbed wire gives us a concrete image of freedom. (1) It now occurs to us, thinking about it, that this means no more Germans, no more selections, no work, no blows, no roll-calls – and perhaps, some time or other, the return home. But it takes an effort to convince ourselves. All around is destruction and death... The pile of corpses in front of our window has now overflowed the ditch. In the contagious ward, all who could not go to other huts have now died. (2)

Yet in Hut 14, on the other side of camp near the Prisoner of War compound, because of a visit to the English POW camp, there are wonders never seen before: margarine, custard powders, lard, soya bean, flour, even whisky. This evening there is singing in Hut 14: but we cannot walk so far, not even to share their whisky if they would give us any. (3)

LEVI (N): (4) January 25th. Now it was Somogyi's turn – the Hungarian chemist, fiftyish, thin tall, taciturn. He had typhus as well as scarlet fever. He had not spoken for perhaps five days. Today he opened his mouth and said in a firm voice: (5)

LEVI (N): (6) We could find nothing to say, and for the time being did not touch the bread. Half his face was swollen. As long as he was conscious he remained enclosed in a harsh silence.

MORE...

CHARLES: (1) (EXCITEDLY) T'as compris, Arthur? C'est fini. On est libre... Plus de S.S....

ARTHUR: (INCREDULOUSLY) Plus de sélection – plus de travail – plus d'appel –

CHARLES: ... et on est en route... nous rendrons... chez nous... T'as compris? Tu te rends compte!

ARTHUR: Chez nous? Je ne croyais pas... Mais c'est pas possible! Oui... nous rentrons... enfin... nous rentrons... (END BEFORE (2) WITH FADE)

SOUND: (2) SNEAK DISTANT SINGING OF PATRIOTIC SONG, BACK-TIMED TO END A FEW MOMENTS AFTER (3)

(AFTER END OF SONG, PAUSE) (4)

SOMOGYI: (5) I have a ration of bread under my pillow. Divide it among the three of you. I shall not be eating any more. (6)

LEVI (N): (CONT'D) But in the evening and for the whole night (1) – and still now – without interruption our peace – and our peace of mind - was shattered by his delirium. As though speaking out of a dream of acceptance and slavery, he murmurs “Jawohl” with every breath, regularly and continuously, like a machine – “Jawohl” – at every collapsing of his wretched frame... (2)

LEVI (N): (3) “Jawohl” – thousands of times – until we want to shake him, or throttle him – anything to make him change the word. (4) (5) Outside the great silence continues. The number of ravens has increased enormously and everybody knows why. (6)

(PAUSE)

LEVI (START ON (N) WITH QUICK TRANSITION THROUGH (D) TO (R) BELOW:
January 26th. We are left alone in a world of death and phantoms. The last trace of civilisation has vanished around us and inside us.

LEVI (R): The creature who has lost all restraint, and now shares his bed with a corpse, is no longer a man. The creature who waits for his neighbour to die so that he can take his piece of bread is guiltless perhaps, but farther away from the type of rational man than the most primitive pygmy or the most vicious sadist.

LEVI (FAST TRANSITION BACK TO (N) ON FIRST PHRASE): (7) And Somogyi has suffered aloud, unconscious all day. And now that the sounds and movements of the day have been driven out by darkness, the room is filled again with his monologue... (8)

SOMOGYI: (1) (BEGINNING QUIETLY, REPEATED OVER AND OVER AS BREATHING) Jawohl... Jawohl... Jawohl... (CONTINUE)

SOMOGYI: (2) (CONTINUING) (RAISE LEVEL SLIGHTLY) Jawohl... Jawohl... Jawohl... Jawohl... (3) (LOWER TO NORMAL BG LEVEL) Jawohl... Jawohl... (CONTINUE)

SOMOGYI: (4) Jawohl... Jawohl... (REPEATEDLY) (AT (4) FADE TO LOW LEVEL BY (5) AND OUT A LITTLE BEFORE (6))

SOMOGYI (OFF): (7) Jawohl... (REPEATEDLY TO (8) – NOW HE IS DYING AND THE WORD RASPS)

SOMOGYI: (8) (IN HIS DEATH AGONY, RISING IN HIS BUNK) Jawohl... Jawohl...

SOUND: SOMOGYI CLIMBS FROM HIS BUNK AND STAGGERS ON MIKE

SOMOGYI: (WITH ABOVE) Jawohl... Jawohl (1)...

LEVI: (1) (URGENTLY) Somogyi, get back to bed! You can't – (HE IS INTERRUPTED BY THE NEXT "JAWOHL")

SOMOGYI: Jawohl... Jawohl... (A DEEP GASPED INTAKE OF BREATH) (2)

CHARLES (2) La mort l'a chassé de son lit.

SOMOGYI: A RASPING EXHALATION OF HIS LAST GASPED BREATH

SOUND: SOMOGYI FALLS TO THE FLOOR

(PAUSE) (3)

CAST & SOUND: (4) BREAKFASTING TILL (5); THEN LEVI AND CHARLES LIFT SOMOGYI AND CARRY HIM AWAY, EMERGING FROM THE HUT (DOOR AND WIND AND CHANGE OF SURFACE FOR FOOTSTEPS) AT (6) AND SOON HALTING. AT (6) THE MOTORISED RUSSIANS START TO ARRIVE AND REMAIN ACTIVE BG TILL FINAL SOUND-FADE: MOST OF THE MOTORS ARE BG, BUT ONE TRUCK AT (7) COMES TO FOREGROUND, STOPS, AND TICKS OVER: TWO RUSSIAN SOLDIERS GET OUT, SHUTTING THE DOORS, AND WALK ON MIKE

FIRST RUSSIAN SOLDIER: (COMING ON) A eti zhivy? Da oni na lyudi ne pokozhi. Kak myertvyets. Vot uzhas!

SECOND RUSSIAN SOLDIER: Vot do chevo lyudyei dovyeli! A na vorotakh napissano: "Arbeit macht frei"! Eto, po-ikhnyemu, trud tak osvobozhdayet! Kak dumayesh, eti vyzhivot?

LEVI (N): (3) January 27th. Dawn. On the floor, we see the shameful wreck of skin and bones – the Somogyi thing. To begin with there are more urgent tasks: (4) we cannot wash, therefore we cannot touch him until we have cooked and eaten breakfast. The dead can wait. We begin our work as on any other day... (5) Then when breakfast was finished we could turn to this other distasteful sad thing. Charles and I lifted him. He was very light. (6) We were carrying Somogyi on a stretcher, only a little way from the hut, when the Russians arrived. We overturned the stretcher on the grey snow, and stood up as straight as we could... (7)

LEVI (N): (1) Charles took off his cap. I was sorry not to have my cap: if I had had my cap I would have taken it off too.

LEVI (R): (2) Consider –
 You who live secure now in warm houses
 And turn home in the evening to friendly faces,
 And savour fire, and food and drink: Consider
 If this is a man –
 Consider too – that these things happened:
 Men were broken at this wheel, women broken to this mould.
 This is true. And this is my word for it.
 Carve my words in your heart, and say them to your children;
 Say them to yourself at home or walking along a street;
 In the act of going to bed or getting up
 Remember – for your own danger's sake.
 Keep far the plague of blindness, the cancer of betrayal;
 Or else your house will fall and your health fail;
 And one day your children will turn their faces from you
 And give their lives – and yours – into the hangman's mercy.

(VERY LONG PAUSE)

FIRST RUSSIAN SOLDIER: A kto ikh, byednyeki, znayet! (1)

SECOND RUSSIAN SOLDIER: (GOING OFF) Yesli vozmozhno bylo dovesti lyudyei do takovo sostoyaniya, mozhet i pravda, chto chelovek chuzhe zverya.

CAST & SOUND: THE TWO RUSSIANS CLIMB BACK INTO THE TRUCK, SHUT ITS DOORS, AND DRIVE FROM FOREGROUND TO MERGE IN THE BG TRAFFIC: AS THEY DRIVE OFF, THE WHOLE SOUND SCENE FADES SLOWLY OUT

(A CREVICE OF SILENCE) (2)

ANNOUNCER: CBC Wednesday Night has presented "If this is a man" by George Whalley,
 adapted for radio from the original Italian "Se questo è un uomo" by Primo Levi
 and from an English translation by Stuart Woolf. Douglas Rain was heard as
 Primo Levi. Others in the cast were.....

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Sound effects were by Alex Sheridan and John Sliz, and technical operations by
 Tom Prentice. The program was directed and produced by John Reeves in the
 Toronto studios of the CBC.

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