

SVETLANA adapted from

A GULAG MOUSE

by Arthur M. Jolly

Drama

Woman (adult)

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Svetlana, a russian prisoner in a Siberian gulag is talking to a young woman (Anastasia) who has returned from what Svetlana believes to be a sexual encounter with a guard.

SVETLANA

There is no shame in this place. The walls, and the dogs, and the guards... there is no shame here.

It is only survival. You do what you have to. Lubov, tell Anastasia. You have been to the guard house - you know these things, tell her. Speak words of comfort.

(beat)

She has no words to give you only because she too must find a way to survive. That is why all of us are here. But if she could talk, she would tell you... what? That the skin can grow so tough that nothing penetrates - not the groping of men's hands or the sting of their whips? Or that there are places men cannot touch - places where you can remain inviolate, so deep inside they would have to dig in hell -- behind fences and guards and dogs, behind a thousand *kalanchás*¹, across eighty seven miles of frozen tundra, and that there you can stay, for years? Are these the words she is looking for? What would she say to you, if she could cry out from inside such a deep place? Maybe... that she is sorry.

END OF MONOLOGUE.

¹ *kalanchás* - watchtowers.