

REBBETZIN CHANA: Can't you just tell me the verdict regardless?

BORIS: [Takes the paper, looks carefully at it, frowns thoughtfully] Here in the government of Mother Russia, we take our duties very seriously. If the document is not perfectly legible, perhaps we should reconvene with another committee.

REBBETZIN CHANA: [slowly] How long would that take?

ANDREI: Oh, it would just be another 6 months or so. Not to worry. Your husband will be kept under careful watch in our prisons in the meanwhile.

REBBETZIN CHANA: Oh no! Hashem Yishmor! You know what gentlemen? [Pulls some money out of her pocket] Thank you so much for taking time from your busy schedules to meet with me. Let me offer you some compensation for your valuable services.

IVAN: [taking the money] That's not necessary ma'am. We're here to serve. Now, about the verdict. [Takes the paper and reads from it in a monotone]. Levik Zalmanovitch Schneerson is found guilty. He will be exiled to Asia for five years.

REBBETZIN CHANA: [staggering back. Grabs a chair for support] Oy! Hashem! But he has documents proving that he's over 70 years of age and doctor's verification that his health is too unstable to allow such long, tiring journeys and deplorable living conditions!

BORIS: [icily] Deplorable living conditions? Ma'am, you are mistaken if you think Mother Russia would subject one of her citizens to such terms of living.

IVAN: Your husband will even be allowed to retain his citizenship and voting rights.

ANDREI: Yes. All that is necessary to remedy his crime is a mere change in address.

IVAN: He has requested a few items for you to prepare for his journey. Prepare some food as well as he won't eat anything from the prison kitchens.

ANDREI: I recognized some of the items myself. [read from a list in a mocking voice] Tallis, teffilin, siddur. [laughs] But there is one thing I did not recognize. A Tanya. That I have never heard of.

BORIS: You may bring a package tomorrow at 10:00.

REBBETZIN CHANA: Please! Some mercy! He's an old, sickly man! Such a journey will surely kill him!

ANDREI: [sharply] We have told you a number of times that your husband is in excellent health.

IVAN: Bring the package tomorrow. Goodbye.

[lights fade out and REBBETZIN CHANA stands in front of the curtain]

REBBETZIN CHANA: The prosecutor said he's never heard of Tanya. They can tear us apart, they can imprison us, they can exile us. But Tanya, we still have.

## PRISON TRANSPORT DANCE

### Scene 4

[Schneerson house. Half packed suitcase in the back. REBBETZIN CHANA is filling the suitcase with clothing and other odds and ends. Knock on the door and FRAIDA enters]

REBBETZIN CHANA: Fraida! Come in, come in! What brings you here so late at night?

FRAIDA: Rebbetzin! [gives her a hug] We're all so worried about you!

REBBETZIN CHANA: But Fraida, its too dangerous for you to come visit!

FRAIDA: I had to come over to see you, no matter the danger. Even my husband doesn't know I'm here! And I'll be careful how I go back so no one can follow me.

REBBETZIN CHANA: Thank you Fraida. Seeing a friendly face in these trying times is truly a help.

FRAIDA: We've heard rumors... Is it true? Is the Rav really being exiled? To Chi'ile? I've never even heard of such a place!

REBBETZIN CHANA: [sighs heavily] Yes, its true. I've tried appealing the decision but they told me the Rav's already been sent.

FRAIDA: [bursts out crying] Rebbetzin, what will be?

REBBETZIN CHANA: [puts her arm around FRAIDA's shoulder and pats her gently] Fraida, Hashem will help. We must have bitachon and trust that Hashem will help.

FRAIDA: [drying her eyes] How do you do it Rebbetzin? How do you go to them day after day, begging for crumbs of information, pleading and begging for the Rav's life? How do you keep your head held up? Don't you regret all those years? If you had kept a low profile, the Rav wouldn't have been arrested.

REBBETZIN CHANA: [holds FRAIDA's hands] Fraida, if I had to do it all over, I would do the same exact thing.

[Sings The Flame Song. She lights a candle and holds it while she sings. Throughout the song, women come up to her and she lights their candles as well. They all take their places around her as their candles are lit.]

A small light in the dark

Fighting to be free

Fighting for its right to live

Struggling bravely

Enduring the storms

The winds cannot prevail

Each time they try and each time they will fail

The flame needs to live on

The flame must never die

It must reach out to every soul

Unchain, release to fly

Each Jew a wick so pure

Waiting to be alight

Another flame now lights the darkened night

And so

We must guard the flame so precious, keep it glowing

While others try to vanquish it, it must keep going

Without the flame, the warmth, the passion, what would be

It's worth any sacrifice for it to burn proudly

For then

When our heads are forced to bow under the strain

That tiny spark inside helps to endure the pain

It beats within our hearts and tells us we're not alone

We look to it to guide us towards our final journey home

REBBETZIN CHANA: [softly] In these dark, trying times, the only thing we still have left is the flame of Yiddishkeit burning inside us to keep us going. [passionately grabs FRAIDA's hands again] We must never let the flame die out! We must keep it burning at any cost!

FRAIDA: [looking around]. Rebbetzin, I see you are in middle of packing. Are you taking a trip somewhere?

REBBETZIN CHANA: Well, yes. Of sorts.

FRAIDA: Where are you going? [REBBETZIN CHANA doesn't answer, just stares calmly at FRAIDA. Understanding dawns on FRAIDA] No, no Rebbetzin! You can't seriously- Rebbetzin! [looks at her imploringly]

REBBETZIN CHANA: [softly] I must.

FRAIDA: Rebbetzin! You aren't well yourself! Just the journey alone-! Who knows what the train schedule is like? And even once you get there, how will you manage to survive with who-knows what kind of living conditions? Rebbetzin, please reconsider!

REBBETZIN CHANA: [sighs and sits wearily in chair] My husband needs me. It's almost Pesach. I need to be there with him. [speaks as if to herself] Yes, it will be difficult. I've been told about the impossible living conditions and the struggles involved. It will be a treacherous five day journey. There will be no community, no kosher food, no basic necessities. [stands up and clenches fists] But I must do this! My husband needs me and my place is with him. I must! [nods head and turns around confidently to resume packing]

FRAIDA: Well then at least allow me to help you Rebbetzin. [They pack the last few things and close the suitcase. Both stand in front of the stage]. Fur gezunt Rebbetzin. Hatzlacha! [they hug and lights close on their hug]

Scene 5

[Drama Choir. Housewives, little boys and girls]

**Life in Chi'ile**

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Life in Chi'ile's