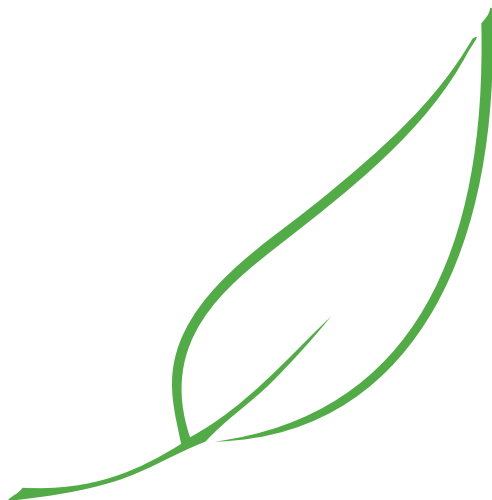


The Legend Of Wenceslas

By Walt Vail



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SYNOPSIS: In Prague, there is a legend that King Wenceslas' sword is hidden under the stones of the Charles Bridge. It is to be found by a child whenever Prague is threatened by enemies. It is Christmas Eve, 1939, and Prague is occupied by Germany. Young Jiri, Franta, and Gustav are living in their family's apartment without their parents. While listening to the story of Wenceslas, Jiri falls asleep and dreams that he is the child to find the sword. In his dream, he is threatened by a German soldier and called to task by King Wenceslas. Bravely, he acts on his dream. With the help of his friend, he retrieves the symbol of Czech identity, saves his sister from the soldier, and reunites with his father. Together, the children and their father do their part to free Prague and restore the Czech nation to independence.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(4 females, 3 males)

JIRI (m)..... A boy, age 12, a bit shy, but bright and adventurous.

FRANTA (f)..... his Sister, age 13, mature and practical for her age.

KING WENCESLAS (m)..... a ghost, bearded, in a long overcoat. Also plays EMIL CERTOVKA.

PRIVATE WOLFGANG FINKZE (m)..... a German Soldier. (He is very dark and threatening in Jiri's dream sequences, but pretty much a bumbler as himself.) He tries to be very stuffy, official and superior, but lacks smarts.

KARELA (f) a Young Girl, age 12, spirited, bright and mischievous, and admires Jiri.

GUSTAV (m)..... Jiri's Teen Brother, age 14,
self-assured, somewhat critical
and sarcastic at times.
ANGELA (f) an American girl, age 13, who
represents the audience.

PROPS

There are two swords of Wenceslas, and they look exactly alike. But one is a single piece “dummy” that can't be drawn from its scabbard, and the other is “practical” and can be drawn. In act one, the “dummy” is handed by JIRI to ANGELA in the audience, who takes it out the back of the house and around to backstage. It will be used again in act two when GUSTAV brings it onstage as the “replica.” In act two, when JIRI calls for the sword in the audience, ANGELA gives him the “practical” sword, which is drawn onstage by EMIL.

Also needed are Christmas packages, scarf, chocolate, cap, wallet, etc.

COSTUMES

German Soldier's Uniform.

Emil Certovka is the same actor who plays King Wenceslas in the dream scenes. He has the same beard, and wears the same long overcoat. The overcoat suggests a King's robe, but is shabby.

Jiri, Franta, Karela and Gustav are dressed as Europeans dressed in the forties.

Angela is dressed as an American of the same period.

TIME & PLACE

The play takes place in the apartment of Jiri, Franta, and Gustav, and at the entrance of Charles Bridge, in Prague. The single set is the interior of the apartment at stage level, with an upper level background to represent the entrance to Charles Bridge, which leads to the bridge offstage. The time is Christmas Eve, 1939.

PRODUCTION NOTES

In The Legend of Wenceslas, young characters are told by the German soldier to speak only German, not Czech. This was the case historically during WWII, since Germans believed that the "Sudetenland" was part of Germany. The idea of speaking in German should be suggested by a slow, deliberate delivery in English, as if the character is struggling to use an unfamiliar language. Alternatively, if the young actors can handle a German accent, they could do the few lines with an accent.

Use of the American girl in the audience is meant to keep audience response in control.

ACT ONE

AT RISE: *(Christmas Eve, 1939. An apartment in Prague. Upstage, the entrance to Charles' Bridge. Outside it is snowing, and Prague's statues and sculptures are wearing white coats. Inside, JIRI has fallen asleep in his chair while listening to his sister FRANTA read.)*

FRANTA: **(Reading)** . . . and the sword of King Wenceslas will be found on Charles' Bridge by a child of Prague, and when King Wenceslas returns again to destroy Prague's enemies, a child will give him his sword, and the bells of Prague will speak out---St. Nicholas, St. Thomas, and St. Vitus will join in, and then Tyn Church, St. James, and the Monastery, pealing out the Hymn of Eternal Prague. And the beauty of Czech speech will cross great waters, singing like the bells of freedom. **(FRANTA looks up from her book and sees JIRI sleeping.)** Well, look at you, Jiri. Sound asleep. So that's what you think of the Legend of King Wenceslas? Well, never mind. It's so cold in here! **(Covers him with his coat)** Stay warm, little brother. I'll wake you to go to St. Vitus for the evening mass.

(A church bell is heard tolling seven strokes. FRANTA now reads silently, nodding a bit herself. FRANTA falls asleep. JIRI moves restlessly, as if dreaming. The light fades to a dreamlike mood. Enter the ghostly figure of KING WENCESLAS. In the shadows, another ghostly figure lurks - a German soldier.)

WENCESLAS: Jiri! Jiri! You must speak! Speak, Jiri!

JIRI: **(asleep)** What? Speak? Why?

WENCESLAS: Speak, to hide the sword. The stones will not.

JIRI: **(sits up, sleepily)** What stones? Who are you?

WENCESLAS: I am King Wenceslas, and you, Jiri, are a child of Prague. You must help me.

JIRI: Help you? How?

WENCESLAS: My enemies have weakened me. I need time to heal

my wounds.

JIRI: Shall I get a doctor?

WENCESLAS: No, Jiri. My sword is out of the stones, and the enemy will find it. You must get my sword and hide it until I am strong again. Run to Charles' Bridge, and find my sword.

JIRI: Where? It's a long bridge!

WENCESLAS: You'll find it by the statue of Bruncvik. A dry patch, with no snow.

JIRI: Bruncvik, the statue with the wide nose?

WENCESLAS: Yes, Bruncvik. At his feet, the stones are turned over, and my sword is there . . . hurry . . . hurry

(WENCESLAS begins to fade into the shadows.)

JIRI: Wait, where shall I hide your sword? Wait!

(As WENCESLAS fades out of sight, the GERMAN SOLDIER appears opposite, still in JIRI'S dream.)

SOLDIER: Achtung! Arbeit! Schnell, schnell!

JIRI: Wait! What shall I . . .

SOLDIER: You dare to speak Czech? Czech Pig! You are liberated, you are German! You speak only German now!

JIRI: I didn't mean to . . .

SOLDIER: I will punish you!

(The GERMAN SOLDIER reaches for a weapon, then freezes and fades into the shadows as JIRI wakes up screaming.)

JIRI: ***(Starts up, awake)*** No! I won't speak! I won't!

(FRANTA wakes up.)

FRANTA: Jiri! What's the matter? What's wrong?

JIRI: He's going to punish me! The German Soldier!

FRANTA: There's no one here. You were dreaming.

JIRI: King Wenceslas said speak, because the stones would not hide his sword. And the Soldier tried to punish me for speaking

Czech.

FRANTA: You were dreaming about the story I was reading, "The Legend of King Wenceslas." Look, it's after seven. Get your coat, we have to go to St. Vitus Cathedral for Christmas Mass.

JIRI: No, I have to go to Charles' Bridge, right now!

FRANTA: You can't. There are German patrols out there.

JIRI: Why do they want us to speak German, and not Czech?

FRANTA: Our language, everything is banned to make us forget that we are Czech. By next year they may ban Christmas mass. But tonight at St. Vitus, we'll pray and sing over the tombs of our Kings and remember who we are, and the beauty and history of our country. Put on your coat!

JIRI: But why did King Wenceslas say I must speak?

FRANTA: You were dreaming!

JIRI: I don't like to speak in public. Not to a lot of people. No one listens to me, anyway.

FRANTA: **(teasing)** Yes, we know how shy you are.

JIRI: I don't like to get up in front of the class at school. My throat tightens up and I can't get the words out. And now, we have to speak to the class in German. I choke on German.

FRANTA: We all do. Get over your shyness. Stand right up there and speak! What if someday you are president and have to speak to the whole country?

JIRI: I don't want to be president! How would I speak to the whole country, all at once?

FRANTA: On the radio!

(Enter KARELA, dressed for the cold, snowy night)

Here's Karela. I'll go wake up our big brother. ***(exit FRANTA)***

KARELA: Mama told me to go to mass with you and Franta.

JIRI: Listen, Karela. We have more important things to do than to go to mass.

KARELA: We do? Great! We'll climb the bridge tower and drop a rock on a German!

JIRI: We don't drop rocks on Christmas evening. The sword of King Wenceslas is lost, and we must find it before the Germans find it.

KARELA: There really is a sword of Wenceslas . . . ?

JIRI: Yes! Would people write stories about a sword if it wasn't real?

KARELA: I guess not.

JIRI: Are you a child of Prague, or aren't you?

KARELA: Mama says I was born in Prague. She tells me everything, she never shuts up.

JIRI: Then you must help me. When Gustav and Franta turn the corner at Jubarka Street, we'll stay behind, and make a run for Charles' Bridge.

KARELA: Great idea! But Mama will kill me if I don't go to mass.

JIRI: We'll go to mass afterwards. It lasts practically forever.

KARELA: Great idea! You're a boy of great ideas, Jiri.

JIRI: Shhh!

(Enter FRANTA and GUSTAV, GUSTAV stretches sleepily.)

GUSTAV: What are you two up to now?

JIRI: Nothing.

GUSTAV: Uh-oh. The great denial---nothing! Confess, we heard you whispering.

KARELA: We're just going to----***(JIRI pinches KARELA)***--Ouch!

GUSTAV: Going to--ouch what?

KARELA: Going to pray for King Wenceslas at mass.

GUSTAV: Pray for . . . ? He's been dead for five hundred years!

FRANTA: Get your coat on. We'll be late! Come on!

GUSTAV: Pray for Wenceslas! You little kids are so dumb.

JIRI: Maybe we learn from our big brothers.

GUSTAV: Watch your mouth.

FRANTA: We're leaving! Jiri and Karela, you first!

JIRI: No, you first. We don't know the way.

FRANTA: Yes, you do. Come on, then.

(GUSTAV puts on his coat, and FRANTA and GUSTAV head out.)

JIRI: ***(whispering)*** Remember. Jubarka Street.

KARELA: I remember.

(JIRI and KARELA follow them out. Lights crossfade to upstage, the entrance to Charles' Bridge. Enter JIRI and KARELA, out of

breath from running.)

JIRI: We made it. They won't know we're missing until they get to church.

KARELA: Your big brother Gustav isn't so smart, is he?

JIRI: Not very. But don't let him punch you. He'll knock you for a loop and a half.

KARELA: He'll miss me, I'm too close to the ground.

JIRI: Be quiet. The Germans keep guards on Charles' Bridge. Look. ***(points offstage)*** There's Bruncvik, with the wide nose.

KARELA: ***(laughing)*** Look, his nose is piled high with snow, all the way up to his forehead!

JIRI: Stop giggling! Look for the sword. King Wenceslas said it would be at the feet of Bruncvik.

KARELA: All I see is snow.

JIRI: We'll have to go out on the bridge and look.

KARELA: You go, I'll keep watch.

JIRI: Okay, here goes.

(JIRI creeps forward, offstage. The sound of whistling is heard, the German soldier, whistling "Deutschland Uber Alles.")

KARELA: Oh-oh. It's the guard. Jiri! Come back! Jiri!

(Enter Private Wolfgang FINKZE, the German soldier)

FINKZE: Ach, *Kinder*. What are you doing on Charles' Bridge?

KARELA: Playing in the snow.

FINKZE: You are speaking Czech. Say that in German!

KARELA: ***(speaks slowly, to indicate German)*** Playing- in- der- snow.

FINKZE: Ah, good! Your accent is very bad, but at least you know the words. You speak German from now on. You've been liberated, you are German once more, as you were in the beginning of your history. Are you grateful?

KARELA: ***(meaning the opposite)*** As- grateful- as- I-can- be.

FINKZE: Yes, well, I wonder how grateful that is. We're not stupid, you know.

KARELA: ***(brightly)*** I- didn't- know- dat.

FINKZE: You little Czech monster. You're breaking curfew. If it wasn't Christmas, I'd send you to prison camp.

KARELA: But- it- is- Christmas.

FINKZE: Thank your lucky stars for that. Well, I was a child once, I played in the snow. I understand *kinder* very well. I have a child of my own, little Wolfgang, Junior. Now get on your way, or I'll punish you. **(Enter JIRI, who is hiding something under his coat.)** What's this, another one?

KARELA: My friend Jiri. He's shy. He doesn't speak Czech or German, do you Jiri?

FINKZE: Cat got his tongue?

KARELA: No, he tried to say "Rumplestiltskin," and his tongue got all twisted.

FINKZE: You take me for a fool, do you? Speak, Jiri, or I will punish you!

JIRI: Don't pay attention to Karela. She's . . . **(slowly)** I- for-got.

FINKZE: That's better. What are you hiding under your coat?

JIRI: Nothing!

FINKZE: Give me that! **(FINKZE reaches under JIRI's coat, pulls out an old sword in a scabbard.)** What's this? You little thief! What, are you going to attack me with a museum-piece? What do you want me to do, die of rust-poisoning? Now I *am* going to take you in!

KARELA: Not on Christmas!

FINKZE: Yes, on Christmas!

JIRI: It's just an old sword. I found it, I wasn't going to . . .

FINKZE: Schnell! March!

JIRI: **(Gestures to KARELA with a head movement)** Karela . . .

KARELA: Right! **(KARELA quickly kneels behind FINKZE'S legs. JIRI rushes at FINKZE, shoves him over KARELA.)**

FINKZE: What . . . oops! **(FINKZE falls over backwards, drops the sword. JIRI picks it up.)**

JIRI: Run! **(JIRI and KARELA run out, leaving FINKZE on the ground.)**

FINKZE: Come back, you little Czech brats!! I will punish you!!

(Lights crossfade to JIRI'S apartment. ENTER JIRI and KARELA, out of breath. JIRI puts the sword on a table.)

JIRI: The sword of King Wenceslas! Isn't it beautiful?

KARELA: Well . . . it's old and dirty.

JIRI: It's been under the stones of Charles' Bridge, and before that it was in many battles. I'll bet once there were rubies and emeralds in the handle.

KARELA: Do you think so?

JIRI: They'll be there again, when King Wenceslas comes for his sword.

KARELA: Gustav said King Wenceslas is dead . . .

JIRI: He's not. No one can kill him.

KARELA: But he could die of old age. Five hundred years . . . that's old.

JIRI: Enemies have taken our country, and that means King Wenceslas will live to defend us. We hide his sword until he comes for it.

KARELA: That's an old Czech story. Pull the sword out of its scabbard, Jiri. You can do it.

JIRI: No one can pull it out, except the king. Try it, you'll see.

KARELA: Okay, here goes! **(KARELA pulls on the sword, as JIRI holds the scabbard. The sword won't budge.)** It's really stuck. Rusted.

JIRI: Not rusted. Only King Wenceslas . . .

KARELA: I'll bet a kopek that Gustav can pull it out.

JIRI: Gustav won't see it, because we'll hide it. And keep our mouths shut about where it is.

KARELA: Oh, a secret.

JIRI: For our freedom, Karela, swear never to tell where we hide the sword.

KARELA: Don't be so serious, Jiri. We can't be sure this old thing is really . . .

JIRI: We are sure! It was on the bridge, as the King told me. Be serious!

KARELA: If you feel so strongly . . .

JIRI: Don't you want the Germans to go back to Germany? Don't you want Prague to be free?

KARELA: Oh, yes, I do, Jiri, I do. With all my heart.

JIRI: Then believe in this sword! Keep our secret!

KARELA: Yes, Jiri. I swear I'll keep the secret. Where can we hide the sword?

JIRI: I'll keep it in my bed, I'll sleep with it.

KARELA: Doesn't Franta make up the beds?

JIRI: I'll make up my own bed.

KARELA: She'll be shocked.

JIRI: I'll tell her I've made a New Year's resolution, to make my own bed.

KARELA: How about a hiding place in a wall, or a loose floorboard . . .

(Enter GUSTAV and FRANTA.)

FRANTA: So! Here you are. What are you two up to? Do you realize you've ruined Christmas Mass for us? We've been looking all over Prague for you! ***(JIRI hides the sword behind him.)*** What are you hiding?

GUSTAV: You little poodle. I told you not to worry, Franta. The poodle is always up to mischief.

FRANTA: What is it? Show it to me!

JIRI: It's nothing. My name isn't poodle!

GUSTAV: Nothing again, always nothing that turns out to be something. Come on, we know what it is. We have it from the mouth of an angry German soldier!

FRANTA: You almost got us punished! We went looking for you on Charles' bridge.

GUSTAV: "Have you seen two lost children," we asked. "A boy and a girl?" "Oh, yes, I've seen them," he said, "When I see them again, I'm going to punish them! Where do they live?"

JIRI: You didn't tell him, did you?

FRANTA: We had to run for our lives! He says you have his sword, and he wants it back.

JIRI: No! It's the sword of King Wenceslas! Give it to the Germans? No!

GUSTAV: Give me that! ***(GUSTAV wrestles the sword away from JIRI.)***

JIRI: No! Please, Gustav! Please, I have to hide it! I'm a child of Prague!

GUSTAV: So am I! Look at this old thing. An old piece of junk, a

fake, a replica. My friend Pavel has one like it, hanging on the wall of his father's restaurant.

FRANTA: Wait, Gustav. It looks real to me.

JIRI: It's the real sword! Please don't give it to the Germans!

GUSTAV: I'll sell it on the black market. I'll get ten kopeks and buy a loaf of bread.

KARELA: I'll give you a loaf of bread for it.

GUSTAV: And what will you do with it?

KARELA: I'll give it back to Jiri. To hold for the king.

FRANTA: You believe in King Wenceslas, too?

KARELA: I believe in Jiri. If he says it's the sword of King Wenceslas, that's good enough for me.

JIRI: It is the sword . . .

GUSTAV: Shut up, poodle.

JIRI: I won't shut up. King Wenceslas said, "Speak!" It's the Germans who want to shut me up, so you must be one of them!

GUSTAV: Call me a German, will you? **(raises his hand threateningly)**

FRANTA: Gustav, don't dare hit your little brother.

GUSTAV: He called me a German!

JIRI: Okay, you're not a German. You're a . . .

FRANTA: Jiri, enough! Give the sword back to Jiri, Gustav. It's very old, and it looks very real to me. There must be a reason why the Germans want it.

GUSTAV: Wait, let me try this. **(GUSTAV attempts to pull the sword out of its scabbard.)** Rusted solid in there! King Wenceslas'll have a hard time killing enemies with this!

JIRI: He'll pull it right out, and it'll shine in the sunlight, and blind his enemies. See, Karela? Gustav couldn't pull it out. You owe me a kopek.

KARELA: You didn't take the bet.

FRANTA: Take the sword, Jiri, and hide it. We must keep our Czech treasures.

GUSTAV: Here's your rusty sword, poodle. You, Karela, you give me that loaf of bread anyway.

FRANTA: Keep your bread, Karela.

KARELA: Gustav can have it . . . It's three days old, and very stale. He'll break a tooth on it.

FRANTA: One day we'll show the sword to Papa, and he'll know if it's the real thing.

JIRI: King Wenceslas will use it . . . to get Papa out of prison.

FRANTA: You miss Papa very much, don't you? You see why he misbehaves a little, Gustav? He's only twelve years old, and he misses his Papa.

GUSTAV: We all miss him . . . we have to be strong until he comes back.

KARELA: Why did they put your Papa in prison? My Mama said, "Because he was foolish." Is that true?

FRANTA: Because he's the editor of *Praha*, and he writes stories about freedom, and about speaking Czech. The Germans couldn't shut him up, so they took him away in the middle of the night. Our Papa is not foolish, he's brave. Jiri, do you remember the last thing Papa told us, before he was gone?

JIRI: Stay together and listen to you, Franta. Because you have more sense than Gustav.

GUSTAV: He didn't say that. I'm the oldest, and I'm in charge. She's only thirteen, I'm fourteen.

FRANTA: I'm the woman of the house, until Mama comes home.

GUSTAV: Okay, who cares? But I work and bring home the bacon, so treat me nice . . . or I'll quit my job at the grocery store, and you'll all go hungry.

FRANTA: You mustn't worry about Papa, Jiri.

JIRI: Maybe they're beating him up, or starving him, or maybe he won't come back, because . . .

FRANTA: The sword of King Wenceslas shows that Papa will come back.

JIRI: Is that why I was picked to hide it?

FRANTA: Yes, because you are a child of Prague.

JIRI: See, Gustav? I *am* a child of Prague.

GUSTAV: We can all be sure about the child part.

FRANTA: Gustav misses Papa, too. He just likes to pretend to be a man.

GUSTAV: Who's pretending? I am a man.

FRANTA: Then stop teasing your little brother. A man is not a big tease.

GUSTAV: Ah, you talk too much.

KARELA: Why doesn't your Mama come home? My Mama says she's getting rich in America.

FRANTA: She was visiting relatives when the Germans invaded us. The authorities won't let her back into Prague. She writes to us, and sends us things, but the Germans take her letters and packages and keep them.

KARELA: What a bunch of crooks.

GUSTAV: They're worse than crooks. We had a letter from Mama last month, but I won't tell you how it got past them. You'd tell your Mama.

KARELA: I don't tell her everything. But she's going to kill me when she finds out I didn't go to Mass.

JIRI: Don't tell her.

KARELA: She'll know. She knows everything, even though she's got a broken foot.

GUSTAV: Don't tell me . . . she got her foot stuck in her mouth!!

JIRI: You can't tell her about the sword. You all have to keep the sword secret!

FRANTA: We will, Jiri. Don't worry.

JIRI: You, too, Gustav?

GUSTAV: Your little secret is locked in my brain, poodle.

JIRI: Don't let it rattle when you shake your head.

KARELA: Where will you hide the sword, Jiri?

JIRI: In my bed.

FRANTA: Here, put it under the cushion of this chair.

JIRI: I'm not so sure. . .

FRANTA: In the chair. There's no other place.

JIRI: Okay, but I sleep in the chair tonight.

FRANTA: Suit yourself. You'll be in your bed soon enough, when you get uncomfortable.

(JIRI hides the sword under the chair cushion.)

KARELA: It's late. I'll go home and let Mama get her yell out.

JIRI: Stuff cotton in your ears.

KARELA: I'll see you tomorrow. Good dreams, everyone.

JIRI: Thanks, Karela. You did a great job on that German!

KARELA: All in a day's work!

(Exit KARELA.)

FRANTA: Time for us to turn in. Christmas day tomorrow. Mama probably sent us gifts, but the Germans will be enjoying them, not us. But we can remember all the Christmases we had before, when Mama and Papa were with us, and everything was wonderful. Tomorrow Prague will be covered in snow, and the city will look magical. And we'll have a good Christmas dinner, with the ham and cabbage that Gustav brought home from the store. We're not starving, and we have hope, and Jiri has the sword of King Wenceslas. We can't ask for much more.

GUSTAV: Good night. Have a good nightmare, poodle.

(Exit GUSTAV.)

FRANTA: No, have a good dream, little brother. And if King Wenceslas comes, tell him I believe in him, too. Goodnight.

(Exit FRANTA. JIRI settles down in the chair, pulls a blanket over himself. The lights dim, and JIRI sleeps.)

After a moment, Enter WENCESLAS.)

WENCESLAS: Good work, Jiri. I knew I could depend on you. But there is danger, much danger ahead. I haven't the strength to come for awhile, I'm sorry to say. You must guard the sword, don't let it get into German hands, or all is lost, and Prague will be enslaved for a hundred years.

JIRI: A hundred years? That's a long, long time. I can't be a child of Prague for a hundred years.

WENCESLAS: No, you'll grow up and be a man, but there will always be the children of Prague. They'll be your children, and your grandchildren, and their children, and their grandchildren, until the end of all civilization. Children are the hope of Prague.

JIRI: Must we be under Germans for all that time? Won't Papa ever get out of prison? Won't I ever see him again?

WENCESLAS: Even under Germans, we'll always be free people. Germans won't be the end of trouble. There'll be others, from the

East, who'll covet Prague. But we'll endure, we'll prevail, because we know what freedom is, we love it, we cherish it, and we remember it. As for your Papa, he is strong, he is a speaker of truth. Keep him in your heart.

JIRI: I do. Always.

WENCESLAS: Good. Now, listen. If the Germans come for the sword... and they are seeking it . . . you must ask the help of all the children of Prague, and they will all help you to keep it hidden. Because all the children of the entire world are also the children of Prague, because all of them love freedom. All of them, every child you see, anywhere you look. They'll help you hide the sword . . . until I come for it, until I come for it.

JIRI: All of them? Every child, everywhere in the world? All of them are children of Prague?

WENCESLAS: Yes, all of them, even the ones who have never been in Prague, even the ones who are not sure where Prague is located, all of them are children of Prague, because they love freedom.

JIRI: I'll remember. I'll ask for their help, if I need it. But I don't like speaking to the whole world.

WENCESLAS: You'll do it if you must, Jiri. You'll be brave like your Papa, and you'll speak. Now, sleep well, little friend. Sleep well.

(Exit WENCESLAS. Opposite, the German soldier appears. This is Private Wolfgang FINKZE, in his dream character.)

SOLDIER: So, here you are, little Czech pig, sleeping like you've done nothing. Thought I couldn't find you, eh? But here I am.

JIRI: Go away, leave me alone. I'm dreaming.

SOLDIER: Yes, I am your worst nightmare, but in the morning, you'll hear a loud knock on your apartment door, and guess who it'll be?

JIRI: You don't know where I live. Gustav didn't tell you.

SOLDIER: I don't need him to tell me. We Germans have a long list of everyone in Prague, in alphabetical order. All I needed to find you was your name, and I know your name.

JIRI: You don't know my name!

SOLDIER: Yes, I do, because, on Charles' Bridge, Karela called you

Jiri, and you called Karela, Karela. You are so stupid, you Czechs, so stupid . . . and so trusting. So I looked down my list, and there you were, in your apartment on Soukenika Street. I'll knock on your door in the morning.

JIRI: No, you won't. This is a dream, and you don't know anything, and you can't find me.

SOLDIER: I know what you're hiding, and where you are hiding it. The sword of King Wenceslas, under the cushion of the chair in which you sleep.

JIRI: There is no sword.

SOLDIER: So, now you add lying to your crimes, eh? I had the sword in my hand, little fool. How do you think it got by the statue of Bruncvik? Put there by a five hundred year old King? Of course not! I wish I had you on that bridge again right now. Do you know what I would do?

JIRI: No.

SOLDIER: I would throw you and the sword into the swift, dark waters of the Vltava River. And then let King Wenceslas come looking for his sword! He'll have to go swimming for it, and deep in the river, he'll find a dead Jiri, staring at him with liquid eyes!

JIRI: You can't drown me! I'm a good swimmer, and I swim in the Vltava!

SOLDIER: Not in December weather, you don't. You freeze up, and drown in December weather. I've half a mind to throw you in the river right now.

JIRI: You can't. You're only a nightmare!

SOLDIER: In the morning, I'm real. Then, I'll throw you in the river. But I'll keep the sword of King Wenceslas, and when he comes looking for it, I'll use it on him!

JIRI: Impossible!

SOLDIER: Why impossible?

JIRI: Only King Wenceslas can draw his sword from its scabbard! No one else!

SOLDIER: That's an old King's tale. You believe that? You're as stupid as your Papa, and you belong in prison with him.

JIRI: You know where my Papa is? Tell me!

SOLDIER: That's a secret.

JIRI: Is my Papa alive? Are they beating him, because he won't

speak German? Tell me!

SOLDIER: Your Papa is none of your business now. He's my business. Forget your Papa.

JIRI: I'll never forget my Papa! I think of him always!

SOLDIER: Don't waste your time. Think of your Mama, in America.

JIRI: I think of her, too.

SOLDIER: Good. Next time Franta writes to her, say thank you for the box of chocolates she sent for Christmas. I enjoyed them very much!

JIRI: You ate my Christmas chocolates? You rat! You should be ashamed, stealing chocolates from children, and on Christmas!

SOLDIER: Oh, they were delicious! Oh yes, and she sent this woolen scarf that I'm wearing. It keeps my neck nice and warm. She knitted it with her own hands.

JIRI: I never wear scarves! What else did she send?

SOLDIER: Guess!

JIRI: Something for Gustav and for Franta?

SOLDIER: Yes!

JIRI: What? Tell me!

SOLDIER: A cashmere sweater in daylight blue for Franta. I gave it to *mein frau*. It looks good on her!

JIRI: You thief!!

SOLDIER: For Gustav, your Mama sent money. I'm going to use it for my vacation trip to Bavaria. I think it was intended to buy food, but I'm sure Gustav won't mind going hungry.

JIRI: You crook! King Wenceslas will get you!

SOLDIER: Not when I have his sword! I'll be around for it in the morning. Pleasant dreams, little Czech pig!

JIRI: Drop dead!

SOLDIER: Drop dead? Oh, that reminds me. You really can forget about your Papa. He died of starvation in the prison camp.

JIRI: He did not! No, he's alive! My Papa is not dead! (*Exit SOLDIER, laughing.*) My Papa is not dead!!

(JIRI turns restlessly in his sleep, mumbling, "My Papa is not dead," over and over until HE finally relaxes. Then the lights slowly come up to daylight. Silence for a moment, and then a terrific knocking is heard on the apartment door. JIRI starts up,

awake. GUSTAV and FRANTA run in, in their sleeping clothes.)

FRANTA: Someone knocking to wake the dead on Christmas morning?

GUSTAV: It's not Santa Claus.

FRANTA: Look out the peephole, see who it is.

JIRI: It's the German Soldier!

GUSTAV: **(Looking)** Jiri's right. It's the Soldier, in his uniform.

JIRI: He wants the sword!

GUSTAV: He won't find it.

JIRI: He knows where it is. We have to hide it somewhere else!

FRANTA: Just leave it alone, don't panic.

JIRI: We have to hide it!

GUSTAV: Just leave it where it is.

(The knocking grows louder.)

FRANTA: He's going to knock down the door!

JIRI: Hide it, hide it! Where? What did King Wenceslas say?

(The voice of WENCESLAS is heard, in a loud whisper.)

WENCESLAS: **(a voice)** Speak, Jiri, speak . . . Speak to the children.
They are all children of Prague!!

JIRI: Yes, that's it! The children! I must speak! **(JIRI goes to the edge of the stage and looks at the audience.)** I can't!! There's too many of them!! You do it, Franta!!

FRANTA: Look them in the eye and speak bravely!! Hurry!!

JIRI: All right, I'll try, I'll try!! All of you children out there, all of you . . . do you believe in freedom? Are you all children of Prague? Tell me!

(ANGELA rises from her aisle seat in the audience and comes forward.)

ANGELA: We're all children of Prague. We all believe in freedom.

JIRI: Who are you?

ANGELA: I'm Angela, an American child, and I speak for all of us out



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