

A Play
By Walter S. Zapotoczny

The Ceremony

Characters

ROLF
KURT
GUENTHER
THE SPEAKER
FRANZ (Kurt's Father)
MARGARET (Kurt's Mother)

Scene

The boys lined up outside the hall and prepared to march in. The ceremony began with a fanfare, a march in with flags carried by the candidates. The room was decorated with greenery and flowers. The candidates sat at the front of the room while the parents were all seated in the rear. Candles lighted the room, with a sole spot light shining on the speaker. The long shadows made by flags in the candlelight somehow made the room seem supernatural. A swastika was fashioned out of candles behind the podium and the reflections on the ceiling seemed to dance as the candles flickered.

ROLF: *(with authority)*: All right everyone, line up. Unfurl your flags and lets check each other's uniform.

KURT: Come here Guenther, your scarf is crooked.

GUENTHER: Everyone looks sharp!

KURT: Yes we do. Well Guenther, this is what we have been waiting for.

GUENTHER: *(Nervously.)* My stomach has a knot in it.

ROLF *(while walking over to Guenther and Kurt)*: I am nervous too.

KURT: You should be. You have to stand in front of everyone and say the pledge.

ROLF: I have been practicing. *(Confidently.)* I think I'm ready! All right now, here we go.
Ready, march!

The procession makes its way into the hall and the boys and girls place the flags in stands behind the podium. The boys take their seats while The Speaker moves to the Podium.

THE SPEAKER: Germans have always found the transition from fourteen to fifteen an important moment! *(Pause.)* It marks the beginning of a new stage of life. It is true that the young person is not yet fully adult. But the body has completed the greater part of its growth. With this physical growth the young person becomes increasingly able to determine his own life. *(A brief drum roll.) (More dramatically.)* This ceremony marks the point at which boys and girls increasingly become men and women. As you become mature, you must increasingly follow the laws and meet the duties of life. Young people, you stand here on the threshold of your lives. *(A long drum roll.)*

FRANZ: *(Leaning over to whisper to Margaret.)* Look at the boys. Don't they look fine?

MARGARET: Yes they do.

THE SPEAKER: You enter joyfully through the open door. You face your fate courageously, for while fate defeats the cowardly, God helps the brave!

All of the candidates repeat at the same time. God helps the brave! (A brief drum roll.)

THE SPEAKER: We affirm that God gave us all our strength, in order to maintain the life of our people and defend it!

All of the candidates repeat at the same time. This we believe!

THE SPEAKER: It is therefore our holiest duty to fight to our last breath anything that threatens or endangers the life of our people. Their deeds are to us holy obligation!

All of the candidates repeat at the same time. This we pledge! (A brief drum roll.)

THE SPEAKER: You the youth are the bridge from ancestors to grandchildren!

All of the candidates repeat at the same time. We want to be fighters for this Reich named Germany, our home. We will never forget that we are German! That is what we want!

The band plays and all present stand and sing the National Anthem.

GUENTHER: Kurt, I have chills.

KURT: Me too Guenther.

THE SPEAKER: *(Nodding to Rolf.)* Who will speak for the candidates?

Rolf rises from his seat and proceeds to the podium.

ROLF: We affirm that the German people have been created by the will of God. All those who fight for the life of our people, and those who die, carry out the will of God! We want to be free from all selfishness! We want to thank our parents!

All of the candidates repeat at the same time. That is what we want! We want this in the name on Adolph Hitler!

The band plays and all present stand and sing the Hitler Youth Anthem. After the music ends, the boys and girls file out of their seats alternating as they go up on the stage to receive a picture of the Fuhrer and a copy of the book "Remember that you are German." Once the presentations are made and the youth are back in their seats the Speaker goes to the podium.

THE SPEAKER: The pledge has been made. A new group of our people has joined our fighting and creative people's community. We are happy in the confidence this experience gives us in the eternal growth of our people. We conclude this pledge and this ceremony with a greeting to the Fuhrer, Adolf Hitler, Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil! *(Pause.)* Retire the flags!

After the flags left the room the ceremony was over.

KURT: *(Turning to face Guenther.)* Well Guenther, this is what we have been waiting for. We're now Hitler Youth.

GUENTHER: I wonder what will change?

Rolf walks over to Kurt and Guenther.

ROLF: Well, how do you feel?

GUENTHER: I feel strange and proud too.

KURT: I am not sure how I feel. Very proud but wondering what's next. Rolf, you did well in front of everyone. Were you nervous?

ROLF: *(Softly.)* I was scared.

GUENTHER: I couldn't tell.

ROLF: We won't have long to wait to see what's next. The next Hitler Youth meeting is three days from now. I read on the bulletin board that an SS soldier is supposed to be at the meeting.

KURT: I wonder what it will be like?

GUENTHER: I can't wait!

Franz and Margaret approach the boys.

FRANZ: How do you boys feel?
GUENTHER AND ROLF TOGETHER: Wonderful Sir!
KURT: Me too, Papa.
MARGARET (*with slight reservation*): We are very proud of you boys.
THE BOYS TOGETHER: Thank you!

The Speaker approaches the group.

THE SPEAKER (*with confidence*): You should be very proud of these boys. They are now in the service of our Fuhrer Adolph Hitler!
MARGARET (*looking at Franz*): As long as The Hitler Youth doesn't interfere with there studies.
THE SPEAKER: (*looking at Franz and then Margaret*): The information these boys will receive from the Hitler Youth will be the most important lessons they will learn! Do you not trust your children to your Fuhrer?
FRANZ (*looking at Margaret*): Of course we do. My wife just wants children to have a good education.
THE SPEAKER: (*with arrogance*): Then I shall leave you to celebrate this joyous occasion.

The Speaker walks away.

ROLF: Come Guenther. I will walk home with you. Allow Kurt to celebrate with his parents.
Good night Mr. and Mrs. Schultz.
GUENTHER: Good night.
FRANZ: Good night boys!
KURT: I will see you at school tomorrow.

Rolf and Guenther walk away. Franz, Margaret and Kurt leave the hall and begin walking home.

FRANZ: Mother, maybe you should not have said those things to the speaker.
MARGARET: Yes but, they are taking over everything. They are becoming more important then school. I just don't know where this is going to lead.
KURT (*with pride*): But mother, did you not hear the speaker tonight and the pledge we made?
MARGARET: Kurt. (*Pause, looking at Kurt.*) I heard everything that was said tonight. That is what worries me.
FRANZ: Kurt, your mother wants you to get a good education. She worries that the Hitler Youth will interfere with that. (*looking at Margaret.*) Kurt, we are both proud of you and what you have done.
KURT: Thank you father. I am proud too. (*With conviction.*) I am proud that I can better serve Adolf Hitler!

Franz and Margaret look at each other.

CURTAIN

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