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Escape From Sobibor

By Thomas 'Toivi' Blatt

In 1942, SS-chief Heinrich Himmler initiated "Operation Reinhardt". Nazi-Germany's final solution to the "Jewish question". 3 death-camps were built and staffed under top secret orders. These camps, all in eastern Poland, were Belzec, Treblinka and the most secret Sobibor. Sobibor. It was here on October 14th prisoner revolt in World War 2 took place. This is that story.

- Did you speak to them?

- Yes, Leon.

But they're still going to do it.

- Leon, Leon...

- What's going on?

We're assigned to the vegetable lot today. While you're at the station, we are going to go.

- We've been working on that fence, it's our chance.

- In broad daylight through the minefield?

It's crazy, you'll never make it. We have the courage now. Who knows if we do tomorrow. We're going to do it, nobody can stop us. Good luck. Quick! Run!

It's nothing but a little target practice. I want no problems here today. Is that clear? Take your positions. Dismissed. Attention, railroad brigade Jews. As always, I expect you to be smiling, when the train arrives. Remember, we are welcoming these people. This will run smoothly. If there's a problem like yesterday's, if people panic or try to run

I don't have to remind you,
you will be killed.
Water!
Give me water!
Remember, we've got to stay together.
Get moving!
You! You, get back!
Get back, I say!
- You must leave your bag.
- No!
Stay right next to me.
If you want to stay together,
volunteer.
When they ask you,
tell them you have a trade.
Quiet!
Quiet!
Stand where you are and be quiet.
You will be separated into
two groups, just temporarily.
Women and children on this side,
men and boys, 14 years of
age or older, on the other.
Those who are ill or too
weak to walk will be assisted.
Leave your luggage, it will
be brought to you later.
Now, move as quickly as possible.
Move!
- Shlomo, Moses...!
- Mama, he said we'd be
together in a little while.
- Yes, a little while. Kiss your sister.
- Mama, which side to go?
Don't start anything.
Move! Back!
All the sick on the top.
On the wagon, over here!
Observe...
Do you see? How I'm scattering this?
Grain by grain.
That is what will happen
with your filthy Reich.
It will vanish like flying dust

and passing smoke.

No.

You stand right here
and don't move until I tell you
Silence!

I want everyone to listen to me carefully.

You have arrived at Sobibor.

You are in eastern Poland.

This is a labour camp.

We have brought you here to work.

You will work hard, but hard
work is good for the soul.

So in reality, we are your benefactors.

You will be housed, you will be
fed. All we ask is your cooperation.

If you do your jobs, you
will have nothing to fear.

You will be given postcards.

Write to your relatives and friends to
tell them you have arrived here safely.

We will mail them for you.

Unfortunately, there
have been reports that
typhus have broken out
at several labour camps.

We do not want typhus at Sobibor.

Therefore, first you will be
taken to the shower facility
where you will each have a hot shower.

Naturally, men and women
will shower separately.

Women will have their hair
cut short before they shower

While you are showering, your clothing
will be disinfected.

Remember, the better your behaviour,
the easier your stay will be.

Hauptscharfhrer Wagner,
Oberscharfhrer Frenzel

- I need experienced shoemakers and tailors.

- Is anybody a qualified seamstress?

- Here, I am a seamstress.

- Where did you work? For how long?

In Warsaw for 2.. no 2,5 years

in a clothing store, Beloskis.

- I did alterations.
- Good, step forward.
- I am a seamstress.
- Step forward.
- Are there any first class shoemakers? Any tailors?
- I am a shoemaker, sir.
- The best.
- Step forward.
- Qualified seamstresses?
- Here, sir. I am a seamstress.
- Is this your son? -

Yes. - No, can't use you.

- I am a seamstress.
- Step forward.
- I need experienced shoemakers. Any tailors?
- Sir, I am a goldsmith. See, I made that. These are my tools, sir. Alright, step forward. And Sir, my brother... He's a goldsmith too. He helps me. We can make jewellery, anything. Alright, step forward.
- Sir, what about our father?
- Never mind him. Stay here, I'll be back.
- Any tailors?
- I'm a tailor, sir.
- From where?
- Bialystock, sir. Very experienced. See?

Alright, step forward.

Any more?

Women and children!

Follow me!

Men and boys!

Move!

- Did you come here with your husband?
- No, I'm not married.
- My name is Bajle.
- I'm Luka.

I'm Naomi. My husband is fighting

with the partisans.

Come on!

Hurry up!

Get in!

I'm Samuel.

Welcome. I am Itzhak.

We work here for the SS and
their Ukrainian guards

- How did you know I was a shoemaker?

- I didn't.

- But what if I'd been a
shopkeeper, or something?

- I'd have taught you.

- It happens here all the time.

- So why did you tell me to volunteer?

Because you like someone I could get
along with and that's important in Sobibor.

Where do you come from?

Come, come!

Come in! Come.

Wait over there!

- What do we do now?

- He said to wait.

Someone will tell us.

They can't allow babies in here.

Help me...

Come!

Stay in there. Don't leave for any reason.

That's sergeant Wagner's orders. Understand?

Look! Way over there.

Looks like a fire. I wonder what it is.

If it looks like a fire, then it
probably is a fire. I sound like grandpa.

- What could be burning?

- Who knows.

What's happening?

This isn't a normal roll-call.

- Complete.

- Complete.

The roll-call is complete,

Herr Hauptscharfhrer.

There's something you

don't seem to understand,

so I'm going to explain it to you.

Our Commandant wants me
to make it very clear
that he is responsible for you.
For each and everyone of you here.
Somewhat like, a large family.
Today 3 members of that
family decided that they
didn't want to be with us
this evening or ever again.
Now, we could not let that happen,
could we?
We have brought these 3 foolish men back,
to be with all of us this evening.
Understand the message these
There's no escape from Sobibor.
There's only death for
those insane enough to try.
Don't any of you ever forget that.
Dismissed!

- Leon, why didn't they listen to you?
- They couldn't stand the pain anymore.

We talk about escape all
the time and we do nothing.
Maybe it's true. Maybe
there is no chance.
No, I still think there is
a way. But not like this.
There has to be organization,
there has to be patience
and some new people whose spirits
have not yet been broken.
Yes, I want a chance to escape. To be free
or at least a chance to die trying.
Better to escape and live.
That would be real revenge.
This is Commandant Reichleitner.
Show the commandant your wallet.
- This is very handsome. You made it?
- Yes, sir.

SS. The initials are appropriate.
What do they stand for?
- My name, sir. Shlomo Szmajzner.
- Can you make rings?
- O yessir. I can make, we

can make any kind of jewellery.

- Show me what kind of monogram you would design for me.

- May I sit, sir.

- Yes, sit.

- The initials, sir?

- FKR Franz Karl Reichleitner.

- You can make that for me?

- Yes sir, but I need gold.

- Is that enough?

- See to it that these boys get food and blankets.

- Sir, our clothes... they're filthy.

- Everything and everybody in Sobibor has to neat and clean.

- Let them pick out what they want at the sorting sheds.

- Yes, Herr Commandant.

- And sir, my parents and...

- Be quiet!

- Let the boy talk.

- My parents and my sister came here with us.

- Please, sir. When can I see them?

- Don't worry about them. They're working in the fields. They're well and happy.

I promise you, soon you will join them.

- How dare she hide the baby in here. We can all be killed for that.

- You must get it out of here.

- And put it where? What would you do if that was your baby?

- It's Wagner.

Good morning, ladies.

- I need someone who can take care of rabbits. Does anyone here have experience?

- I have.

- Stand up. How did you learn?

- At home.

- We raised rabbits and chickens.

My mother sold them at the market.

- You have a new job.

- Oberkapo, show her.

- Come.

Bit of advice. Don't get Wagner angry.
These Nazis can be madmen. He is the worst.

- What is your name?
- Luka.

Luka. Well, Luka the woman who tended the rabbits twisted her back a few days ago. We haven't seen her since. Sergeant Wagner arranged that. The rabbits are food for the SS. They love their Hasen-Pfeffer. You'd better know what you are doing.

- Oberkapo? Does that mean you are in charge of all the capos?
- Yes.
- Are you Jewish?
- All the capos are.

There are only Jews here.

- A Jew and you work for the Nazis?
- I have no more choice than you do.
- But you carry a whip. Choose your clothes!
- Esther! Kapo!
- If they catch you with that, you're dead. And they'll kill me too. So don't risk my life for me. I am risking it enough already, not turning you in right now. I don't know how to thank you.

- Where did all these clothes come from?
- Quiet! No questions! You have what you need.
- Get back to work, you lazy scum!
- Well said, Kapo.

Now, give me your whip. Do your job. Get back to work! All of you! Go on! Go on!
Do you think...

- Where are all the women and children?
- Eda. Look.
- How did you find it?
- Put it in the soup.

Vodka!
- Go on! Stuff your faces right

in front of us! Shame on you!

- Big bad Kapo Porchek.

What guard did you bribe

to get food for you and your whore?

- For your own good, shut up!

- Give me that food.

I'm warning you, stop it!

Why do we fight among ourselves?

If we have energy to spend, let's spend it
against those who have reduced us to this.

Wait!

Here, let them share this.

Share it.

- Excuse me. Excuse me, are you Leon?

- Yes.

- I thought so. Samuel said I
should see you. I am Itzhak Lichtman.

- Oh yes, he told me about you.

- You're from Zolkiewka? - Yes.

- I have been there many times.

Did you know the Rabbi there?

- Rabbi Schmeitzher?

- Yes, he was a close friend of my father's.

- Did you know they shot him?

- No.

It's in the synagogue.

During the service of Yom Kippur.

I was there.

Let's go outside.

You found him. Good.

Samuel and I are forming a small group.

We have to select our people very carefully.

- We're planning an escape.

- An escape?

- For how many?

- We don't know yet. 10 people, perhaps

Whatever we say here

must be kept secret at all costs.

- I swear to God. I'd rather die
right here, right now than betray you.

- Good.

- Can I bring my wife and
my son? Can I bring him?

- How old is the boy?

Four.

When you saw your wife and child at the train station last. Who were they with?

- They were with all the other women and children going to the showers.

- Are you sure?

- Yes.

What is it?

- Itzhak. - What?

- Listen to me. - What?

This is a death camp.

Every day a train comes.

All the people, everyone who goes to the showers is dead.

Men, women, children. Everyone.

Oh, God...

Oh, God... Oh, God... Oh, God...

Itzhak.

Itzhak.

The fire, the fire is their funeral.

They were my life.

- Beautiful. That is excellent work. Excellent, isn't it?

- Very handsome, Herr Commandant.

- I expect you to design an SS-ring. I want my SS-men to have a nice gold ring.

Start right away.

- Yes, sir.

Bend over

- You are two lucky Jews.

- Why? Why?

Have you seen the new girl in charge of the rabbits?

- I've seen her. I wouldn't mind having a little of that right now.

- A Jew? That's disgusting!

- If you saw her...

- Remember Poul and Groth.

Two good men. Kicked out of the SS and sent to the Russian front for raping Jewish girls.

- That didn't make sense to me.

- Me neither. We are ordered to kill them.

- But we are not allowed

to use their bodies first.

- As it should be. We're

SS. We're the elite.

- We do not soil ourselves in Jewish filth.

- The British bombed Hamburg again.

And again I'm lucky.

My wife and kids are alright, thank God.

Just be glad you are in a safe place.

Look at us. Proud defenders of the Reich.

Don't talk like that. My father

was killed in the first war.

Doing his duty for the fatherland.

And we are doing our

duty for the Fhrer here.

That's as honourable as

being on a battlefield.

- He is right.

- Battlefield. You're crazy.

What do you do? Sit in your

little booth and turn on the gas?

Valve on... Wait 20 minutes... valve off...

Big job.

That takes great courage, Bauer.

How many Jews did you gas today?

- Don't talk about that in front of them.

They don't hear anything. Do you?

- I'm sorry, sir. I didn't hear you.

- See, they are deaf.

- How old are you?

-15, sir.

I mean if a Jew can, why can't he?

- What's your name?

- Toivi, sir.

- Toivi. Get me another beer.

- Yes, sir.

Get this butcher out of here.

I've seen Treblinka.

I don't know how they managed it.

- Sloppy security, that's all.

- Right, Herr Commandant.

- If Jews at Treblinka can

riot and set buildings on fire

then they can do it here. - Could they?

- Not at Sobibor, Untersturmfhrer.

But still I want extra
caution to be taken.
I am advised by Berlin
that they are increasing the
number of transports we
are to receive to 3 a day.
A tribute to our efficiency.
We'll be up to our eyes in Jews.
Tell your men what
happened at Treblinka.
I expect you to see to it, that
nothing like that happens here.
Yes, Herr Commandant.
- Can I help you, sir?
- Here's a little present
for you. Put it to work.
- Tell them your name.
- We know Toivi, sir. We can use him.
Nobody asked you that.
I want a design in gold.
On the handle.
- A snake that winds
around from here to here.
- I'd be happy to do that for you, sir.
- But Sergeant Wagner,
he said that I wasn't...
- I don't want to hear about
Hauptscharfhrer Wagner,
just do it or I'll break some bones.
- Understood?
- Yes, sir.
Send him to compound 3 tomorrow morning.
Ask for me at the gate, Scharfhrer Bauer.
- I will have a gold piece, I want
inserted at the end of the handle. Here.
- Yes, sir.
Look at this.
Thank you.
See, the skin is the most nourishing part.
I've put a piece in your soup too.
Try it.
You must eat. The best revenge
is for you to survive.
- Itzhak...

- Hmm?

My family was murdered too.

Roll-call in 2 minutes. Come on! Quick!

- All I'm saying is that maybe somehow we can use the Ukrainian guards.

- It's possible.

- How loyal are these Ukrainians to the SS?

They hate the SS as much as they hate us, but they're mercenaries and also known as shooting at them.

We use them all the time.

When we find gold or jewels in the sorting sheds we steal some of it sometimes and bribe the Ukrainian guards to bring us food.

They get rich but at least we stay alive.

- Whats your idea?

- Look, suppose we find the right Ukrainian, we bribe him to bring us poison. Strychnine, cyanide...

- Alright, we have the poison, then what?

- Well, who serves the SS meals? The butchers. We get them to do the poisoning...

- They're children, Samuel. It's too much responsibility for them.

- You're right. The problem is we are not soldiers.

We don't know how to kill, we never have...

Roll-call, come on.

Sergeant Bauer wants me.

- What are you doing?

You're not allowed in here.

- Sergeant Bauer ordered me here, sir.

Wait here.

- What's taking Moses so long?

- Maybe he got lost.

No, here he is.

- Moses! Moses! Moses! What happened?

Did someone hurt you? - No.

- What is it? What happened? Tell us.

- I went there to get this.

- From sergeant Bauer. - Yes, I know that.
- I saw the shower place.
And there are no showers.
'Cause all the people who
go in there, are killed.
I saw the dead bodies.
Women, babies...
All twisted together. And prisoners like us
throw them on carts and pull them away.
Everyone who goes for a shower is dead.
Everyone. Shlomo, our whole family is dead.
- You knew this. You knew
and you didn't tell us.
- My family are dead too.
The sergeants, they said if I told anyone,
they'd kill me.
Our mother, our father and our sister
are murdered.
Now I want to kill.
And I will kill!
- Which one of you is Leon?
- I am. You are the new...
eh... the new goldsmith.
- Shlomo.
- Yes, hello Shlomo.
- What's going on in here?
How can you do this in a place where
they murder your families?
They kill little children.
And you make music, you laugh,
you play games, you even make
love. In here, it's a carnival.
And you work for these monsters!
You packet our clothing to send to Germany.
My mother's clothing,
my father's clo...
Now that you know the truth about Sobibor,
will you still make jewellery for them?
What will you do? Refuse?
Consider yourself an honoured
person because you let them kill you?
No, you won't. As we don't.
And every day will be
an agony of conscience.

It's the same for everybody here.
When I came here, I was
with my wife and small child.
They took me to work in the sorting shed.
My wife and child were sent to the showers.
The next day I am sorting through
clothes, and I... I come...
I came across their clothes.
I find them by accident.
This is the way I find that
they are dead. My wife. My child.
But what is there to do but survive?
Yes, we sing and we dance.
Sometimes we make jokes. We make love.
If not, we deny life.
We work for them so we may survive.
And we survive for a reason.
Revenge.
And some day we will have it.
Do you understand?
I will do anything for revenge.
Even if I have to die for it.
- How old are you?
- How old do you have to be?
You're old enough.
Wagner's going to be
late on his round today.
No he isn't!
Here he comes!
God morning, ladies.
And how is the work
progressing this morning?
- No, please...
- Is that yours?
- What are you going to do?
- What do you think?
There are no babies in Sobibor
- You're going to kill her?
- Because I am in a good mood
today, I'm going to let you live.
- No! - I really shouldn't. You're
a lucky woman. - Give me my baby!
You don't understand. I'm offering you
a chance to live. It's quite unusual.

I spit on your offer, you Nazi bastard.

We got to get out of here.

We got to get out.

- But even if we do.. even
if we do escape, what then?

- We disappear into the forest.

There are partisan groups there. We
find these groups and we join them.

But first things first. We
must find a way of escaping.

This should be one of our easier days.

These Dutch will behave themselves.

I'll take this.

- Here. Be sure to keep your baggage check.

- Thank you. Just a second.

- Here you are.

- We're not allowed to accept tips, Madame.

- Nonsense. Please, take it.

- I can't.

Well, then only as a
souvenir from Holland.

Are there any other
Dutch people already here?

No, this is the first train from Holland.

- Here is your baggage check. Don't lose it.

- Thank you, I won't.

When they ask for seamstresses or
laundresses just raise your hand.

Whatever it is, say
you're a professional.

- Why?

- Just do it.

Look at the SS. They're amused.

- Bastards!

- Not only do we die for them, we dance
for them like stupid performing bears.

- That was charming. A lovely
folkdance. - Thank you. - Very charming.

Now, everybody dance. Play.

I want you all to have a good time.

Come on.

Dance! Enjoy it. Let's dance.

Let's dance. Come on. Dance.

May I have the honour?

Let's dance. Come on.

- Hello, Bajle.

- Hello.

- You dance beautifully.

- Thank you.

- You came to Sobibor alone?

- Yes.

- Where are your family?

- I don't know where they are.

- I'm by myself.

- And I'm by myself.

- My name is Chaim. -

I'm Selma. Hello. - Hello.

- Would you dance with me?

- Oh, I would.

Come on! Come on!

- You look like you want to dance.

- Yes, but I don't know how.

Would you like me to show you?

- But no laughing.

- Maybe just a little.

Let's dance! Come on!

One, two three,

one, two three...

I keep seeing people

coming to you for advice.

We talk it passes the time.

Whatever it is, if I can ever help,
just say so.

Bajle, I don't know how
to say things like this...

but I want you.

Let me tell you, you do know
how to say things like that.

Shlomo, I'm 26.

Why don't you ask one of the younger girls?

I've never eaten an apple before.

I wouldn't want a green one.

Bajle... When?

We'll see.

Wagner's coming!

Keep working.

- When will the SS rings be finished?

- We'll finish the last ones today, sir.

I have orders from
Commandant Reichleitner
to close down the goldsmith
shop when the rings are done.

- Why?

- It doesn't matter why.

Now listen to me. I'm making you
the head of the mechanics shop.

You'll have 4 or 5 men under
you and a lot of hard work.

If you want to live, you'll
see that it's done right.

- You can take that one
with you. What's his name?

- Moses.

Ah... the king of Jews.

You will work and sleep in the
mechanics shop and at night,
in secret, you'll continue
to make gold jewellery
for me and for whoever I send to you.

Remember, if this secret leaks
you and the little king will be
dead 5 minutes later. Understood?

Yes.

- Sir, what about Toivi, sir?

- You better find yourself another job.

What other job, sir?

Any other job!

Get up! Get up!

Get up!

Alright, 25 for you.

And don't forget to count.

One! Two! Three! Four! Five!

Six! Seven! Eight! Nine! Ten!

Eleven! Twelve! Thirteen! Fourteen!...

Kapo! Hurry up! Move it!

Move along!

Here, You. Get the water.

- Got a light?

- I think so. - You two, wait!

- Now?

- At the stream, I'll hit him.

Alright, go ahead. Move!

- What's taking them so long? - I don't know. - Stay here, I'll have a look.
Scharfhrer! Scharfhrer Wolf!
Two prisoners... escaped... at the stream!
They have a rifle!
You, you, you and you follow me!
Come on!
They got out.
Let's go! Go!
Stand at attention!
This morning two prisoners
escaped from North Camp.
by that idiotic example
also tried to escape. If any of you would
like to cheer. Go right ahead.
There will be no more escape attempts
in this camp. I'll repeat that:
There will be no more escape attempts
in this camp!
We're going to kill these
But we're going to do more than that.
We're going to allow each of these men.
the privilege of selecting one of you,
as his partner in death.
Go and select your partners.
You're all free to walk over and
select your partners. Do it now.
I said, do it now.
Do it now!
No! None of us will do.
We will never do it.
Let me explain.
This is simple mathematics.
So it shouldn't be
too difficult to understand.
If you 13 men do not
select 13 to die with you
then I will select 50.
So the decision is yours.
I'm sorry.
And now we begin. You will watch this,
so that you will remember.
If I find anyone turning away
or closing their eyes

then that person will join
these 26 who are about to die.
Scharfhrer Fallaster!
Yes, Hauptscharfhrer Wagner.
Take your positions.
Avenge us!
Fire!
Enough time off now.
Everyone back to work.
Tell the others... We'll meet in your
shed tonight. 8 o'clock
There's something we have to discuss.
We've been planning the escape
for a small number of people
but you saw what happened today
when 13 men tried to escape.
The same thing will happen again.
We can not leave hundreds behind
to be slaughtered. And they would be.
Therefore, the escape we plan must
be for every prisoner in Sobibor.
Everyone?
Even the workers in camp 3?
Yes, all 600.
Or else no one.
But that's impossible.
How can we get 600 people out of here?
I believe there is a way.
And I believe that we must find it.
Leon is right. It is an
incredible idea. 600 people!
Everyone in Sobibor must
have a chance to be free.
There is no other choice.
Shlomo?
Morris?
Mundek?
Itzhak?
Good, the we are agreed.
Alright, let's put our mind to
discovering what this plan should be.
There is one if we can just find it.
What about this?
We build 30 ladders in my carpenter shop.

They should be maybe 12 foot long.

This is perfect!

On a dark night we rush the fence.

ladder. Zip, zip, zip, zip.

In no time. That's 600 people.

- Even if you could build it,
where would we hide the ladders?

- Make it 20 ladders.

- We'll find a place to hide
them somewhere. I don't know.

- And what about the
minefields outside the fence?

- It won't work, Morris.

- That's alright, Morris. Keep thinking.

Every idea may be the right one.

- Let's talk about a tunnel.

- Exactly. It would have to
be at least 50 yards long.

- But how could we do that?

- It doesn't matter. Let's say we
can dig this tunnel and hide the dirt.

The suppose we start

the escape at midnight

and give each of us 600

people 1 minute to get through

the tunnel, crawl through

and escape into the woods.

which is impossible, but never mind,

that adds up to 600 minutes. 10 hours.

We'd still be escaping at

- Well, we have to come

up with a real plan soon.

- It's there. We can find it.

We'll meet again tomorrow.

- Russian soldiers.

- What are they doing here?

- They should be in a prisoner of
war camp. Maybe theyre all Jews.

- Maybe.

You wanted to know about the Russians.

They are all Jewish.

- They're here to do heavy
labour in the North Camp.

- Thanks.

See if their officer will meet me
in the womens barracks tonight.
I don't know what is going on,
but whatever it is, I wish you good luck.
No, no, no, no.
Now, we'll just see what he's like.
- Let's find out if he trusts us.
- Or whether we trust him.
Civilians and soldiers, Russians, Poles
trusting each other. I don't know...
- Well, we have to try.
- Supposing they escape?
If they escape, they'll pay for it.
- Lieutenant, I am Leon Feldhendler.
- Alexander Pechersky.
- This is Samuel Freiberg.
- A pleasure, lieutenant Perchersky.
Everyone calls me Sasha.
It saves time and energy.
Thank you. We would like
very much to know what's
happening in the outside
world. Would you tell us?
- Of course.
- What's happening in the war?
- Please, please.
- How far away is your army?
We are between 6 and 700 miles away.
We are beating back the Nazis,
but it is a slow process.
- Are there partisans
nearby? Could they help us?
- They have many things to do.
I'm afraid here, we must help ourselves.
Let us be open with each other.
You did not ask me here just to be
friendly with the Russian soldiers.
- No.
- So what do you want of us?
To see if we can trust each other.
- Why should I trust you?
We are 2 Jews in a death camp.
- Perhaps, together we can
device a way of surviving past

what they have planned for us.

We must get back to the barracks.

- They lock them at 10.

- Good night, Leon.

- Good night, Sasha.

- Samuel.

- He wants us to trust him.

- To do what?

- I do not know for sure.

- An escape?

- Hmm. Maybe.

- Why do we need civilians?

We are soldiers. We can handle it ourselves.

He's trying to use us.

He... He knows this place.

Maybe we should use him to get out.

Faster!

Wait!

Wait! Just wait!

- Are you ready?

- Almost, sir.

Wrong. You're ready now.

They've got 10 minutes got to everybody fed.

There's extra work today.

Start serving!

-10 minutes.

- We... we're trying, sir.

But not hard enough!

Don't, they will kill you.

Alright, enough. Kapos get these people off to work.

I have a great deal of work planned for you.

Move out! All of you! Do it now!

Be careful. They only need us as long as the trains keep coming in.

- We must escape.

Yes, escape. For how many?

- All 600. Every prisoner in Sobibor.

- The whole camp?

Move on!

The more people who know of an escape plan the less chance of success.

- Yes, of course. That's why

it is absolutely essential
that it will remain a
secret until the last minute.

Then everyone must get a chance.

- I will need a detailed
map of the entire camp.

We can get that for you.

We can also get you a fairly good map of the
minefields outside the camp. - Minefield?

Minefield. Except for the front gate,
it runs all around the
perimeter of the camp.

You see how terrified they are of us.

Also, I need to know everything you can tell
me about the SS and the Ukrainian guards.

- How many. What they do.

- We can get that for you.

- Now, the two of us can not be seen
every night, alone, talking together.

- How can we meet without causing suspicion?

- Well the SS is used to see me here.

Perhaps if you had a girlfriend, you
would come and visit her every night.

That would look normal to them.

I think we'd better get you a woman.

It's got to be somebody completely
trustworthy. Give me 24 hours.

- Where's your brother?

- He's sleeping in the carpenter shop.

How did you know to kiss me there?

I liked to look at film posters
when I was a kid.

When you were a kid?

- Yes, before I came here.

- Oberkapo!

- Yes, sir!

They have looked long enough.

- I am sure, they now understand that no one
steals from the Reich. - Yes, sir!

Dismissed!

Berliner turned them in.

I saw him watching them last night.

Thank you, Toivi.

- Hello, I am Luka.

- Sasha. Hello.
For such a brief acquaintance,
that was a lovely smile
Love at first sight.
Those are my instructions.

- It is a beautiful night.
- Look at the moon, Sasha
Look at the board, Sasha.
- Do you want white?
- No, you have it. - I'll take it.
We should go just before dark.
Enough light to find our way into the woods.
Too dark for them to hunt us.
- That will give us a head
start until the morning.
Right.
- Is there an electrician?
One you can trust?
- Yes, Abraham Weiss. He does
some of the electrical work here.
Because among the last things we do, is we
cut the electrical lines and the telephone.
- It will leave them with
now way to call for help.
I understand.
- How many SS are here?
-16 and 125 Ukrainians.
- The Ukrainians are all armed, right?
- Yes, there is a lot of strength there.
- But when you cut out the
brains, the strength is useless.
- How do we get rid
of 16 SS all at once?
- I don't know if my men
are capable of killing.
- But killing the SS
is the key to our plan.
I've a tailor, I.. I have a carpenter,
I.. I have two shoemakers.
I.. I ran a flour mill.
Before the war I was a book-keeper.
I played the piano. I wrote songs
They will manage because they have to.
What is the simplest plan?

I will tell you. 600 prisoners
walk out the main gate.
They just walk out.
Right after evening roll-call.
They just walk out the front gate?
That's impossible. That's crazy.
Except for one thing. Nothing is impossible
for us. So let us create a plan.
With 600 prisoners...
.. who walk out the main gate
- Are you waiting for the Russian?
- Yes.
- Are you in love with him?
- I think so.
- What am I saying? I know so.
- What's he like?
I don't know. I fell in love so quickly
I haven't found out yet.
- Has he said that he loves you?
- No, not until tonight. In about an hour.
Good evening.
Sasha, this is Abraham Weiss,
the electrician that I spoke to you about.
- We've just had a
very interesting game.
- Yes, we have. But I am a better
electrician than I am a chess player.
Good to meet you, lieutenant.
I'll be seeing you tomorrow night.
Good. Good.
One thing I know.
The Kapos have the run of the camp.
For any plan to succeed, when must have
the cooperation of at least one of them.
But they work for the Germans.
Is there anyone we can trust?
Kapo Porchek. 1 or 2 others, maybe.
One I know we can't trust
is a man named Berliner.
- We must kill him. Don't leave any marks.
- It will be done. My people will do it.
We talked last night about
cutting out the brain.
Let us suppose, just suppose that most SS

were dead. Even... even all of them.

- Alright, let's suppose.

- It would have to happen secretly.

We would have to isolate them, kill them,
one by one, in an hour at the most.

Now let us assume we can do that.

Where would we stand?

The Ukrainians would become confused.

The escape could begin.

Right.

The prisoners in compound 3, the men who
cremate the bodies, how do we get them out?

This is a problem. They can't come out.

We're forbidden to go in there.

We can't even get a message through to them.

We've tried. I don't think we can help them.

- You wanted to see me.

- Yes.

- Can you make knives in your shop?

- Like this?

- Careful. Yes, just like that.

- How many?

- As many as you can make, starting now.

- Consider it done.

Leon, with your Kapo Berliner...

the sooner the better.

Luka, let's go.

This had better be important,
or it's 25 for you.

I told you sir, I don't know
what's happening in there.

Kapo Porchek said for
me to get you right away.

That's all I know.

Porchek!

Porchek!

Only in the belly. No marks.

Go and tell sergeant Frenzel
that oberkapo Berliner is very sick.

Everyone must be in position by 3:30

The killings must begin at 4.

It must be done in one hour.

Their punctuality and their greed.

- Can we make use of that?

- I think so.

For example, Samuel is making a pair of boots for lieutenant Niemann. We can get him to the shoe shop for a fitting and kill him there.

- What about Reichleitner and Wagner?

- Reichleitner is a problem.

We know he checks the entire camp at noon and then again at 5 after roll-call.

But he always has men with him.

Wagner has no pattern.

Shlomo is making jewellery for him.

Could you get him to the machine shop?

We need this kind of information on every SS in camp.

We must have our killers in the right place at the right time.

- Can we get some watches, so we can coordinate our timing?

- Yes, I think so, from the sorting shed.

Good.

- Sasha, I have to be one of the killers. I want Wagner.

Shlomo, my men will be in charge of the killings.

And I will make the assignments.

Sasha, I know I'm not supposed to talk about it but it's terrifying to listen to you talking about life and death is such a cold blood.

- Well, sometimes one has to think of them that way.

No.

- No? Why not?

- Because, everything is too real to me. Too alive.

Sasha, what I feel for you...

I...

No, Luka. You must not say that.

Please, listen to me.

I have a wife and a little daughter.

As far as I know they're still living.

I love them both very much.

- Why didn't you tell me?
- I do not know.
- We are pretending, aren't we?
- Pretending?

Lukatshka, I... never intended...

Oberscharfhrer Niemann!

Oberscharfhrer Frenzel!

Wagner and I will be
in Lublin for 3 days.

No transports are coming in
until after we're back.

You two will be in charge while we're away.

Alright, we'd better go. Gentlemen?

We just found out that Captain Reichleitner
and Wagner left today for a 3-day trip.

- Leon and I have come to a decision.
- We escape tomorrow.
- At last!
- Oh, God.

Now let us go over the details.

The killings will start
at 4 o'clock tomorrow.

Until then, it's a normal day.

Leon will be in charge of compound 2,
I will be in compound 1.

Porchek, you will arrange for me
and 2 of my men to be in the carpenter shop.
And Toivi will run his little legs off,
carrying messages between us.

Who is scheduled to take evening
roll-call with Frenzel?

- Sergeant Wolf.
 - He must be killed as well.
- Leon and I will handle that.
I promise you.

When we hear Judah's bugle,
we act normal.

We go to the assembly area.

By then the key SS should be dead.

And instead of dismissing us,
Porchek will march us to the main gate.

We will have pistols to take
care of the guards in the tower.

We kill the 2 Ukrainians at the gate,

open it and out we go.

Running like Cossacks into the woods.

Now, if anything goes wrong before we get out, it is everyone for himself.

I've been working on the stoves in the Ukrainian barrack.

I think I can steal some rifles and ammunition from there tomorrow.

- What do you think?

- Good.

Meet my men just before roll-call in the kitchen.

- Shlomo, do not take any unnecessary risks.

- In Sobibor?

- Did you know that tomorrow is the beginning of Succoth?

Yes. It is a holy day.

- I forgot. And my father was a rabbi.

- They kill on holy days.

- Why not the other way around? God will forgive.

- There are those here who wonder if we can forgive God.

This plan of ours, do you think it can really work?

Yes, but it would not hurt to pray.

What's wrong with you? Today's supposed to look like a normal day, you're dressed like you're going to a wedding.

I'm sorry. It's going to be cold in the forest. I'll go and change.

No, it's too late. You'll just draw more attention to yourself.

- Who can work?

- You can. It makes the time pass by.

Oh my God! It's the SS. Look at this.

- They're new, aren't they?

- Yes.

SS men just arrived.

I've never seen them before.

- How many?

- Where?

In the canteen.

Damn! What are they doing here today?
We've got to get word to Sasha right away.
God almighty,
if word gets out we're all dead.
They've been there over 2 hours already.
What are they doing here?
- Maybe they're just visiting?
- Visiting? A death camp?
Supposedly there's a very good
canteen there. A lot of vodka.
But in any case, with all those SS
we don't have a chance.
But the longer we wait,
the more chance of something leaking out.
We have 2 choices.
Neither of them is good.
- We postpone.
- Agreed. I'll pass the word.
Postponed.
Postponed.
Thank God we waited.
That would have been a disaster.
Yes, it would have.
but we have to go tomorrow no matter what
before Reichleitner and Wagner get back.
Too many people know now.
Tomorrow.
Stop!. You, work here! Come on!
Sasha will be here in a few minutes-
- Have you seen sergeant Frenzel?
- No.
- Where is Frenzel?
- Outside the sergeant's barrack.
- Do you know where he is to be killed?
- Yes, the carpenter shop.
Do not get him in there before I tell you.
- You're ready?
- Yes, take us to the clothing store.
Also pick up Mundek on the way.
- Right.
Please, sir. They're late.
So far so good.
Go tell Sasha we are ready.
- Oberkapo!

- Yes, sir!
- Fix three men from the sorting shed.
- Yes, sir!
- For what job, sir?
- For heavy labour in the north camp.
- Do it!
- Yes, sir!

You, you, you, come with me now.

- Toivi!

- Leon, look! It's Porchek!

He's going the wrong way!

Toivi, tell Sasha an SS corporal with a machine-gun is taking away Porchek with 3 prisoners. I don't know where they're going! I don't know what it means, but we may have to do without Porchek now.

Hurry! You have 10 minutes before you bring sergeant Wolf back here.

Sergeant Wolf! I've been looking for you.

Tailor Mundek has found a beautiful leather coat for you.

If you can stop in the clothing storeroom, sir?

He says, it'll just take a minute.

Alright, in a minute.

Look out! Klat is coming in.

What are we going to do?

Get back.

- Get back!

- Yes, sir. can I help you, sir?

- I want a wool shirt.

They're in the back. Please help yourself.

You! You don't work here. You work in the sorting shed. What are you doing?

It begins.

There's no turning back now.

Hide the body.

Good afternoon, sir.

- The princelet said you had a leather coat for me.

Yes, sir. I think you are

going to like it very much, sir.
I might have to let it out at the waist.
It's a beautiful leather,
sir. Very expensive.
Handsome. Very handsome. Good.
You can fit me at the tailor tomorrow.
But, sir? Wouldn't you like
to see how it looks now?
What was that?
Sergeant Beckmann,
I've been looking for you.
The tailor Mundek has found
a beautiful jacket for you.
If you could stop in the
clothing storeroom, sir?
- He said it would just take a second.
- A jacket? Who said I wanted a jacket?
I don't know, sir, but the
tailor said it would be perfect for you.
Alright, I'll look at it.
- Yeah? - There are 2 dead so far.
Sergeant Wolf and corporal Klat
I though we had sergeant
Beckmann, but he walked away.
- Where's Beckmann? Have
you seen sergeant Beckmann?
Yes, he was here, but he left.
Damn it! We lost him.
He must have gone back to his office.
Leon, if you need me, I want to help.
- Can you deal with Beckmann?
- Yes, I can.
I'll find a way to get you there.
Sergeant Frenzel, they like to see you
in the carpenter shop at 4:30.
Why?
- To pick the colour of
the stain for you book case.
To pick the colour? Why didn't that idiot
ask me when I was in there yesterday?
I don't know, sir.
Should I tell them 4:30?
No! I'll be there when I decide to be there.
Today, tomorrow or whenever!

Lukatshka!

Sasha...

- Will you stand next with me
at the roll-call?

If you will do one thing for me?

I will try. Tell me.

If you will wear this.

For good luck.

Luka, it is beautiful.

I made it for you.

- You! - Yes, sir!

- Take my horse to the stables. - Yes, sir!

- Good afternoon, sir.

- Are my boots ready?

- Yes, sir. I hope you'll
be pleased with them, sir.

I want to try them on.

Yes, sir. By all means, sir.

Please...

See if anyone heard.

- It's all clear.

- Sasha, take his pistol.

You keep it. Clear up!

Fallaster is next.

Meet me in the kitchen
just before roll-call.

I'm going to steal some rifles
from the Ukrainian barrack.

- Now, Moses, if I'm killed...

- No, Shlomo.

Don't worry. We'll be alright.

Good luck, Shlomo.

It's sergeant Fallaster.

You'd better hide.

- Scharfhrer Fallaster.

- What is it?

A message from

Scharfhrer Beckmann

- Tell him I took care of this yesterday.

And not to bother me about it again.

Yes, Scharfhrer.

Are my boots finished?

- Yes, sir. They're

finished. Please sit down.

- I've stretched them, sir. So I think you'll find them a lot more comfortable now. It's for my wife... my child

- We need help. Go and ask Klat.

- Yes, sir.

Sturmmann Klat?

Where's Klat?

- I don't know. He's not there, Scharfhrer Bauer.

- Well, I haven't got all day. Get 2 men to unload this. Yes, sir!

Here's Porchek.

- Where have you been? - They took me to the north camp. I couldn't get out of it. So far, we've been very lucky, but Frenzel is missing and we may have trouble with Beckmann. Go over to compound two. Leon needs help. I just can't believe it. We're actually killing SS-men. I mean that's a hard thing to believe. Killing them. It's beautiful. I just can't believe it.

- Mmm... Magnificent. The aroma alone... Words fail me. Tell me how you do it. You are a plumber, are you not? Of course you are. Only a Jewish plumber could concoct something so obviously delicious. So tell me how you do it.

- You do speak, don't you?

Yes, sir.

What's your Christian name?

I'm just trying to be friendly.

What's your Christian name?

- I have no Christian name, only a Jewish name. My name is Hershel Zuckerman and don't you forget it! We can't wait any longer,

it's almost time for roll-call
Go to Beckmanns office. If
everything looks alright, kill him.
You come right back here, get Kalimali and
the other Russians, take them to compound 1.
- Chaim, this one we didn't plan.
- I know. Thank you.
Here, use this.
No, please let him use this one.
Good luck.
I'll be back.
- Two more, eh?
- Come on, move! Move!
Sergeant Beckmann.
What are you doing here...?
Kill him. Do it! Do it!
We'll put him behind the desk.
- It went well. We killed 5. - That
makes 10 all together. - Eleven.
Here are some pistols. Leon has the rest.
Good man, Kalimali.
- What's in the box?
-2 rifles.
- Ammunition?
- Just one clip. Each.
Go to the kitchen. You take him.
Ask Shlomo if he has any ammunition.
- Right.
So far, we've been too lucky.
Someone is bound to catch on soon.
- Judah, you'd better sound the bugle. Now.
- Still no sergeant Frenzel.
If he shows up at roll-call
we can get him there.
If not... God help us.
Follow me!
Columns of fours. We do it every day.
Line up!
Follow me!
- Are you wearing it?
- Did you think I would not?
It's going to be cold at night.
- Where is Shlomo? Have you seen him?
- He'll be here. He'll be here.

Put the bullets here. You see.

Here. I don't know how to use this.

- Is everything going alright?

- Yes. Everything's fine.

- How long do we stay here?

- Until I blow the whistle for roll-call.

- More than 10 minutes before roll-call.

- I don't think we can wait that long.

Look what's happening.

- We must go.

- Now...? Now!

Come on, line up in fours!

Line up in fours!

Line up!

Everybody in line!

Come on!

Beckmann...?

Beckmann! Hey!

Hello?

Hello!

Everybody in line!

- Scharfhrer Bauer! Niemann

is dead in the shoe shop.

And Fallaster. Both murdered.

- No.

Stop! Stop!

We'll never make it to the front gate now.

Listen to me. Our day has come.

Most of the SS are dead.

It's everyone for himself now.

Those of you who survive, bear witness.

Let the world know what has happened here.

God is with you.

Now let nothing stop you.

Move! Move!

Come on!

Go on! Go on, save yourselves.

You are free.

- The gate is down! Move! Move! Move!

- Come on, Leon!

- Get up! Get up! -

Leon! - Move! Move!

Leon, come on, we must go!

Cover me.

- Shlomo!

- Are you hurt? - No, Shlomo.

Then get out. Take Moses with you,
and I'll find you in the forest.

Go!

No. No, Samuel! Get up! Get up!
Samuel, we're almost at the woods.

Over 300 prisoners escaped safely
to the forest.

Here, Eda and Itzhak Lichtman
found each other.

On the run, they managed to stay alive.

After the war they were
married and emigrated to Israel,

where they still live
in Holon, near Tel Aviv,
close to other Sobibor survivors.

Toivi with 2 other boys was
hidden by a Polish farmer
who eventually shot them for the money.

With a bullet in his jaw,
Toivi pretended to be dead

and managed to stay
alive until liberated.

Thomas "Toivi" Blatt
married and has 3 children.

Today he lives in Santa
Barbara, California.

Yet he returns each year to Sobibor
in remembrance of his family who died there.

Chaim and Selma made it to a small farm
where they were given
shelter until the liberation.

Happily married for more than 40 years,
and the parents of 2 grown children,

Chaim and Selma Engel
now live in Connecticut.

Stanislaw "Shlomo" Szmajzner
joined the partisans and

became an active fighter
against the Nazis in Poland.

There is no record of what happened
to his younger brother Moses.

After the war, Shlomo emigrated to Brazil,

where he married and raised 2 sons.
In South America he
was largely responsible
for the discovery of sergeant
Gustav Wagner in 1978.
Brazilian law did not allow for
sergeant Wagner's extradition,
but a year later he was
found, stabbed to death.
The records list Wagner's death:
suicide.
Captain Franz Reichleitner
was re-assigned to Trieste,
and was killed by partisans less than
Esther Turner managed
to hide from Germans
and hostile Polish nationals
until the Russian liberation.
She moved to the United States
and now lives with her
husband, Irving, in New Jersey.
Esther has testified in many
war-crimes trials in West-Germany.
Including the trial of sergeant Eric Bauer
who died in prison.
Esther and Thomas Blatt testified
at the trial of sergeant Frenzel
who was convicted and is still
alive, serving a life sentence.
Sasha Pechersky and many of his
men made it back to Russian lines
to rejoin the fight against the Nazis.
In 1963 Sasha gave key testimony in a
war-crimes trial against
11 Ukrainian guards at Sobibor.
Today at 77, Sasha is
retired and lives with
his wife Olga on Rostov-on-the-Don
in the Soviet Union.
Luka vanished in the Polish countryside.
All efforts, including Sasha's,
to locate her proved unsuccessful.
The good-luck shirt she gave to Sasha
is now displayed in a Russian museum

honouring those who fought and died
for freedom during World War 2.
Leon Feldhendler fought his
way back to Lublin in Poland
where he remained safe
until the liberation.
There he ran a small business
employing and helping many Jews
who had survived the
camps, including Sobibor.
14 months after the escape, in a
confrontation with a group of Anti-Semites,
Leon was murdered by his
countrymen because he was a Jew.
October the 14th 1943. Sobibor.
A Nazi death camp where over
one quarter of a million Jews were killed.
But in the revolt that day, over 300
of the 600 prisoners made it to freedom.
Something which had never happened before,
and would never happen again in World War 2.
Within days, SS-chief Himmler
ordered the camp closed,
dismantled and planted with pine trees.
In that forest now stands
this monument to the dead.
It is also a reminder
of the valiant fighters of Sobibor
who were among those who began to make
the idea a vow "never again" a reality.

translation: