

## *A Lifetime of Love*

Dear Mirele, I can't believe I have one night to fill a lifetime of love into this letter. Tomorrow morning – if 4am can be called morning I am giving you up. I am taking you, Mirele, to the back entrance of dear, brave Herman's grocery store and the child rescuers will be waiting there for you and the thirty two other children under the age of three. They'll inject you with a sedative so you won't cry and then they'll slip off in the predawn with you- my life, my love, out of this barbaric country to safety. We pushed it off, Mirele. We didn't want to believe we would have to give up our child probably never to see here again, but this is the last child rescue. After this there will be none left to rescue, because tomorrow, our informers tell us, is the last round up. Tomorrow they come for men, women and children. And I've been convinced by these words, spoken by our trusted informer, Herman, the brave gentle grocer. "Any child they take away either dies immediately or dies on the way to the death camp." The word death, three times in one sentence! We were the last ones to be convinced to give up our child. He said, finally with the deepest sadness in every exhausted wrinkle in his face "I cannot force you. But if you keep her with you, she will be dead in a month. They will have no use for babies, she cannot work for them. If you want to give her to us, bring her to the back entrance of my grocery store at 4am. No belongings, whatever food you have. Goodbye". Mirele, do you see why I have to give you up?

He said no belongings, but I will beg, I will plead that this letter be allowed to go, sewn into your undershirt. And then, I will pray to G-d that the letter stays with you until you are old enough to read it. You must know why you are alone, without parents. Not because they didn't love you...but because they did. It's eerie to think that by the time you read this, I will probably be dead. That's what Herman says is going on. People either die immediately or on the way or after a week or two of forced labour and no food. But I won't have lived in vain, Mirele, if I know that I have brought you into the world and you will live and survive and grow big and strong and you will be happy. You can be happy, Mirele, because we loved you. What makes a difference in the lives of adults, it seems, is if they had secure childhoods. Secure, with lots of love and acceptance and needs fulfilled and predictable routine and the like. You've had that up to this minute. You'll have it up to 4am, but then you won't. Who knows who will end up taking care of you? Some family who will take you in for the money Herman will pay them? They will surely be

kinder to their own than to you. Here is where the pain mixes with rage! I rage at the animals who are making it possible for you to cry and I won't be there to comfort you. But you will have this letter, and this letter will make you feel secure, if G-d answers my prayers. You have us, Mirele, even though you can't see us, we're with you. We're watching you and praying for you. Every time you have troubles we are pounding on the door to G-d's very throne room, insisting on an audience and demanding mercy for our Mirele down on earth, alone, without her parents. And G-d will listen to us. We won't leave Him alone until He agrees that you deserve health, love and happiness. Mirele, you'll wonder what your first two years were like. You'll wish you could remember. Let me remember for you right now, tenderly, on this piece of paper.

You like hot cereal in the morning, with lots of milk and sugar. Except there is no milk and sugar now, none in this whole city. But I will make your cereal anyway and you eat it with big smiles between every bite. Then you become ready for your nap, so I will rock you, after putting the rocker where the sunlight will fall in it. I rock you until you fall asleep and then I put you in my bed. You sleep well there, you like my smell. What will you smell tomorrow night? Surely nobody will rock you tomorrow, not even in the shade. Oh G-d I cannot do it! But I will do it. For you Mirele, so you will have at least a hope for life. Mirele, do me a favour. After you've grown, after this dirty nightmarish war is over...I know there will be some who underplay the tragedies going on here every day. They will say "A war is a war. It was just a war." Mirele, tell them about this agony! Tell them how you felt secure in my arms rocking to sleep in the sunlight. Tell them how your father ran one night, a year ago, to get you medicine, past sentries, whilst breaking the curfew. He risked his life to ease your pain, Mirele. And now the three of us are being torn apart. "Just a war...?" Tell them, Mirele that all the wars in the world don't add up to the agony in my heart right now as I write this. Oh gosh! It's 2am already. Only two more hours with me, my love, my baby, my Mirele. I'm going to hold you now, Mirele for two hours. Your father and I are going to wake you, feed you and tell you over and over how much we love you. You're barely two years old, but maybe, if G-d is good, maybe, you'll remember it. And maybe you'll keep this letter until you are old enough to read it. There will be bad times for you Mirele, I know. But just think about me holding you, rocking you to sleep in the sunlight. Keep that sunlight in your heart always. I love you. Your father loves you. May G-d help us all. Mama -Both the child and the letter survived.