

SIDES: GRACE

GRACE (female/50s-60s) A fair, kind but firm widowed woman with no living children of her own. After she takes in a Jewish refugee child from Germany, she struggles to find a way to connect with this boy who speaks no English.

Grace has taken the young boy, Peter, to the library. However, instead of looking at books, he stares at a poster of Uncle Sam with a Victory Garden in the background.

GRACE

Well. My my. He's riveted. He's staring at the poster and touches the tomatoes with his palm. I nod and tell him, "It's a garden. See? Tomatoes? Lettuce?" Then I take a step to move, but he doesn't follow me, so I put my hand on his shoulder to turn him to walk, but he won't move. So I hold his arm and pull him a little, but he shakes me off, staring at this picture. So I...I stare at it too.

(pause)

"You like the garden?" He looks up at me.

(pause)

"*Garten,*" he says. "*Mein garten.*"

(pause)

"You have a garden?" I ask him. He now touches the rows of dirt in the poster. "*Mein garten,*" he says.

(pause)

"You had a garden," I say. "In your home. *Garten. Hause.*"

(pause)

He nods. "*Ich will nach hause gehen.*" He puts his cheek to the tomatoes in the corner. "*Mein garten.*"

(pause)

"I can't take you home, Peter. No home. *Nien hause. Nien hause.*"

(pause)

Then I think for a moment.

(pause)

"But do you want a garden? Your own tomatoes and squash and peppers? Yes, garden? *Ja garten?*"

(pause)

And he pulls his cheek away from the poster. And he looks right up at my eyes.

(pause)

"*Ja garten,*" he says.

(pause)

Then the first English words I hear him say:

(pause)

"Yes, garden."

(pause)

We leave the book. I drop it right there by the wall and I grab his hand and I run out of the library faster than I have run anywhere in decades. But I'm smiling, oh, I'm smiling like a teenage girl, and so is he, because we are going to get some seeds and a hoe and a rake and I am

going to give this little Jewish boy who lost his mother and his father and his home and his toys and his garden—I am going to give him the one thing on that list that I can get back for him.