

**SEVEN
JEWISH
CHILDREN**

a play for Gaza

Caryl Churchill

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**ROYAL
COURT**

No children appear in the play. The speakers are adults, the parents and if you like other relations of the children. The lines can be shared out in any way you like among those characters. The characters are different in each small scene as the time and child are different. They may be played by any number of actors.

1

Tell her it's a game
Tell her it's serious
But don't frighten her
Don't tell her they'll kill her
Tell her it's important to be quiet
Tell her she'll have cake if she's good
Tell her to curl up as if she's in bed
But not to sing.
Tell her not to come out
Tell her not to come out even if she hears shouting
Don't frighten her
Tell her not to come out even if she hears nothing for a long time
Tell her we'll come and find her
Tell her we'll be here all the time.
Tell her something about the men
Tell her they're bad in the game
Tell her it's a story
Tell her they'll go away
Tell her she can make them go away if she keeps still
By magic
But not to sing.

2

Tell her this is a photograph of her grandmother, her uncles and me
Tell her her uncles died
Don't tell her they were killed

Tell her they were killed
Don't frighten her.
Tell her her grandmother was clever
Don't tell her what they did
Tell her she was brave
Tell her she taught me how to make cakes
Don't tell her what they did
Tell her something
Tell her more when she's older.
Tell her there were people who hated Jews
Don't tell her
Tell her it's over now
Tell her there are still people who hate Jews
Tell her there are people who love Jews
Don't tell her to think Jews or not Jews
Tell her more when she's older
Tell her how many when she's older
Tell her it was before she was born and she's not in danger
Don't tell her there's any question of danger.
Tell her we love her
Tell her dead or alive her family all love her
Tell her her grandmother would be proud of her.

3

Don't tell her we're going for ever
Tell her she can write to her friends, tell her her friends can maybe
come and visit
Tell her it's sunny there
Tell her we're going home
Tell her it's the land God gave us
Don't tell her religion
Tell her her great great great great lots of greats grandad lived
there

Don't tell her he was driven out
Tell her, of course tell her, tell her everyone was driven out and
the country is waiting for us to come home
Don't tell her she doesn't belong here
Tell her of course she likes it here but she'll like it there even
more.
Tell her it's an adventure
Tell her no one will tease her
Tell her she'll have new friends
Tell her she can take her toys
Don't tell her she can take all her toys
Tell her she's a special girl
Tell her about Jerusalem.

4

Don't tell her who they are
Tell her something
Tell her they're Bedouin, they travel about
Tell her about camels in the desert and dates
Tell her they live in tents
Tell her this wasn't their home
Don't tell her home, not home, tell her they're going away
Don't tell her they don't like her
Tell her to be careful.
Don't tell her who used to live in this house
No but don't tell her her great great grandfather used to live in
this house
No but don't tell her Arabs used to sleep in her bedroom.
Tell her not to be rude to them
Tell her not to be frightened
Don't tell her she can't play with the children
Don't tell her she can have them in the house.
Tell her they have plenty of friends and family

Tell her for miles and miles all round they have lands of their own
Tell her again this is our promised land.
Don't tell her they said it was a land without people
Don't tell her I wouldn't have come if I'd known.
Tell her maybe we can share.
Don't tell her that.

5

Tell her we won
Tell her her brother's a hero
Tell her how big their armies are
Tell her we turned them back
Tell her we're fighters
Tell her we've got new land.

6

Don't tell her
Don't tell her the trouble about the swimming pool
Tell her it's our water, we have the right
Tell her it's not the water for their fields
Don't tell her anything about water.
Don't tell her about the bulldozer
Don't tell her not to look at the bulldozer
Don't tell her it was knocking the house down
Tell her it's a building site
Don't tell her anything about bulldozers.
Don't tell her about the queues at the checkpoint
Tell her we'll be there in no time
Don't tell her anything she doesn't ask
Don't tell her the boy was shot
Don't tell her anything.

Tell her we're making new farms in the desert
Don't tell her about the olive trees
Tell her we're building new towns in the wilderness.
Don't tell her they throw stones
Tell her they're not much good against tanks
Don't tell her that.
Don't tell her they set off bombs in cafés
Tell her, tell her they set off bombs in cafés
Tell her to be careful
Don't frighten her.
Tell her we need the wall to keep us safe
Tell her they want to drive us into the sea
Tell her they don't
Tell her they want to drive us into the sea.
Tell her we kill far more of them
Don't tell her that
Tell her that
Tell her we're stronger
Tell her we're entitled
Tell her they don't understand anything except violence
Tell her we want peace
Tell her we're going swimming.

7

Tell her she can't watch the news
Tell her she can watch cartoons
Tell her she can stay up late and watch Friends.
Tell her they're attacking with rockets
Don't frighten her
Tell her only a few of us have been killed
Tell her the army has come to our defence
Don't tell her her cousin refused to serve in the army.

Don't tell her how many of them have been killed

Tell her the Hamas fighters have been killed

Tell her they're terrorists

Tell her they're filth

Don't

Don't tell her about the family of dead girls

Tell her you can't believe what you see on television

Tell her we killed the babies by mistake

Don't tell her anything about the army

Tell her, tell her about the army, tell her to be proud of the army.

Tell her about the family of dead girls, tell her their names why not, tell her the whole world knows why shouldn't she know? tell her there's dead babies, did she see babies? tell her she's got nothing to be ashamed of. Tell her they did it to themselves. Tell her they want their children killed to make people sorry for them, tell her I'm not sorry for them, tell her not to be sorry for them, tell her we're the ones to be sorry for, tell her they can't talk suffering to us. Tell her we're the iron fist now, tell her it's the fog of war, tell her we won't stop killing them till we're safe, tell her I laughed when I saw the dead policemen, tell her they're animals living in rubble now, tell her I wouldn't care if we wiped them out, the world would hate us is the only thing, tell her I don't care if the world hates us, tell her we're better haters, tell her we're chosen people, tell her I look at one of their children covered in blood and what do I feel? tell her all I feel is happy it's not her.

Don't tell her that.

Tell her we love her.

Don't frighten her.

***Seven Jewish Children* is Caryl Churchill's
response to the situation in Gaza in January
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