

**A Readers' Theater Adaptation of Joan M. Wolf's *Someone Named Eva***

**By Nicki Stohr**

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©*Somone Named Eva* by Joan M. Wolf, Clarion Books, 2007.

**Characters:**

Narrator 1	Milada
Narrator 2	Terezie
Narrator 3	Jaro
Mama	Papa
Babichka	Terezie's Mother
Hana	Ruzha
Zelenka	Karel

**Narrator 2:** This script comes from the novel, *Someone Named Eva* by Joan M. Wolf.

**Narrator 3:** In the spring of 1942, when the soldiers came to our town, my best friend, Terezie, and I had spent every day together, as usual.

**Narrator 1:** It has been warm that May, the kind of warmth that comes only in the late spring, before it gets too hot or sticky humid. Our birthdays were just a month apart, and we would both be turning eleven. We had spent many nights together planning our parties and looking at the stars.

**Milada:** I could gaze at the stars forever, searching for their hidden pictures and watching them glitter like crystals. Papa said that even when I was a baby, I would reach up with both fists and try to grab them from the sky.

**Narrator 2:** Terezie didn't like stars as much as I did, but being my best friend, she usually joined me when I went outside to look at them.

**Milada:** One night, a week before my birthday, we were outside lying next to each other when there was a streak in the sky.

**Terezie:** Ooh, Milada, look! [jabbing Milada excitedly]

**Terezie:** A shooting star.

**Narrator 1:** A shooting could only mean that something wonderful and special would happen soon.

**Milada:** Make a wish.

**Narrator 3:** Milada closed her eyes and thinking about what she should use her own wish for.

**Milada:** I immediately thought of my birthday.

**Terezie:** I know why there's a shooting star, I know what's going to happen.

**Narrator 2:** Terezie said, as if she knew what Milada had been thinking. She had a way of doing that – of always seeming to know Milada thoughts even if she didn't speak them out loud.

**Milada:** [Look over at Terezie and to see the grin on her face.] Is it about my about my birthday?

**Narrator 1:** Terezie's smile widened and she looked away with a giggle, hugging her knees to her chest.

**Milada:** [grab Terezie shoulder] You know, don't you! Terezie, you know what my birthday present is. Is it a real present? Oh, please, you must tell me!

**Terezie:** I am sworn to secrecy. [Her giggle became a big, hearty laugh, one that was loud and musical at the same time.]

**Narrator 3:** That laugh was one of my favorite things about her.

**Narrator 2:** I had known there probably wouldn't be a present for my birthday that May, even though I hoped differently.

**Narrator 1:** My Babichka, my grandmother, might knit a scarf or mittens from yarn that she had saved, but since the Nazis had come to Czechoslovakia three years ago, everything had been scarce. I knew better than to hope for a present that cost money.

**Milada:** Stop teasing, Terezie. Mama said there wasn't even enough sugar for a cake. How could there be a present?

**Terezie:** You'll just have to wait until your birthday party to find out. [Make a motion as if zipping lips together, and refused to say anything more.]

**Narrator 3:** Ever since I could remember, Terezie's family and mine had come together each May to celebrate my birthday and then again each June to celebrate Terezie's.

**Narrator 1:** Even with the war and rations, this year was to be no different. And so on a beautiful Sunday afternoon in the middle of May, everyone from both families gathered in our backyard for my party.

**Narrator 2:** I had even been allowed to invite Zelenka and Hana, two friends from school. But Mama had also made me invite Ruzha. Like Zelenka and Hana, she was in my class, but I did not consider her a friend. She was cold and unfriendly, and she could be so mean that even the boys were afraid of her.

**Milada:** Oh, Mama, no! Please? [begging]

**Narrator 1:** Mama had insisted I invite her.

**Mama:** If you want to invite others, you must include Ruzha. Things have been hard on her since her mother died.

**Milada:** She'll ruin my party!

**Narrator 3:** But Mama had turned away, and I had known there would be no further discussion.

**Narrator 2:** Now, as we all sat together, chatting and enjoying the beautiful day, Ruzha stood off to the side by herself. She wore a dress that she had nearly outgrown, and strands of her blond hair had come out of her barrette, falling into her eyes.

**Narrator 3:** She looked pained, as if she were counting the minutes until she would be dismissed. I sometimes felt that way during lessons, but never at a party. Ruzha seemed to like school, and she was a good student. But she was never the teachers' pet. The teachers, too, seemed to tire of the way she always found fault – with others and with them.

**Mama:** Happy birthday, Milada!

**Narrator 1:** Papa placed a large wrapped package in my lap.

**Milada:** "Oh, Papa, a present!" [Look at Terezie, and she winked.]

**Narrator 2:** Babichka, stood nearby holding my one-year-old sister, Anechka, who gurgled and stuck her fingers in her mouth.

**Narrator 1:** Terezie and her two older brothers crowded close as I began to rip open the package. Suddenly, a hand appeared on top of mine.

**Milada:** [yelled] "Jaro!"

**Narrator 2:** My fifteen-year-old brother, Jarvoslav, was forever pestering me.

**Milada:** "Stop it!"

**Narrator 3:** But when I looked up at him, there was a softness in his eyes.

**Jaro:** Guess what's inside, Milada. You have to guess before you open it. That makes for good luck.

**Narrator 2:** For a moment it was as if I was a little girl again, when he would push me on the swing instead of constantly tormenting me, and I smiled.

**Narrator 3:** Following his directions, I closed my eyes.

**Milada:** I think it's a doll. Like the one I used to sleep with every night.

**Narrator 1:** That doll, affectionately named Mrs. Doll, still sat, ragged and torn, on a shelf in my room, Jaro constantly threatened to throw her in the trash when I wasn't looking.

**Narrator 2:** Jaro let out a deep laugh. Hanna and Zelenka laughed too, and I even saw a smile flicker across Ruzha's face as she watched from a distance.

**Narrator 1:** Then I tore the rest of the paper from the gift, lifted the lid of the box, and sat staring at what lay inside, my mouth open in awe.

**Papa:** Do you like it, Milada?

**Milada:** Oh, Papa. [I could barely speak.]

**Narrator 3:** Inside the box was a telescope. The small dent on one side told me it was a used telescope, but it was the most beautiful thing I had ever seen.

**Papa:** I know you like the stars. Now that you are eleven, I felt you were old enough for the responsibility of your own telescope.

**Milada:** Oh, Papa!

**Narrator 2:** I put the box aside and grabbed his neck in a hug.

**Papa:** [patting Milada's shoulder] I'm so glad you like it. So glad.

**Terezie:** Here, Milada. [Withdraw a small package from dress pocket.] This is for you. Happy birthday.

**Milada:** Oh, Terezie. You weren't supposed to.

**Narrator 1:** Mama had made it very clear that there were to be only family gifts.

**Terezie:** [Glance at Mama, then at Milada.] Well, we're practically sisters.

**Milada:** Thank you.

**Narrator 3:** Unwrapping the package and unfolding what was inside. It was a hand-made movie poster. Terezie had pasted one of her movie-star photos in the middle and drawn decorations around it to make a poster like the ones that hung in the theaters.

**Narrator 2:** The photo was one of her favorites. It was a true gift.

**Terezie:** I made it myself.

**Milada:** [hug Terezie] It's perfect.

**Mama:** [holding up a pan of Milada's favorite berry dessert] Dessert, everyone!

**Milada:** Mama, where did you get the sugar?

**Mama:** Terezie's mother gave me some of her rations.

**Milada:** [Looked at Terezie's mother, who smiled] Thank you.

**Narrator 1:** I looked around at all the people at the party. They had helped make it a special day.

**Milada:** Thank you, everyone.

**Narrator 2:** The partly used candle from Anechka's first birthday had been lit and placed in the middle of the pastry, so it looked a little more like an actual birthday cake, I made a wish, blew out the candle, and watched Mama cut small pieces for everyone.

**Narrator 1:** I took a bite, enjoying the mix of tangy fruit and sweetened dough. As we ate, the adults gathered in a group, and, as usual, their conversation turned to the topic of Hitler.

**Papa:** [to Mama] The dessert is delicious." [to Terezie's mother] It was so generous of you to give us your sugar rations.

**Terezie's Mother:** It's the least I could do. We all have to do what we can while Hitler and his Nazis are here.

**Babichka:** [sharply] Hitler!

**Babichka:** [spit on the ground] He is evil!

**Papa:** [touching Babichka's shoulder] Mother, things will improve. Don't upset yourself.

**Milada:** Let's go by the tree and eat.

**Narrator 1:** I said to my guests. I hated seeing Babishka so upset, and I didn't want to hear about the war or spoil the good feelings of the day.

**Narrator 3:** We settled on the ground under the huge tree in our yard. Even Ruzha joined us. I passed Terezie's movie poster around so everyone could get a closer look.

**Hana:** [sighing] I would like to be a movie actress someday.

**Ruzha:** [with a cutting tone] You're not pretty enough.

**Zelenka:** That's not nice.

**Ruzha:** Well, it's true, and you have to be able to read and memorize lines to be a movie actress.

**Narrator 2:** Hana's face reddened with embarrassment. Everyone knew she had struggled for a long time with learning to read. Zelenka tried to help Hana by changing the subject.

**Zelenka:** I like the flowers in your hair, Milada.

**Narrator 1:** Ruzha rolled her eyes but said nothing more.

**Milada:** [touching small wildflowers woven into braid.] Thank you. Mama and Babichka put them in.

**Narrator 3:** Terezie nodded in agreement, but I saw a look of longing in her eyes. She had always been envious of my straight blond hair. Hers was deep brown and wildly curly and unruly.

**Narrator 2:** Of the two of us, she was the one to worry about her hair and her looks and when she would be old enough to wear make-up. I had never cared much for dressing up or styling my hair, and I had complained loudly when Mama and Babichka had insisted on putting it in a fancy braid for the party.

**Narrator 1:** Our conversation was interrupted by Mama.

**Mama:** Ruzha, your brother is here for you.

**Narrator 3:** I looked up to see Ruzha's brother, Karel, at the edge of our yard. He looked uncomfortable, standing with his hands shoved into his pockets and shuffling from foot to foot.

**Mama:** [handing Karel a slice of dessert] You don't need to leave right away, do you?

**Karel:** [mumbling] Thank you.

**Narrator 2:** He ate quickly, not speaking to Jaro or Terezie's brothers or even to Ruzha. Ruzha seemed even more uncomfortable with Karel there, and she too said nothing as we all sat quietly finishing our dessert.

**Karel:** [gruffly] Ruzha. Come.

**Narrator 1:** Ruzha got up, and without even saying goodbye, they both left. Although I would never have said anything out loud, I was secretly glad she wasn't staying for the rest of the party. She had already been mean to Hana. I didn't want her ruining anything else.

**Narrator 3:** After dessert, everyone, adults and children, divided into two teams to play our annual game of tug-of-war. This, I knew, would be followed by the game of my choice, since it was my birthday.

**Milada:** Tag. I choose tag!

**Terezie:** Well, of course. What other game would it be?

**Narrator 2:** Terezie teased. I was the fastest runner in my class, and I loved any game that involved speed.

**Narrator 3:** We played many rounds of tag until the adults tired and went inside the house. Zelenka, Hana, Terezie, and I kept running around the yard, laughing and giggling as Jaro and Terezie's brothers chased us. Finally, even we grew tired and Mama declared the party over.

**Narrator 1:** Zelenka and Hana left first, followed by Terezie and her family. I helped Mama carry the plated and silverware into the kitchen, but she told me I didn't have to wash them since it was my birthday.

**Narrator 3:** When it began to grow dark, Babichka and I sat together on the front steps. I had pulled my hair out of its braid, and it hung loose and long against my shoulders.

**Narrator 1:** Babichka sat on the step above me, gently brushing my hair as she did sometimes. I loved the feel of her hands and the soothing motion of the brush.

**Narrator 2:** Stars had begun to appear, one by one, in the sky. I looked up, and Babichka followed my gaze.

**Babichka:** Tonight you and your papa should try your new birthday gift and get a closer look at those stars.

**Milada:** Yes.

**Narrator 1:** I could tell it was going to be a clear night, a good night for stargazing, with or without a telescope.

**Narrator 2:** My grandmother was the one who had taught me about stars and constellations, and the stories behind them. She was an expert on stars and known through our village as a gifted storyteller.

**Narrator 3:** We had spent many nights on the porch looking up at the sky together. I hoped to be just like her someday.

**Narrator 2:** I loved that we already shared the same name: I had been named Milada after Babichka, who had been named after her mother.

**Narrator 1:** To find out more about how Milada gets a new name from the League of German Girls then read *Someone Named Eva* by Joan M. Wolf.