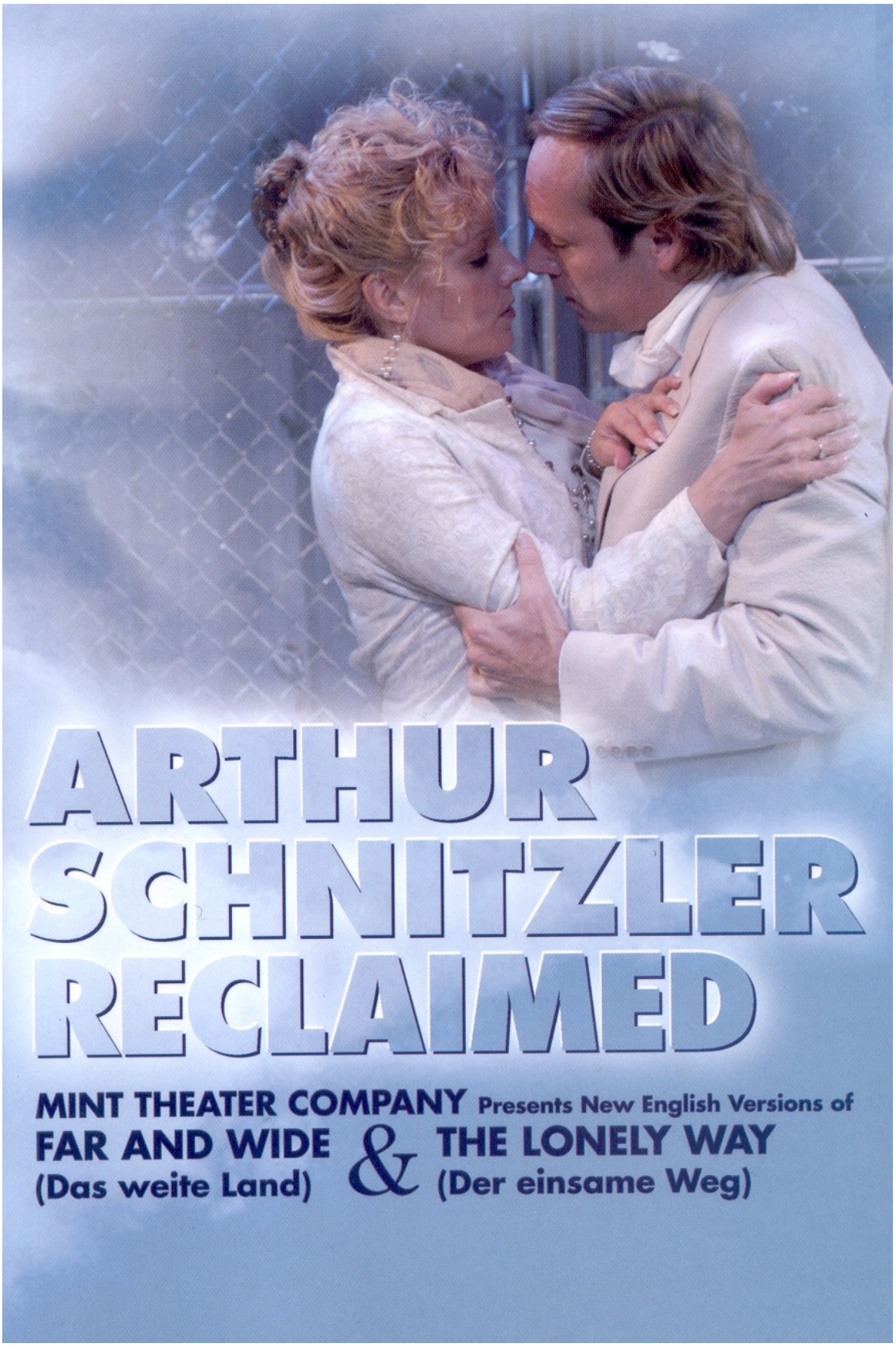
ARTHUR
SCHNITZLER
RECLAIMED
MINT THEATER COMPANY Presents New English Versions of
FAR AND WIDE
(Das weite Land)
&
THE LONELY WAY
(Der einsame Weg)

ARTHUR SCHNITZLER RECLAIMED

Edited and with an
Introduction by

JONATHAN BANK

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CONTENTS

THE BOY ON THE BICYCLE

Reflections on Arthur Schnitzler and Our Time

Peter Schnitzler

I always have rather ambivalent feelings in talking about Arthur Schnitzler. On the one hand, he is public property, bigger than life, the literary essence of turn-of-the-century Vienna. On the other hand, he was my grandfather, my father's father, a man, as I am. How much of him is in me? Where do our paths diverge? These are questions that arise in any family, but where greatness sheds its light—and casts its shadow—responding to them takes on a special urgency.

My father's way was that of the good son. He was a theater director, best known for his sensitive productions of Arthur Schnitzler's plays. It is largely due to his untiring work on behalf of his father that a major Schnitzler renaissance began in the sixties and seventies and continues to this day.

My way, on the other hand, has—perforce—been more distanced. My family fled the persecutions of the Nazis in 1938, and, as a result, I grew up in California—playing baseball, playing jazz, entirely committed to the gospel of self-improvement that characterized the sixties generation.

Over the years, I've been attracted to a number of the social, psychological, and spiritual movements of the twentieth century. I have flirted with Marxism. I have undergone psychoanalysis. I've meditated. I've been an ecological activist. And yet, whenever I think I have found a safe harbor, a place beyond question, there comes a time when I hear a voice, saying: "Don't fool yourself. It's not as simple as that." This is my inheritance, my grandfather's gift to me. It is a mixed blessing.

Among Arthur Schnitzler's notes and aphorisms is the following:

> A religiously devout young boy is riding on his bicycle. As he passes by a church, he takes one hand from the handlebars and makes the sign of the cross. At that moment, he loses his balance, falls, and breaks his arm.

This little parable tells me much about my grandfather and my family tradition. Embedded in it is mistrust, not only of religion, but of belief in anything beyond physical or psychological reality. To imagine that there is a better world attainable through any system or ideology is self-deception. When we abandon what is for the world of symbols and ideas, we crash.

This is the liberal-humanist tradition speaking—skeptical, individualist, self-analytical. It is one of the strains that winds through the twentieth century, from Arthur Schnitzler to Woody Allen. It is also, I believe, a particularly secular-Jewish tradition, born of a people who have lived in fear for many centuries. Fear makes you cautious. If you embrace one direction wholeheartedly, you might ignore the danger behind you. Alertness is all.

Arthur Schnitzler dismissed all of the tendencies that formed the bubbling soup of the early twentieth century: Nationalism, Fascism, Socialism, Communism, Zionism—even Freudianism. In 1914, while his country—and a good number of his literary colleagues—enthusiastically embraced "the war to end all wars," he remained a stubborn pacifist. Nationalism was just another sublimation of individual drives and needs, taking us away from what life is really about—the pursuit of love, the fear of death.

In his play *Das weite Land*, adapted as *Far and Wide* by Jonathan Bank, there is an oft-quoted speech by the cool, worldly Hofreiter. He is talking with a woman, the banker's wife Adele Natter, and says: "If one has the time and inclination, he builds factories, conquers empires, writes symphonies, and becomes a millionaire…but, take my word for it, all that is secondary. The essential thing is you!—You!—You!"

So much for politics, industry, creativity. In the end, according to Schnitzler, we are revealed as fools stumbling in the dark, searching for a moment of sweetness at the mother's breast. At best, we can arrive at a vague understanding of the forces that drive us. If we are honest, we will trust nothing and no one, least of all ourselves and our own motivations.

It is not coincidence that Freud and Schnitzler occupied the same time and place, though they met on only a few occasions. A letter from Freud to Schnitzler speaks of his, Freud's, *Doppelgängerscheu* (literally: fear of one's double). He expresses his feeling that Schnitzler, with his creative intuition, has arrived at conclusions similar to those that Freud has only achieved through laborious scientific research.

Their respect was mutual but their paths diverged exactly at the point where Freud suggested that, through psychoanalysis, there could be a release from the soul's suffering. Again, we are confronted with Schnitzler's dogged unwillingness to accept any systematic response to life's problems. In a letter to

Theodor Reik, Schnitzler writes: "…there are more paths to the soul's darkness than psychoanalysts could possibly dream of—or dream interpret."

In 1902, the young Leon Trotsky wrote an article highly critical of Arthur Schnitzler. It is worth quoting from, particularly in light of the subsequent fate of communism—the religion in which Trotsky so passionately believed:

> The fear of death runs through his work like the smell of ether. Nothing can cure it—not philosophy, not the torments of life, not love. It is only when you can push open the window to the wide world of collective behavior, of the duties of the masses, of social battle, only then can you shake off the nightmare of waiting for the scythe of death.

"The duties of the masses" would probably have provoked a world-weary smile from Schnitzler, the explorer of the soul. Salvation through political belief—another glorious opportunity for self-deception. It is the boy on the bicycle again, only this time he is riding past Lenin's tomb and saluting.

How my grandfather viewed social differences can perhaps be illustrated by the following, another fragment from his notes:

> A charitable young woman takes a young, hungry boy home with her. The boy, as he sees the comfort of her surroundings, strangles the woman's child out of fury and anger.

Implicit here is the tragic inevitability of class differences and their consequences. Though by 1900 there were cracks in the Habsburg Empire's facade, it was impossible—even for someone of Schnitzler's vision—to imagine a change in the order of things. The carriages would still roll through the Prater. The Emperor would bless his subjects. Diamonds would glitter in the theater lobbies while, in the back streets and narrow, twisted alleys, the poor would cough away their lives. That is how it always had been and always would be.

At the turn of the century, there was a thriving, multifaceted Jewish community in Vienna. Even if they could not hope to be admitted to the highest levels of aristocratic power, Jews were well established in the city's social, intellectual, and cultural life. My mother's father was an industrialist, decorated by the Emperor for his work in agriculture. Arthur Schnitzler was a doctor, as were his father and his brother. Yet, beneath Vienna's sophisticated, tolerant veneer, there simmered a centuries-old irrational hatred of the city's Jewish population.

Schnitzler's works, particularly *Professor Bernhardi* and *The Road into the Open*, deal with anti-Semitism as a fact of Jewish existence in Vienna—not life-threatening but omnipresent. As a writer, he considered himself part of the great German-Austrian cultural tradition, a product of his city and his country. When Theodor Herzl spoke to him about his vision for a new Jewish state and assured Schnitzler that his plays would be performed better there than they were in Vienna's Burgtheater, the author's gloomy response was: "But in what language?"

Though he could accept Zionism as a spiritual or moral movement, the idea of founding a Jewish state struck him as "a nonsensical defiance of the whole spirit of historical evolution." Defiance, in other words, of assimilation. His family and mine were nothing if not assimilationist. On my mother's side, we are three generations of baptized Protestants—loyal Austrians who were totally unprepared for what happened when the Nazis came to power.

In 1939, only eight years after my grandfather's death, all Jewish businesses in Vienna were closed or destroyed or "Aryanized." We were not allowed to drive cars, or visit public parks or theaters or libraries. We were not allowed to own radios or use the post office. We could not attend universities, were not permitted to work as doctors, pharmacists, musicians, actors. Jews were forced to scrub Vienna's sidewalks, were kicked and beaten by jeering bystanders. Jewish places of worship were closed or destroyed. Those who did not have the good fortune or quick wit or sufficient funds to emigrate were sent to the concentration camps. Many of them were murdered.

Arthur Schnitzler wasn't alive to see his works banned, his books burned, his family—my family—scattered to the far corners of the earth. I have asked myself if these events have put a barrier between his time and mine, made it impossible for readers today to see him as anything other than a chronicler of decadence at the turn of the century. A Viennese Original, charming, a little risqué, definitely dated.

In the radicalized, politicized days following the First World War, it was fashionable to portray him this way, but I think that this misses the point of his genial talents. It is the fact that he risked diving down into the murky depths of his own motivations and half-conscious desires that makes him, I believe, a writer who transcends time and place. In those deep waters, distinctions among culture and era and class become less important than the things that people have in common: their fantasies, nightmares, passions, fears, self-delusions.

Today, seventy-five years after his death, Schnitzler's works are a staple of the European theater repertoire. In Germany and Austria, his books continue to rank high on the lists of perennial bestsellers. In America, the strong response to the Mint Theater Company's outstanding 2003 production of *Far and Wide* is further indication to me of my grandfather's capacity to evoke universal longings and contradictions. Though the fashions have changed and the music is different, Arthur Schnitzler is still writing about us.

A passage in one of Nietzsche's letters reads:

> There is a basic division in the ways of men: those who wish for peace of soul and happiness must believe and embrace faith, while those who wish to pursue the truth must forsake peace of mind and devote their lives to inquiry.

The second way was clearly my grandfather's: rigorous, self-searching honesty,

whatever the price. It left him neither a particularly happy man, nor an optimistic one. A critic once suggested that Arthur Schnitzler killed so many of his characters off (in these two plays alone, there are three suicides and a murder) in order to keep from killing himself.

As for me, I'm an incurable world-changer. I believe that it's possible for humans to know themselves, to break their neurotic patterns, to control their aggressive behaviors. I believe that we can learn to hear that deep, quiet voice inside us that some people call God and others call intuition. In the face of a century of war, genocide, torture, inhumanity, by the cold light of the nuclear bomb, I say, with Rilke: "*Dennoch preisen*"—to praise in spite of everything. My grandfather would not have approved.

Peter Schnitzler is an accomplished documentary filmmaker who has produced, written, and directed over two hundred films, many of them dealing with human behavior, psychology, and social issues. He has been head of a university department (the Media Center, University of California–Los Angeles), director of an experimental college campus (International Community College, Viborg, Denmark), director of a community film training project for young African Americans and Hispanics, and head of his own film company (Peter Schnitzler Productions, Los Angeles). He is also a painter whose work has been shown in Europe, the U.S., and Canada. He is Arthur Schnitzler's grandson and executor of the writer's literary estate.

INTRODUCTION

Jonathan Bank

The idea that Arthur Schnitzler needs to be "reclaimed" is perhaps both presumptuous and preposterous. At any rate, it's only true in the English-speaking world. In Europe, his works are now part of the standard repertory. Recent productions include *Das weite Land* at the Salzburg Festival in 2002 (revived again in 2003 due to its enormous popularity) and *Der einsame Weg* in Wiesbaden in 2003.

In the English-speaking theater, however, our knowledge of Schnitzler rarely goes beyond *Reigen*, certainly his most notorious play, but hardly his most ambitious. Chances are that you know the play as *La Ronde* (the title of the 1950 French film by the German-born Max Ophuls). The play depicts ten individuals in ten scenes of various pre- and post-coital conversation with each lover taking two partners, and Schnitzler knew that if it was produced it was sure to create the kind of attention that he could do without; he originally printed only two hundred copies of the play to share with his professional colleagues and friends. Censors indeed banned *Reigen* in 1903 after a few of the scenes were presented in Munich. It wasn't produced in its entirety until 1920—leading to riots, an obscenity trial for the cast and producers, and nothing but heartache for its author who was branded a pornographer. Weary of the controversy, violence, and venom, much of it openly anti-Semitic, and despairing that the play would ever be understood on its own terms, he ordered it withdrawn from the stage in 1922—a ban that was enforced by Schnitzler's son Heinrich until 1981, the year before his own passing. Of course, controversy is always good for business, and it has surely helped *Reigen* to earn a place in the canon of plays receiving productions in American theaters, where it has perpetuated a rather narrow understanding of Schnitzler's genius.

Reinforcing the view of Schnitzler as immoral, decadent, and—what's worse—sentimental and even frivolous is *Anatol*, Schnitzler's first-performed play and a work that has also enjoyed success in English. *Anatol* shows its hero in seven scenes with seven different women; one scene depicts Anatol hurrying a lover

out his rooms so that he can dress for his wedding—a scene banned by the Berlin censors in 1899. Cecil B. DeMille filmed *The Affairs of Anatol* in 1921. *Anatol* played Broadway in 1912 with John Barrymore in the title role, and again in 1931 (with a translation by Harley Granville Barker); it was the basis of a musical in 1962 by Fay and Michael Kanin, with music by Arthur Schwartz, entitled *The Gay Life*. (A new title will be required for any revivals.)

Most of what we get these days is "based on" and "inspired by" rather than actual Schnitzler. In recent years, for example, we've had Stanley Kubrick's *Eyes Wide Shut* from *Traumnovelle* (*Dream Story*) and David Hare's *The Blue Room*, subtitled "Freely Adapted from Arthur Schnitzler's *La Ronde*." None of this quite prepares you for the shocking brilliance of the two plays in this book. John Simon, theater critic for *New York Magazine*, rapturously extols Schnitzler's "staggeringly acute psychological and sexual insights" and describes *Das weite Land* as "one of the twentieth century's greatest plays and a masterpiece by any standard." "Schnitzler previously seems to have been served up secondhand with not much of the original taste intact," wrote Karl Leverett in *Backstage*, reviewing Mint's production of this remarkable play.

> Suddenly with *Far and Wide* there's a plate of meat and potatoes before you. Schnitzler has the most penetrating vision of human relationships, often expressed in the most contradictory terms. The acute psychological insights never falter and make this a sustained drama for the head and heart.

How can such a play go unrecognized and unproduced in the English-speaking theater for so long? After all, Schnitzler's fame was such that *Das weite Land* premiered simultaneously in nine European cities in 1911—an unprecedented international roll-out. But, as I have tried to demonstrate at Mint for the last ten years, there may be a dozen different explanations for why a play suffers neglect, all quite plausible, but none really answering the question: there just doesn't have to be a good reason for bad luck.

One obstacle for would-be producers of Schnitzler is the scarcity of translation—publication of this book is certainly intended to fill a very real void. However, lack of translation only reflects a lack of demand. *Das weite Land* was translated only once into English, and that version was never produced. Two men whom I have been able to learn nothing about, Alexander Caro and Andrew Woticky (Woticky once co-authored a science textbook but I come up blank on Caro) collaborated on a translation entitled *The Vast Domain* which was published in *Poet Lore* magazine in 1923. (*Poet Lore*, by the way, was established in 1889 and is still going: the oldest continuously published poetry magazine in the United States). There is another, more famous version of *Das weite Land* in English, and that's how I came to learn of Schnitzler's play and of the earlier translation. In 1979, Tom Stoppard was commissioned by the National Theatre in London to create a version of *Das weite Land* that he called *Undiscovered Country*—a clever title, albeit misleading: Hamlet's "undiscovered country" is death, but it's the vastness of the human soul that Schnitzler is writing about. Catalogued in Stoppard's papers, which are housed at the University of Texas–Austin, is a photocopy of *The Vast Domain*. J. Ellen

Gainor of Cornell University tracked down the source of the play and made me my very own copy, which I polished into *Far and Wide*.

Far and Wide whet my appetite for Schnitzler, and, fortunately for me, there exists a rather decent, if dated, translation of *The Lonely Way*; otherwise I would never have known I wanted to do the play. In 1931, the Theater Guild, that venerable organization responsible for introducing so much of Europe's dramatic literature to American audiences, commissioned a translation of *Der einsame Weg* from Julian Leigh. The play was scheduled for an unusually extensive out-of-town tryout, a week in Baltimore and another in Washington followed by Cincinnati and Chicago before coming to New York. During rehearsals, the actor playing Sala broke his leg (a skating accident) and was replaced. By the time the week was up in D.C., the Theater Guild had decided to pull the plug, indicating that they would bring the play to New York the following season when Tom Power's leg was fully healed. But *The Lonely Way* was never heard from again.

The bad luck of that story is countered by the good fortune that Leigh's translation somehow wound up in the anthology *Representative Modern Drama* edited by Charles Huntington Whitman and published in 1936. It's noteworthy that Whitman even knew about the play, much less tracked down a copy of the Leigh translation—Leigh doesn't even get credit for his work in the Theater Guild's D.C. program. (The director, Phillip Moeller, takes credit for the "acting edition," but, let me tell you, I've read the prompt script and Leigh wuz robbed.) What is truly remarkable is that Whitman was brave enough to include the play in his anthology given its scant production history in the United States.

If Schnitzler has really never had a significant presence in the U.S., it's largely due to the fact that his fame faded at home after World War I. Closely associated with the "decadent" culture of *fin-de-siècle* Vienna, both his pre- and post-war output seemed to lose their currency in the new age. This association, however, fails to do justice to either the man or his work. Moreover, this explanation for Schnitzler's fall from the heights of fame ignores the "virulent and lingering anti-Semitism that was the root cause of Schnitzler's relegation to near oblivion after his death," as James McWilliams asserts in Scribner's *European Writers* series.

> Almost alone in his time, [Schnitzler] dared to treat openly the anti-Semitism rife in his society. Because no criticism was tolerated, he became in effect a non-person in the society in which he had lived. Since he had not been a fighter for social progress, but had pursued his lonely calling undeterred by the ferment in society, his name was not revived by the West during the struggle against Fascism, and after World War II he was still given short shrift by critics in Germany and Austria.

Heinrich Schnitzler emigrated to the United States in 1938 but returned to Europe twenty years later intent on establishing his father's literary legacy, which was virtually nonexistent. His efforts, particularly at the centenary of Schnitzler's birth in 1962, were chiefly responsible for the triumphant

"Schnitzler renaissance" that followed. Heinrich himself directed an important production of *Der einsame Weg* in 1962 that set the bar for future productions. Now in Austria, Germany, and all of Europe, Schnitzler is once again known, read, performed, and appreciated. In the United States, however, he has yet to receive the attention he deserves—although audiences at the Mint have embraced his work with hungry enthusiasm.

Charles H. Whitman, the maverick editor whose anthology brought us *The Lonely Way*, wrote an insightful introduction there that reveals a true appreciation for Schnitzler's gifts and the challenge they offer to readers, audiences, and artists alike: "Schnitzler was master of an art so subtle and complex that it is exceedingly difficult to come to an understanding of it or to convey any adequate impression of it in words." Exceedingly difficult to act, as well. Naturally this book aims to encourage productions of these plays, but I think it only fair to warn the practitioners among you that the challenges of acting Schnitzler seem to be almost entirely different from those presented by any other playwright I've encountered. Leo Carey, critic-at-large for *The New Yorker*, writes that "Schnitzler never shows just one emotion where four conflicting ones will do," and that has been the watchword of our rehearsal process at the Mint. Ordinarily if I were to ask an actor what he wanted in any given scene or moment, and he answered that he didn't know, that might be the end of rehearsal until he had done his homework. But with Schnitzler, it is perhaps the only useful answer. Carey goes on to quote from *Das weite Land*, "There is room in us for so much, and all at the same time… We try as best we can to create order within ourselves, but this order is always artificial. The natural condition is chaos. Yes, my friend, the soul is a vast land—it stretches far and wide…"

The actor (or reader) who wishes to do justice to Schnitzler must resist the temptation to create order, but instead must invite chaos—a challenge that is as rewarding as it is frightening.

Jonathan Bank is Artistic Director of the Mint Theater in New York City where he has unearthed and produced more than two dozen worthy but neglected plays including The Daughter-in-Law *by D.H. Lawrence,* Echoes of the War *by J.M. Barrie and* The Truth about Blayds *by A.A. Milne. He is the editor of* Worthy But Neglected: Plays of the Mint Theater Company *which includes his adaptations of Thomas Wolfe's* Welcome to Our City *and Edith Wharton's* The House of Mirth*, both of which he directed at Mint, along with five other Mint rediscoveries.*

FAR AND WIDE

Adapted by Jonathan Bank

ADAPTATION…

Jonathan Bank

Adaptation is a tricky term, and not one with which I'm wholly satisfied. We start with the question of translation: Schnitzler wrote in German, which I neither speak nor read. I worked from an English translation that had been "authorized" by Schnitzler in 1923 but was never produced. I substantially rewrote, cut, and polished this text to loosen it up and make it workable for contemporary actors and audiences. I also spent a great deal of time with a good German-English dictionary and the original text. Ultimately I went through the play line by line with Peter Sander, a professional dramaturg and award-winning translator, who was invaluable both for confirming my instincts about meaning and for enlightening me about tone.

I use the term "adapted" so as not to represent *Far and Wide* as a wholly literal version of Schnitzler's play, although I've been scrupulous about trying to honor the spirit of his intentions and to accurately represent the meaning of every line. However, *Das weite Land* is a play with twenty-nine-plus characters, and *Far and Wide* has only fifteen. I'm sure it sounds like I've done radical surgery, but in fact I've only cut three characters with more than a few lines. None of the cut characters have any bearing on the central story of the Hofreiters and their circle of friends; they simply furnish the Hotel Völs Lake with its proper complement of guests, employees, and guides. My intention in making these cuts was not to fix any "problems" in the play, but to make it produceable. We could no more manage a cast of twenty-nine-plus than we could afford the working elevator Schnitzler wanted for the hotel—and I imagine that's true for most of my professional colleagues. My hope is that *Far and Wide* brings Schnitzler's play into reach for theaters with more modest resources.

This text (as well as that of *The Lonely Way*) preserves Schnitzler's stage directions, which are extremely useful and sometimes strangely specific (is it important that both Friedrich in this play and Sala in *The Lonely Way* part their hair on the right side?). But I hope that Schnitzler's instructions will not intimidate the aspiring producer. I've left the descriptions of the hotel with its mountain vista and bustling lobby, the estate with its tennis court upstage—but the Mint production proved that all of that can be sacrificed without diminishing the play's devastating impact.

The title itself may be where I have taken the greatest liberty. A more literal translation of *Das weite Land* might be "The Far Country" or "The Wide Land." The terrain that Schnitzler refers to is, of course, psychological rather than geographical, and I decided to reflect that by choosing an idiom that might convey the limitless expanse of the human soul—exactly the ambitious task that Schnitzler set for himself with this astounding play.

A NOTE ON DUELING

Linnet Taylor

In Schnitzler's Austria, duels between gentlemen were frequent and (despite the inaccuracy of dueling pistols) sometimes fatal. Among the upper classes, a man was expected to answer any insult with a challenge, failure to do so labeling him forever a coward.

Duels were elaborately ceremonial affairs, governed by precedents and textbooks, whose degree of intensity depended on the type of insult that had provoked them. These ranged from a mere verbal slur, which might result in a saber bout where neither participant would expect to be seriously injured, to the seduction of a wife or female relative (the most serious of all), where pistols would almost certainly be used, and a duel to the death might even be agreed upon in advance.

Once a challenge had been made, the participants then agreed whether to fight with swords or pistols, each choosing two seconds (who were responsible for providing and readying the weapons, and witnessing the duel) and a doctor to preside over the combat.

Although dueling was officially illegal, the authorities could be counted on to turn a blind eye as long as nobody was killed. Penalties for dueling, and their enforcement, varied according to whether the combat proved fatal, but at worst a gentleman might spend up to five years in prison. If the duel was judged to have been justified (for example, in the case of a seduction), the victor could expect little more than a slap on the wrist.

A gentleman of Schnitzler's time was expected to have dueled in his youth, proving both that he had honor and was ready to defend it. Scars from such bouts were considered so masculine and attractive that plastic surgeons took out advertisements offering to create them for those unlucky enough not to have acquired them the hard way.

The 1880s saw the invention of a new variant: the American duel. It was so named by European duelists not for its origin but for its recklessness and disregard for convention—typical, it was thought, of the Wild West. This type of duel was fought in the form of a game (which could be anything from billiards to the toss of a coin), where it was agreed that the loser would commit suicide. The American duel was despised by traditionalists as a dishonorable suicide pact, whose principal object was death rather than the restoration of honor.

Mint Theater Company's production of *Far and Wide,* written by Arthur Schnitzler and adapted into English by Jonathan Bank, began performances on February 7, 2003, at the Mint Theater, 311 West 43rd Street, in New York City. The production was remounted in the fall of 2003, beginning September 10, and played for a total of 106 performances with the following cast and credits:

Friedrich Hofreiter ..... Hans Tester
Genia Hofreiter ..... Lisa Bostnar
Anna Meinhold-Aigner ..... Lee Bryant
Otto von Aigner ..... James Knight/Joshua Decker
Doctor von Aigner ..... Ken Kliban
Frau Wahl ..... Anne-Marie Cusson
Erna Wahl ..... Victoria Mack/Kate Arrington
Natter ..... Allen Lewis Rickman/Peter Reznikoff
Adele ..... Pilar Witherspoon/Katie Firth
Doctor Franz Mauer ..... Ezra Barnes
Demeter Stanzides ..... Rob Breckenridge/Kelly AuCoin
Paul Kreindl ..... Matt Opatrny/Matthew Wilkas
Serknitz ..... Allen Lewis Rickman/Peter Reznikoff
Hiker ..... Rob Breckenridge/ Kelly AuCoin
Rosenstock ..... Kurt Everhart

Directed by: Jonathan Bank
Set Design by: Vicki R. Davis
Costume Design by: Theresa Squire
Lighting Design by: Josh Bradford
Sound Design by: Stefan Jacobs
Prop Specialist: Judi Guralnick
Translation Advisor: Peter Sander
Assistant Director: Linnet Taylor
Associate Costume Designer: Naama Greenfield
Production Stage Manager: Douglas Shearer/Allison Deutsch
Assistant Stage Manager: Lisa M. Webb
Production Assistant: Donielle J. Lee
Press Representative: David Gersten & Associates
Graphic Design: Jude Dvorak

SETTING

Baden near Vienna, except the third act, which is set at the Hotel Völs Lake.

ACT I

Veranda and garden of the Hofreiter Villa. At right, the veranda, with balustrade, which continues along either side of the six steps leading into the garden. Double door, leading from the veranda to the drawing room, stands open. In front of the veranda, a lawn with roses in bloom. A rather high wooden fence, painted green, encloses the garden, curving round at the rear right corner, and running onward behind the house. Without, along the fence, a footpath. A highroad parallel to the footpath. Inside the fence, shrubbery running along it. At left, the garden gate, facing the veranda, stands open. Benches stand round about the lawn. On the veranda, a longish table with six armchairs. Late afternoon, after a thundershower. Meadows and leaves moist. The long shadows of the fence rails fall in the garden.

GENIA, thirty-one, clad simply, but with distinction; dark-gray skirt, blouse of violet silk. She is seated at the veranda table. She is just putting down her teacup. Staring before her a moment, she rises, pushes back her chair, glances rearward over the balustrade into the garden, then goes down the steps to the garden, her hands clasped behind her, as is her habit.

FRAU WAHL and ERNA, coming down the highroad from the rear along the fence, are nearing the gate. GENIA, continuing her walk along the meadow, also approaches the gate. FRAU WAHL and ERNA nod greetings from without. GENIA returns the greeting with a slight wave of the hand, hastens her steps somewhat, and meets them at the entrance. FRAU WAHL and ERNA, both in dark English walking suits, remain standing. FRAU WAHL, slender, supple, age about forty-five, with a certain languorous, but intensely conscious, distinction. Her enunciation is slightly nasal, and she speaks an aristocratic Viennese that is not quite genuine. Her glance and manner of speech are now too languid, now too animated. For the most part, she looks past the person whom she is addressing, and only when she has finished speaking does she direct a friendly, searching gaze upon her auditor, as if to reassure herself. ERNA, taller than her mother, slender, determined, and direct to the point of thoughtlessness, without appearing arrogant. Steady, unaffected glance.

GENIA: *(Giving both a friendly handclasp.)* Back from the city, safe and sound?

FRAU WAHL: As you can see, Frau Genia. The weather was dreadful.

GENIA: Here too, until an hour ago.

FRAU WAHL: You were right to stay home. The cemetery was swamped. I only went to please Erna. Personally, I would have been content just going to the church. I don't know who benefits…

ERNA: Mother is right… We can't bring him back to life again, poor Korsakov.

GENIA: It must have been a large gathering?

FRAU WAHL: Enormous. We could hardly move in the church. And there were several hundred people at the cemetery too—despite the wretched weather.

GENIA: Many folks you knew?

FRAU WAHL: Of course… The Natters came cruising along in their new red car.

GENIA: *(Smiling.)* I've heard about that car.

FRAU WAHL: The effect was fantastic, at the graveyard wall…not exactly fantastic, but—well, it did look remarkable.

GENIA: Did you talk to my husband at the cemetery?

FRAU WAHL: Yes…in passing.

ERNA: He was very upset.

GENIA: I'm sure.

ERNA: I was surprised. Generally speaking, he is not easily moved.

GENIA: *(Smiling.)* How well you know him.

ERNA: And why not? *(Very simply.)* I was in love with him by the time I was seven. Long before you, madam.

GENIA: "Madam" again.

ERNA: *(Almost tenderly.)* Frau Genia. *(Kisses her hand.)*

GENIA: Friedrich was very fond of Alexei Korsakov.

ERNA: Obviously. It's funny—I always thought of Korsakov as just—his pianist.

GENIA: What do you mean—his pianist?

ERNA: Well, just as Doctor Mauer is his best friend, Herr Natter is his banker, I am his tennis partner, Lieutenant Stanzides… his dueling second.

GENIA: Oh…

ERNA: If such an occasion should ever arise, I mean… He takes what he needs from each of us, but he hardly pays attention to any of the other qualities that we might possess.

FRAU WAHL: My poor husband used to call such remarks from Erna her performances on the psychological high wire.

(OTTO VON AIGNER approaches, a young man, twenty-five, reserved and courteous manner: in the uniform of an ensign.)

OTTO: Good evening.

GENIA: Good evening, Herr von Aigner. Please come in.

OTTO: Thank you.

(Exchange of greetings.)

GENIA: How is your mother? I was hoping to see her here this afternoon.

OTTO: Didn't she come to see you yesterday, madam?

GENIA: Yes. And the day before, too. *(Smiling.)* She's spoiled me, you see.

OTTO: My mother went to town two hours ago. She's performing tonight. *(To FRAU WAHL and ERNA.)* Weren't you ladies in town today? I saw you driving to the depot this morning during that terrible storm.

FRAU WAHL: We were at Korsakov's funeral.

OTTO: Of course, that was today. Does anyone know why he killed himself?

ERNA: No.

FRAU WAHL: Someone at the cemetery today was saying that it was the result of thwarted ambition.

GENIA: What—? Korsakov…?

FRAU WAHL: Yes. Because, you see, it was always being said that he could only play Chopin and Schumann—but not Beethoven or Bach…I found that to be the case too.

OTTO: It seems unlikely that would drive a man to take his own life. He didn't leave a note, did he?

ERNA: Korsakov was not the sort to leave a note.

FRAU WAHL: Now how do you come to know that with such certainty?

ERNA: He had too much taste for that. And he understood what it means—this thing we call death. So he couldn't have cared less how people would react the next morning.

OTTO: I read somewhere that he dined with friends that evening…and was in good spirits.

FRAU WAHL: Yes, of course, that's what the papers always say afterward.

GENIA: This time it happens to be true. My husband was one of the friends.

FRAU WAHL: Ah…

GENIA: *(Casually.)* Friedrich often works late, and then dines at the Imperial—there's a club table there reserved for his set—a left-over from his bachelor days. Korsakov would often dine with them—he lived at the hotel, you know. And Friedrich told me there wasn't anything unusual about him that last evening. In fact, after dinner they played billiards in the café.

FRAU WAHL: What—your husband and Korsakov?

GENIA: Yes. They even made a wager—which Friedrich lost. Next morning he sent one of the office clerks to the hotel with the cigars…and—didn't you hear? It was the clerk that discovered the whole thing.

FRAU WAHL: Really?

GENIA: Yes, apparently he knocked several times and no one answered. So he opened the door to leave the cigars and…

ERNA: …found Korsakov dead…

GENIA: Yes. Dead on the couch, the gun in his hand…

(Pause.)

FRAU WAHL: It must have been quite a shock for the clerk! What did he do with the cigars? Did he leave them?

ERNA: Mother believes in historical accuracy.

GENIA: Forgive me, Frau Wahl, but I completely forgot to ask.

(The sound of a motor becomes audible.)

GENIA: I hear Friedrich's car…

ERNA: Good, we can have a little tennis. Is the court in good shape?

OTTO: Absolutely. Herr Hofreiter and I played singles yesterday.

FRAU WAHL: He was in the mood for tennis?

ERNA: Why not, Mamma? They can dance the cakewalk on my grave… In fact…I rather like the idea.

(DOCTOR MAUER enters, aged thirty-five, tall, fair beard, pince-nez, scar from a saber cut on his forehead, dark sack suit, not fashionably, but by no means negligently, attired.)

MAUER: Good evening, everyone.

GENIA: Oh, it's you, Doctor.

MAUER: *(To FRAU WAHL.)* Madam. Good evening, Fraulein Erna. Good evening, Ensign. *(To GENIA.)* Friedrich sends his regards; he's still busy at the factory. He was kind enough to loan me the car for a few house calls that I had to make out here. He'll take the train later.

FRAU WAHL: I'm sorry, but we have to be going. *(To MAUER.)* I hope you'll soon call on us too, Doctor. Although, thank heaven, we find ourselves in the best of health.

ERNA: But you'll have to come soon. We're going to Tyrol in July—to Völs Lake.

MAUER: Ah!

FRAU WAHL: We're meeting Gustav there. *(To OTTO.)* That's my son. He travels the whole year. Well, not exactly the whole year—but—well, a good deal… Last year he was in India.

ERNA: I'm looking forward to going climbing again.

MAUER: Are you? Then perhaps we'll meet on some mountain peak. I'm planning a trip to the Dolomites myself. *(To GENIA.)* In fact, I have the notion of borrowing Friedrich for the purpose.

GENIA: To go mountain climbing? …What does he say about it?

MAUER: He's not entirely opposed.

FRAU WAHL: I thought Friedrich had given up climbing since…since…the accident…

MAUER: Oh, but not forever.

GENIA: *(Explaining to OTTO.)* A friend of my husband's, Doctor Bernhaupt, was climbing alongside Friedrich when he fell from a cliff and was killed instantly. But that was seven years ago.

OTTO: Your husband was in that group?

ERNA: *(Reflectively.)* You must admit…he hasn't had much luck with his friends.

GENIA: *(To OTTO.)* You knew about this?

OTTO: It stuck in my mind, you see, because it happened on the cliff that—the cliff that my father was the first to scale some twenty years ago.

GENIA: Yes, of course, it was Mount Aigner.

MAUER: Mount Aigner…yes, it's easy to forget that it's named after a living man.

(Short pause.)

ERNA: It must be an odd feeling to know that there is a peak up there in the Dolomites that you are related to, in some way.

OTTO: I'm afraid it isn't, really. Both the peak and my father are strangers to me. I was four or five when my parents separated.

FRAU WAHL: And you've never seen your father since?

OTTO: As chance would have it…

(Pause.)

ERNA: *(Moving to go.)* Now Mamma…I believe it is time…

FRAU WAHL: Yes, I don't know when we'll ever finish unpacking. *(To MAUER.)* We only moved out here last Sunday. We're not even cooking at home yet. We have to take our meals in that frightful park.

ERNA: The food seems to agree with you, Mamma.

FRAU WAHL: But there are so many people there, especially in the evenings… Well, good night, Frau Genia. Are you coming with us, Ensign?

OTTO: If you'll permit me, yes. Good night, madam. Please give my regards to your husband.

ERNA: Good night, Frau Genia. Good night, Doctor.

(FRAU WAHL and ERNA exit.)

MAUER: *(After a brief pause, during which his glance has followed ERNA.)* Now there's a girl…well, one could almost forgive her for her mother.

GENIA: Good Frau Wahl? I find her rather amusing. If that's the only factor— *(She walks towards the veranda.)* As I've said before, you should give the matter some serious thought.

MAUER: *(Half in jest.)* I'm afraid I'm not fashionable enough to suit her taste. *(Following her slowly.)*

GENIA: *(Has gone up a few steps.)* I didn't know Friedrich had work to do this evening.

MAUER: Oh—I was supposed to tell you—he's waiting for an important telegram.

GENIA: America?

MAUER: Yes. Something to do with the patent for his new incandescent light.

GENIA: Not new, Doctor, just "improved." *(She sits.)*

MAUER: *(Standing, leaning on the balustrade.)* Whatever. Anyway, the matter appears to have taken on tremendous significance; I understand he wants to buy up the adjacent block of houses and build an addition to the factory…

GENIA: Yes…

MAUER: And that company that's been badgering him about purchasing the factory has inquired again. He's meeting with his banker in the morning.

GENIA: With Natter.

MAUER: Yes, of course.

GENIA: The Natters were at the funeral too, I hear.

MAUER: Yes.

GENIA: Apparently the red car attracted a great deal of attention.

MAUER: Well, what can you say? It's red.

(Short pause. GENIA gazes at him with a slight smile.)

MAUER: By the way—the affair is over.

GENIA: *(Still smiling quietly.)* You know that with absolute certainty?

MAUER: I assure you, Genia.

GENIA: Did Friedrich perhaps refer…

MAUER: You know he never talks about these things. But, —well the diagnostic eye must be worth something. It's been over for a while. He really is always at the office or in the factory. You know him, if anyone does. If his new light bulbs don't take the world by storm, the whole thing's no fun for him. As for Frau Natter—that's all in the past as far as he's concerned.

GENIA: That's comforting news.

MAUER: There was never cause for real concern. Adele is the most harmless person in the world. If we didn't happen to know—

GENIA: Yes, *she* is! But Herr Natter, for all his superficial courtesy and good nature, is a brutal man, I think. And dangerous. There were times when I really felt concerned for Friedrich. Concerned, as I might be for a child—a rather grown-up child—who is engaged in questionable activities.

MAUER: *(Sits facing her.)* It's so fascinating, the way you look at things. I wonder if the woman with strong maternal instincts always ends up mothering her husband?

GENIA: I haven't always been so maternal, believe me. There was a time—more than one—when I was on the verge of leaving.

MAUER: Really?

GENIA: With my son, of course. I would never have left Percy with him, rest assured! …There was even a time when I wanted to kill myself. Of course, that was a long time ago. Perhaps it only seems to me now that I could have seriously…

MAUER: No…that is something you never, ever would have done…if only to avoid causing him trouble.

GENIA: Do you really think I'm so discreet? You're wrong. There was even a time when I considered the most indiscreet thing a woman can do to a man, especially a vain man…to retaliate.

MAUER: Retaliate?

GENIA: Well—to even the score.

MAUER: Ah…now that would have been the simplest way of all. Well, perhaps your time will come yet. The hour of fate may strike for you too, someday.

GENIA: Perhaps it won't even need to be the hour of fate.

MAUER: *(Earnestly.)* With you, absolutely. That's just it. It's a shame. It does offend my sense of justice that, of all people, my old friend Friedrich—isn't made to pay.

GENIA: And what makes you think he doesn't pay? Must it be in the same coin? He pays, don't you worry—but in his own way. Things aren't as well with him as you think. Or as he thinks. There are times when I feel rather sorry for him. Sometimes I think it's a demon that's driving him on.

MAUER: *(Somewhat surprised by the question.)* He seems nice enough.

FRIEDRICH: It's remarkable how like his father he is. Don't you think so?

MAUER: Perhaps… Personally I never much cared for this Doctor von Aigner. Too much pretense for my taste.

FRIEDRICH: Style, my friend. The two are often confused. It's been a long time since I last saw him. Seven years. Remember, Genia?

GENIA: Of course. *(To MAUER.)* I rather liked him.

FRIEDRICH: Yes, he was at his best, then. He was certainly in a better humor than I was. *(To MAUER.)* You know, it was just a few days after the—after that Bernhaupt thing happened. They say he has at least one child in every Tyrolean village.

MAUER: All right—we'll say he has style… But now I really must go. Stanzides is waiting—

FRIEDRICH: Give him my best. Maybe I'll visit him tomorrow. You'll come back for dinner, won't you?

MAUER: I don't think so.

FRIEDRICH: Of course you will.

MAUER: *(Hesitating.)* All right. But I'd like to make the ten-twenty to town. I have to be at the hospital early in the morning.

FRIEDRICH: You're not superstitious, are you?

MAUER: Superstitious? Why?

FRIEDRICH: I thought maybe you didn't want to sleep in the guest room because Korsakov spent the night there a week ago. But I don't imagine the dead are permitted to begin haunting us on their very first night.

MAUER: You know, when you talk that way—

FRIEDRICH: *(Suddenly serious.)* Yes, yes—but it really is terrible, isn't it? A week ago he slept here, and the night before we sat out here and he was playing—Chopin—the "C Minor Nocturne"—and something of Schumann's—Otto was with us, and the Natters—and nothing could have been further from our minds! And there isn't a clue as to why. —He didn't say anything to you, Genia, did he?

GENIA: To me?

FRIEDRICH: *(Without attributing any significance to GENIA's bearing.)* Sudden mental aberration, people say. But what does that mean: sudden mental aberration? Mauer, perhaps you'll be kind enough to explain it to me?

MAUER: First, I'm no psychiatrist, and second, I'm never surprised when anyone kills himself. We're all so often on the verge of it. At fourteen, I wanted to kill myself because one of my professors reprimanded me.

FRIEDRICH: I would have rather killed the professor… Only in my case, I would have had to become a mass murderer.

MAUER: After all—he was an artist! Aren't they all more or less abnormal? At least when it comes to their own self-importance. Ambition itself is a kind of psychosis. This striving for immortality! And the interpretive artist has it worst. No matter how celebrated they are, no matter how much they accomplish; nothing remains when they're gone but the name. That could certainly drive you crazy.

FRIEDRICH: What are you talking about! You didn't know him. None of you knew him. Ambition… Korsakov? —He was far too sensible, too philosophical, to let ambition get the better of him. Playing the piano was really secondary for him. Do you have any idea of the range of things he was interested in? Trust me to pick the man worth

talking to…and on top of that he practiced six hours a day! I can't imagine where he found the time—And twenty-seven years old! And kills himself. God, think of the life he had before him. Young, famous, and good-looking too—and shoots himself to death. Now if it were some old ass, someone that life had nothing more to offer… But of course those are just the—well. And the night before we dined together, chatting away—we played billiards…Excuse me, Genia—but what is so funny?

GENIA: I was just telling the story to Frau Wahl. She had to ask what happened to the cigars you sent him the next day.

FRIEDRICH: Ha. That woman is priceless. *(Taking out his cigar case, offers it to MAUER.)* You said you're not superstitious. Of course Franz brought them back to me.

MAUER: Thanks. It's a pity to light it before supper. *(Takes one.)* Now, then, au revoir. I'll be back soon. *(Exits.)*

FRIEDRICH: Yes, it was just as well you stayed away, Genia. The speeches…and the weather besides. *(Glances carelessly through letters and newspapers.)* Oh, yes—as they lowered the coffin, the sun suddenly came out—*(Pause.)* Isn't this Thursday? He was going to have dinner here tonight. That's something to tell Mauer… *(Reading.)* A postcard from Percy. "Dear Mother." For you. Just a postcard again. The lazy lout.

GENIA: You can't expect a thirteen-year-old boy to write letters. He'll be home in four weeks.

FRIEDRICH: *(Reading.)* Hm. Leads his class in Greek composition. Not bad. Maybe he'll be an archaeologist. By the way, did you read the article in the *Daily Telegraph* yesterday about the new excavations in Crete?

GENIA: No.

FRIEDRICH: Very interesting. That's another spot we should go someday. Yes.

(Pause.)

GENIA: What you said before about America—were you serious?

FRIEDRICH: Absolutely. Wouldn't you like to go? There wouldn't be much to do in New York. But in Chicago and Washington, and St. Louis… And while we're at it, we really ought to skip a bit further; say to San Francisco. Do you remember poor Korsakov telling us about his tour through California? It must be wonderful.

GENIA: But that would take several months.

FRIEDRICH: Yes, if things here are in full swing by then, especially the new building, we could extend the trip into the spring. Well, think it over.

(GENIA shakes her head slowly.)

FRIEDRICH: Are you afraid of the voyage? My dear—with these new ships! And they've just discovered a surefire remedy for seasickness. Electric vibrators.

GENIA: I don't think I'll go. In spite of the electric vibrators. But I did have an idea—

FRIEDRICH: Yes.

GENIA: While you're away, I could stay in England with Percy.

FRIEDRICH: You wouldn't see much of him.

GENIA: He could live with me, instead of the dormitory. Like my sister's boys.

FRIEDRICH: *(Gazes at her out of the corner of his eye.)* What sort of—where did *that* notion come from so suddenly?

GENIA: Not so suddenly. I mentioned it to you the other day—if you'll recall. And since you seem determined to keep him there for a few more years…

FRIEDRICH: Absolutely. You see how well he's doing. It would just be damned selfish-

ness to take him away now, in the middle of his studies, and bring him here, where lads are taught nothing but sentimentalities and brutalities, instead of rowing and golf.

GENIA: If only I didn't miss him…

FRIEDRICH: Well, that must be taken in the bargain. Do you think I don't miss him? In my opinion, it's good for the soul. And good for relationships. Relationships ought to be based on longing rather than habit, if you ask me. Anyway, we might both accompany him to England, and then you could decide if you wanted to go on with me or stay with him over the winter.

GENIA: I'd rather you consider the matter settled.

FRIEDRICH: Settled?

GENIA: There will be a great deal to do before leaving for England. Moving can't be arranged in a day.

FRIEDRICH: Moving?

GENIA: Call it whatever you want…

FRIEDRICH: What is going on, Genia? You really are strange today.

GENIA: What's so strange? That a mother, that an only son—When he's a few years older, I'll have nothing of him at all. And now—the two summer months, a week at Christmas, another at Easter—it's not enough. I've put up with it for as long as I can.

FRIEDRICH: I might almost suspect that you are less concerned with being near your son than with getting away from…from here.

GENIA: I'm sure you won't miss me, especially. But why talk about that? *(Rises.)*

FRIEDRICH: Now really, what's the matter?

GENIA: Nothing.

(He glances after her. GENIA walks away slowly. He has stepped down from the veranda; still in his overcoat; halts beside a rose bush.)

FRIEDRICH: Absolutely no scent to the roses this year. I don't understand it. They look lovelier every year, but they no longer bother themselves about fragrance.

(GENIA continues to walk towards rear, her hands behind her back.)

FRIEDRICH: *(After a pause.)* Genia.

GENIA: Well?

FRIEDRICH: When you're closer.

GENIA: *(Approaches slowly.)* Here I am.

FRIEDRICH: Tell me, Genia, *(Very quietly, looking at her.)* is it possible that you do know why Korsakov shot himself?

GENIA: *(Quietly.)* What are you suggesting? You know that I was just as shocked as you were.

FRIEDRICH: That certainly was my impression. Tell me, then, why do you want to get away from me…all of a sudden?

GENIA: I don't want to get away from you. I want to go to Percy. And not all of a sudden, but in the fall. To be with Percy.

FRIEDRICH: Yes, or it would be too obvious.

GENIA: What would be…?

FRIEDRICH: It would look like you were running away.

GENIA: Running away? From you? What would be the point? There's plenty of distance right here at home—

(Pause.)

FRIEDRICH: Come, Genia— He is dead and buried—Herr Alexei Korsakov…

GENIA: So why don't you leave him in peace?

FRIEDRICH: Steady, child, steady!… I only mean that now there is nothing that can…Of course, nothing would happen to him if he *were* still alive, or to you either…but you must admit…well, I only mean that this talk, today…that today, the day which Herr Korsakov was buried, your mood is so strange… Even if I am a husband, Genia, I'm not a complete fool. Something isn't right here, that much I'm sure of. So—what was there between you two?

GENIA: You astonish me.

FRIEDRICH: Yes, I can see that. But you will admit that's no answer. Now don't misunderstand me, Genia. I'm not necessarily suggesting that anything actually occurred between you two. It might have been just a flirtation. That's more likely, in fact. If there had been anything else—why the suicide? Unless…there was something more—and you broke it off. *(He has spoken very quietly throughout, but now has seized her arm.)*

GENIA: *(Almost smiling.)* A jealous scene? Well!… You really ought to do something for your nerves, Friedrich.… You know it's not my fault that the affair between you and Adele Natter is over—with no one to take her place as of yet…

FRIEDRICH: Yes, you are very well informed. I won't ask how this knowledge may have reached you for the moment—but it's not my fault that you never asked me directly. I would have denied nothing. I certainly wouldn't have told you to do something for your nerves. That's not like you. Now why are you standing there like a statue, instead of giving me a reasonable answer? Don't you trust me? Really—don't think I'm pretending—I promise I'll understand—completely. After all, you certainly were entitled—whether it was Alexei or—well, there's no accounting for taste. Of course, in these matters, the wife is not generally guided by her husband's taste, anyway.

GENIA: Why do you deny him now? I thought he was your friend? Apparently you were deeply moved at the funeral today.

FRIEDRICH: Did Mauer tell you that too?

GENIA: No. It was Erna Wahl, in fact. She didn't think there was anything on earth that could affect you so.

FRIEDRICH: Ah, Erna, the reader of souls. Yes, I was deeply moved. I grieve over him as I have seldom grieved over anyone. And I would grieve all the same, if I knew with absolute certainty that he was—your lover. You can't possibly understand how irrelevant certain things are when one has just come home from the cemetery. I don't say this to reassure you, but because it's true. Now answer me. I won't let the matter rest until you do. So…yes or no?

GENIA: He was not my lover. Unfortunately, he was not my lover. Are you satisfied?

FRIEDRICH: Yes. Because now I know that he was. You've betrayed yourself. Don't you see? *"Unfortunately,"* you said. Obviously you loved him, so of course he was your lover. What would have stopped you? But you ended it, and he killed himself. Simple. As to why you ended it, that's even simpler. Because these things must always end, that's why. And besides, Percy will be home soon, and there may have been a certain—let's say—a feeling of decency… Well…very respectable. That makes it all clear, until we get to the idea of the trip to England…

GENIA: Don't give yourself any further trouble. Read. *(She takes a letter from her girdle.)*

FRIEDRICH: What do you want me to…?

GENIA: Read.

FRIEDRICH: What…a letter? From him? To you? —Keep it. I don't want it. No, that would be…Thank you. If you weren't intending to show me this letter, please keep it.

GENIA: Read!

FRIEDRICH: Why should I? You tell me what it says. Perhaps it's in Russian. And the handwriting. Bad for the eyes.

GENIA: Read!

FRIEDRICH: *(He begins reading silently. Looks up at her in astonishment.)* What? You had no idea that he…When did you get this?

GENIA: An hour before you brought me the news of his death.

FRIEDRICH: So you knew when I came home? …Well…at the risk of being taken for an idiot—I noticed nothing, absolutely nothing… *(Continues reading silently, then looks up again, in surprise; continues reading half-aloud.)* "Perhaps you were right to deny my presumptuous suit. Neither of us is versed in lying…certainly not you…in spite of all…" "In spite of all" …you must have complained about me a good deal.

(GENIA gives FRIEDRICH a questioning glance.)

FRIEDRICH: *(Reading.)* "That you do not want to leave Him"— with a capital H, very flattering—"to leave Him, in spite of all, I now understand. You love him, Genia, you still love your husband. That is the answer to the riddle. And perhaps what I described as…" I can't make out the rest.

GENIA: "…what I described as a foolish sense of loyalty…"

FRIEDRICH: Ah, you know it by heart, "…what I described as a foolish sense of loyalty is actually the hope that he will come back to you someday."

GENIA: His version. You know I neither hope nor wish—for anything.

FRIEDRICH: *(Gazes at her; continues.)* "When I spoke to you yesterday, I had already decided—" Yesterday?…Was he here on Sunday? Yes, I remember, you walked up and down together on the path back here…yes… *(Reads.)* "When I spoke to you yesterday, I had already decided that everything would depend on your answer. I said nothing, because I was afraid if you knew that it was absolutely impossible for me to live without you…" Somewhat explicit this Herr Alexei Ivanovitch…

(Music heard from the park, muffled.)

FRIEDRICH: *(Reads.)* "I did not want my happiness to result from compulsion, or pressure of any kind. Therefore…" Would you have said yes, if you had known that it was a matter of life and death?

GENIA: *If* I had known? Who can say?… I wouldn't have believed it. How could I have believed that?

FRIEDRICH: Let me put it another way.

(PAUL KREINDL, young, well dressed with a straining towards smartness, appears at the gate.)

PAUL: Good evening, sir…madam.

FRIEDRICH: Who is it?…Ah, you Paul.

PAUL: I hope I'm not intruding. I come as ambassador from the park; representing Frau von Wahl, Fraulein Erna, Ensign von Aigner, and Lieutenant Stanzides…

FRIEDRICH: Is Stanzides up and about already?

PAUL: …to inquire as to whether you would like to join them at the concert.

GENIA: Thank you, but Doctor Mauer is coming to dinner.

PAUL: Bring him with you, madam.

FRIEDRICH: I suppose you'll be staying in the park awhile.

PAUL: Till they put out the lights.

FRIEDRICH: Perhaps we'll come later… but I'm not promising.

GENIA: At any rate, please convey our thanks.

PAUL: Not at all. We should all be delighted. Madam, good evening; Herr Hofreiter, I beg a thousand pardons if I have intruded. *(Leaves.)*

(Pause.)

FRIEDRICH: Let me put it another way. Suppose you could bring him back to life—by proclaiming yourself ready…to be his…

GENIA: I don't know.

FRIEDRICH: But you just said, "*Unfortunately* he was not my lover." If you regret that he wasn't, you must have considered it. And now you question whether you would consent to be his, even to save his life… Why can't you admit it? If he had only waited a few days longer, you would have…you *did* love him.

GENIA: Not enough, apparently.

FRIEDRICH: You say that as if to blame… There's nothing I could have done about it, is there?

GENIA: No. Just me. I know that.

FRIEDRICH: And now you…regret…that you drove him to his death?

GENIA: His death is very painful to me. But as for regret, really I have nothing to regret. If he had told me what he was thinking…I would have persuaded him to be sensible…

FRIEDRICH: How?

GENIA: I would have made him promise…

FRIEDRICH: Oh, please! You wouldn't have made him promise—you would have become his lover…of course.

GENIA: I don't think so.

FRIEDRICH: Really!

GENIA: Oh, not for your sake. Not even for Percy's.

FRIEDRICH: Then why?

GENIA: For my own sake.

FRIEDRICH: I don't understand that.

GENIA: I couldn't have done it. God knows why. I couldn't.

(Pause.)

FRIEDRICH: Here is your letter, Genia.

(She takes it. MAUER enters.)

MAUER: Good evening. I hope I didn't keep you waiting.

FRIEDRICH: *(Moving towards him.)* Ah, Mauer. Well, Stanzides seems to be doing better. He's in the park at the concert.

MAUER: Yes, I took him there myself.

FRIEDRICH: Paul Kreindl has just been here, to invite us to come over after dinner.

GENIA: I'll go see whether dinner is ready.

FRIEDRICH: Genia, look…let's go to the park now. All of a sudden I have a hankering for music and a crowd. If it's all right with you, Mauer?

MAUER: Me?

GENIA: Please, you two go ahead—but I'd rather stay at home.

FRIEDRICH: No, there's no sense in that. Come with us, Genia—it will do you good, too.

GENIA: I would have to change.

FRIEDRICH: Fine—we'll wait.

GENIA: Is it that important to you?

FRIEDRICH: *(To MAUER.)* What do you say? *(Nervously.)* Well, then we'll all stay home…never mind.

GENIA: I'll be right down… I'll just put on my hat.

FRIEDRICH: *(After a pause.)* Yes, dear Mauer, yes, yes…

MAUER: Really, I don't understand you…a wife must find that sort of thing unpleasant.

FRIEDRICH: Oh, the food in the park is good enough. *(Pause.)* Perhaps it's just as well that you're going to town tonight. The chances of this house being haunted have increased considerably.

MAUER: Excuse me?

FRIEDRICH: You really don't deserve my confidence, the way you blurt out everything you know, even things I never told you.

MAUER: What do you mean?

FRIEDRICH: Well, how did Genia happen to learn that the affair with Adele Natter is over?

MAUER: You ought to be glad that it's possible to say something to your credit, every once in a while.

FRIEDRICH: I don't know whether that's particularly praiseworthy…Lord, Mauer, life is a rather complicated arrangement…but interesting…very interesting.

MAUER: What did you mean about the house being haunted?

FRIEDRICH: Oh, yes— Well, so what do you think was the reason that Korsakov killed himself? Go ahead, guess!—Unrequited love—for my wife. You're dumbfounded, eh? Unrequited love!… Who knew that such a thing existed? He left a letter for her. She showed it to me. A remarkable letter…not badly written…for a Russian.

(GENIA enters with hat. The music is heard more distinctly.)

GENIA: I'm ready. Now, Doctor, the truth is, it's on your account that I'm letting our perfectly good dinner go to waste. Erna is there in the park.

FRIEDRICH: Ah! Erna! *(To MAUER.)* That *would* be something. Well, Mauer, pull yourself together. There aren't many I wouldn't begrudge her to. Although apparently she thinks me heartless, and doesn't even believe that the death of a friend…

(They leave the garden and step out on the roadway.)

ACT II

The Hofreiter Villa. Adjacent portions of the garden. At left, rear facade of the house. Door leading into the garden. On either side of the door, two windows partly open. On the first story, a small balcony. A lawn in the center. Farther towards the right, a large walnut tree; beneath it, a bench, table, chairs. Farther back in the center, a clump of trees, through which, in the background, tennis court is visible. About the tennis court, a high wire netting with benches outside. Two small benches beside the main door, under the ground floor window. Hot, sunny, summer's day.

GENIA under the walnut tree in thin white gown, book in hand, but not reading. A game is in progress on the tennis court. At the left, FRIEDRICH HOFREITER and ADELE NATTER. To the right, ERNA WAHL and PAUL KREINDL. Now and then we hear the cries, "Fifteen," "Thirty," "Forty," "Out," "Deuce," "Second," etc.

OTTO VON AIGNER, in tennis costume, comes from behind the house with racquet in hand and is about to go to the tennis court. He sees GENIA and goes over to her. She greets him with a friendly nod.

OTTO: Good afternoon, madam—you're not playing?

GENIA: As you can see, Ensign. I don't stand a chance in that company.

(A ball falls at OTTO's feet. He returns it. Voices from the tennis court: "Thank you.")

OTTO: Not all champions there, by any means…Except your husband, of course.

Forgive me, madam, I'm interrupting your reading. *(About to leave for the court.)*

GENIA: Not at all, Otto. I tried to read, but I was about to fall asleep. The air…

OTTO: Yes, it's warm, but really the days are so fine. We can thoroughly enjoy our local forests.

GENIA: You've been for a nice long walk today, I presume.

OTTO: Yes, I was out quite early with my mother.

GENIA: She must be very happy having you home with her again.

OTTO: I'm happy to be with her… especially as this will be my last leave for a long time. I've been detailed to a ship that will be away for three years in the South Pacific.

GENIA: *(Conventionally.)* Oh.

OTTO: The war department has assigned our ship to a scientific expedition.

GENIA: I suppose you spend much of your leisure time studying.

OTTO: Why do you think that, madam?

GENIA: I can't imagine that a soldier's life would really satisfy you.

OTTO: *(Smiling.)* I think I might say, without exaggeration, that we Marines do a great variety of things that could be considered scientific.

GENIA: Of course—I don't doubt that. I only meant that you must have other interests outside of your profession.

OTTO: There isn't much time for anything else. I am hoping for an opportunity to become better acquainted with a field that I have only dabbled in so far. The expedition that we are connected to is equipped for deep-sea exploration. And as I'm friendly with one of the assistants… Ah, here is Frau von Wahl.

GENIA: *(Rising.)* You must tell me more about that, Ensign. About these deep-sea matters.

FRAU WAHL: *(Coming from the house into the garden.)* Good afternoon, dear Genia, Ensign. *(Raising her lorgnette.)* Youth is already busy at its work.

GENIA: If you count Friedrich among the youth.

FRAU WAHL: Him especially. Who else is playing? Adele Natter, of course. I saw the car outside. The red car. Here against the green background it's not so bad. Better than at the cemetery wall at any rate…

GENIA: *(Smiling languidly.)* That's an image you can't seem to forget.

FRAU WAHL: It was only two weeks ago.

(FRIEDRICH and ERNA come from the tennis court, racquets in hand.)

FRIEDRICH: *(With his mischievous smile.)* How are you, Mamma Wahl? Good afternoon, Otto. What was only two weeks ago?

FRAU WAHL: Poor Korsakov's funeral.

FRIEDRICH: As long as that? What in the world brings you to that black subject?

GENIA: The red car…Frau von Wahl saw the Natters' car outside.

FRIEDRICH: Ah.

ERNA: Who else would speak of a dead piano player on such a fine summer's day?

FRAU WAHL: Have you ever seen such a deep-natured girl? That's another of her performances on the philosophic high wire, as her poor father used to say.

FRIEDRICH: She had best take care lest she tumble off someday, our little Erna.

(ADELE NATTER, pretty, plump, clad in white, red belt, red scarf and PAUL KREINDL come from the tennis court carrying their racquets. Greetings.)

ADELE: So, aren't we playing anymore?

(PAUL KREINDL kisses FRAU WAHL's hand.)

FRIEDRICH: You might play singles.

ADELE: He thinks I don't play well enough for him.

PAUL: Not so! *(Whining.)* No one plays too poorly for me. I don't know what's the matter with me. I think I'm cursed. Maybe it's my new racquet. If you'll excuse me—I'm running home to get my old one. *(Leaves.)*

(The rest laugh.)

FRIEDRICH: What are you laughing at? At least he's serious about it. That's the important thing. Whether it's tennis, painting, or medicine. I consider a good tennis player to be a far nobler specimen of humanity than a mediocre poet or general. *(To OTTO.)* Don't you agree?

ADELE: When do you expect Percy home, Frau Genia?

GENIA: He should be here in two weeks. Then you must bring your children over to play, all right?

ADELE: Yes…of course, gladly. But I don't know whether your boy will stoop to play with the little devils—

(MAUER enters. With him, DEMETER STANZIDES in uniform. Greetings.)

GENIA: Lieutenant Stanzides! How good to see you here again.

FRIEDRICH: How's the arm?

STANZIDES: Thanks for asking. Our esteemed doctor has just examined it for the last time. *(Throws his arm in a friendly way about MAUER's shoulder.)* But it's not ready for tennis yet.

MAUER: All in good time.

STANZIDES: *(To ADELE.)* Are you ready for battle, madam? I just had the pleasure of running into your husband in the park.

FRIEDRICH: Well, Mauer, where have you been? We hardly see you anymore. I thought you left already.

MAUER: I've just come to say goodbye. I'm leaving tomorrow.

GENIA: Where to?

MAUER: Toblach. From there I go hiking.

FRIEDRICH: Why don't you take me with you, Mauer?

MAUER: Well, could you come, and would you?

FRIEDRICH: Why not? You leave tomorrow?

MAUER: In the morning by the express.

ERNA: *(To MAUER.)* And when shall we have the pleasure of your company at Völs Lake?

MAUER: In about a week, if you like.

FRIEDRICH: *(Honestly indignant.)* Ah, planning clandestine meetings…

ERNA: And without your permission.

FRAU WAHL: We're leaving the day after tomorrow.

(During the following, OTTO and GENIA stand side by side, and ADELE alone.)

FRAU WAHL: Do you know who is managing the new hotel? Doctor von Aigner. And they say he's turning all the women's heads there in spite of his gray hairs.

FRIEDRICH: Yes, the ladies have always been putty in his hands—so be careful, Mamma Wahl.

(PAUL enters.)

PAUL: Well, I'm back. With my old racquet. At least with this I know what I'm holding.

FRIEDRICH: Well, back at it then. But now no excuses, otherwise you'll have to take up another vocation—law, cutting hair—

(FRIEDRICH, ERNA, ADELE, OTTO, and PAUL to the tennis court. FRAU WAHL and STANZIDES follow.)

GENIA: Shall we go watch the game? Erna looks her best on a tennis court.

MAUER: *(Remains standing.)* Don't you get the impression that she doesn't care two straws for me?

GENIA: That's the best foundation for a happy marriage.

MAUER: Yes, if the indifference were mutual. *(Breaking off.)* Listen, do you think Friedrich is serious about joining me?

GENIA: I—I don't know. I was a little surprised myself. He's been working night and day the last two weeks—so he's earned a rest. But he wouldn't have to—he probably wasn't serious. No, I don't imagine he'll go with you.

MAUER: And what's the latest about America?

GENIA: Friedrich is going, that much is certain.

MAUER: And you?

GENIA: Possibly. *(Smiling.)* Yes, dear friend, possibly.

MAUER: You'll both go? Splendid, I'm so glad.

GENIA: I said possibly.

MAUER: Possibly will soon be definitely. It would be too stupid if Korsakov were to have died in vain.

GENIA: *(Taken aback.)* If Korsakov—? What do you mean?

MAUER: I have come to believe that Korsakov was destined by fate to be a sacrifice.

GENIA: *(More and more astonished.)* A sacrifice?

MAUER: For you—and your happiness.

GENIA: Do you really believe in such things?

MAUER: Oh, I don't know that I believe in them. But I do feel a sort of mysterious connection here. Hasn't it occurred to you?

GENIA: To me? To tell the truth, I think very little about that sad business. And when I do, it's faded and distant, honestly—quite distant. I can't make myself any better or more sensitive than I am. Maybe that will change. Perhaps in the fall. Perhaps these summer days are too bright for sadness and dejection. I can't seem to take anything too seriously. For example, I simply can't harbor any resentment against dear Adele. I just asked her to bring her children here sometime. It seems absurd to bear a grudge against her or anyone else. I find her rather touching, actually. Somehow, she strikes me as being long dead without knowing it.

MAUER: *(Gazing long at her.)* Well—

(Pause.)

MAUER: Friedrich seems to be behaving sensibly, at last. Of course it isn't difficult, when what is sensible is also what makes you happy, as in this case. But if he doesn't understand how to stick to it—

GENIA: *(Rapidly.)* There is nothing to stick to. You seem to have misunderstood me. Nothing has changed between us.

MAUER: But it will. It's impossible to stay angry with him, our Friedrich. Look at me, no matter how annoyed I am with him—when he begins to work his charm, I'm completely at his mercy.

GENIA: That isn't my way. I must be wooed, wooed with great patience.

(GENIA exits as OTTO, FRIEDRICH, ADELE, STANZIDES, ERNA, FRAU WAHL, and PAUL return from the court.)

PAUL: *(As they approach, to ERNA.)* Truly, Fraulein—I swear—your service—first class.

FRIEDRICH: And her backhand? But then she learned her game from me.

ERNA: Which, you will pardon me, teacher, was a mixed blessing.

FRIEDRICH: Oh?

ERNA: *(To the others, particularly PAUL.)* He scolded me constantly. And if I let up the least little bit—he treated me as if I were a hopeless disgrace.

FRIEDRICH: *(Casually.)* These things are closely linked with character, in my opinion.

GENIA: *(In the doorway.)* Excuse me, ladies and gentlemen, tea is ready. And there are ices.

(FRAU WAHL enters the house with STANZIDES; GENIA with OTTO; PAUL, ERNA, and MAUER follow.)

FRIEDRICH: *(To ADELE, as she is about to enter the house.)* I'm afraid I haven't had a chance today to ask how you are. I trust you're well?

ADELE: Splendid. And you?

FRIEDRICH: Not bad. Busy, of course. We're building again. Next year, we'll have six hundred employees, and in the fall I'm going across to America.

ADELE: Oh?

FRIEDRICH: It doesn't seem to interest you, Adele.

ADELE: Well, I knew all that from my husband. I'd like to suggest that we use less familiar terms with each other. Over means over. I believe that relationships should be clear.

FRIEDRICH: Must they be clear, too? I didn't know that.

ADELE: None of your jokes, now, if you please. We should be thankful that it ended quietly. The time for youthful follies is over for both of us, I think. My children are growing up and your boy, too.

FRIEDRICH: Yes, nothing we can do about that.

ADELE: And if you'll allow me to offer a word of advice…

FRIEDRICH: I'm listening.

ADELE: *(Changing her tone.)* Now, seriously—The way you flirt with that little Wahl girl is shameless. For heaven's sake don't take this for jealousy. It's your wife I'm thinking about, not you.

FRIEDRICH: *(Amused.)* Ah!

ADELE: She really is the most charming, the most touching creature I have ever met. When she asked me to bring the children—did you hear her? I almost sank into the ground.

FRIEDRICH: I'm afraid I missed that.

ADELE: If I had known her better—well—honestly you don't deserve her.

FRIEDRICH: I can't say I disagree with you. But if things on this earth went according to deserts…

ADELE: And as for Erna—be careful.

FRIEDRICH: Really I don't know what's put this idea into your head. In fact, you're putting ideas into mine. A girl that I've bounced on my knee.

ADELE: That has nothing to do with it. Girls of that sort come in all ages.

FRIEDRICH: Ah, yes, Adele—without thinking particularly of Erna, thanks for the suggestion—it really would be splendid.

ADELE: What would be splendid?

FRIEDRICH: To be young again.

ADELE: You've been so long enough.

FRIEDRICH: Yes, but I was so too soon. I'm only just now beginning to understand what it means to be young. If we could begin our youth now, then we could really get something out of it. The truth is, Adele, I have a feeling that everything that has happened so far has just been a rehearsal. And life and love are just beginning.

ADELE: I really can't understand you. There is more to this life than just—ourselves.

FRIEDRICH: Yes, oh yes—the gaps between one love affair and the next. If one has the time and inclination, he builds factories, conquers empires, writes symphonies, and becomes a millionaire…but, take my word for it, all that is secondary. The essential thing is you!—You!—You!

ADELE: *(Shaking her head.)* To think that there are people who take you seriously.

(HERR NATTER comes in. A tall, rather well-built man in fashionable summer attire.)

NATTER: Hello, Adele. Good afternoon, Hofreiter.

FRIEDRICH: Hello, Natter.

ADELE: *(In a very friendly manner.)* Where have you been wandering about?

NATTER: I'm sorry, my child. I've been sitting in the park, reading. It's my only opportunity. Tell me, Hofreiter, is there anything more enjoyable than to sit under a tree and read?

FRIEDRICH: Depends…What were you reading?

NATTER: You'll laugh. A new Sherlock Holmes. Really wonderful. Gripping, in fact.

(MAUER and ERNA come from the house. Greetings.)

ERNA: *(To FRIEDRICH.)* Another match?

FRIEDRICH: Absolutely. *(To NATTER.)* Will you have tea with us? We were just about—

NATTER: Thank you. Is Lieutenant Stanzides still here?

FRIEDRICH: Yes, of course.

NATTER: I want to invite him to go to the theater with us. *(To ADELE.)* If you don't mind. I took a box for tonight in the Arena Theater.

(MAUER and ERNA walk towards the right.)

FRIEDRICH: Does that touring trash amuse you?

NATTER: Why not?

ADELE: There isn't anything that doesn't amuse him. There is no more appreciative audience than my husband.

NATTER: Yes, it's true. I find life highly amusing. I enjoy myself royally. Always. Every chance I get.

(FRIEDRICH, ADELE, and NATTER enter the house.)

ERNA: How did the accident happen?

MAUER: Apparently a stone came loose under his feet. They were descending Mount Aigner. Friedrich was in front. Suddenly he hears an odd rumble overhead. And then these tremendous boulders crash past him and then, poor Bernhaupt himself. Close enough to touch. Friedrich doesn't like to talk about it. He may act as if he were above it all, but it made a strong impression on him.

ERNA: You think so?

MAUER: Well, he hasn't been climbing since.

ERNA: So, this year we'll climb Mount Aigner.

MAUER: You had better think twice about that.

ERNA: I always do that before I speak. Once I've set my mind on a thing, nothing can stop me. If you want, I promise to wait until you join us at Völs Lake.

MAUER: Do you really want me to?

ERNA: Of course. I take you on as guide with the usual fee.

MAUER: I never presumed that I might lay claim to more.

ERNA: Was that meant to be wistful, Doctor Mauer, or merely witty?

MAUER: Shall I come to Völs Lake, Fraulein Erna? Yes or no?

ERNA: I see no reason for you to change your original plan.

MAUER: Is it really impossible for you to give me a straight answer?

ERNA: It isn't easy. *(She sits under the walnut tree.)* You know I like you. Yes, you should come. It will give us an opportunity to get better acquainted. But you shouldn't consider yourself obligated, any more than I will.

MAUER: Very wisely spoken.

ERNA: There's wiser coming. I assume, like all unmarried men, you have a lady friend of sorts. Well, you shouldn't be in a hurry…I mean, don't get the idea that after this conversation you owe me anything like fidelity.

MAUER: Your friendly advice comes too late, I'm afraid. Of course, I won't deny that like other men, I…but I've ended it already. I hate messiness in these matters—I find it offensive.

ERNA: You're a good man, Doctor Mauer. It seems that if a girl were to entrust her fate to you, she would be anchored safe in the harbor. And nothing else could happen to her.

MAUER: So I hope.

ERNA: Only I don't know if that's particularly desirable. For me, at any rate. Truthfully, Doctor Mauer, I think I want something more from existence than a safe harbor; something better or worse, I can't say for sure.

MAUER: I hope you won't think me naïve if I believe that there are many fine things that might be yours at my side, even the very finest things. There is more to life than adventures of a certain kind.

ERNA: Why, did I—?

MAUER: You didn't say so, but that's what you feel. And no wonder—in the atmosphere that surrounds us here. But believe me, a healthier atmosphere does exist, where the air is pure. I am sure that you could learn to breathe in it, freely and deeply.

ERNA: You are courageous, Doctor. I like you—I do, indeed. Come to Völs Lake. We'll see.

(ADELE, NATTER, and STANZIDES come out of the house. After them, GENIA, OTTO, PAUL, FRIEDRICH, and FRAU WAHL.)

STANZIDES: I used to watch the performance, from above the auditorium—a bird's-eye view from the hill behind the arena.

ADELE: That must be fun.

STANZIDES: Fun—I don't know. It's odd. Of course you only see a small part of the picture—You can hardly see the actors at all. Here and there you get a disjointed word. But the strangest thing happens when a familiar voice suddenly penetrates the jumble—for example, perhaps you know a lady in the cast. Then suddenly you can

understand the words. Nothing of what anyone else says; but you can understand the voice of an acquaintance perfectly.

ADELE: *(Laughing.)* An acquaintance!

FRIEDRICH: One shouldn't call a lover an acquaintance, Stanzides. Say stranger; that would be more accurate.

ADELE: If you want to be discreet, say friend.

FRIEDRICH: Or enemy.

ERNA: If you are indiscreet.

FRAU WAHL: Erna!

NATTER: It's getting late—we'll have to leave now if we are going to see any of the play. Please don't let us disturb you.

(NATTER, ADELE, and STANZIDES leave.)

PAUL: *(To OTTO.)* Last year, I once played for nine hours at a stretch with Doctor Herz. First for four hours, then we had an omelet, and then… *(Continues talking to OTTO.)*

MAUER: *(Preparing to go.)* My time has come as well. *(To GENIA.)* Madam…

FRIEDRICH: What's the rush? Wait another fifteen minutes, and I'll go with you.

MAUER: Are you serious?

FRIEDRICH: Of course. You'll wait?

GENIA: You're going with him? You're going to the city tonight?

FRIEDRICH: Yes, I think that's best. All the things I need for the mountains are there and then we can leave together in the morning.

MAUER: Excellent.

(FRIEDRICH rushes into the house. ERNA has been listening. GENIA gazes after FRIEDRICH.)

MAUER: He is a man of impulse.

(GENIA is silent.)

PAUL: Well, let's make the most of the last rays of the evening sun.

(ERNA, OTTO, PAUL, and FRAU WAHL leave for the tennis court. After a moment of reflection, MAUER follows. GENIA stands rigid; suddenly, as she is about to enter the house, FRAU MEINHOLD approaches her. She is about forty-four, looking her age, her features somewhat worn, figure still youthful.)

FRAU MEINHOLD: Good evening.

GENIA: Oh, Frau Meinhold, I was afraid you weren't coming. I'm very glad to see you. Come, have a seat—here's your favorite spot.

FRAU MEINHOLD: Thank you.

GENIA: Or would you rather go to the tennis court? They're still playing; you like to watch, don't you?

FRAU MEINHOLD: It's you I've come to see, dear Frau Genia. I'm not disturbing you, am I? You seem a little— Weren't you just going in?

GENIA: No, not at all. It's just—My husband is going to town with Doctor Mauer. Out of the blue, they're going off hiking together. An hour ago, he had no idea of going anywhere. But the doctor came in to say goodbye and spoke of his plans, and Friedrich was suddenly taken with the idea of wandering the hills again as in bygone days. So off he goes. *(Glances towards the balcony.)*

FRAU MEINHOLD: Then my coming is inconvenient. I'm sure you have much to discuss with your husband.

GENIA: Oh, no, he's only going for a short time. And we are not sentimental, believe me.

FRAU MEINHOLD: Soon Percy will be home with you.

GENIA: Oh, my husband will be back before that. Percy won't be here for another two weeks.

FRAU MEINHOLD: You're looking forward to his coming, I'm sure.

GENIA: As you can imagine, Frau Meinhold. I haven't seen him since Christmas. Not an easy thing, to have your only child among strangers. But you have a similar story to tell, Frau Meinhold.

FRAU MEINHOLD: Yes.

GENIA: And now your son is going away for several years.

FRAU MEINHOLD: Yes, three years, probably, and far, very far.

GENIA: To the South Pacific—he told me about it. But I think that you must be better off than I am. You have your profession. A noble profession that fills your life. That must help a good deal.

FRAU MEINHOLD: A good deal. Oh, yes.

GENIA: Doesn't it? For a woman to be just a mother—it doesn't really seem sensible. You never would have consented to Otto joining the Marines if you were nothing more than a mother.

FRAU MEINHOLD: *(Simply.)* And what if I hadn't consented?

GENIA: He would have stayed with you. Surely. If you wanted him to, if you asked. He loves you so much. He could have gone into something else. I can just see him as a squire, or—a scholar.

FRAU MEINHOLD: The question is whether that would have made him any more mine than he is now, when he is to sail across the sea.

GENIA: Oh…!

FRAU MEINHOLD: I don't think so. *(Not sadly.)* One can't disabuse oneself too soon of the notion that we ever really possess our children. Especially sons. They have us, we do not have them. I think when our children are under our roofs we are even more painfully conscious of the feeling. When they are small they would sell us for a toy—and later, for still less.

GENIA: *(Shaking her head.)* That is—really— May I say something to you, Frau Meinhold?

FRAU MEINHOLD: *(Smiling.)* Why not? We're just chatting.

GENIA: I asked myself recently, when you made, please forgive me, an equally bleak remark about humanity in general, whether your rather tragic view of life didn't result from the roles that you play?

FRAU MEINHOLD: *(Smiling.)* Tragic? Do I give that impression?

GENIA: I only know that my view of life seems less cynical than yours. I like to believe, for example, that I will always mean a great deal to Percy—a very great deal. And you have every reason, I believe, to cherish a similar hope. Your son seems to me an exceptionally devoted— a…I'm sure that he worships you.

FRAU MEINHOLD: *(Smiling.)* Let us say so.

GENIA: And if he should someday sell you, as you put it, it will be for nothing mean. And only then, I believe, might the relationship between mother and child change a little. *(After a little reflection.)* No, not even then.

FRAU MEINHOLD: *(After a slight pause.)* You seem to forget—he is a man. How can anyone predict…even sons become men. *(With bitterness.)* I think you must have some idea of what that means.

(GENIA casts down her eyes. FRIEDRICH appears above on the balcony.)

FRIEDRICH: I hear a familiar voice, a noble voice. Ha, I knew it. Greetings, Frau Meinhold.

FRAU MEINHOLD: Good evening, Herr Hofreiter.

GENIA: Is there something you need, Friedrich?

FRIEDRICH: Oh, no, thank you. I'll be down in a moment. I'm going away.

FRAU MEINHOLD: Yes, Frau Genia has told me.

FRIEDRICH: Well, au revoir— *(Leaves the balcony.)*

GENIA: May I say something else?

FRAU MEINHOLD: *(Smiling.)* Why do you always ask permission?

GENIA: You are so sure of yourself, what you say is so irrefutable, it's impressive. I think you see the world very clearly… Obviously you understand people…but aren't you… aren't you a little unjust?

FRAU MEINHOLD: That may be, Frau Genia…but after all that is a woman's only revenge.

(GENIA gives her a questioning glance.)

FRAU MEINHOLD: The only revenge for an injustice committed against her in the past.

GENIA: But everlasting punishment of a past injury—isn't that too much?

FRAU MEINHOLD: *(Bitterly.)* Some things can never be forgotten. *(Pause.)* Does that seem tragic to you? You're probably thinking, "What sort of tale is she telling me, this aging comedienne? What is it that she wants? Long ago she left her husband and after that, the rumor is, she made her life to her own liking. She certainly never seemed to regret the separation. What does she want?" Am I right? Isn't that what you are thinking?

GENIA: *(Somewhat embarrassed.)* Obviously, you had the right to live as you pleased.

FRAU MEINHOLD: Of course I had. That's another story. And I don't want anyone to think that I'm still pained by that stale affair—or indignant— Only—well, I haven't forgotten it, that's all. But just think what I have forgotten since. Joy and sorrow…forgotten—as if they had never been. And what I can't forget is what my husband did more than twenty years ago. So it must have meant something. I think of it without pain, without anger—I simply know it, that's all. But I know it as I knew it the first day, just as clearly, just as finally, just as irrevocably. That is what I mean.

(FRIEDRICH comes down in gray traveling suit; very brisk and animated. Kisses FRAU MEINHOLD's hand.)

FRIEDRICH: I am glad of the opportunity to say goodbye to you, madam.

FRAU MEINHOLD: Will you be away long?

FRIEDRICH: That depends to some extent on how urgently I am needed here. I mean at the factory.

(OTTO, PAUL, ERNA, FRAU WAHL, and MAUER come back from the tennis court. Exchange greetings.)

OTTO: Good evening, Mother. *(Kisses her hand.)*

FRAU MEINHOLD: Good evening, Otto.

FRIEDRICH: Well, Paul, how did it go?

PAUL: Don't ask, please. From now on, I only play with the instructor.

MAUER: Are you ready?

FRIEDRICH: Yes. Ladies and gentlemen, *(Shakes hands with each one.)* —Genia…

GENIA: Excuse me, Doctor, may I borrow my husband for a moment?

MAUER: Why—

(PAUL, MAUER, ERNA, FRAU MEINHOLD, OTTO, and FRAU WAHL leave them.)

FRIEDRICH: You have something to say, Genia?

GENIA: Only that I'm a little astonished. I had no idea that you wanted to leave today.

FRIEDRICH: Nor did I, my child.

GENIA: Really?

FRIEDRICH: That it would be tonight, certainly not. If Mauer hadn't come in— But you knew I wanted to go to the mountains for a few days. Now whether it's today or tomorrow or the day after…I see no reason for astonishment.

GENIA: *(Stroking her forehead.)* Of course. You're right. It's only that it was never discussed.

(Constrained pause.)

FRIEDRICH: I'll wire every day, here as well as the office. And you'll send me all the news. And if anything comes from Percy, send it out, even if it's only addressed to his "dear mother"… Yes, my child. Now—Mauer must really be getting impatient.

GENIA: Why—why—are you leaving?

FRIEDRICH: *(A trifle impatient, but not angry.)* Now, it seems to me I've answered that already.

GENIA: You know quite well that you haven't answered anything.

FRIEDRICH: I'm not accustomed to being questioned in my own home, Genia.

GENIA: Of course, you're not obligated to account to me, but I don't know why you should refuse to answer me.

FRIEDRICH: Well, my dear child, if you insist that I be explicit, very well. I haven't been feeling myself for some time. That will probably pass—surely it will pass—but right now I feel the need for a change of atmosphere. At any rate, I need to get away from here.

GENIA: From here? From me!

FRIEDRICH: From you, Genia, why I didn't—but if you insist—all right, from you, yes.

GENIA: But why? What have I done to you?

FRIEDRICH: Nothing…Who says you've done anything?

GENIA: Friedrich, please. I am…I was prepared for anything except that you should… all of a sudden…From day to day—from hour to hour—I've been expecting that we would talk things over.

FRIEDRICH: Yes, I could see that, Genia. Yes. But I think it's too soon for—talk. There are too many things that are still unclear to me.

GENIA: What isn't clear? You had the letter in your hand. You read it. If you had any doubts before that—which I never believed—since that night, for heaven's sake, Friedrich, since that evening, it must be clear to you how unfair…God, is it really necessary to put it into words?

FRIEDRICH: No. Of course not. That's just it. That evening—yes. Since then, it has seemed to me, forgive me—I know it wasn't your intention—but I can't help feeling that, you were… *(Hesitates.)*

GENIA: Yes—?

FRIEDRICH: That you were holding Korsakov's suicide over me, unconsciously of course. And that—well, that makes me a bit anxious.

GENIA: Friedrich! Are you…! God! How can you…?

FRIEDRICH: I think you can't help it. I know it's not your intention. You're certainly

not proud of the fact that he—that because of you, well, that you drove him—I know you are not self-righteous about your fidelity. I am aware of all that.

GENIA: Well, if you know that…

FRIEDRICH: Yes, but that it happened at all…

GENIA: What? What?

FRIEDRICH: That he killed himself… That's the terrible thing. The thing I can't get over.

GENIA: That he… *(Her hand goes to her forehead.)*

FRIEDRICH: Yes, yes, now think about it—No matter how you look at it…The reason that Korsakov is rotting in his grave is you. Of course, you are innocent—in both senses—another man might kneel before you, worship you—like a saint—for that very reason…But I'm different…To me, you have become, because of that…become… like a stranger…

GENIA: Friedrich!…a stranger…Friedrich!

FRIEDRICH: Now if you had found him unattractive, that would be one thing. But you liked him…One might even say that you were a little in love with him. Or—if I…had deserved…if you owed me… loyalty…but, I really had no claim to that—We needn't go into that now. But I keep asking myself over and over again: Why did he have to die?

GENIA: Friedrich!

FRIEDRICH: And it's this thought—the thought that something, something which is in fact nothing, a shadow, a phantom, a trifle, at least when weighed against something as terrible and irrevocable as death—the thought that your virtue has driven a man to his death—it's simply appalling—to me. I can't put it any other way…well…I'm sure it will pass in time…in the mountains… when we've been separated for a few weeks…but now—well, there it is and I can't help it… That's the way I feel…

(GENIA is silent.)

FRIEDRICH: I hope you won't hold it against me that, at your insistence, I have expressed all of this so clearly. So clearly, that even while saying it, it has almost ceased to be true…

GENIA: Oh, it's still true.

(The others come slowly nearer.)

MAUER: *(In the lead.)* Pardon me, Friedrich, but—I have something to do in the city before… Perhaps you might take a later train.

FRIEDRICH: No, I'm ready.

FRAU WAHL: Well, a pleasant trip and au revoir but, let us hope, not goodbye.

ERNA: Until we meet at Völs Lake.

FRAU WAHL: Do you know what would be splendid, Frau Genia? If you came too.

ERNA: Yes, Frau Genia!

GENIA: Impossible, unfortunately. Percy is coming.

FRIEDRICH: But not so soon. *(To MAUER.)* When will we get there?

MAUER: In about eight or ten days, I think.

FRIEDRICH: Yes, that would be an idea. Really, consider it, Genia.

GENIA: I…will think it over.

MAUER: And now goodbye, Frau Genia. *(Takes leave of the others also.)*

FRIEDRICH: Goodbye, ladies and gentlemen. And what are you all going to do tonight?

PAUL: I have an idea. How about a moonlight party to Holy Cross?

ERNA: Count me in.

FRAU WAHL: You're going to walk?

FRIEDRICH: Oh that won't be necessary. I'll send back the car from the depot.

PAUL: Three cheers for our noble benefactor.

FRIEDRICH: No applause, please. And now goodbye. Enjoy yourselves, all of you. Goodbye Genia.

(He takes GENIA's hand again; she lets it fall listlessly. FRIEDRICH and MAUER leave through the house. GENIA stands rigid. PAUL, ERNA, and FRAU WAHL stand side by side. OTTO and FRAU MEINHOLD have exchanged a quick, significant glance.)

OTTO: *(To GENIA, as he is about to leave.)* We must also—

GENIA: *(Agitated, speaking rapidly.)* Are you going? And you madam? But why? There's room for all of us in the car.

ERNA: Absolutely. Herr Kreindl will sit in front with the chauffeur.

PAUL: With rapture.

OTTO: I'd just like to point out, a moonlight party will present some difficulties. It's a new moon.

ERNA: The stars will do, Ensign.

FRAU MEINHOLD: *(Looking skyward.)* I'm afraid you'll have to do without them too.

ERNA: Then we'll plunge boldly into the dark.

GENIA: Yes, Erna, perhaps that will be the most fun. *(She laughs loudly.)*

ACT III

Lobby of the Hotel Völs Lake. Entrance in front, left. At the right, opposite the entrance, a lift, on either side of which are stairs leading upward. The background consists of a broad alcove with glass windows. A view of forest, hill, and mountain scenery. At rear right, the door leading to the dining room. By the entrance, a long table, raised, on which are timetables, etc. Behind it, a practical wooden wall with small compartments for letters and room keys. In the lobby as well as in the alcove, tables, chairs, and couches. Newspapers on the tables. Behind the table at the entrance stands ROSENSTOCK, the porter, a red-cheeked, youngish man with small black moustache, black hair, shrewd, good-natured eyes, obliging and self-possessed, noting memoranda in a small book. A young HIKER—knapsack, mountain staff, enters.

HIKER: Good morning. Good evening, rather.

ROSENSTOCK: Honored.

HIKER: Tell me, do you have a room with a comfortable bed?

ROSENSTOCK: May I ask your name?

HIKER: Ah—must one be introduced here? Bogenheimer, law student at Halle, born in Merseburg, Protestant-Episcopal.

ROSENSTOCK: *(Very politely and with a slight smile.)* I only wanted to ask if the gentleman has reserved a room.

HIKER: No, I haven't.

ROSENSTOCK: *(Very courteously.)* Then I'm very sorry. There is nothing available.

HIKER: Nothing at all? You're an evil man. Not even a straw litter that I might snuggle into?

ROSENSTOCK: No, I'm sorry.

HIKER: What am I going to do? I've been hiking for fourteen hours.

ROSENSTOCK: *(Sympathetically.)* That's a long time.

HIKER: Long indeed. I'll not stir from this spot. Do you hear, Cerberus? I'll not stir.

ROSENSTOCK: Yes, sir. The spacious hall has room for all.

HIKER: Ah, a poet.

ROSENSTOCK: Only in emergencies.

HIKER: My present situation, exactly.

ROSENSTOCK: Perhaps the gentleman would like to try the Alpenrose…

HIKER: Is that a hotel, too?

ROSENSTOCK: In a manner of speaking.

HIKER: Do you think they'll have anything?

ROSENSTOCK: They always do.

HIKER: All right then, Cerberus, I'll try to pluck the Alpenrose. *(Exits.)*

(PAUL KREINDL enters wearing a fashionable traveling suit, and carrying a tennis racquet with case.)

PAUL: Good day.

ROSENSTOCK: Honored, Herr von Kreindl.

PAUL: Is that you, my dear Rosenstock? Are you working here now? What will the Semmering do without you?

ROSENSTOCK: One climbs, Herr von Kreindl. From three thousand to forty-two hundred…feet…

PAUL: Well, have you got anything for me?

ROSENSTOCK: Certainly. But nothing below the fourth floor. If Herr von Kreindl had only telegraphed a day earlier—

PAUL: I don't mind if it's on the sixth floor. What's your elevator for, anyway?

ROSENSTOCK: When she happens to be working. Some of your friends are here already. Herr von Hofreiter is here, Frau von Wahl, her daughter, Doctor Mauer.

PAUL: *(After each name.)* Yes…Yes…Yes. Oh, Rosenstock, don't tell Herr Hofreiter that I've come. Don't tell anyone. I want to surprise them.

ROSENSTOCK: Herr Hofreiter has been out climbing since yesterday.

PAUL: Something big?

ROSENSTOCK: Oh, no. He gave that up seven years ago. They went to the Hofbrand Lodge. Fraulein Wahl is with them, too. Here comes her mother now.

PAUL: Good afternoon, madam.

FRAU WAHL: Ah, good day, Paul. *(To ROSENSTOCK.)* Aren't they back yet?

ROSENSTOCK: Not yet, madam.

FRAU WAHL: *(To PAUL.)* I'm in despair. Well, not exactly in despair but seriously concerned. Erna's been out since yesterday. She was supposed to be back by lunch and already it's five o' clock and she still isn't here. I've just been up to her room—in close proximity to the heavens, of course. Always her way. I'm beside myself.

PAUL: But aren't the others with her?

FRAU WAHL: Yes.

PAUL: Then I'm sure nothing will happen. Now, please, madam, don't tell anyone I'm here. I'd like it to be a surprise. *(Disappointed.)* I didn't succeed in your case, unfortunately.

FRAU WAHL: You must excuse me today, my dear Paul, I'm rather preoccupied. What's new in Baden? Is Genia coming out?

PAUL: Frau Hofreiter? She didn't say anything about it. I just saw her the day before yesterday. A group of us were at the Arena Theater. I'll tell you more later. At the moment, I must give some attention to the external man. After a night on the train and six hours on a wagon… *(To ROSENSTOCK.)* Lord, what connections!

ROSENSTOCK: In another three years, a train will bring you directly here, Herr von Kreindl. Our manager is going to Vienna soon to see the cabinet minister.

PAUL: That's a good idea. You'll send my things upstairs, Rosenstock? This, I'll keep in my right hand. *(Referring to his racquet.)*

ROSENSTOCK: Yes, Herr von Kreindl.

PAUL: Good. Well, until later, madam. And you won't say anything, will you? *(Takes the elevator.)*

ROSENSTOCK: *(To FRAU WAHL.)* Madam needn't be so concerned. They did take a guide.

FRAU WAHL: A guide? A guide to the Hofbrand Lodge? You said there was no need for a guide to make the Hofbrand Lodge. Don't you think that's strange?

ROSENSTOCK: Oh, it's only to carry the knapsacks. And besides your daughter is a splendid climber.

FRAU WAHL: So was Bernhaupt.

ROSENSTOCK: Yes. "Between my head and my hand, there is always the face of death."

FRAU WAHL: Well—Excuse me…?

ROSENSTOCK: Oh…No reference to your daughter, of course.

FRAU WAHL: I left a book here somewhere, Rosenstock. Yellow binding—Ah, here it is. I think I'll sit for a while and read…if I can.

ROSENSTOCK: Yes, a book will distract you, madam.

SERKNITZ: *(Comes from the staircase, carelessly dressed, tourist's shirt with pleats. To ROSENSTOCK.)* Any letters?

(FRAU WAHL sits down at one of the tables.)

ROSENSTOCK: Not yet, Herr von Serknitz. In about a half-hour.

SERKNITZ: The mail has been in for some time.

ROSENSTOCK: But it must be sorted, Herr von Serknitz.

SERKNITZ: Sorted! I'll sit down there and sort the whole batch for you in fifteen minutes. If I took as long to sort mail in my office at home—That's your Austrian dawdling. And then you complain about poor business.

ROSENSTOCK: We're not complaining, Herr von Serknitz. We're completely full.

SERKNITZ: You don't deserve the climate, I swear.

ROSENSTOCK: And yet we have it, Herr von Serknitz.

SERKNITZ: You needn't bother with the formality. I'm not so easily flattered. Besides it wasn't the mail I wanted to ask you about. It was my laundry.

ROSENSTOCK: Pardon me, Herr Serknitz, I have nothing to do with that…

SERKNITZ: Nor anyone else, apparently. The girl upstairs directed me to the front desk. I've been waiting three days for my wash.

ROSENSTOCK: I'm really very sorry. Here's the manager. *(Gestures offstage.)*

SERKNITZ: With a young lady, as usual. Yesterday it was somebody else. Have you any idea how he carries on around here?

(DOCTOR VON AIGNER enters, a man over fifty; courteous, not without affectation.)

SERKNITZ: Pardon me, sir—

AIGNER: *(With forced affability.)* Just one moment, please. *(To ROSENSTOCK.)* Rosenstock, the honorable Herr Wondra will be here tomorrow instead of Thursday and requires four rooms, as you know.

ROSENSTOCK: Four rooms, sir, for tomorrow. How am I going to manage that? I'll have to…Pardon me, sir, but I'll have to murder a few guests.

AIGNER: Very well, Rosenstock. But try to do it quietly. *(To SERKNITZ, introducing himself.)* Doctor von Aigner. What can I do for you?

SERKNITZ: *(With some embarrassment, which he strives to conceal beneath an assumed ease.)* —I…I must express my indignation… or at least my dissatisfaction— *(Breaking out.)* The conditions here are outrageous.

AIGNER: Well, I am sorry. What seems to be the problem, Herr Serknitz?

SERKNITZ: I can't get my wash. I've been trying for three days. I find myself in the greatest embarrassment.

AIGNER: So I see. Hadn't you better talk to the chambermaid?

SERKNITZ: You're the manager. I come to you. I always appeal to the highest tribunal. You can't imagine that I enjoy appearing like this among your countesses and dollar princesses.

AIGNER: Excuse me, Herr Serknitz, but there isn't the least obligation here as far as dress is concerned.

SERKNITZ: Do you suppose I don't notice the preferential treatment accorded some of your guests?

AIGNER: My dear sir!

SERKNITZ: I'm speaking frankly, my dear sir. If instead of Herr Serknitz of Breslau, you had a Lord Chamberlain or His Excellency Herr von Bulow before you, you would adopt a different tone, I'm sure. Yes, Herr Manager, sir, you ought to hang up a sign in front of your door: In this hotel, human beings begin at the rank of baron, bank director, or American.

AIGNER: That wouldn't be in accordance with the truth, Herr Serknitz.

SERKNITZ: Do you think because I didn't arrive in a motorcar I'm not entitled to the same consideration as any trust magnate or cabinet minister? I'll not tolerate disrespect from any man, whether he wears a monocle or not.

AIGNER: *(Calm throughout.)* If anything in my personal attitude should displease you, Herr Serknitz, you will find me at your service, of course.

SERKNITZ: Ha! Now you want to fight a duel? Is that it? Perfect! You really should have that patented. A man complains that he can't get his shirts, so of course, he must be shot at twenty paces. Look, if you believe that you are furthering the interests of your hotel with this behavior, you are making a serious mistake. I'd leave this ridiculous place, this Eldorado of snobs, strutters, and stock market strivers with express speed, if I were willing to make you a present of my wash. Which I am not. Good day, sir.

AIGNER: Good day, Herr Serknitz. *(Approaches FRAU WAHL to whom he has already nodded a greeting during the conversation.)* Madam.

FRAU WAHL: I admire your patience, sir.

AIGNER: That comes with practice.

FRAU WAHL: I wish I had your self-control.

AIGNER: What's the trouble?

FRAU WAHL: I'm so agitated. Our group isn't back.

AIGNER: Madam, please…No one has ever been lost climbing to the Hofbrand Lodge. Why, it's just a stroll. Will you permit me? *(Seats himself.)*

FRAU WAHL: Will I permit? Really one must be thankful if occasionally you're not otherwise engaged…exotically…erotically…

AIGNER: Exotically, erotically? That doesn't sound like you, fair lady. You're not quite so naughty.

FRAU WAHL: No, it's… *(She holds up her book.)*

AIGNER: Yes, I thought so. What a handsome broach you have there, madam! A cameo, eh? Really magnificent.

FRAU WAHL: Yes, it is rather handsome, isn't it? And not at all expensive. Well, not exactly cheap, either. Swatek in Salzburg saves these things for me. He knows my taste. Tell me honestly; is it really a safe proposition, this Hofbrand Lodge?

AIGNER: I assure you—it's just a stroll. I'd tackle it myself.

FRAU WAHL: Why didn't you go with them? That would have been reassuring.

AIGNER: Well, I am rather busy here, as you remarked before. And since I couldn't go much further than—the Hofbrand Lodge, I'd rather—not even go that far.

FRAU WAHL: But, sir, it just occurs to me, doesn't the ascent to your mountain start at the lodge—to Mount Aigner, I mean?

AIGNER: Ah, it was mine, once. No longer… Nor anyone else's.

FRAU WAHL: Lord, what if they're on Mount Aigner?

AIGNER: Impossible. It's very seldom attempted now. No one has made that peak this year.

FRAU WAHL: They must be. Or they would have been back already. They have a guide with them, too. Of course. And you are in on the plot. You had better confess at once.

AIGNER: I swear…

ROSENSTOCK: *(Returning from offstage.)* Beg pardon madam, I've just spoken with a guide…

FRAU WAHL: What's happened? Where's my daughter?

ROSENSTOCK: Madam, they are all back. Apparently the young lady is quite a sport.

FRAU WAHL: What is that supposed to mean? Where were they?

ROSENSTOCK: Up Mount Aigner.

FRAU WAHL: *(With a faint cry.)* Ah! Wicked!

AIGNER: But, madam, they're all back safely.

FRAU WAHL: Where are they now?

ROSENSTOCK: They went in through the café so as not to make a fuss.

FRAU WAHL: I must go up and see Erna *(To AIGNER.)* …I'd like to know why your lift spends most of its time on the fourth floor. That's another mystery of this hotel.

AIGNER: Did they really make the mount?

ROSENSTOCK: Apparently so, sir.

FRIEDRICH: *(Enters.)* Good evening, sir.

AIGNER: Well, good evening, Hofreiter.

FRIEDRICH: *(To ROSENSTOCK.)* Anything for me? No telegrams? No letters? Hmmm. *(To AIGNER.)* I'm glad to report that nothing has changed up there, not on the peak at any rate. The road conditions have deteriorated—or are we just older? Now it's dangerous, but it'll be sheer suicide if this disintegration continues.

AIGNER: But it was fine on top.

FRIEDRICH: It's always fine on top—especially on Mount Aigner… But I'll tell you, when we reached that crevice about nine hundred feet under the peak—

AIGNER: *(Interrupts him.)* Please don't speak of it. All that is over for me. How did the little one hold up?

FRIEDRICH: Erna? Splendidly.

AIGNER: Taking her up there…I don't know…

FRIEDRICH: She took us. I had no intention of ever going up Mount Aigner again. Where's Mauer?

AIGNER: I haven't seen him.

PAUL: *(Coming down the steps rapidly.)* Good evening, Herr Hofreiter.

FRIEDRICH: *(Somewhat indifferently.)* Ah, Paul. Good evening.

PAUL: I have a mass of greetings to deliver. First from your wife, then from Lieutenant Stanzides, then from the Natters, from Frau Meinhold-Aigner, from young Herr Aigner.

FRIEDRICH: Permit me—Herr Paul Kreindl—Herr von Aigner.

PAUL: Ah, delighted… *(He is silent. Then to AIGNER, having recovered himself.)* I have the pleasure of knowing your son.

AIGNER: *(Calmly.)* I, unfortunately, have not.

FRIEDRICH: Well Paul, what's new in Baden? *(Quietly.)* Do you know—is my wife coming?

PAUL: Sorry, madam said nothing to me.

FRIEDRICH: Are they having a fun time?

PAUL: Splendid. We all went together to the Arena Theater. Your wife must have written to you about it.

FRIEDRICH: Yes, of course.

PAUL: And before that, we were all on the common for some sort of public festival. We mingled with the crowd. We even danced.

FRIEDRICH: Even my wife?

PAUL: Yes, of course, with the Ensign… Oh, there was quite a sensation at the theater when the actors discovered that the celebrated Frau Meinhold was seated in our box. They played right to us.

(After a pause.)

PAUL: Please excuse me, gentlemen.

AIGNER: I didn't realize that my former family visited with you so frequently.

FRIEDRICH: Yes, we see each other now and then. Your ex-wife and mine are great friends. And I play tennis with Otto. He's an excellent player. You're to be congratulated on your son. He has a bright future; I understand he's very popular with his superiors. Perhaps he is the future admiral of the Navy.

AIGNER: You're talking about a young man who is a stranger to me.

FRIEDRICH: Tell me, Aigner, don't you have even the slightest desire to see him again?

AIGNER: See him again? Meet him would be more accurate. I doubt the Ensign that you know bears the slightest resemblance to the young man that kissed his father goodbye twenty years ago.

FRIEDRICH: All right then—but aren't you curious to meet him—? There will be an excellent opportunity. I understand you have business in Vienna.

AIGNER: Yes, I'm going to see the cabinet minister. We want to construct a railroad, you know, from Lake Völs all the way up here.

FRIEDRICH: Here's a proposition, Aigner. Call on us at Baden. We have a handsome guest room. True, it is occasionally haunted by the spirits of departed friends who have spent the night there—but that wouldn't bother you.

AIGNER: I have no trouble with spirits of the departed. It's the living spirits that I object to.

FRIEDRICH: I would like nothing better than to introduce you to your son. We could arrange it so nicely in our garden—he and I playing tennis—you suddenly appearing, a distinguished stranger.

AIGNER: Thank you. I'm not saying I would go out of my way to avoid meeting him, but a prearranged encounter like that would reek of sentimentality. And you're

forgetting that I'm likely to run into my ex-wife at such a reunion; I would certainly like to avoid that.

FRIEDRICH: Well, whatever you think best…

(Pause.)

AIGNER: It really is an extraordinary coincidence.

FRIEDRICH: What is?

AIGNER: That you should speak of my son today, of all days—right after your return from up there.

FRIEDRICH: …If Paul Kreindl hadn't brought it up…

AIGNER: Do you know when I first began the ascent of that peak you've just come down from? Right after I separated from my wife.

FRIEDRICH: Are you saying there was some connection?

AIGNER: To an extent. I won't go so far as to say that I was seeking death. But my grip on life was not firm. Perhaps I had the notion of calling forth some sort of divine judgment.

FRIEDRICH: Can you just imagine the scramble if every unfaithful husband were to climb the Alps under similar circumstances? You did no worse than many others.

AIGNER: The degree of offense must be measured by the reaction of the injured party. My wife loved me very much.

FRIEDRICH: All the more reason to have reconciled.

AIGNER: Possibly. But I loved her too. There's the rub. I loved her deeply, as no one before or since… Well, never mind that. Otherwise the thing might have been patched up. But because I loved her so much and was still capable of betraying her, you see, that alienated her from me—from the whole world. The earth had shifted beneath her, there was no longer a possibility of faith, you understand?—Not because the thing happened—but because it *could* happen, that was what drove her away from me. Which I understood. In fact, I should have anticipated it.

FRIEDRICH: Well, then, I can't help asking, why…

AIGNER: Why did I deceive her? *You* ask me? Haven't you noticed just how complex we human beings are, at heart? There is room in us for so much, and all at the same time. Love and deceit, loyalty and betrayal, worshipping one while longing for another, even several others. We try as best we can to create order within ourselves, but this order is always artificial. The natural condition is chaos. Yes, my friend, the soul is a vast land—it stretches far and wide…as a poet once expressed it. He may even have been a hotel manager.

FRIEDRICH: The hotel manager is not far wrong. Well— *(Pause.)* The misfortune was that your wife discovered the thing. Otherwise you would probably still be the happiest of couples.

AIGNER: A misfortune—yes…

FRIEDRICH: How did she find out?

AIGNER: I told her.

FRIEDRICH: You—?

AIGNER: Yes. I owed her that at least. Her and myself. It would have been too damned cowardly if I hadn't. One shouldn't make things too easy for oneself. Don't you agree?

FRIEDRICH: It was rather grandly conceived—if it wasn't just affectation or over-refinement…or convenience.

AIGNER: Or all combined, which is equally likely. For the soul is—and so forth.

FRIEDRICH: And in spite of this fabulous decency and in spite of all her love, your wife could not find a way to…

AIGNER: For heaven's sake, don't say "forgive." That simply isn't relevant. There wasn't a scene between us, or anything like that. It was simply over—over, irrevocably over, then and there. We both knew that. It could only be over.

FRIEDRICH: Only?

AIGNER: Only. Well, let's leave the living in peace. The dead usually take care of that without our help.

FRAU WAHL: Ah there he is—!

FRIEDRICH: My respects, Mamma Wahl.

FRAU WAHL: I'll never speak another word to you, Friedrich. What if she had fallen? How would you face that? Could you ever look me in the eye? And I'm through with Doctor Mauer, too. Where is he? It's shameful. I could…

FRIEDRICH: But Mamma Wahl, Erna would have climbed up without us.

FRAU WAHL: Then you should have tied her down.

FRIEDRICH: She was tied, Mamma Wahl. We were all tied, to one and the same rope.

FRAU WAHL: Straitjackets are what you need, all of you.

ERNA: *(Comes down clad in a thin white dress.)* Good evening.

AIGNER: Ah, Good evening, Erna. Good evening. With your permission. *(He takes her hands and kisses her on the brow.)*

ERNA: That was the most wonderful hour I have ever experienced, Herr von Aigner.

AIGNER: Yes, up there! …But I hope you will experience still more wonderful hours to come.

ERNA: That doesn't seem possible. Perhaps life will seem just as beautiful someday. But, at the same time, to be completely indifferent to death, that must be truly rare. And that is the wonderful part of it.

(AIGNER exits. ROSENSTOCK enters with the mail, sorts letters.)

PAUL: Erna, permit me, also, to lay my admiration at your feet.

ERNA: Good evening Paul. How are you?

PAUL: What the devil—I beg your pardon. Isn't anyone surprised that I'm here?

FRIEDRICH: *(Seated.)* My dear Paul, it is a far greater surprise that we are here.

(FRAU WAHL takes her letters from ROSENSTOCK.)

ERNA: Well, Mamma?

FRAU WAHL: From home. *(To FRIEDRICH.)* And here is a card from your wife. She sends her regards to you.

FRIEDRICH: Does she say anything about coming out here?

ROSENSTOCK: Here are some letters for you, Herr Hofreiter.

FRIEDRICH: *(Rising.)* For me? Ah, here is one from Genia.

FRAU WAHL: *(To FRIEDRICH.)* Well, is she coming?

FRIEDRICH: No. She writes that friends have invited Percy to Richmond where he'll stay an extra week. The rascal! To have friends in Richmond already.

(FRIEDRICH opens another letter, smiles, bites his lip. ERNA has observed it.)

FRAU WAHL: I must answer these before the evening post.

(FRAU WAHL departs along with PAUL, who also excuses himself.)

ERNA: *(Looking over FRIEDRICH's shoulder.)* Love letter?

FRIEDRICH: Guess who from? Mauer…

ERNA: Oh…

FRIEDRICH: Urgent telegram from Vienna. Had to leave at once…He's already gone, in fact. Asks me to say goodbye for him.

ERNA: I expected something like that.

FRIEDRICH: Yes—In such a good mood at supper last night in the lodge—and then so quiet today when we started our climb… He didn't say a word on the way back…Well, Erna, an open meadow, fifty paces from a lodge with twenty windows isn't the place for two people to rush into each other's arms.

ERNA: You think he saw that?

FRIEDRICH: I suppose so.

ERNA: And you think that's why he left? There you are mistaken. Even if we hadn't so much as looked at each other, he would have noticed, as others are noticing…

FRIEDRICH: What is there to notice?

ERNA: How things are between us.

FRIEDRICH: Erna, how can these people…

ERNA: Perhaps there's a sort of halo above our heads.

(FRIEDRICH laughs.)

ERNA: That must be it, don't you think?

FRIEDRICH: I should have left, Erna.

ERNA: Yes, that would have been very sensible.

FRIEDRICH: Don't be a flirt, Erna.

ERNA: I'm not, really.

FRIEDRICH: Then what are you?

ERNA: I am—what I am.

FRIEDRICH: That is your advantage over me. I am not what I was. I am mad, since we kissed, mad. I didn't sleep a wink last night.

ERNA: I'm sorry. I slept wonderfully…I took my blanket out on the meadow—our meadow—and lay down in the open air and slept blissfully under the stars.

FRIEDRICH: Erna, Erna! I suddenly feel capable of doing something wildly foolish. Now I understand all the nonsense that I used to laugh at. I understand window promenades, serenades… *(Gesture.)* I understand how a man can lunge at a rival with drawn knife—or plunge into an abyss for unrequited love.

ERNA: Why should you speak of unrequited love?

FRIEDRICH: *(Seriously.)* We mustn't deceive ourselves, Erna. Last night, up there on the peak, holding hands, this notion of belonging to one another, this tremendous sense of happiness, it is all, I'm sure, nothing but—lightheadedness. At least for you. It's the altitude, the rarefied air, the danger. I'm sure I play the smallest part in your mood.

ERNA: Why would you say that? I have loved you since I was seven. Of course, with interruptions. But the case has become pretty serious lately. And now—yesterday and today—and up there—and here. Oh, Friedrich, I'd like to get into your hair and ruffle it!

FRIEDRICH: Careful! That won't be necessary. Listen, I have something to ask you.

ERNA: Yes?

FRIEDRICH: What would you say…listen carefully. You know, of course, my marriage—I don't need to tell you…It's mostly my fault. Anyway, we don't suit each other. And especially since Korsakov, you know, I

told you…The point is; I want to divorce Genia, and marry you.

(ERNA laughs.)

ERNA: You said you felt like doing something wildly foolish.

FRIEDRICH: Perhaps it wouldn't be if we were realistic from the start. I know your love for me will not last forever.

ERNA: But yours for me will!

FRIEDRICH: More likely. Besides, *forever*! Next year there may be another Mount Something-or-other, and forever will come to an end. I only know, and I know this with absolute certainty, that I cannot exist without you. I am dying with longing for you. I won't be able to think, work, or engage in any rational undertaking, until you…until I hold you in my arms.

ERNA: Why didn't you come to the meadow last night?

FRIEDRICH: Please don't play with me. I am honest enough with you. Simply say no, and the thing is settled. Mauer is still within hailing distance. I have no desire to make a fool of myself. Will you marry me?

ERNA: Marry? No.

FRIEDRICH: Very well.

ERNA: Sometime later on, perhaps.

FRIEDRICH: Later on—?

ERNA: Finish your letters.

FRIEDRICH: Why should I? As far as I'm concerned, the factory can be blown to shreds. Everything can be blown to shreds. What do you mean later? Life isn't so long. I refuse to grant a reprieve. A kiss like that is a pledge. Either of immediate retreat or unconditional surrender. I cannot wait. Will not. Say no, and I will leave here today.

ERNA: I know what our kiss pledges.

FRIEDRICH: Erna.

ERNA: Haven't you always known that I belong to you?

FRIEDRICH: Erna…Erna!

(ROSENSTOCK enters ringing the dinner bell. FRAU WAHL enters.)

AIGNER: *(Meeting with her.)* Ah, I haven't seen that clasp. Charming!

FRIEDRICH: Lord, how we have been chattering. I guess there's no time to dress.

FRAU WAHL: You are handsome enough as you are. Where is Doctor Mauer?

FRIEDRICH: Oh, yes—he sends his respects; he received a telegram and had to leave suddenly.

FRAU WAHL: A telegram? Doctor Mauer? Why…You're keeping something from me. He fell from the cliff! He's—dead!

FRIEDRICH: Now, Mamma Wahl, do you think we could sit here and chat so comfortably…

FRAU WAHL: With you, one can never be sure.

FRIEDRICH: I would have worn black gloves, at least.

SERKNITZ: *(Enters in frock coat, white scarf; goes to AIGNER.)* I have the honor to report, sir—my laundry has arrived, and I took the liberty of dressing in a manner befitting your hotel.

AIGNER: You look positively stunning, Herr von Serknitz.

(SERKNITZ goes into the dining room. FRAU WAHL and AIGNER follow and then PAUL.)

FRIEDRICH: *(Loudly.)* Come, Erna. *(Softly.)* Did you mean what you said?

ERNA: Yes.

FRIEDRICH: Then they are serving our wedding dinner in there.

ERNA: And thank God no one will make a toast.

FRIEDRICH: And you are mine.

ERNA: Yes.

FRIEDRICH: Be careful, Erna. If I find your door locked tonight, I'll break it down…

ERNA: And I anticipate hours even more wonderful than the one up on Mount Aigner.

FRIEDRICH: Erna!

ERNA: *(At length, with the full tone of truth.)* I love you.

(They enter the dining room.)

ACT IV

Scene of Act II. Summer afternoon. Under the walnut tree. GENIA, HERR NATTER, FRAU WAHL, STANZIDES, PAUL, ERNA, OTTO, and ADELE come out of the house, one by one in the order mentioned.

NATTER: The dinner in honor of our esteemed host's return was excellent. Too bad he wasn't here.

GENIA: He must have been detained at the factory.

NATTER: No wonder, after an absence of three weeks.

FRAU WAHL: Did you call the office, Genia?

GENIA: I didn't think there was any need. After his telegram yesterday, I expected him for dinner. You must bring your children out here again next Sunday, Adele. Percy will surely be home by then.

(STANZIDES has sat down on bench and taken up a newspaper which lies there. Near him FRAU WAHL and OTTO; then PAUL and ERNA. At the extreme right, ADELE, GENIA.)

STANZIDES: Listen to this! *(He reads.)* "As reported from the Hotel Völs Lake, Fraulein Erna Wahl, a young lady from Vienna, along with the manufacturer Hofreiter and the well-known physician, Doctor Mauer, ascended Mount Aigner, a peak which, owing to its dangers…"

ERNA: Come, Paul, let's play tennis.

PAUL: Unconditionally agreed. *(To ADELE.)* Madam? Ensign?

ADELE: I never play right after dinner.

OTTO: In a moment.

PAUL: Good. We'll just play singles today. A tournament. Perhaps Herr Hofreiter will be here in time to take part. The standings must be cleared up once and for all.

(PAUL leaves with ERNA.)

FRAU WAHL: What else does it say there?

STANZIDES: *(Reads on.)* "…A peak which, owing to its dangers, is notorious among the folk in the Southwest Dolomites. It is the same peak from which a young physician, Doctor Bernhaupt, through an unfortunate accident seven years ago…"

FRAU WAHL: There, Frau Genia, that's where they dragged my Erna. I am so angry with Doctor Mauer and your husband.

NATTER: Apparently they were so afraid of your wrath that both beat a hasty retreat.

GENIA: *(With a glance at ERNA, smiling.)* Yes, it seems a guilty conscience made Friedrich very uneasy. Every day I received a card from a different place—Caprile, Pordoi, and God knows where else.

FRAU WAHL: *(Newspaper in hand, turning the pages.)* What paper is this?

NATTER: Aren't you proud of Fraulein Erna?

FRAU WAHL: Proud—?

GENIA: *(Has stepped across towards the center of the stage, where FRAU WAHL is standing.)* What paper is that? I don't recognize it… How did it get here?

FRAU WAHL: There's a part marked in red.

STANZIDES: You had better not read anything marked in red in a paper like that.

FRAU WAHL: This is really remarkable.

ADELE and GENIA: *(Speaking together.)* What's remarkable?

FRAU WAHL: *(Reads.)* "Recently, there has been a persistent rumor in Vienna social circles which we repeat with due reservation. It concerns the suicide of a world-renowned virtuoso which created a sensation in the early summer and was for the most part shrouded in mystery, which even the popular phrase 'sudden mental aberration' did not quite clear up. The report states that this suicide was the result of an American duel in the form of a billiard game." —What does it mean?

(Embarrassed pause.)

GENIA: *(Quietly.)* The game of billiards referred to was between Korsakov and my husband, but Friedrich lost the game. If it had been an American duel, it would have been Friedrich who had to kill himself—isn't that right?

(Pause.)

STANZIDES: It's incredible, really, that there's no way to defend oneself against such slander. But that's the case when no name is mentioned.

NATTER: They're too clever for that.

FRAU WAHL: *(At last understands.)* Ah, the game of billiards. Why, of course, Frau Genia, you told us about that. Your husband sent the cigars to Korsakov in the morning. Why yes, I could testify to that in court.

ADELE: You won't have to testify, Frau Wahl. No one bothers about such nonsense.

(ADELE and STANZIDES head towards the tennis court and disappear gradually from the scene.)

FRAU WAHL: Really that is…How does such a thing get into the paper? And why should Friedrich and Korsakov have dueled…?

(FRAU WAHL and NATTER go towards the tennis court.)

GENIA: You believe it?

OTTO: This ridiculous duel story? How can you think that?

GENIA: No, but that the story has some foundation. Do you believe that I was Korsakov's mistress?

OTTO: No, I don't believe it.

GENIA: Why not? Because I deny it? That doesn't prove anything. If I were you, I would believe it. *(Moves to go to the tennis court.)*

OTTO: I don't, Genia. I swear to you I don't believe it. Let it be. Please stay, please. We may not have another moment alone. I have to be in the city early in the morning.

GENIA: *(Gazing at him.)* So soon?

OTTO: How will I communicate with you?

GENIA: Simply write. No one opens my mail. If you want to be especially careful, write to me as you're speaking to me now—as to an old friend.

OTTO: That is asking too much. That I could not do.

GENIA: There is another way— Don't write, don't write at all.

OTTO: Genia!

GENIA: Wouldn't that be the best thing? We'll never see each other again.

GENIA: Please, Otto.

OTTO: You won't be able to lie. You'll betray yourself somehow, or you'll confess.

GENIA: It's possible.

OTTO: *(With a sudden resolve.)* Let me speak to him.

GENIA: Otto…

OTTO: It's the only way. You know I'm right. Anything else would be dishonorable.

GENIA: I will tell him after you're gone. Tomorrow, perhaps today.

OTTO: And what will happen?

GENIA: Nothing, I expect. And you'll never come here again, never, promise me, never, not in two years, never.

OTTO: *(As if enlightened.)* You love him. You still love him. That's where you're drifting.

(FRAU WAHL, NATTER, ADELE, and STANZIDES come from the tennis court. ERNA and PAUL play on.)

FRIEDRICH: *(Appears in his tennis attire.)* Good afternoon, Genia.

(FRIEDRICH kisses her on the brow. He greets the others also. To FRAU WAHL, who does not take his hand.)

FRIEDRICH: Well, Mamma Wahl, still angry with me?

FRAU WAHL: I'm not speaking with you. Or Doctor Mauer.

GENIA: We haven't seen Doctor Mauer lately.

FRIEDRICH: He should be here today. I've written him.

GENIA: So, when did you arrive in Vienna?

FRIEDRICH: Last night. I would have come out sooner, but it was impossible.

GENIA: We had a party in your honor.

NATTER: Yes, it was a splendid meal.

FRIEDRICH: Really? Would you be so good as to have them bring me a cup of black coffee, Genia.

NATTER: You were gone longer than you intended, Hofreiter.

FRIEDRICH: Yes. *(Fixes him with a glance.)* Are those your children romping about there on the lawn?

ADELE: Yes, I thought Percy would be here.

(STANZIDES and FRAU WAHL have walked to the rear meanwhile.)

FRIEDRICH: Well, when is he coming? Accepts invitations to English castles, the rascal.

GENIA: I think he's going to surprise us today or tomorrow with my sister…because I haven't heard from him for three days.

(ERNA and PAUL come from the tennis court.)

PAUL: Herr Hofreiter.

ERNA: Good evening, Friedrich.

FRIEDRICH: Well, how are you?

PAUL: Fraulein Erna has beaten me again.

FRIEDRICH: So, did you enjoy the rest of your stay at Völs Lake?

ERNA: Yes, it was splendid. Even without you—imagine that! Really, it wasn't very nice of you to disappear so suddenly. Oh, and thanks for the card. I guess you visited some interesting places.

FRIEDRICH: Your fame is celebrated in the paper today, Erna.

FRAU WAHL: We've seen it.

FRIEDRICH: You have that paper here? An interesting rag, isn't it?

(Pause. FRIEDRICH is amused at the embarrassment of the others.)

FRIEDRICH: It was beautiful up there on Mount Aigner. Oh, Otto! Where is he?

(OTTO is standing with ADELE.)

FRIEDRICH: I'm supposed to convey regards to you—that is, regards is hardly the word—I've seen your father.

OTTO: Frau Hofreiter told me.

(NATTER, STANZIDES, and GENIA all exit—gradually.)

FRIEDRICH: It's a pity you're leaving tomorrow. Your father is coming to Vienna in a few days.

OTTO: You know, Herr Hofreiter, my father and I don't have any relationship.

FRIEDRICH: That might still develop. Should, in fact. And now you're about to go off to sea for years without even seeing him. It isn't right. Don't you think so?

OTTO: Yes, perhaps. But I'm afraid it's too late.

PAUL: *(Who has been standing with ERNA and FRAU WAHL, approaches.)* Well, Ensign, it's time for our match, if you please. *(To FRIEDRICH.)* We're just playing singles today. You'll have to join us, Herr Hofreiter. The Ensign is leaving tomorrow, and the standings must be cleared up once and for all.

FRIEDRICH: Of course, I'm at your service. As soon as I've finished my coffee.

(PAUL, ADELE, and OTTO exit. ERNA has remained, standing behind his chair.)

FRIEDRICH: Oh, Erna.

ERNA: I'm so glad you're back.

FRIEDRICH: Really?

(FRIEDRICH kisses her hand over the back of the chair.)

FRIEDRICH: Me too.

ERNA: And now you can tell me the reason you vanished.

FRIEDRICH: I told you, Erna. We talked about it. If I had stayed, in a few days, my God, on the same day, the entire hotel would have known everything. You know, the halo about our heads. We earned it honestly enough.

ERNA: Well, what if they did see it?

FRIEDRICH: Child, a thing like that should never be exposed. The world doesn't understand. Or it does after its own fashion, which is worse. You should be grateful that I didn't give away our secret. Later on, you would have resented it.

ERNA: Later? Oh, I see. I don't intend to get married, Friedrich.

FRIEDRICH: Don't predict the future, child. Not for yourself or for others—not even for the next minute, believe me.

ERNA: And do you think if I ever really loved anyone else I could keep this from him?

FRIEDRICH: Of course you could. And you would be right. I assure you it's what we deserve.

ERNA: "We"? There are better men than you.

FRIEDRICH: Do you think so? *(Rises.)*

ERNA: What is it? Why are you so distracted? Are you expecting someone?

FRIEDRICH: Yes, Doctor Mauer.

ERNA: Doctor Mauer? What do you want with him?

FRIEDRICH: Oh, it's about some business.

ERNA: Business with a doctor?

FRIEDRICH: With a friend.

ERNA: Do you think he still is?

FRIEDRICH: Yes. Friendship is eternal, regardless of anything that…happens. Mauer is and remains my only friend. Even if he were to kill me one day, it would still be true.

ERNA: What is so important for you to talk about?

FRIEDRICH: It concerns my trip to America.

ERNA: Then you are going?

FRIEDRICH: Yes. And there are many odds and ends that need tending, and only Mauer will do.

ERNA: Odds and ends?

FRIEDRICH: Why, a wife couldn't be more curious. Besides it's all very tedious.

ERNA: Yet, it seems to make you extremely nervous.

FRIEDRICH: Do I give that impression? I haven't had enough sleep, that's all.

ERNA: Why not? You weren't on the train all night?

FRIEDRICH: No, but I didn't sleep much. I made a window promenade.

ERNA: Last night?

FRIEDRICH: Yes, last night. Are you surprised? I told you that I now understand these things. Window promenades, serenades, manslaughter, suicide—

ERNA: I don't understand. Under whose window did you promenade?

FRIEDRICH: Yours, of course.

ERNA: Mine? What sort of a story—

FRIEDRICH: Don't you believe me? I came out here last night, right after my arrival in Vienna. It was almost midnight when I was under your window. You had a light on. I saw your shadow passing by the curtains. If your room had been on the ground floor… who knows…

ERNA: You were under my window—and then—

FRIEDRICH: Then I left. I saw your shadow, was close to you. I had been longing for that.

ERNA: You had been longing, Friedrich? And where did you go then?

FRIEDRICH: Back to Vienna. My car was waiting at the square. I had something to do at the office at eight o'clock this morning.

ERNA: You were under my window… Friedrich!

FRIEDRICH: What shall I swear by? By the sacred waters of Völs?

ERNA: You were under my window, my sweetheart.

FRIEDRICH: Quiet, quiet.

MAUER: *(Comes from the house.)* Good afternoon, Friedrich. Good day, Fraulein Erna.

FRIEDRICH: How are you, Mauer?

ERNA: *(Calmly.)* Good day, Doctor.

MAUER: *(Quite unembarrassed.)* Been back long, Fraulein Erna?

ERNA: Only two days. You two have business to discuss. Excuse me. *(Leaves for the tennis court.)*

MAUER: You sent for me. Here I am.

FRIEDRICH: Thank you. I hope I'm not taking you away from anything important.

MAUER: You write that you want my advice. I assume you're ill.

FRIEDRICH: *(Gazes at him.)* So that's how it is. No I haven't called for the doctor, but for the friend.

MAUER: The friend, I see. Well: Here I am.

FRIEDRICH: It concerns a ridiculous story that you've probably heard or read.

MAUER: What story?

FRIEDRICH: That I…that Korsakov—

MAUER: Well—?

FRIEDRICH: That Korsakov was the victim of an American duel.

MAUER: Ah.

FRIEDRICH: Have you read it?

MAUER: Heard, to be accurate.

FRIEDRICH: Well, what should I do?

MAUER: Do? You have the evidence to disprove it. Korsakov's letter to your wife.

FRIEDRICH: What good is that? I couldn't—That would be in horrible taste.

MAUER: Well, then, ignore it. The report will die away before you know it. Sensible people aren't likely to believe such a thing about you.

FRIEDRICH: Even so. Something will remain. Besides, someone is trying to humiliate me. He should be made to answer for that.

MAUER: He'll be difficult to identify.

FRIEDRICH: I've already identified him. Natter.

MAUER: You think so?

FRIEDRICH: It's his revenge. You see, he knew.

MAUER: *(Rapidly.)* Everything?

FRIEDRICH: Yes. It seems there are fewer deceived husbands than the wives or even the lovers suspect.

MAUER: Can you prove that he started the rumor?

FRIEDRICH: Prove! No.

MAUER: Then there's nothing you can do.

FRIEDRICH: Confront him.

MAUER: He'll deny it.

FRIEDRICH: Punish him.

MAUER: That won't improve the situation.

FRIEDRICH: It might improve my attitude.

MAUER: The machinery you propose to employ would be too great for that.

FRIEDRICH: I don't think so. A good attitude is the chief thing in life.

MAUER: Let it be. With the best of intentions, that's the only advice I can give you. Now I'll say good night to your wife and go.

FRIEDRICH: Mauer, are you angry?

MAUER: Angry? No. But I have no compelling desire to stay here.

FRIEDRICH: Mauer, you know I left Völs Lake soon after you did?

MAUER: "Soon" is good.

FRIEDRICH: Immediately after. The next day. Do you know why? I ran away.

MAUER: Ah.

FRIEDRICH: Yes, from myself. I'll freely admit that I was falling in love with Erna.

MAUER: You owe me no explanation.

FRIEDRICH: I'm not giving you one. Only don't let your false suspicions…

MAUER: Whatever I suspect, false or not, that's all over for me. Permit me to say good night to your wife.

FRIEDRICH: Later. Now please stay and let's talk this out. I kissed her, yes. Once. I'm not denying it. An embrace like that in the open air, under a blazing sun, six thousand feet above sea level, it means nothing. Call it lightheadedness.

MAUER: Well, if you call it that, then it's all right.

FRIEDRICH: How many unkissed girls do you think there are running around? Girls are even occasionally kissed on level ground, I'm told. For a man to believe that he's too good for a girl, because of a kiss—forgive me, but it's just vanity.

MAUER: It amuses you to lie, doesn't it?

FRIEDRICH: It does sometimes…But now I'm not lying. And I'll tell you something else. Even if there had been more than this kiss—

MAUER: I assure you, I'm not the least bit interested in how far things went between you.

FRIEDRICH: There you are unjust.

MAUER: Ah!

FRIEDRICH: You might be better off if she had been my mistress. The thing would be finished. And you would be, to a certain extent, more secure.

MAUER: You're beginning to amuse me.

FRIEDRICH: Good. That's the most important thing in any conversation. After all, as to whether you're being told the truth or not, you can never be sure.

MAUER: Erna would tell me the truth.

FRIEDRICH: You think so?

MAUER: Lying is the only thing I consider her incapable of.

FRIEDRICH: Perhaps. And that, in the end, is the most important thing. In fact, I consider it rather narrow to judge women only from the sexual standpoint. Every woman, even the woman who takes a lover, has much more than her love affairs to occupy her mind—music, charity work, cooking, raising her children—she may even be a very good mother, yes, and sometimes an excellent wife, better even than the so-called faithful woman. Now take Adele Natter.

MAUER: I hope you haven't asked me here to present your philosophic views.

FRIEDRICH: No, that's just incidental. But since we're on the subject, may I ask if you know anything about the affair between my wife and Ensign von Aigner.

MAUER: *(Astonished.)* Your wife and…no, nothing. How could I…I haven't been here for three weeks.

FRIEDRICH: So now you know. Well?

MAUER: Perhaps it isn't true. And if it is…

FRIEDRICH: You think it serves me right. I know. But your gloating about it is pointless. If the thing were painful to me, or at least irritating, perhaps. But it isn't. It's actually a relief. I can breathe again. I no longer skulk about like a guilty man. It's as if, in some way, she had atoned for Korsakov's death. In a sensible, painless way. She begins to be human again. We are finally living on the same planet, so to speak.

MAUER: You take it very calmly. My congratulations. Obviously you don't believe it. Of course, you can never know a thing like that with absolute certainty…

FRIEDRICH: Oh, sometimes you can. For example, if you see the lover, at half-past one in the morning climbing out of your wife's window.

MAUER: What's that?

FRIEDRICH: Last night at half-past one, I saw Herr Otto von Aigner, Ensign in His Majesty's Marines, climb out of the window of the wife of the manufacturer Hofreiter. I would swear to it in writing.

MAUER: Last night at half-past one?

FRIEDRICH: Yes, I took the last train here from Vienna. I walked from the station, and at midnight I entered the garden as I sometimes do. To my surprise, I heard voices. I crept nearer and saw a gentleman and a lady

sitting here under the tree. Genia and Otto. Naturally, I kept my distance. After a few seconds, they both disappeared inside. The lights in the house are turned off. The night was lovely. I lay down in the shadow of the trees that stand near the fence. And I waited. At half-past one, the window opens, a gentleman climbs out, and then I heard the gate open, and the slender figure of Ensign Otto von Aigner swung right past me.

MAUER: And then?

FRIEDRICH: I slept blissfully till seven in the morning. It really is delightful to sleep in the open air on a fine summer night. Someone was just singing its praises to me.

MAUER: I hope you're not thinking of taking any sort of revenge, against either of them. The only thing for you to do now is to end it once and for all.

FRIEDRICH: Who said anything about ending it?

MAUER: It goes without saying. You could do it now without attracting attention. Simply leave for America sooner than you intended.

FRIEDRICH: Genia will go to America with me.

MAUER: What?

FRIEDRICH: Yes.

MAUER: *(Shrugging his shoulders.)* Let me tell you, that is the most outrageous example of your self-confidence that I've ever heard. Now…

(NATTER enters.)

NATTER: Good evening, Doctor Mauer, how are you? Hofreiter, I wanted to ask you, since we must leave…

MAUER: Allow me to say good night to your wife now.

FRIEDRICH: She will be pleased.

(MAUER goes to the tennis court.)

NATTER: I wanted to ask you, Hofreiter, if I might meet with you tomorrow at the office. That company has applied again. They are offering…

FRIEDRICH: Business tomorrow, Herr Natter.

NATTER: All right.

FRIEDRICH: Today, let's chat a bit.

NATTER: With pleasure.

FRIEDRICH: Tell me, Natter, what do you think of Demeter Stanzides?

NATTER: Stanzides? A decent fellow. Rather sentimental for a lieutenant of Hussars. But on the whole, a decent fellow.

FRIEDRICH: No debts?

NATTER: Not that I know of.

FRIEDRICH: Does he abuse his subordinates?

NATTER: I've heard nothing to that effect.

FRIEDRICH: Perhaps he cheats at cards?

NATTER: Do you believe that, Hofreiter?

FRIEDRICH: No. I'm just trying to make it easier for you to find something against him later, when his affair with your wife is over.

(They stand looking hard at each other.)

NATTER: I'm glad, Hofreiter, that you don't take me for a fool.

FRIEDRICH: No, for a…

NATTER: I warn you not to push your luck. It probably wouldn't suit me to settle the business with a game of billiards.

FRIEDRICH: Perhaps not—but in another way.

NATTER: If I had wanted that, there would have been a better opportunity not so very long ago.

FRIEDRICH: What stopped you? A man doesn't suddenly become…In your youth, you risked your life for less valuable considerations.

NATTER: Less valuable? For other things.

FRIEDRICH: If the thing was so distressing to you, why put up with it? Why not leave her?

NATTER: It's simple; because without Adele, my life would be meaningless. I'm hopelessly in love with her. Such things happen, Hofreiter. There's nothing I can do about it. Believe me, I've tried. In vain, all in vain. I love her in spite of everything. Outrageous, isn't it? Yet, there it is.

FRIEDRICH: And so you revenge yourself against me by inventing an outrageous lie?

NATTER: Perhaps by spreading the truth.

FRIEDRICH: I know you don't really believe that I…about the American duel?

NATTER: Refute it if you can.

FRIEDRICH: I could. I know the reason for Korsakov's suicide. I know… But what am I stooping to—? Justifying myself to you—you…

NATTER: Be careful.

FRIEDRICH: I swear to you, you are wrong. I swear it.

NATTER: By your wife's virtue, eh?

FRIEDRICH: Sir… *(Makes a step towards him.)*

NATTER: Shhh, no scene. I won't fight with you. But another word and…

FRIEDRICH: I can't believe that I might be defenseless against you…

NATTER: One is sometimes.

FRIEDRICH: Against a…

NATTER: Against a man who finds life tremendously amusing, Hofreiter, and no more.

(PAUL comes in from the tennis court.)

PAUL: Herr Hofreiter, it's time for your singles match with the Ensign.

FRIEDRICH: Oh, yes. I'm ready. The standings must be cleared up once and for all…I know…

NATTER: Don't let me keep you. *(In a whisper.)* Another matter of life and death?

FRIEDRICH: Perhaps.

(MAUER and GENIA come in.)

MAUER: *(About to leave.)* Well, my friend—

FRIEDRICH: No, you must stay. Genia, you must hold him…with all your seductive arts.

(FRIEDRICH, PAUL, and NATTER go to the tennis court.)

GENIA: I am afraid my arts will prove insufficient.

MAUER: I'm sorry, but I must go, madam.

GENIA: And I presume we won't see you for some time.

MAUER: That is quite likely.

GENIA: *(Gazing at him.)* I'm sorry to lose a friend. And what have I done to deserve that—done to you, at any rate? You won't answer me, will you, Doctor? Of course I won't ask you to confide in me, as I can easily imagine precisely what is driving you away.

MAUER: You'll forgive me if I don't praise your insight. Permit me to say good night now.

GENIA: It is not for me to permit or forbid. But let me give you some parting advice. Don't take the thing too hard. It would be absurd, if you, a man who knows the serious side of life, were to attach any importance to such a frivolous game. And that's what love affairs are, Doctor, believe me.

Once you've found that out, they can be amusing, both to watch and to take part in.

MAUER: Once you've found that out.

GENIA: Oh, you will, my friend. The sad, stupid words that are trailing through your mind—just let them go, and you'll see how immaterial they really are. They'll evaporate and blow away like dust. Those sad, stupid words…

MAUER: There is only one really sad thing in the world, and that is a lie.

GENIA: A lie? There's no such thing in a game. Strategy or fun is what you call it there.

MAUER: A game? Yes, if that's what it really was. Listen, Genia, I would have no objection to a world in which love were really nothing more than an amusing game. But then—just honestly admit that's what it is! Honesty—even to the orgy. That I could abide. But the hypocritical jumble that we have here: restraint and impudence, jealousy and indifference, raging passion and empty lust—that's what I find so unbearably sad. The freedom we boast of lacks the courage of its convictions. No one is actually happy. The boast is hollow, the gaiety is glib, and the laughter is no more than a toothless grin.

GENIA: You are unjust, Doctor. We are all trying our best. Of course, the thing doesn't go as well as we would like. But we have the best intentions. Haven't you noticed? Adele Natter, for example, brings her children here. I chat with Erna as if Lake Völs were the most harmless pool of water in the world. Friedrich plays his game of tennis with Ensign von Aigner…

MAUER: Why shouldn't he?

GENIA: Oh, Doctor!

MAUER: Yes, I know about that, too.

GENIA: Who told you?

MAUER: Who? Be careful, Genia—it was Friedrich himself.

(The tennis match is over. The participants come in slowly.)

GENIA: Friedrich? Of course he suspects. I could see that when he greeted us from the balcony. But why this ominous "Be careful"? He can't hold it against me. Maybe Otto would have killed himself too—like the other one. And one mustn't drive a young man to his death for such a trifle. Friedrich will be pleased with me. Tomorrow, when my lover is gone, I'll tell him the whole story myself.

MAUER: That won't be necessary. He doesn't suspect. He knows. He saw the Ensign last night at half-past one.

(GENIA winces, but quickly regains her composure. PAUL, ERNA, STANZIDES, ADELE, FRAU WAHL, NATTER, OTTO, and FRIEDRICH come from the court.)

GENIA: Well, who won?

PAUL: The old guard lives still. Herr Hofreiter won.

STANZIDES: Too bad you weren't there, madam. It was a good game.

FRIEDRICH: Well, Mauer, I see you stayed after all. That's friendly of you.

PAUL: Now Fraulein Erna must play Herr Hofreiter.

ERNA: It's too dark now, we'll have to postpone that until tomorrow. We can wire the Ensign the final standings.

OTTO: Ladies and gentlemen, I really must go. *(He begins to take leave.)*

FRIEDRICH: *(Following him with his glance.)* Too bad we can't play another game tomorrow, Otto. There's no pleasure in my victory today.

PAUL: Why? The Ensign played splendidly, and you were even better.

FRIEDRICH: I don't know. You weren't in good form, Otto. You had such a distracted,

tentative stroke today. Thinking about your departure, I suppose.

OTTO: Perhaps I was uncomfortable… facing so strong and well-rested an opponent. Well, when I come back in three years, you'll enjoy my competition a little more, Herr Hofreiter.

FRIEDRICH: Yes, if we could be sure that we would see each other again. I never speak of the future. Three years! Anything can happen in that time. There are occurrences against which all foresight may be in vain. And all prudence.

NATTER: True. And perhaps that quality is not one of the Ensign's outstanding attributes.

OTTO: I fear so myself, Herr Natter.

FRIEDRICH: That's a thing you really can't know yet, Otto—whether or not you are prudent by nature—Your profession is based so completely on bearing and discipline, you haven't really had the opportunity to know yourself, truly. Don't you think so?

MAUER: It's too late in the evening for psychology. *(To OTTO.)* Shall we go together, Ensign?

FRIEDRICH: *(Paying no attention to MAUER.)* Of course I'm sure you are ready to lay down your life for your country and your emperor, and even for lesser things. But in these matters, external pressure plays a strong part. In the depths of your soul, right down in the very depths, Otto, you are a coward.

(Long pause.)

OTTO: I must have misunderstood.

FRIEDRICH: I don't know what you understood. In any event, I shall repeat it. Coward.

(OTTO takes a step towards FRIEDRICH who quickly counters.)

OTTO: You will hear from me.

FRIEDRICH: I trust so. *(Softly.)* And soon.

(OTTO exits. PAUL follows, ERNA stands motionless. GENIA motionless. FRAU WAHL looks about perplexed, turns to ADELE.)

NATTER: We won't disturb our friends any longer.

FRIEDRICH: No disturbance, I assure you—on the contrary. *(To MAUER.)* I hope I can count on you.

MAUER: I won't have anything to do with it.

FRIEDRICH: As a physician, Mauer. You can't deny me that. It is your duty.

MAUER: *(Shrugs his shoulders.)* Very well.

FRIEDRICH: Thank you. My dear Stanzides.

STANZIDES: At your service.

FRIEDRICH: Thank you. Natter…

NATTER: My dear Hofreiter…

(FRIEDRICH draws NATTER forward.)

FRIEDRICH: I think we view life in the same way? Laughing ourselves to death?

NATTER: I've always said so.

FRIEDRICH: This particular joke would have additional spice for me if you agreed to be my second.

NATTER: Gladly. The Ensign must be a good shot.

GENIA: *(With a sudden resolve.)* Friedrich.

FRIEDRICH: Later.

GENIA: Now.

FRIEDRICH: *(To the others.)* Please excuse me.

(FRIEDRICH goes with her. FRAU WAHL tries to induce ERNA to leave, but she remains standing against the wall of the house. FRAU

WAHL turns to ADELE who is standing under the walnut tree staring at her husband. NATTER and STANZIDES walk towards the rear. MAUER stands alone.)

FRIEDRICH: *(To GENIA.)* Well—

GENIA: What are you thinking of? How dare you…

FRIEDRICH: Don't be afraid. I won't do much to him. Probably nothing.

GENIA: Then why? You don't have the slightest regard for me…If it were hate, jealousy, love—

FRIEDRICH: Well, it's true, I feel damned little of any of that. But one doesn't want to feel like a fool. *(Turns from her, follows NATTER and STANZIDES. GENIA stands motionless. ERNA stands against the wall of the house. The women's eyes meet.)*

ACT V

A light, pleasant room in the villa adjacent to the veranda. Large glass door leading to the veranda stands open. Cupboards to the right and left of the door. In the center, a large table with cover; on it periodicals, books—chairs. At the left wall, a stove. In front of it, a small table with chairs, etc. Pictures on the walls. Another door at the right. A wall clock in front at the left.

GENIA comes from the right in morning gown, very pale and agitated. Goes to veranda door, steps out on the veranda, back again, sits down at the large table, takes up one of the periodicals, stares into it, then straight before her. ERNA, without hat, in summer frock, enters rapidly from the veranda.

GENIA: *(Rises, quickly composed.)* Erna? What news?

ERNA: No one's back yet. Have you heard anything?

GENIA: How could I? Try to stay calm, Erna. It can't possibly take place before this afternoon. The arrangements are probably being made now.

ERNA: *(Gazing at her.)* Yes, of course. Forgive me. I have no right to question you, of course, but the unusual circumstances—

GENIA: You have the same right to tremble for someone that I have.

ERNA: I am not trembling, Frau Genia. That isn't my way. I just wanted to ask if you had seen your husband today.

GENIA: My husband went to the city last night. Probably to consult his lawyer. That is the usual thing, no matter how superfluous. He must be arranging his affairs. Burning some letters and whatnot. In short, he will act precisely as if this were a deadly serious matter, even though it is nothing but a farcical bit of vanity and a travesty on honor, as we all know.

ERNA: I'm not so sure, Frau Genia.

GENIA: I am. Come, Erna, the day is fine. We might as well chat. You haven't told me anything about your trip. You had an interesting experience at Völs Lake.

ERNA: Can you really indulge in mockery now, while…?

GENIA: I am not mocking. Far from it. You love him very much—my husband—don't you? Well, no wonder. The first—that is always an experience. Or has that lost its meaning, too? Perhaps you can help me to understand. I can't get my bearings anymore. Life has become so much more trivial these days. When I was your age, certain things were still looked upon as terribly serious. That wasn't so very long ago, but it seems to me the world has changed a great deal since then. My sister is coming here this morning with Percy. A happy reunion. Shall we take a drive, Erna? The day is so glorious. The air will do you good. You look pale…did you have a restless night?

ERNA: Yes, I was awake all night. And I saw my brother leave the house at five this morning… Any moment now, we will know how it turned out. While we sit here chatting, it is long since over.

GENIA: Erna, I told you—Friedrich went to the city—to his lawyer probably.

ERNA: He didn't go to his lawyer. My brother told me. It was all arranged last night. The duel took place at eight this morning. Not very far from here, I think. In Holycross Wood probably. And by now it is all over.

GENIA: Well, then it's over. In Holycross Wood you think? And now they're all sitting together in the public garden, under the shade trees, celebrating the reconciliation. Breakfast was arranged in advance by the seconds. People are easily reconciled when they were never really angry in the first place. What do you think, Erna—are they drinking our health? Laughing perhaps? Why not? I imagine they'll come in together, arm in arm. Why don't we go out to meet them?

ERNA: I'm going home. My brother may be back.

GENIA: All right, go home, Erna. I'll wait here.

(ERNA appears to be listening.)

GENIA: What is it? Someone coming?

ERNA: *(Goes to the veranda door.)* It's Frau Meinhold.

GENIA: *(With a start.)* What—?

ERNA: She's walking so peacefully. She knows nothing.

GENIA: Why is she coming so early?

ERNA: I'm sure she knows nothing. Her face is perfectly calm. How could she know? Take hold of yourself, Frau Genia.

FRAU MEINHOLD: *(Approaching.)* Good morning.

ERNA: Good morning, madam.

GENIA: Frau Meinhold, good morning.

ERNA: Goodbye.

FRAU MEINHOLD: Are you leaving? I hope I'm not driving you away.

ERNA: Not at all, madam. I was just about to go. Goodbye, Frau Genia. *(Exits.)*

GENIA: *(With tremendous self-control.)* How nice to see you again, Frau Meinhold. I was very sorry you didn't come yesterday.

FRAU MEINHOLD: There were so many people here, and I don't like a crowd. Today, I came earlier.

GENIA: It isn't so very early. Only ten o'clock. I thought it was near noon. Friedrich left long ago. As you probably know, Frau Meinhold, he returned yesterday.

FRAU MEINHOLD: Of course I know. *(Smiling.)* He sent his regards with Otto.

GENIA: Your son is leaving today?

FRAU MEINHOLD: My son left already. He took the last train to the city yesterday. Tonight he goes to Pola.

GENIA: So soon?

FRAU MEINHOLD: Surely you already knew that?

GENIA: Yes. But I thought he would want to spend his last day here with his mother.

FRAU MEINHOLD: He had a great many things to attend to in the city; so we said our goodbyes yesterday. It's better that way.

GENIA: Of course.

FRAU MEINHOLD: Can you imagine, Frau Genia, how I felt this morning as I sat all alone at breakfast? My little house has suddenly become so empty…as it hasn't been for a long time. I've been spoiled for a while—in spite of all. And the thought that

he has gone away so far, and for so long; it makes the house seem sadder and emptier. So I thought I had better go out…

GENIA: I understand.

FRAU MEINHOLD: Not with the intention of disturbing you so early. I only wanted to take a walk—a walk in the woods, alone. And yet, here I am. God knows how that came about. Something must have driven me here. *(Looks long at GENIA.)*

GENIA: *(Returning her glance.)* Thank you.

FRAU MEINHOLD: Oh, don't thank me. I had the choice of either being very angry with you or holding you very dear. When I left home, I had by no means decided. I can tell you, now that he is gone, Genia—These last few days I've been feeling very anxious—

GENIA: Anxious?

FRAU MEINHOLD: I know my son. And I know how he suffered these last few weeks. He is not well-suited—to false relationships—. I feared for him. You meant so much to him, Genia. More than his calling, his future, than I, more than his life. But I kept silent. I was compelled to keep silent. And even to understand. I felt it coming the first day Otto entered your house. With all my anger, my fear, my jealousy, I still felt compelled to understand. You were so alone, Genia, and had been so hurt. Even if it had been someone less worthy than Otto, I wouldn't have blamed you. And now that he has left, my anger and jealousy are gone, and I wonder: How will you bear it? You—who loved him?

GENIA: Frau Meinhold, I am not worth so much sympathy. I will try to forget him. And I will succeed. That is certain—as he will forget me. It is my firm resolve, to forget him. Don't you believe me? Rest assured, there is no understanding between us. I swear. We won't even write. That is settled.

FRAU MEINHOLD: You are very good, Genia.

GENIA: No, just…clever, Frau Meinhold. Just clever. *(Suddenly she gives way to a fit of sobbing. Her head drops down on the table.)*

FRAU MEINHOLD: Genia, Genia, *(She strokes her hair.)* Don't cry, Genia. It is a small consolation, of course—but we will bear it together, his being away. We shall be friends, Genia. It must be so. Genia…Genia, child, control yourself!

GENIA: Frau Meinhold

(She takes her hand as if to kiss it.)

FRAU MEINHOLD: Can you really find nothing better to call me? I am his mother.

GENIA: *(Shaking her head wildly.)* No, no, no. I can't.

FRAU MEINHOLD: *(Gazing long at her.)* I had better leave you now. Goodbye. But when you weary of loneliness, come to me. You'll always be welcome. Goodbye, Genia.

(FRIEDRICH comes in from the terrace. Buttons his overcoat quickly, composes his face. GENIA stares at him questioningly.)

FRIEDRICH: *(Forces a smile.)* Good morning, madam.

(He takes FRAU MEINHOLD's proffered hand with a barely noticeable hesitation.)

FRIEDRICH: How are you?

FRAU MEINHOLD: Well, thank you. Back from the city so early?

FRIEDRICH: From the city? No. I'm just going there. I've been out for a walk. A…glorious day…

FRAU MEINHOLD: I hear you've had a good trip.

FRIEDRICH: Yes, splendid. Excellent weather, interesting people. What more can one ask?

FRAU MEINHOLD: Oh, by the way, I have regards for you.

FRIEDRICH: Regards—for me?

FRAU MEINHOLD: You will be a little surprised. Regards from Herr von Aigner.

GENIA: From your husband?

FRAU MEINHOLD: Yes, this morning. Before I left the house, a letter arrived from him, the first in many, many years. He's coming here in a few days. He's meeting with one of the cabinet ministers, apparently.

FRIEDRICH: Yes, of course—concerning the new railroad. It will be a fine thing, that new road. Besides, he'll be a cabinet minister himself, someday—your husband. All in all, a remarkable man, a most remarkable man. He still has a great future ahead of him.

FRAU MEINHOLD: You think so?

FRIEDRICH: Why not?

FRAU MEINHOLD: His letter says something about poor health.

FRIEDRICH: Poor health? I don't suppose he could do any more mountain climbing—but being a cabinet minister is less demanding. And the fall is less dangerous. The man is life itself. He'll survive all of us. Oh, pardon me—of course I can speak only for myself—that's all that any of us can do. *(Laughs.)* A very interesting man. I like him.

FRAU MEINHOLD: He seems to have a strong regard for you too. Yes, it's an odd letter. Touching almost. And somewhat affected. That's not a habit he's likely to break himself of.

FRIEDRICH: No, not now.

FRAU MEINHOLD: Well, au revoir.

FRIEDRICH: Au revoir, madam. And, when your husband comes, our house is, of course… *Les amis de nos amis* and so forth…Goodbye, madam.

(GENIA accompanies her a short distance.)

FRAU MEINHOLD: Stay, stay, dear Frau Genia. Au revoir. *(Exits.)*

(GENIA returns rapidly. FRIEDRICH stands motionless.)

GENIA: Well—everything all right?

FRIEDRICH: *(Glances at her.)* Well—

GENIA: He's wounded? Friedrich!

FRIEDRICH: No. Dead.

GENIA: Friedrich, don't push too far. This is no time for jokes.

FRIEDRICH: He is dead. I can't say it any other way.

GENIA: Friedrich, Friedrich…

(She rushes to him, grabs his shoulders.)

GENIA: You killed him, Friedrich…and shook his mother's hand.

FRIEDRICH: *(Shrugs his shoulders.)* I didn't know she was here… What could I do?

GENIA: Dead…Dead! *(Suddenly nearing him.)* Murderer!

FRIEDRICH: It was an honest fight. I am no murderer.

GENIA: Why, why…

FRIEDRICH: Why? Obviously…I wanted to.

GENIA: That isn't true. Don't make yourself out to be worse than you are. You didn't want to. It was a terrible accident. You didn't want to…It isn't true.

FRIEDRICH: When he stood facing me, it was true.

GENIA: My God! And you took his mother's hand. You liked him, even. And you killed him out of vanity! You're inhuman.

FRIEDRICH: It isn't as simple as all that. You can't see inside of me. No one can. Listen, I'm sorry for poor Frau Meinhold and dear Herr von Aigner. But I can't help them. Or you. I can't help him. Or me. It had to be.

GENIA: Had to be?

FRIEDRICH: As he stood facing me with his impudent young glare, I knew it…It was him or me.

GENIA: You lie, he would never….

FRIEDRICH: Wrong. It was life or death. He wanted it the same as I. I could see it in his eye, as he saw it in mine. Him or me.

(ERNA and MAUER come from the garden. ERNA remains standing at the door. MAUER goes quickly to GENIA and presses her hand.)

FRIEDRICH: Ah Mauer, here already?

MAUER: There was nothing for me to do.

GENIA: Where is the body?

MAUER: On the way.

GENIA: Where to?

MAUER: To his mother.

GENIA: Does she…? Who will tell her?

MAUER: No one dares.

GENIA: I will tell her. It is my duty. I must hurry.

FRIEDRICH: Genia… Just a moment. When you return there'll be little opportunity…. I can't ask you to give me your hand, but we will say goodbye.

GENIA: *(Remembering.)* Percy is coming.

FRIEDRICH: Percy? Well, I'll wait for him…then…the others…well…

GENIA: What do you intend to do?

FRIEDRICH: Go to the city. The best course will be to give myself up. Nothing will happen to me. I defended my honor. They'll probably release me on bail. Still—they might suspect flight.

GENIA: You think of all that? And he lies dead.

FRIEDRICH: Ah yes—it's easier for him than for me. For him all things are settled. But I—I am still here on earth and I mean to continue living. You and I must come to a decision. One way or the other.

GENIA: *(Staring at him.)* It's over. *(About to go.)*

MAUER: Frau Genia, you mustn't go alone. Let me come with you.

GENIA: Thank you. Come.

(MAUER and GENIA leave. FRIEDRICH motionless as before.)

ERNA: *(At the door. Without moving.)* What will you do?

FRIEDRICH: However it turns out, conviction or acquittal—away, of course, from these parts…from the continent.

ERNA: And—wherever you go Friedrich—I will follow.

FRIEDRICH: Thanks. Not accepted.

ERNA: I feel it more than ever, Friedrich—we belong to each other.

FRIEDRICH: Wrong. You are under the influence of this thing now. Perhaps it even impresses you, that I…but that is an illusion. Everything is illusion. Over, Erna, between us too. You are twenty, you do not belong to me.

ERNA: *(Still standing on the same spot.)* You are younger than all of us.

FRIEDRICH: Hush! I know what youth is. Less than an hour ago, I saw it gleam in a cold, impudent eye. I know what youth is. And it won't do to always serve it as I have… Stay where you are, Erna, amuse yourself, and…

ERNA: *(Listening.)* A wagon.

FRIEDRICH: *(Remaining rigid.)* Percy.

ERNA: *(A little nearer to him.)* Believe me, Friedrich, I love you. I belong to you.

FRIEDRICH: I belong to no one on earth. No one. And don't want to.

A CHILD'S VOICE: *(From the garden.)* Mother! Father!

FRIEDRICH: Percy! *(He moans faintly.)* Yes, Percy, I'm coming. Here I am. *(Exits rapidly to the veranda.)*

(ERNA remains standing.)

(Curtain.)

THE LONELY WAY

Translated by Margret Schaefer and Jonathan Bank

LOST IN TRANSLATION

Margret Schaefer

The old saying that literature is whatever is "lost in translation" is born of suspicion. As the Italians say, "*traduttore—traditore!*": "translator—traitor." Words are so deeply embedded in a cultural fabric, so inextricably interwoven with the lived reality of the users of the language, that we secretly believe translation can never really reproduce the original. True. A translation is always a re-creation, not a reproduction, and depends upon the fallible hand of the translator. Sometimes while translating Schnitzler's fiction, it seemed to me that I was like a violinist attempting to play a sonata by Beethoven. And just as different violinists have different interpretations of Beethoven, so my translations of Schnitzler are unique to me.

It is generally agreed that the aim of any translation is to stay close to the original while writing in the vernacular of the language you're translating into. When a score specifies a B flat, you don't play an F sharp. This may sound straightforward, but in practice it isn't. There is a reason that translation, like psychoanalysis, has the reputation of being impossible (and perhaps interminable as well!). As usual, the proverbial devil is in the details. The translation of some words is obvious—*Berg* is mountain and *Stuhl* is chair—but all too often it is not obvious, and sometimes even the most seemingly clear words turn out to have complications in practice. There are many words that could be translated "correctly" with five or six different English words. Is a *Kunstbeamter*, a word that Professor Wegrat uses in *The Lonely Way* to define himself, best translated as "art executive," "art official," "art manager," "art administrator," "art bureaucrat," or "art functionary"? Any one of these would be "correct"—but actually all of them sound odd in English. My final choice here was "bureaucrat," because Professor Wegrat is being self-deprecatory in so characterizing himself, and because the "art" (*Kunst*) part of the word was implicit from the context. The translator's task isn't finished with pure semantic correctness; you also must convey the tone, the style, the atmosphere, the flavor, and—if possible—the sound and the melody of the original.

I came to translating *The Lonely Way* by way of translating Schniztler's fiction. If translating fiction was like playing a solo, translating *Der einsame Weg* was like playing in a symphony orchestra: a collaborative effort, guided and enriched (and sometimes complicated, too!) by having two conductors—myself and Jonathan Bank—and many instrumentalists—the cast. Jonathan and I had begun our collaboration with him asking me to provide a complete, uncut translation of Schnitzler's script this summer. This was not an endpoint, but a beginning. From then on, the process of our collaboration began in earnest. Jonathan proved to have an eagle eye and many questions. Many an email passed back and forth between Berkeley and New York debating this or that phrasing, this or that word, suggesting this or that revision. Jonathan cut and polished, pruned, revised, and clarified and used his theatrical ear to refine and reshape lines so that they would work on a contemporary stage.

Jonathan's directing experience, his feel for what would and what wouldn't work on stage, resolved many issues that I had considered problems. How to translate all those charming but meaningless super-polite Viennese formulas like *gnädige Frau* and *darf ich bitten* and those strings of titles that would have to be translated as something like "my dear Herr Professor Doctor Wegrat"? A mouthful! Jonathan thought many of these linguistic features of turn-of-the-century Viennese retarded the action, and he cut some of the more egregious examples—but he left enough of them in for the audience to know we're in Vienna here, not New York. The characters do sometimes ramble on and on—Viennese audiences must have had more leisure and patience than contemporary ones—and Jonathan condensed some speeches, leaving the meat but trimming the fat. Should the man who plays in a Prater café for nursemaids and soldiers be said to be eighty-three or thirty-eight? This was an issue over which I had agonized. The German says eighty-three but other translations insisted it was thirty-eight. Jonathan fixed it with a stroke of the pen: the age of the man is irrelevant; let's leave it unstated. Problem solved. Sala doesn't take the cigarette he is offered—his doctor told him not to smoke, and anyway, there are those pesky New York fire laws (our printed text leaves the smoking alone).

At the end of the fall, Jonathan and I had arrived at a better text than either of us could have done alone. His invaluable feedback made me think that all translation should be done in collaboration. We had decided to leave some things for rehearsals—to see how they actually sounded—but thought we had a pretty final text. However, as soon as rehearsals began, I realized the enormous difference between translating fiction and translating drama. Hearing the words you've put on a page read by a group of fine actors, hearing them expressed with dimensions of feeling and meaning and nuance of tone and voice, makes you feel—as Wegrat feels at the end of *The Lonely Way*—that you are really hearing them "as though for the first time." To my dismay, a line of dialogue that had seemed fine on the page suddenly sounded flat, awkward, or confusing when I heard an actor actually say it. Yet what was needed often wasn't at all clear. If a line was confusing or enigmatic, was that Schnitzler's intention—or was the translation flawed? I tended to assume that whatever awkwardness or confusion I heard was the fault of the translation, but Jonathan was often able to say, "No, wait, it's not a text issue, it's an acting issue; it'll become clear; this is only the first week!" Jonathan and I again discussed and debated words and lines. We checked and rechecked the German text. An actor would ask, "Well, what does the German actually—literally—say? "Actually" say? "Literally" say? Alas, even though I consulted my German text over and over again (by the end of the first week of rehearsals, my paperback copy of the play in German was coming apart at the seams), that didn't necessarily resolve the issue. My answer often had to be the same as the one that Peter Schnitzler told Jonathan he received to his most ordinary questions when growing up: "It's not as simple as that." That word means this—and this—and this…

"It's not as simple as that" is also what Jonathan told the actors when they wanted clarification and direction during rehearsals. Schnitzler's language is so subtle and rich, so full of nuance and ambiguity, that not just one but three or four often contradictory feelings are being expressed in any one scene, and he kept telling the cast: "I need you to express all four meanings at once!" That's just what I often wanted to do in the translation. But where an actor has the resources of his body, his face, his hands, his gestures, his tone of voice, as well as the words of the text, a translator has only words. And he can't use three or four at once. He has to choose one. It got so I started to envy the actor his resources.

Consider the stage direction *mit Wehmut* intended to characterize the way that Johanna looks at Sala in Act IV. "Wistfully," the word I chose, is a perfectly "correct" translation. But *mit Wehmut* also means "sorrowfully," "nostalgically," "plaintively," and "woefully." …"Wistfully," Jonathan felt, implies admiration and idealization; the others don't. So does Johanna admire Sala? Is she "wistful"—or just "sad"? Which emotion should she express here? Answer: all five. And yet I needed to pick just one word.

Even when a word has an obvious translation, it can be problematic. Take the word *Kind*. Simple enough: *Kind* means "child." But—"It's not as simple as that." For one thing, *Kind* is often used by couples as a term of endearment. In those cases, I used "sweetheart," or "my dear." But even when an actual "child" is being referred to and the word "child" would be appropriate, there can still be a problem. There is a long passage in the play in which Irene fantasizes about "the child" that she and Julian could have had. The German word is grammatically neuter and thus conveniently refers to either a male or a female child; the pronoun used to refer to the word is "it." But in English we don't refer to a child as an "it" unless we're being callous. So—what pronoun to use in the text for this genderless child that Irene imagines she has? I tried resorting to "he or she," but Jonathan rightly nixed that: too awkward, too politically correct. So then I tried varying it—in one sentence I had Irene say "he," and in the next "she." Jonathan nixed that, too—too artificial. No one talks that way except in lectures. We finally agreed on "he." I resisted this for a while, but Jonathan convinced me that it served the story better than using "she." So please don't accuse Irene of selling out to the patriarchy because she wishes she had a boy rather than a girl—she's only doing so because of the constraints of the English language!

Even purely grammatical issues can have other dimensions. One example is the perennial problem of how to indicate in English the difference between the formal "you" (*Sie* in German) and the informal "you" (*Du*). English hasn't distinguished between the formal and the informal variants since we dropped "thou" a few centuries ago, but there were strict rules about when one could appropriately address someone with *Du* in Schnitzler's time, much stricter than those ones that prevail in Germany now. (Schnitzler himself was known to address even long-standing intimates with the for-

mal *Sie*.) So when Sala and Johanna change from addressing each other as *Sie* in Act I to *Du* in Act III, this is very meaningful. But there is no way to indicate this linguistically: English only has "you." Fortunately, Jonathan believed that we could indicate this change through nonverbal behavior. No text needed to be changed. How wonderful that the theater can do that!

I very much like the text that Jonathan and I and the cast have come up with. It's leaner, more direct, less leisurely, than Schnitzler's original German, but it's still authentically Schnitzler's *Der einsame Weg*. The language plunges us directly into the rich depths of this drama, the emotional tumult below that exquisite Viennese surface. The text and I are both richer for the opportunity of collaborating with Jonathan and the cast. I learned a great deal during the rehearsal process. One thing I learned was that the play is even better and more powerful than I thought it was. Though I had lived with the script and chewed it over for months, hearing it acted out by a talented cast really got to me. At one particularly gripping point, I had to fight to keep from choking up. So much feeling, so much depth, so many "tears in things"… So much more was communicated by the acting than by the text alone. And that, of course, is just how it should be. After all, *The Lonely Way* is a play, not just words on a page. It longs for actors to translate Schnitzler's text into living, vital theater.

Margret Schaefer has published two volumes of translations of Arthur's Schnitzler's fiction, Night Games *(2002) and* Desire and Delusion *(2003), and is currently working on a third collection. She received a Ph.D. in English at UC Berkeley, and has taught English and comparative literature at Berkeley, San Francisco State, and the University of Illinois at Chicago. She has written and published on Oscar Wilde, Heinrich von Kleist, and Kafka, as well as on female psychology, feminist literary criticism, and the history of psychoanalysis.*

Mint Theater Company's production of *The Lonely Way,* written by Arthur Schnitzler and translated into English by Margret Schaefer and Jonathan Bank, began performances on February 1, 2005, at the Mint Theater, 311 West 43rd Street in New York City, with the following cast and credits:

Professor Wegrat ..... George Morfogen
Gabriele Wegrat ..... Sherry Skinker
Felix Wegrat ..... Eric Alperin
Johanna Wegrat ..... Constance Tarbox
Julian Fichtner ..... Ronald Guttman
Stephan von Sala ..... Jordan Lage
Irene Herms ..... Lisa Bostnar
Doctor Franz Reumann ..... John Leonard Thompson
Valet to Fichtner ..... Bennett Leak

Directed by: Jonathan Bank
Set Design by: Vicki R. Davis
Costume Design by: Henry Shaffer
Lighting Design by: Ben Stanton
Sound Design by: Jane Shaw
Furniture Design by: Frank Gehry
Prop Specialist: Judi Guralnick
Production Stage Manager: Samone B. Weissman
Assistant Stage Manager: Dawn Dunlop
Assistant Director: Kimberly Mueller
Press Representative: David Gersten & Associates
Graphic Design: Jude Dvorak

SETTING

Vienna. The present.

ACT I

A little garden left of PROFESSOR WEGRAT's small house, almost completely enclosed by other houses so that it has no view. Right of the garden is the small two-story house with a covered veranda from which three wooden steps lead into the garden. The house has entrances on the right and the left as well as from the veranda. Near the middle of the stage is a green garden table with matching chairs and a comfortable armchair. On the left, near a tree, is a small iron bench.

JOHANNA is walking back and forth in the garden. Enter FELIX in a military uniform.

JOHANNA: *(Turning around.)* Felix!

FELIX: Yes, it's me.

JOHANNA: How are you?—How did you get another furlough so soon?

FELIX: It's not for long— Well, how's Mamma?

JOHANNA: Not so bad, the last couple of days.

FELIX: Do you think she'll be frightened if I walk in without warning?

JOHANNA: No. But you'd better wait a little. She's napping— How long are you staying?

FELIX: I have to be on the road again tomorrow night.

JOHANNA: *(Gazing into the distance.)* On the road…

FELIX: That sounds grander than it is. I'm not going so far away, not in any sense.

JOHANNA: You wanted to get away from home so desperately… *(Points to his uniform.)* aren't you happy?

FELIX: Well, it's the most sensible thing I ever did, at any rate. I feel I could actually accomplish something now, given the right circumstances.

JOHANNA: I think you'd be a success no matter what you did.

FELIX: I don't think I would have been a successful lawyer or engineer. Certainly I'm better off than I was before. But—

JOHANNA: But you're free!—you can do anything, go anywhere…

FELIX: Within certain limits, yes.

JOHANNA: Well, your limits are a lot less narrow than the ones I have here!

FELIX: *(Looking around with an approving smile.)* This isn't exactly a prison… The garden is looking really good now. It was so pitiful when we were children! —What's this? A peach trellis! That's nice!

JOHANNA: Doctor Reumann's idea.

FELIX: I might have guessed.

JOHANNA: Why?

FELIX: No one in our family would have such a practical idea. By the way, what are his chances now?…I mean for that professorship in Graz.

JOHANNA: I have no idea. *(Turns aside.)*

FELIX: I suppose Mother spends a lot of time outdoors in this wonderful weather?

JOHANNA: Yes.

FELIX: Are you still reading to her? Trying to distract her a little? To cheer her up?

JOHANNA: As if that were so easy!

FELIX: You can't give up, Johanna.

JOHANNA: Easy for you to say, Felix!

FELIX: What do you mean?

JOHANNA: *(Half to herself.)* I don't think you'll understand.

FELIX: *(Smiling.)* Why should it be so hard for me to understand you all of a sudden?

JOHANNA: *(Giving him a long look.)* Ever since she became sick, I don't love her as much.

FELIX: *(Recoiling a little.)* What?

JOHANNA: You see, it's impossible for you to understand me. She's drawing further and further away from us… It's as though every day there was another veil separating her from us.

FELIX: What does that mean?

(JOHANNA gives him another long look.)

FELIX: You think…?

JOHANNA: You know I'm never wrong about these things, Felix.

FELIX: What? I know what?…

JOHANNA: When poor little Lilli von Sala was about to die, I knew it—before any of you even knew she was sick.

FELIX: You just imagined that—and you were only a child.

JOHANNA: I didn't imagine it. I knew it. *(Brusquely.)* I can't explain it.

FELIX: *(After a pause.)* And Father—is he prepared?

JOHANNA: Prepared? …You think he can see the veils, too?

FELIX: *(Shakes his head slightly.)* Really, it's only your imagination—I'm sure—I'm going to… *(He turns towards the house.)* Father isn't home yet?

JOHANNA: No. He's been coming home very late these days. He has a lot to do at the academy.

FELIX: I'll try not to wake her up— *(Exits by way of the veranda.)*

(JOHANNA, alone, sits down in a garden chair, clasping her hands across her knees. Enter SALA. He is forty-five, but looks younger. Slender, almost thin, clean-shaven. His dark blonde, medium-length hair, parted on the right, is just beginning to gray at the temples. His features are sharp and energetic, his eyes gray and clear.)

SALA: Good evening, Fraulein Johanna.

JOHANNA: Good evening, Herr von Sala.

SALA: Your mother was resting, so I took the liberty of coming out here.

JOHANNA: Felix just arrived.

SALA: Really? Another furlough already? In my day the regiment was much stricter.

JOHANNA: I always forget you did all that, too.

SALA: A long time ago. And only for a couple of years. But it was a rather good time in my life, when I look back on it now.

JOHANNA: Like most of your experiences.

SALA: A good many of them.

JOHANNA: Won't you sit down?

SALA: Thanks. *(He sits down on the arm of a garden chair.)* May I?

(He takes a cigarette from his cigarette case and lights it after JOHANNA has nodded her consent.)

JOHANNA: Have you moved into your villa yet, Herr von Sala?

SALA: Tomorrow.

JOHANNA: You must be very happy.

SALA: It's a little premature to say that.

JOHANNA: Are you superstitious?

SALA: Yes. But that isn't the reason. I'm only moving in temporarily, not for good.

SALA: Wanted that…? Embraced it when it came, perhaps—yes, you may be right about that.

JOHANNA: I know! A life without sorrow would be just as incomplete as one without joy. *(Pause.)* How long has it been?

SALA: What?

JOHANNA: *(Softly.)* Since your wife died.

SALA: Seven years, almost to the day.

JOHANNA: And Lilli…?

SALA: She died the following month. Do you still think about Lilli?

JOHANNA: Often. I haven't had a real friend since. She was very beautiful. She had such dark black hair, almost blue, like your wife's, and your bright eyes, Herr von Sala. As you wrote, "Now you've both gone, hand in hand, along the dark road into a land of light…"

SALA: What a memory you have, Johanna.

JOHANNA: Seven years ago…how strange.

SALA: Why strange?

JOHANNA: Here you are building yourself a house and digging out buried cities and writing esoteric poetry—and two people you loved have been rotting in the earth for seven years already. And you're still young, really. How incomprehensible it all is!

SALA: "You who live on, cease your weeping," said Omar Nameh, the son of a tinker, born in Baghdad in the year 412 of the Islamic calendar. I know a man who's already buried two wives and seven children, to say nothing of grandchildren, and now he plays piano in one of those shabby Prater cafés that has dancers in skimpy skirts performing onstage. His career has come to an end in a little Prater café where his public consists of nursemaids and corporals, and his greatest desire is—their applause!

(Enter DOCTOR REUMANN.)

REUMANN: Good evening, Fraulein Johanna. Good evening, Herr von Sala.

(REUMANN shakes hands with both of them.)

REUMANN: How are you?

SALA: Excellent! You know, just because someone had the honor of consulting you once doesn't mean they're in your clutches forever.

REUMANN: I had forgotten all about that. There are people who feel just that way, though. —Your mother is resting, Fraulein Johanna?

JOHANNA: *(Apparently struck by the short conversation between the DOCTOR and SALA, has been watching SALA intently.)* She's probably awake by now. Felix is with her.

REUMANN: Felix…? Surely no one sent for him?

JOHANNA: Not as far as I know.

REUMANN: I was just… Your father tends to worry.

JOHANNA: Here they come.

(FRAU WEGRAT and FELIX enter from the veranda.)

FRAU WEGRAT: How are you, my dear Doctor? What do you think of this surprise?

(The men shake hands all around.)

FRAU WEGRAT: Good evening, Herr von Sala.

SALA: I'm delighted to see you looking so well, madam.

FRAU WEGRAT: Yes, I'm feeling a little better. If only the gloom of winter weren't approaching so fast.

SALA: But, madam, the finest days of the year are still to come. When the woods are ablaze with red and yellow and a golden mist

lies over the hills, and the sky looks pale and distant as if in awe of its own endlessness…

FRAU WEGRAT: Yes, that would be worth seeing once more.

REUMANN: Please, madam—

FRAU WEGRAT: Forgive me—but sometimes I can't help myself. *(More cheerfully.)* If I only knew how much longer I could count on you being here, my dear Doctor?

REUMANN: I can reassure you on that score, my dear lady: I'm staying in Vienna.

FRAU WEGRAT: What? Has the matter been settled already?

FELIX: You mean they've actually appointed someone else to the position in Graz after all?

REUMANN: No. But the man who was practically certain of getting the position broke his neck mountain climbing.

FELIX: Well then, your chances should be better than ever.

REUMANN: Yes. But I prefer to withdraw myself from consideration.

FRAU WEGRAT: But why? Are you that superstitious?

FELIX: Or that proud?

REUMANN: Neither. But knowing that my own advancement was due to another man's misfortune would make my life miserable. That's neither superstition nor pride, just petty vanity.

SALA: That's rather subtle.

FRAU WEGRAT: Well, the only thing I understand from all of this is that you're going to stay. Which just goes to show how selfish you get when you're sick.

REUMANN: *(Deliberately changing the subject.)* So, Felix, how do you like it in the garrison?

FELIX: Very much.

FRAU WEGRAT: You're quite happy there, Felix?

FELIX: I'm very grateful, especially to you, Mamma.

FRAU WEGRAT: Why especially to me? After all, it was your father who made the final decision.

REUMANN: Of course, he would have preferred that you had chosen a more peaceful profession.

SALA: Nothing is more peaceful today than the army!

(Enter PROFESSOR WEGRAT.)

WEGRAT: Good evening—Felix! You're here again? What a surprise!

FELIX: Good evening, Papa. I have a two-day furlough.

WEGRAT: Furlough…Really? Or is it another one of your brilliant little tricks?

FELIX: *(Lightly, not taking offense.)* I'm not in the habit of lying, Father.

WEGRAT: *(Also jokingly.)* And I didn't mean to insult you, Felix. Even if you had deserted, your desire to see your mother would be sufficient excuse.

FRAU WEGRAT: To see both his parents.

WEGRAT: Of course—to see us all. But as you're a little under the weather right now, you're most important. —Well, how are you, Gabriele? You're feeling better, no? *(Softly, almost bashfully.)* My dear… *(He strokes her brow and her hair.)* Dear… The air is so balmy today.

SALA: It's a wonderful fall.

REUMANN: You're just returning from the academy, Professor?

WEGRAT: Yes. There's so much to do—especially now that I'm the director, and not

all of it pleasant or gratifying. But they tell me I'm made for it. They're probably right. *(Smiling.)* A born bureaucrat.

SALA: Don't be too hard on yourself, Professor.

FRAU WEGRAT: Did you walk all the way home again?

WEGRAT: Yes, I took a little detour—across the park. On evenings like this, the whole city lies below you as if bathed in a silver mist. —By the way, Gabriele, I ran into Irene Herms, she sends her regards.

FRAU WEGRAT: She's in Vienna?

WEGRAT: Just for a few days. She wants to pay you a visit in the next few days.

SALA: Is she still acting in Hamburg?

WEGRAT: No. She's left the stage and is living in the country with her married sister.

JOHANNA: I saw her in one of your plays, Herr von Sala.

SALA: You must have been very young.

JOHANNA: She was playing a Spanish princess.

SALA: Unfortunately. Royalty wasn't her strong suit. She couldn't perform verse to save her life.

REUMANN: And you remember to this very day, Herr von Sala, that a lady once recited your verse badly?

SALA: And why not? If you lived in the center of the earth, you would know that all things are of equal weight. And if you were perched in the center of the universe, you would see that all things are equally important.

FRAU WEGRAT: How does she look these days?

WEGRAT: She's still very attractive.

SALA: As beautiful as her portrait in the museum?

FELIX: What portrait?

SALA: I'm sure you know the painting. It's called "Actress." A young woman in a Harlequin costume, with a Greek toga thrown over it, and a pile of masks at her feet. She's all alone and looking directly out at the auditorium, standing on a dimly lit stage, surrounded by various pieces of scenery—stairs, goblets, and crowns—all gleaming in bright daylight.

FELIX: That's Julian Fichtner's painting!

SALA: That's the one.

FELIX: I had no idea the woman was Irene Herms.

WEGRAT: It's been more than twenty-five years since he painted that. It made a tremendous sensation, his first great success. To think that today people have never even heard of him. —By the way, I asked Irene about him. But, remarkably, not even she knows where he is.

FELIX: I talked to him just a few days ago.

WEGRAT: What?! You've seen Julian Fichtner? Where?…In Salzburg?…When?

FELIX: Three or four days ago. He looked me up and we spent an evening together.

(FRAU WEGRAT throws a quick glance at REUMANN.)

WEGRAT: How is he? What did he say to you?

FELIX: He's hasn't changed much—he's just a little grayer.

WEGRAT: How long has he been away from Vienna this time? Two years, isn't it?

FRAU WEGRAT: At least.

FELIX: He's traveled far and wide.

SALA: Yes, I got a postcard from him on occasion.

WEGRAT: We did, too; but I thought you were in regular correspondence with him.

SALA: Regular? No.

JOHANNA: Isn't he your friend?

SALA: As a rule, I don't have friends. But when I do, I'm inclined to deny them.

JOHANNA: But you two used to be so close.

SALA: He with me more than I with him.

FELIX: What do you mean?

JOHANNA: I understand what he means. I suppose you're the same with almost everyone?

SALA: I am.

JOHANNA: One can see it in your writing.

SALA: I hope so. Otherwise it might as well have been written by someone else.

WEGRAT: Did he say when he's coming to Vienna again?

FELIX: Soon, I think. But he wasn't very definite.

JOHANNA: I'd love to see Herr Fichtner again. I like people like that.

WEGRAT: What do you mean?

JOHANNA: People arriving from far away.

WEGRAT: But when you knew him, Johanna, he lived nearby.

JOHANNA: That doesn't matter; I always felt as if he were coming from far away.

WEGRAT: Well, yes…

FELIX: I know what you mean.

WEGRAT: Isn't it strange how he's been roaming the world the last few years?

SALA: Hasn't he always been restless? Even when you were both at the academy?

WEGRAT: Yes. When he was a young man, there was something about him—something dazzling. I've never known anyone who better fit the description of "promising."

SALA: Well, he's fulfilled much of that promise.

WEGRAT: But think what he was capable of!…

REUMANN: One does what one can.

WEGRAT: Not always. Not Julian. He was undoubtedly destined for higher things. But he lacked inner peace. He never felt at home anywhere, not even in his work, unfortunately.

FELIX: He showed me a few sketches he had done recently.

WEGRAT: Were they good?

FELIX: They seemed charged with feeling.

FRAU WEGRAT: What kind…what kind of paintings were they?

FELIX: Landscapes. Mostly sunny ones.

JOHANNA: Once in a dream I saw a spring landscape, very sunny and warm, and yet it made me cry.

SALA: Yes, there are tears in things…buried deeper than we suspect.

WEGRAT: So—he's working again? Perhaps he'll paint something extraordinary.

SALA: With a real artist, surprises are always possible.

WEGRAT: That's right, Herr von Sala. That's the difference. With an art professor, you never have to worry about surprises. *(With cheerful self-contempt.)* He paints his one nice little picture for the exhibition every year and couldn't do anything new or different with the best will in the world.

REUMANN: But who does more for the world and for art: professors like you, or…the so-called geniuses?

WEGRAT: Oh, as to genius—we'd better not talk about that. That's a world beyond all discussion—

REUMANN: Well, I respectfully disagree.

WEGRAT: It's really only possible to discuss people who have limits. I would argue that the man who knows his limits is the better man. So in that respect, I have every reason to think very well of myself. —Isn't it a little chilly here for you, Gabriele?

FRAU WEGRAT: No.

WEGRAT: Better wrap the shawl a little tighter around you, and then let's take a little walk.

FRAU WEGRAT: All right. Gladly— Please come along, Herr Doctor, take my arm. You haven't paid any attention to your patient yet.

REUMANN: I'm at your service.

(The others go on ahead, JOHANNA with her brother, the PROFESSOR with SALA. REUMANN and FRAU WEGRAT prepare to follow them, but suddenly FRAU WEGRAT stops.)

FRAU WEGRAT: Did you notice how his eyes lit up when they were talking about him? —Felix's, I mean. It was very strange.

REUMANN: Young men are always fascinated by people like Fichtner.

FRAU WEGRAT: *(Shaking her head.)* And he visited him… Obviously he went to Salzburg just to see Felix. He must be feeling lonely.

REUMANN: Why shouldn't he visit a young friend if they happen to be in the same place? I don't see anything strange about it.

FRAU WEGRAT: Perhaps. I might not have thought anything of it before myself. But now, in view of… No, Doctor, I won't be tragic.

REUMANN: It's not tragedy that I object to, just nonsense.

FRAU WEGRAT: *(Smiles.)* Thank you— But I have cause to reconsider so much. You shouldn't object to that. You know the reason I told you everything was so that I could talk about the past with a wise and kind person, not because I wanted to be absolved of any guilt.

REUMANN: It's more important to bring happiness to others than to be free of guilt. You've had opportunity to do that, so you've atoned for everything…if you'll pardon the use of such an absurd expression.

FRAU WEGRAT: How can you talk like that?

REUMANN: Aren't I right?

FRAU WEGRAT: As if I didn't know that you of all people have contempt for us all, the betrayed as well as the betrayers.

REUMANN: Why me of all people?… What you call contempt—if I felt anything like that—would only be envy in disguise. Don't you think I'd like to act on my impulses the way others do? I'd like nothing better than to be the kind of man who lies and seduces, and strides over the bodies along the way with a scornful laugh. I just don't have the talent for it. I'm condemned to be decent—and what's even worse: people say it right to my face.

FRAU WEGRAT: *(Who has been listening to him with a smile.)* I keep wondering if you told us the real reason for staying in Vienna…?

REUMANN: Of course I did. I really don't have any other. I don't have the right to any other. Let's not talk about it anymore.

FRAU WEGRAT: Aren't we good enough friends that I can talk to you frankly about

everything? I know what you mean anyway. But I think you might be able to drive the illusions and idle dreams out of a certain young woman's soul. It would be a great comfort to me if I could leave you behind with these people that I love so much who don't really know each other, don't understand their relationships to each other, and seem destined to drift away from one another to God knows where.

REUMANN: We'll talk about these things when the time comes.

FRAU WEGRAT: It's not that I have regrets; I don't. But something isn't right. Perhaps it's only the gleam in Felix's eyes… But isn't it strange—extraordinary almost—to think that a man like Felix should go about the world with his eyes wide open, yet never know whom he has to thank for seeing the light of this world?

REUMANN: What I think is this: a lie that's been strong enough to sustain the welfare of a family is at least as honorable as a truth that would only destroy the past, darken the present, and obscure the future.

(They continue walking. Enter JOHANNA and SALA.)

JOHANNA: And so one quickly returns to the same spot. I'm sure your garden is much larger, Herr von Sala?

SALA: My garden is the woods—for those who don't let a little fence stand in the way of their vision.

JOHANNA: Your villa has turned out to be quite beautiful.

SALA: You've seen it?

JOHANNA: I saw it again recently, for the first time in three years.

SALA: Three years ago, we hadn't even laid the foundation stone.

JOHANNA: But I could see the villa already standing, even then.

SALA: How mysterious…

JOHANNA: Not at all. The whole family once went to Dornbach, and we met you and Herr Fichtner on the very spot where you were planning to build it. And now everything looks just the way you described it then.

SALA: And what took you there recently?

JOHANNA: I often go out walking by myself, since Mamma took ill…

SALA: And when did you pass by my house?

JOHANNA: Not very long ago—today.

SALA: Today?

JOHANNA: Yes. I walked all around it.

SALA: Did you notice the little gate that leads into the woods?

JOHANNA: Yes. —But the house is practically invisible from there. The foliage is quite dense. —Where did you put those busts of the Roman emperors?

SALA: They're standing on columns at the beginning of a path. Right next to them is a little marble bench overlooking a small pond.

JOHANNA: *(Nodding.)* Just the way you described it back then… And the water is greenish-gray… And in the morning the shadows of the beeches are reflected in it—I know.

(She looks up at him and smiles. They resume walking.)

ACT II

At JULIAN FICHTNER's. Comfortable, elegantly furnished room in some disorder. Large bookcases. Books piled up on two chairs; an open suitcase on top of another. JULIAN is seated at the desk, taking papers out of a drawer, some of which he tears up and throws into the wastebasket.

VALET: *(Announcing.)* Herr von Sala. *(Exits.)*

(SALA enters. His habit of walking back and forth while talking becomes more and more pronounced during this scene. Occasionally he sits down for a moment, often only on the arm of a chair. From time to time, he stops beside JULIAN and puts his hand on JULIAN's shoulders while talking. Two or three times during the scene, he touches his hand to his left side as though experiencing some discomfort, but he doesn't do so conspicuously.)

JULIAN: I'm so glad to see you.

(They shake hands.)

SALA: You arrived this morning?

JULIAN: Yes.

SALA: And are you staying?

JULIAN: I don't know yet. Everything is still a mess, as you can see. I probably won't get it all organized either. I'm going to give this place up.

SALA: Too bad; I've grown accustomed to it. Where will you move to?

JULIAN: Nowhere, for a while, anyway. I'll just travel, as I've been doing the last few years. I may even auction off my things.

SALA: That's not a very appealing idea.

JULIAN: No, it doesn't really appeal to me, either. But I have to be practical. I've spent too much over the last few years, and I have to make it up somehow. Eventually I'll settle down and furnish a place again. There comes a time when one wants to settle down and concentrate on working. —Well, and how about you? And all of our friends?

SALA: You haven't seen anyone yet?

JULIAN: No, no one. You're the only one I even wrote that I was coming.

SALA: So you haven't been to the Wegrats'?

JULIAN: No. I'm almost reluctant to go there.

SALA: Why?

JULIAN: After a certain age, it really isn't a good idea to go back to where you spent your youth. People and places are seldom the same as when you left. Don't you agree? —Gabriele is said to have changed a great deal since she's been sick. That's what Felix told me. I'd rather not see her again. I'm sure you understand that, Sala.

SALA: *(Somewhat disconcerted.)* Of course. How long has it been since you've had news from Vienna?

JULIAN: I'm always traveling ahead of my mail. I haven't received anything for two weeks. *(Embarrassed.)* Why, what's happened?

SALA: Gabriele died about a week ago.

JULIAN: Oh! *(He appears very moved, walks up and down the room, then sits down and speaks again after a pause.)* Of course, it was inevitable, and yet…

SALA: She had an easy death—as if it were ever possible to know if that's really true. In any case, she fell asleep one night and never woke up again.

JULIAN: *(Very quietly.)* Poor Gabriele! —Had you seen her recently?

SALA: I went there almost every day—Johanna asked me to. She was literally afraid to be alone with her mother.

JULIAN: Afraid?

SALA: The sick woman made her very anxious. She's a little calmer now.

JULIAN: What a strange creature… And our friend, the Professor, how's he taking the loss? Resigned to the will of God, I suppose?

SALA: The man has responsibilities. I don't think you and I can grasp that, we who by grace are sometimes like gods—and sometimes less than human.

JULIAN: Felix is still here, of course?

SALA: I spoke to him an hour ago, and told him you were here. He was very pleased that you visited him in Salzburg.

JULIAN: So it seemed. And it did me a lot of good. In fact, I'm considering settling down in Salzburg.

SALA: Permanently?

JULIAN: For a while. Partly on his account. His innocence gives me great pleasure—makes me feel younger. If he weren't my son, I might almost envy him—and not only because of his youth. *(Smiles.)* What else can I do but love him. I feel a little ashamed that I've had to do it incognito, so to speak.

SALA: It's a little late for all of this feeling, don't you think?

JULIAN: I think I've been feeling this way longer than I remember. And don't forget—I didn't know he existed until he was already ten or eleven.

SALA: That must have been a very awkward meeting between you and Gabriele, ten years afterwards— She forgave you, obviously.

JULIAN: Forgave me? …It was both more and less than that. We only talked about the past once—she without reproach, and I without regret, as though it had all happened to other people. And after that, we never talked about it again. I could have believed that some miracle had erased the memory of it from her mind. And actually, as far as I was concerned, there didn't seem to be any real connection between this quiet woman and the creature I had once loved. And the boy—didn't mean more to me than any other pretty and gifted child, in the beginning, anyway. —Of course, my life was very different ten years ago. I was still clinging to a lot of things that I've let go of since. Over the years I was drawn to that house more and more, and eventually I began to feel at home there.

SALA: Of course there's something very attractive about family life. But I think it should at least be one's own family.

JULIAN: Look, I admit my relationship with the family was odd and that was embarrassing to me. That was one of the things that drove me away. Of course, there were lots of things bothering me at the time. My work wasn't going well, and I thought traveling would help.

SALA: And did it? You really could have written me once in a while. You know I like you more than I do most people. We have the knack of giving each other the right cue—don't you think? Sentimental people might call such a thing friendship. I've actually missed you these last two years—really! On many a lonely walk, I've thought of our wonderful conversations in Dornbacher Park, when we used to plumb "the depths and the heights."

JULIAN: Yes, I've taken many a lonely walk myself in the last few years.

SALA: Well, I'm sure you could easily have remedied that.

JULIAN: Yes, but the sort of thing that's available to me now just isn't satisfying. I've been very spoiled, Sala. I lived in a fog of love and passion—and power, too. But that's all past. Lord, the pitiful illusions I've had to beg, buy, or steal these past few years! It makes me sick to look back at them now, and when I look into the future, I shudder. What's left of all of the passion that I embraced the world with, except a kind of stupid rage that it's all over—rage that I'm subject to the laws of nature like everyone else?

SALA: Why all this bitterness? Even if some of the joys of youth have begun to lose their appeal, there's still plenty left for us in this world. Surely you of all people can appreciate that, Julian?

JULIAN: Take away the actor's part and then ask him if he still appreciates the beautiful scenery that surrounds him.

SALA: But haven't you started to work again?

JULIAN: Nothing to speak of.

SALA: Felix said you showed him a few sketches.

JULIAN: He talked about them?

SALA: Glowingly. And since you showed them to him, you must think they're worth something, too.

JULIAN: That's not why I showed them to him. *(Walking back and forth.)* I'll tell you the real reason—even at the risk of having you think I'm a complete idiot.

SALA: A little more or less of an idiot doesn't matter. Tell me.

JULIAN: Because I don't want him to lose his faith in me. Can you understand that? Of course I know that everyone, even you, considers me washed up, a has-been whose talent vanished along with his youth. I don't care. But to Felix I want to be the man I once was—the man I still am. If he ever finds out that I'm his father, I want him to be proud of it.

SALA: If he ever finds out…?

JULIAN: I'm not going to keep it a secret forever. Especially now that his mother is dead. The last time I talked to him it was quite clear that I not only have the right to tell him the truth, but almost the duty. He has a mind for the essential. He'll understand. And I would have somebody who belongs to me, who knows that he belongs to me, and I would have some reason to go on. I would live near him and spend time with him. My life would have some real grounding instead of being suspended in mid-air as it is now. And I could work again—like I used to—when I was young. —And I'll prove you all wrong—all of you!

SALA: But who doubts you? Everyone is sure that you'll find yourself again sooner or later.

JULIAN: Enough—enough about me already. Forgive me. What about you—tell me about yourself. You must have moved into your new house by now?

SALA: Yes.

JULIAN: And what are you planning to do now?

SALA: I'm thinking of going to Asia with Baron Ronsky.

JULIAN: On that expedition we've all been reading about?

SALA: Yes. I've wanted to do something like this for years. Do you know Rolston's account of the Bactrian excavations in '92?

JULIAN: No.

SALA: It's absolutely staggering. Imagine, they now think that underneath the rubble and the ruins there's a city the size of London. They went down into a palace and found the most wonderful paintings in a few of the chambers, some of them perfectly preserved. And they dug out some stairs—stairs carved from a marble that has never been found anywhere else. Three hundred and twelve steps, gleaming like opals, leading down into an unknown depth… Unknown because they stopped digging after the three hundred and twelfth step—God knows why. I can't tell you how much these stairs intrigue me.

JULIAN: But I've always heard that the Rolston expedition was completely destroyed.

SALA: Not entirely. Of the twenty-four who went, eight returned. They faced some Kurdish attacks that cost them a few men. But we'll be much better equipped. We're going to join up with a Russian contingent that's traveling with a military escort.

JULIAN: *(Who's already lit himself a cigarette, offers one to Sala.)* Have one?

SALA: Thanks. I really shouldn't. Yesterday Doctor Reumann told me not to… It's nothing—my heartbeat is a little irregular.

(Enter VALET.)

VALET: Fraulein Herms wants to know if you're at home, sir.

JULIAN: Of course. Ask her in.

(VALET exits. IRENE HERMS enters. She's about forty-three, but looks younger. She is simply and tastefully dressed. Her movements are lively, sometimes almost youthfully quick. She has thick, dark blonde hair and vivacious eyes, good-humored most of the time but easily filled with tears. She enters smiling, nods cordially to SALA and, with an almost joyful expression on her face, holds her hand out to JULIAN, who walks towards her.)

IRENE: Well, well. *(She has the habit of saying this "well" in a tone of warm inquiry.)* So I was right to be patient for a few more days. I've got you back again. *(To SALA.)* Do you know how long it's been since we've seen each other?

JULIAN: More than three years.

IRENE: *(Just nods, and only now takes her hand from his.)* It's never been this long before. And your last letter was over two months ago, Julian. I say "letter" to save face, but really it was only a postcard. Where in the world have you been all this time?

JULIAN: Please sit down. I'll tell you everything. You'll stay awhile, won't you?

IRENE: Of course. —Look at you—how wonderful you look! *(To SALA.)* Handsome—don't you think? I always knew that he would look good in gray.

SALA: It seems you're going to be privileged to hear all sorts of flattery, Julian. Unfortunately, I've got to be going.

IRENE: I hope I'm not driving you away?

SALA: How can you think that, Fraulein Herms?

IRENE: I suppose you're going to the Wegrats'? — Isn't it terrible, Julian? *(To SALA.)* Please give them my regards.

SALA: Actually I'm going home.

IRENE: Home? And you say that so casually? I understand you're now living in a veritable castle.

SALA: It's just a modest country house. It would give me great pleasure, Fraulein Herms, if you would convince yourself of that in person sometime. My garden is truly beautiful.

IRENE: If I have the time, I'll make a point of it.

JULIAN: Are you leaving again so soon?

IRENE: Yes. I have to get back home. Just this morning I got a letter from my little nephew—he says he longs for me. Five years old and already he has longings. What do you think of that?

SALA: And are you longing to go back, too?

IRENE: It's not that. But in Vienna I come across memories at every step— Guess where I was yesterday, Julian? In the house where I grew up. I sneaked in under a pretext. But then I started to cry so much that they must have thought I was crazy. So I told them the real reason I had come. There's a post office employee living there now with his wife and two children. One of them was such a darling; he was playing with a toy train that kept running over my foot— But I'm sure that doesn't interest you very much, Herr von Sala.

SALA: Oh, Fraulein Herms, don't stop now, just when it was getting exciting! I'd very much like to hear more about it. But, unfortunately, I really do have to go.

Goodbye, Julian— Fraulein Herms, I trust I may count on you to visit. *(Exits.)*

IRENE: Thank God!

JULIAN: *(Smiling.)* Do you still dislike him as much as all that?

IRENE: Dislike…? I hate him! It's only your incredible goodness of heart that makes you able to bear him. He's your worst enemy!

JULIAN: Where on earth did you get that idea?

IRENE: I can feel it—it's obvious.

JULIAN: I think you're still not entirely objective about him.

IRENE: Why not?

JULIAN: You still hold it against him that you weren't a success in his play ten years ago.

IRENE: It was twelve years ago. And it wasn't my fault. As far as his so-called poetry is concerned, I consider it rubbish. And I'm not the only one who thinks so either. But you don't really know him. To fully appreciate him in all his glory, you would have to have had the pleasure of rehearsing with him. *(Imitating SALA.)* "My dear Fraulein, this is poetry—poetry, my dear Fraulein…" Then you might have some idea of the boundless arrogance that lurks within… And besides, everybody knows he killed his wife.

JULIAN: *(Amused.)* But sweetheart, wherever did you get such an awful idea?

IRENE: People don't die at twenty-five for no discernible reason.

JULIAN: Irene, I hope you don't talk like this to other people.

IRENE: It isn't necessary. Everybody knows it but you. And I have no reason whatsoever to spare Herr von Sala, since he's been mocking you for twenty years.

JULIAN: But you'll visit him anyway?

IRENE: Absolutely. I'm very interested in beautiful villas. And I understand his is quite charming. If one only visited people…

JULIAN: Who haven't killed anyone—

IRENE: Really, we do him too much honor to continue talking about him. Enough about him. —Well, Julian? How are you? Why didn't you write me more often? Perhaps you couldn't?

JULIAN: Couldn't?…

IRENE: Were you forbidden?

JULIAN: —No one forbids me anything.

IRENE: Really? You're living all by yourself?

JULIAN: Yes.

IRENE: I'm delighted to hear it. I can't help myself, Julian, I'm glad you are. Though it's ridiculous. Sooner or later something new will start.

JULIAN: Those days are over.

IRENE: If only that were true! —Can I have some tea?

JULIAN: Of course. The samovar is over there.

IRENE: Where?—oh yes, here! And the tea? Oh, I know. *(She opens a small dresser and takes out the necessary things. During the next few minutes, she prepares the tea.)*

JULIAN: Are you really only staying a few more days?

IRENE: Yes. I've finished all my shopping. One doesn't need much finery in the country.

JULIAN: How do you like it there?

IRENE: I love it! It's wonderful to be able to just forget the theater!

JULIAN: But you'll go back to it anyway, one day.

IRENE: Never! Why should I? I've finally got what I always wanted: fresh air, a forest

nearby to walk in, open fields for riding, and a large private park where I can sit in the mornings wearing only my dressing gown. No directors, no audiences, no colleagues, no playwrights—even though not all of them are as arrogant as your precious Sala. —Well, anyway, I've finally got all that. I have an estate—a little castle, you could say— True, it isn't exactly mine—but I don't care. I'm living with the most wonderful people in the world; my brother-in-law is even more wonderful than my sister, if that's possible.

JULIAN: Didn't he court you once?

IRENE: Of course! He was desperate to marry me. Once upon a time, everyone was in love with me. But the smarter ones took up with Lori sooner or later. In fact, I've always mistrusted you a little because you were never in love with Lori. What I don't owe her!…If it hadn't been for Lori— Well, I've been living with the two of them for half a year.

JULIAN: The question is, how long will you be able to stand it?

IRENE: But Julian, why would I leave paradise and go back into that swamp where I *(More softly.)* spent more than twenty years of my life? What could I possibly get from the theater now? I have no desire to play the Heroic Mother or the Grande Dame. I intend to die as the Old Maid of the Castle, and if all goes well, I'll appear to my sister's great-grandchildren as the Woman in White. In other words: I have the best of all possible lives to look forward to—Why are you laughing?

JULIAN: It's wonderful to see you so cheerful again—and so youthful.

IRENE: It's the country air, Julian. You should give it a try. It's glorious! Obviously, I missed my real vocation. I'm sure the good Lord meant for me to be a milkmaid or a farm girl of some kind. Or maybe a shepherd boy; I always looked especially good in the breeches roles. —So. Can I pour you some tea? *(She pours him some tea.)* Have you got anything to go with it?

JULIAN: There ought to be some biscuits left in my suitcase. *(He takes a small package out of his suitcase.)*

IRENE: Fine. Thanks.

JULIAN: Isn't this passion of yours quite new?

IRENE: Biscuits—?

JULIAN: No. Nature.

IRENE: How can you say that? I've always had a great love of nature. Remember when we fell asleep in the woods in the middle of a hot summer afternoon? And the image of the Holy Mother of God up there on top of that hill where the thunderstorm overtook us? And when things had gone bad and I wanted to kill myself for your sake, fool that I was… Nature was the thing that saved me. Really, Julian. I could still show you the spot where I threw myself in the grass and cried and cried. It was one of those days when you had chased me from your door—again. Well, after I had been lying in the grass for half an hour and had cried my fill, I got up and ran around the meadow like a little girl, just for the pleasure of it. I dried my tears and actually felt quite fine again. *(Pause.)* Of course, the next morning I was mewling at your door again, and the whole thing began all over.

(It gradually grows dark.)

JULIAN: You still remember all of that!

IRENE: You do too. And admit it—who turned out to be the stupid one in the end? Really. Who?… Were you happier with anybody else? Did anyone else dote on you more than I did? Did anyone love you as much as I did?…Of course not. And really, you could have forgiven me that ridiculous little affair I stumbled into on tour. That kind of thing

doesn't mean nearly as much as you men make out—if we women do it, that is.

(They drink their tea.)

JULIAN: Should I turn on the light?

IRENE: The twilight is very pleasant.

JULIAN: If we had made up—it wouldn't have been the same anymore. It's better this way. Now we're the best of friends. That's also something very special.

IRENE: Yes. I'm quite content now. But then—! Oh God! What a time I had! It was only afterwards that I began to really love you—after I lost you through my own foolishness. That's when I learned what it means to be truly faithful… But a man can't be expected to understand that kind of thing.

JULIAN: I understand it quite well, Irene. Believe me.

IRENE: In any case, let me tell you something, Julian, it was nothing but just punishment—for both of us.

JULIAN: For both of us?

IRENE: Yes. I came to that conclusion long ago. Our well-deserved punishment.

JULIAN: For both of us?

IRENE: Yes, you too.

JULIAN: What do you mean?

IRENE: *(Earnestly.)* You're so clever otherwise, Julian. Think about it: could it have happened—do you think I could have done something like that if we—the baby—if we—had had the baby? Honestly, Julian—do you really believe that? I don't, and you don't either. Everything would have been different. Everything. We would have stayed together, had more children, we would have married, lived together. I wouldn't be the Old Maid of the Castle, and you wouldn't be—

JULIAN: An aging bachelor.

IRENE: Well, you said it. But the main thing is: we would have a child! I would have a child! *(Pause.)*

JULIAN: *(Has been walking back and forth in the room.)* Why are you bringing all this up again, Irene? All these long-forgotten—

IRENE: Forgotten?

JULIAN: —these things that happened so long ago?

IRENE: Yes, they happened a long time ago, yes. But out in the country you have lots of time to think. And when you see other children—Lori has two boys, you know—you get all sorts of ideas. The other day it was almost like a vision.

JULIAN: What was?

IRENE: I was walking across the field at dusk, all by myself, as I often do. The village below was still and quiet. I walked into the surrounding woods, deeper and deeper. And suddenly I wasn't alone anymore. You were there. And between us was our child. We were holding it by the hands—our little child. *(Angrily, to keep herself from crying.)* Oh, it's too stupid of me! Of course I know that by now the child would be a twenty-three-year-old brat, or even worse. He might be dead already. Or somewhere far away and we would have nothing to do with him anymore—yes, true—But we would have had him once; he would have been a little child once who would have loved us. And…

(She is unable to go on. Silence follows.)

JULIAN: *(Softly, almost tenderly.)* Irene, you shouldn't talk yourself into such a state.

IRENE: I'm not talking myself into it.

JULIAN: Don't brood about it. Things are what they are. You've had other things in your life, perhaps better things. Your life was richer than a mother's could have been… You were an artist.

IRENE: *(Half to herself.)* Who cares!

JULIAN: A great artist, a famous artist—that means something. And you've had many other wonderful experiences—after me. I know that.

IRENE: And what's left of all that? What does it all amount to? A woman who has never had a child has never really been a woman. But a woman who could have had a child—who should have had a child—and who— *(She glances at him.)* —didn't— she's a—! But no man can understand that! Not a single one of you! The best of you is worthless when it comes to this sort of thing. Is there a single one of you who knows how many children you have running about in the world? At least I know that I didn't have a child. Can you say the same?

JULIAN: And what if I did know—

IRENE: What? You have one? Tell me, Julian! You can tell me. Where? How old? Is it a boy? A girl?

JULIAN: Don't ask… And anyway, even if I had a child, it wouldn't belong to me.

IRENE: He has a child! He has a child! *(Pause.)* Why are you letting him run loose in the world?

JULIAN: You said it yourself: even the best of us is worthless in this sort of thing. And I'm not one of the best.

IRENE: Why don't you go and find him?

JULIAN: What right do I have to do that? What business is it of mine? Enough… *(Pause.)* Do you want another cup of tea?

IRENE: No thanks, thanks. No more.

(Pause. Twilight has fallen.)

IRENE: He has a child, and I didn't even know it!

(Long pause. VALET enters.)

JULIAN: What is it?

VALET: Herr Lieutenant Wegrat asks if you're at home, sir.

JULIAN: Of course. Show him in.

(VALET goes out after having turned on the light.)

IRENE: Felix?—I thought he had already gone back to his regiment.—The poor boy seemed quite devastated.

JULIAN: I can imagine.

IRENE: You visited him in Salzburg?

JULIAN: Yes, I was there for a couple of days in August.

(FELIX enters dressed in civilian clothes.)

FELIX: Good evening— Good evening, Fraulein Herms.

IRENE: Good evening, Herr Lieutenant.

JULIAN: My dear Felix… I was going to call on you this evening. It's very kind of you to take the trouble of coming here.

FELIX: I have to leave the day after tomorrow, and I didn't know if I'd have another opportunity to see you.

JULIAN: Please take off your coat. —I didn't have any idea, believe me. Sala just told me—less than an hour ago.

(IRENE looks first at one, then at the other.)

FELIX: We never imagined that anything like this would happen when we were out walking together in Salzburg this summer.

JULIAN: Was it sudden?

FELIX: Yes. And I wasn't with her… I had left late that evening, and she died during the night.

IRENE: Say rather: she didn't wake up the next morning.

FELIX: We have a lot to thank you for, Fraulein Herms.

IRENE: Oh please…!

FELIX: Mother was always so cheerful when you were talking with her or playing the piano.

IRENE: Please don't mention my piano playing—!

(A clock strikes.)

IRENE: That late already!? I have to go.

JULIAN: What's the hurry, Fraulein Herms?

IRENE: I'm going to the opera. I want to take advantage of the few days that I'm here.

FELIX: Will you visit us again, Fraulein Herms?

IRENE: Certainly. —You're leaving before I am.

FELIX: Yes. My furlough's almost over.

IRENE: *(Casually.)* How long have you been an officer, Felix?

FELIX: Three years.

IRENE: Three years? —Just how old are you, Felix?

FELIX: Twenty-three.

IRENE: So. *(Pause.)* Even when I saw you four years ago during your year of volunteer service, I thought you would stay in the military. —Do you remember, Julian? I told you so at the time.

JULIAN: Yes—

FELIX: That must have been in the summer, the last time you came to see us.

IRENE: I think so…

FELIX: A lot has changed since then.

IRENE: Yes, indeed! We had some wonderful days then. —Didn't we, Julian? Those beautiful summer evenings in the Wegrats' garden.

(JULIAN nods. IRENE looks at FELIX and JULIAN again several times. —Brief pause.)

IRENE: But it's really high time I left. —Goodbye. Give everyone at home my regards, Herr Lieutenant. —Goodbye, Julian.

(She leaves, escorted to the door by JULIAN. Pause.)

FELIX: The last time I was here was a very important moment in my life. I came to ask your advice.

JULIAN: Well, everything turned out as you wished. Even your father has resigned himself to it.

FELIX: Yes. I suppose he would have preferred me to continue my studies, but now he sees that it's possible to have a reasonable kind of life, even in uniform. In fact, my life is almost too comfortable.

JULIAN: And how are things at home?

FELIX: At home? —Strange, the word has almost lost its meaning.

JULIAN: Has your father gone back to work yet?

FELIX: Of course. He was back in his studio two days later. It's admirable. But I don't quite understand it… Am I disturbing you, Herr Fichtner? You were going through your papers?

JULIAN: Oh, there's no hurry. It won't take me long. I'm going to burn most of them.

FELIX: What?

JULIAN: Doesn't it make sense to get rid of things one hardly looks at anymore?

FELIX: It must make you a little sad to throw away your past like that.

JULIAN: Sad?…Why should it? It's just something one has to do.

FELIX: I can understand burning a letter or a picture or something like that as soon as

you receive it. But a souvenir of a past happiness or a past grief never loses its meaning. Especially with a life like yours, that's been so rich and so eventful. I imagine you must feel a kind of…awe when you think of your own past.

JULIAN: Where do you get such ideas—as young as you are?

FELIX: Well, it just occurred to me.

JULIAN: You may not be so wrong. But there's something else, something that makes me want to clean house. I'm about to become homeless, so to speak.

FELIX: What do you mean?

JULIAN: I'm giving up this place and I'm not sure what I'll do next. So I'd rather destroy these things than bury them in a box to rot in some basement.

FELIX: You must feel bad about losing some things.

JULIAN: I can't think of which.

FELIX: I'm sure you have mementos that mean something to others as well as to you. Sketches that you've kept, for instance.

JULIAN: Are you thinking of those trifles I showed you in Salzburg?

FELIX: Yes, of course, those too.

JULIAN: Those are still wrapped. Would you like to have them?

FELIX: I'd love to, thank you very much. They have a particular appeal for me. *(Pause.)* But there's something else I want to ask you. A great favor. If I may…

JULIAN: What is it? Just ask.

FELIX: I thought you might still have a portrait you painted of my mother as a young woman. A small watercolor.

JULIAN: Yes, I know the painting you're talking about.

FELIX: Do you still have it?

JULIAN: I think I could find it.

FELIX: I'd love to see it.

JULIAN: Did your mother remember this picture…?

FELIX: Yes. She told me about it the last time I saw her, the evening before she died. Of course, at the time I didn't dream the end was so near…neither did she, I don't think. But now it seems strange to me that on that very evening she talked so much about events that happened so long ago.

JULIAN: And she mentioned this painting?

FELIX: It's supposed to be very good.

JULIAN: *(Trying to remember.)* Where could I have put it? Wait a minute… *(He goes to a bookcase and opens the door of a low cabinet. Several shelves piled with large folios become visible.)* I painted it in the country, in the little cottage where your grandparents lived.

FELIX: I know.

JULIAN: Do you remember them?

FELIX: Vaguely.

JULIAN: *(Takes a large folio from one of the shelves of the bookcase.)* It's probably in this folio.

(He puts it on the desk and opens it. He sits down. FELIX stands behind him and looks over his shoulder.)

JULIAN: That's the cottage where they all lived, your grandparents and your mother. *(Turns the pages.)* —and this is the country inn where your father and I stayed… And this—

(He looks at the picture in silence. Neither of them speak for some time.)

FELIX: *(Picks up the painting.)* How old was my mother then?

JULIAN: *(Remains seated.)* Eighteen.

FELIX: *(Moves a little distance away and leans against one of the bookcases as if to see the painting in a better light.)* So a year before she married.

JULIAN: No, the same year. *(Pause.)*

FELIX: …There's a smile on her lips… It's almost as though she were speaking to me…

JULIAN: What did your mother say to you—that last evening?

FELIX: Not much. But I feel like I know more than she actually told me. It's strange to think that she's looking at me now, as she once looked at you… She seems nervous to me. Almost afraid… That's how you might look at someone you long for but who frightens you at the same time… Why don't you say something? I'm not one of those men who can't understand—who refuse to understand—that mothers and sisters are also women. I can imagine that it must have been a dangerous time for her…and for someone else. *(Very simply.)* Did you love my mother very much?

JULIAN: What a question. —Yes, I loved her.

FELIX: And those moments when you were sitting in that little garden with the canvas on your knee and, facing you, between all those red and white flowers on the green grass, the young girl with her straw hat and the nervous smiling eyes—those moments must have been very special to you.

JULIAN: Did your mother talk about those moments that last evening?

FELIX: Yes. And ever since then it has seemed to me that no one could have ever meant more to you than she did.

JULIAN: *(More and more agitated, but simply.)* I want to be careful here. —Before I know it, I'll be tempted to make myself appear better than I am. You know how I've lived my life. I've never been blessed with the capacity to bestow or to accept lasting happiness.

FELIX: I know that. I've always known it. Sometimes with a kind of pity—pain almost. But people like you, who seem destined by their nature to experience so much…are just the kinds of people, I think, who would cherish simple, tender memories more than… passionate and stormy ones. Am I right?

JULIAN: Perhaps.

FELIX: My mother had never mentioned this painting to me before. Isn't that strange?…That last evening was the first time. —We were all alone on the veranda; I had already said goodbye to everyone else… And suddenly she began to talk about those summer days of long ago. Her words implied much more than she could have suspected. I believe that her youth was unconsciously speaking directly to mine. That moved me more than I can say. —As much as she loved me, she had never talked to me like that before. And I think she had never been as dear to me as she was at that moment. —And when I finally had to leave, I had the strange feeling that there was more she wanted to tell me. —You can understand why I wanted to see this painting. —It's as though it could go on talking to me just as my mother would have done—if I had been able to ask her to!

JULIAN: Ask… Go ahead, Felix.

(FELIX, struck by the emotion in JULIAN's voice, looks up at him from the painting.)

JULIAN: I think it has much more to tell you.

FELIX: Is something wrong?…

JULIAN: Would you like to keep it?

FELIX: What?…

JULIAN: The picture—. Take it. On loan. When I've settled down in permanent quarters, I'll want it back. But you'll still be able to see it whenever you want. I hope that you won't have to travel far.

FELIX: *(Fixing his eyes on the painting.)* It's coming to life in my hands… That look was

meant for you! …That look—? Can I possibly be reading it right?

JULIAN: Mothers have their adventures too, like other women.

FELIX: I think it has nothing left to hide from me.

(FELIX puts the painting down. Long pause. He looks at JULIAN.)

JULIAN: Aren't you taking it with you?

FELIX: Not now. It belongs to you more than I imagined.

JULIAN: And to you…

FELIX: No, I don't want it until I know everything. *(He looks JULIAN straight in the eye.)* I don't know how I feel; nothing has actually changed, has it? Nothing, —except that now I know what I…

JULIAN: Felix!

FELIX: No, I never suspected that. *(Looks at him long with a mixture of emotion and curiosity.)* Goodbye.

JULIAN: You're leaving?

FELIX: I really need to be by myself for a while— Goodbye.

JULIAN: Until tomorrow, Felix. Tomorrow I'll come to your… tomorrow I'll come to see you, Felix.

FELIX: I'll expect you. *(Exits.)*

(JULIAN remains standing calmly for a while, then goes to the desk and studies the painting.)

ACT III

Room adjoining the veranda in WEGRAT's house. Corresponding view.

JOHANNA is by herself, sitting in an armchair, hands clasped. Enter SALA.

SALA: Good morning, Johanna.

JOHANNA: *(Gets up and goes towards him. Looks at him.)* Have you come to say goodbye?

SALA: Goodbye? My ship doesn't sail for another seven weeks, not until November twenty-sixth.

JOHANNA: One day you'll disappear without warning. I'll knock at your garden gate, and no one will come to open it.

SALA: We don't need to talk like that to each other.

JOHANNA: No we don't. Remember that.

(Enter FELIX.)

FELIX: Good morning, Herr von Sala.

(They shake hands.)

FELIX: Well, are you ready for your trip?

SALA: There's not much to do. I'll pack my suitcases, close the curtains, lock the doors, and then it's off into the mysterious distance. By the way, I have a question for you, Felix— Would you like to go with us?

FELIX: *(Startled.)* Are you serious?

SALA: Just as serious as you want me to be.

FELIX: Isn't it a purely scientific expedition?

SALA: Yes, that's the intention. But I expect there'll be many occasions when the presence of young men like you might come in handy.

FELIX: Like me?

SALA: During the Rolston expedition seven years ago, a lot of things happened that weren't on the itinerary. On the plateau of Karakum they had to fight a regular little battle.

(Enter DOCTOR REUMANN.)

REUMANN: For those who were buried there, your little battle was big enough, I daresay.

(They greet and shake hands all around cursorily without interrupting the conversation.)

SALA: I suppose you're right about that.

FELIX: Pardon me, but is this just a sudden impulse of yours—or something more?

SALA: Well, after a discussion that took place yesterday at the Foreign Office, I feel authorized to speak to you about it. —It's not a secret, Felix. You've probably read that a member of the General Staff and a few engineering officers will be assigned to us on an official basis. On account of the latest news from Asia—which, by the way, I don't consider very reliable, since it came by way of England—it has been decided to secure the assistance of a few young infantry officers, on an unofficial basis.

FELIX: And so it might be possible for me…

SALA: Could you be prepared to board ship with us on the twenty-sixth of November?

REUMANN: So soon?

SALA: Yes. *(Lightly.)* Why are you looking at me like that, Herr Doctor? It's rather indiscreet of you.

REUMANN: Indiscreet? How so?

SALA: Your look seems to say: go if you want, but whether or not you'll return is another matter.

REUMANN: A venture of this sort certainly warrants some skepticism. But does it matter to you whether you'll come back or not? You're not the type who wants to put his affairs in order, are you?

SALA: Oh no. It's really the affairs of others that one's concerned with in such cases. If I were interested in how things stood with me, it would be for a far more important reason.

JOHANNA: Namely?

SALA: If I didn't have long to live, I wouldn't want to be cheated out of knowing that my last days were at hand.

REUMANN: That's an unusual attitude.

SALA: In any case, you'd have to tell me the absolute truth if I should ask you. I think one has the right to live life to the utmost, with all of its joys and terrors. Just as I think we should perform every good deed and commit every villainy that we're capable of… No, I wouldn't let you deprive me of knowing my final hour! That would be unworthy of us both. —Well, Felix, the twenty-sixth of November. Seven weeks from now! When does your furlough end?

FELIX: Tomorrow.

SALA: You'll want to talk it over with your father, of course?

FELIX: With my father? —Of course. In any case, I'll give you my answer tomorrow morning, Herr von Sala.

SALA: Fine. I'd be very happy if you would join us. But remember: it won't be a stroll in the park. Well, goodbye then. Goodbye, Fraulein Johanna. Goodbye, Herr Doctor. *(Exits.)*

(Short pause. Those who remain are a little agitated.)

JOHANNA: *(Getting up.)* I'm going up to my room. Goodbye, Herr Doctor. *(Exits.)*

REUMANN: You've made up your mind?

FELIX: Almost.

REUMANN: You'll discover many new things.

FELIX: Myself among them, I hope—it's about time… "Off into the mysterious distance…" It would be so thrilling!

REUMANN: And yet you need time to think about it?

FELIX: I hardly know why. And yet… The thought of leaving people behind that you might never see again—and who won't be the same even if you do, and who may suffer because you've gone…

REUMANN: If that's the only thing holding you back, then don't waste another minute. Nothing is more likely to distance you from those you love than staying with them out of obligation. Seize this opportunity… I'm sure it'll be thrilling. My best wishes go with you. *(Reaches to shake his hand.)*

FELIX: Thanks. But there's plenty of time for goodbyes. No matter what I decide, we'll still see each other in the meantime.

REUMANN: *(Smiles.)* Is it ever really possible to know if you'll see someone again?

FELIX: Tell me, Doctor… was Herr von Sala right about how you were looking at him?

REUMANN: You needn't concern yourself with that.

FELIX: He won't be able to go?

REUMANN: *(Hesitating.)* That's hard to say.

FELIX: You never did learn how to lie, Doctor. Didn't he come to see you a few days ago?

REUMANN: Yes. *(Pause.)* You can see yourself that he isn't well, can't you? —So, goodbye, Felix.

FELIX: You're not planning to come back here! But why?

REUMANN: I assure you…

FELIX: I understand…

REUMANN: *(Embarrassed.)* What?

FELIX: I understand why you don't want to come here anymore… Someone else has broken his neck… My dear friend—

REUMANN: Felix… Goodbye…

FELIX: And if you should be called back…

REUMANN: I won't be. But if I should be *needed*, you know where to find me.

(JOHANNA enters the room.)

REUMANN: Goodbye… Goodbye, Fraulein Johanna…

JOHANNA: You're leaving already, Doctor?

REUMANN: Yes… give my regards to your father. Goodbye…

(He shakes her hand. Exits.)

JOHANNA: *(Calmly.)* Did he tell you that Sala is doomed?

(FELIX hesitates.)

JOHANNA: I knew it…

(As FELIX begins to speak, she makes a gesture to stop him.)

JOHANNA: And you're going—with or without him.

FELIX: Yes. *(Pause.)* It'll be very quiet around here.

(JOHANNA looks at him.)

FELIX: Father will be lonesome. I think he'd be very grateful if you paid more attention to him, perhaps go for a walk with him when you have time. For your own sake, too…

JOHANNA: *(Brusquely.)* What good would it do either of us? What can we be to each other? I wasn't made to stand by people in their hour of need. I can't help it, that's the way I am. Sooner or later, I begin to resent people who want sympathy from me. I felt that way the whole time Mother was sick.

FELIX: —What *do* you think you were made for?

(JOHANNA shrugs her shoulders and sits down again, clasping her hands together and staring straight in front of her.)

FELIX: Johanna! Why don't you talk to me like you used to? We used to tell each other everything.

JOHANNA: That was a long time ago. We were children then.

FELIX: Why can't you talk to me now the way you did then? We were such close friends!… Remember how we wanted to venture together out into the great, wide world!

JOHANNA: The great, wide world… Oh yes. I remember. But the words have lost their meaning.

FELIX: What do you mean?

JOHANNA: Once in the Belvedere you and I saw a painting that I still think about. There was a meadow with knights and ladies—and a forest, and a great city with churches and towers and bridges. Soldiers marched across the bridges and a boat was gliding down the river. In the distance there was a castle, and beyond that mountains enveloped in mist. The city was bathed in sunlight and the mountains were bright with snow and ice. —And whenever someone talked about the "great, wide world," I used to think of that painting. It was the same with other grand words: Danger—that was a tiger with gaping jaws, —Love was a pageboy with golden curls kneeling before a lady, —Death was a beautiful youth with black wings and a sword, —and Fame was the peal of trumpets and a road strewn with flowers. There was a time when one could talk about such things, Felix. But now everything seems different… Fame and love and death and the great, wide world.

FELIX: *(Hesitating.)* I'm a little worried about you, Johanna. —I don't want you to cause Father any grief.

JOHANNA: And I'm the only one who can do that?

FELIX: I know where your dreams are leading you, Johanna.

JOHANNA: Does everything have to lead somewhere? —I think, Felix, that some people are meant to be just a memory to each other.

FELIX: Johanna! —You said yourself—you weren't made to see people suffer.

(JOHANNA starts slightly.)

FELIX: Suffer… and…

(JULIAN enters.)

JULIAN: Hello.

(JULIAN shakes hands with FELIX.)

JOHANNA: *(Stands up.)* Herr Fichtner!

(She shakes hands with him.)

JULIAN: I hardly recognize you, Johanna. You've grown into a young lady. —Your father isn't home yet?

JOHANNA: He hasn't even left yet. He doesn't have to be at the academy until noon.

JULIAN: I suppose he's in his studio?

JOHANNA: I'll call him.

(Just as JOHANNA is about to go, WEGRAT enters with his hat and walking stick.)

WEGRET: Julian! My dear friend! I'm so glad to see you.

(He gives JULIAN his hand.)

JULIAN: I just heard yesterday— I don't have to tell you…

WEGRAT: Thank you. —Sit down. I don't have to be at the academy until twelve. Johanna, would you order a carriage for me?

(JOHANNA exits. WEGRAT sits down. JULIAN sits down too. FELIX remains standing.)

WEGRAT: If you'd come ten days earlier, you would have seen her. It happened so suddenly—although it wasn't unexpected.

JULIAN: So I've heard.

WEGRAT: And are you here to stay?

JULIAN: For a while. I can't really say for how long.

WEGRAT: Of course. You were never one to plan ahead.

JULIAN: True. Planning has never been my strong suit.

(Pause.)

WEGRAT: Oh, God—my friend—I think of you often! …When I walk into the building where I'm now in charge, I can't help remembering how we used to sit next to each other in the life model class with a thousand hopes and plans.

JULIAN: You say that with such melancholy. Many of our hopes have been realized.

WEGRAT: Yes… And yet one can't help wanting to be young again, even at the price of facing the same struggles and worries…

JULIAN: And even at the risk of having to relive the good times.

WEGRAT: True, it's the good times that are the hardest to bear, once they've become memories. —Do you remember our hike through the Ampezzaner Valley to Pieve and all the way down to Venice? The sun has never shone as brightly as it did then.

JULIAN: That was almost thirty years ago.

WEGRAT: No, not quite. You had just painted that wonderful picture of Irene Herms. It was the year before I married.

JULIAN: Yes, yes.

(Pause.)

WEGRAT: Do you remember that summer morning you first went with me to Kirchau? How we rode through the broad sunny valley in that little country carriage? And the little garden on the edge of the hillside where you met Gabriele and her parents?

FELIX: *(Moved, but concealing his emotion.)* Father, is the house where Mother lived still standing?

WEGRAT: No, it's been gone for a long time. The last time we were there was five or six years ago when we visited your grandparents' grave. Everything was different, except for the cemetery… *(To JULIAN.)* Do you remember, Julian, how we sat on the cemetery wall one stifling afternoon and had a remarkable talk about the future?

JULIAN: I remember that day very well. But I don't remember what we talked about.

WEGRAT: I can't remember exactly what we said either, but I recall it was an extraordinary conversation… The world seemed somehow to expand. I felt a little envious of you, as I often did in those days. But I had the feeling that I too could do anything—if I just wanted to. There was so much to see, so much to experience—life rushes on in a mighty stream—I just had to be a little bolder and dive in—That's how I felt while you were talking… And then Gabriele came up towards us on that little narrow road, her straw hat in her hand, and she nodded at me. And all my dreams of the future revolved around her after that, and the whole world was once again contained in a frame, one that seemed beautiful and big enough for me. Why has it all suddenly become so vivid again? I had virtually forgotten all of this, but since she died, everything is coming to life again with an intensity that almost frightens me… It's better not to think of it at all. What's the use? What's the use? *(Pause. He goes over to the window.)*

JULIAN: *(Struggles to overcome his embarrassment.)* It's brave of you to go back to work so soon, and wise too.

WEGRAT: Well, once you've decided to go on living—?! Work is the only remedy for that feeling of being all alone…that feeling of being left alone…

JULIAN: I think perhaps your grief is making you ungrateful for— what you still have.

WEGRAT: Ungrateful—? *(Turns to FELIX.)* Please don't hold it against me, Felix… you understand, don't you? There's so much that calls the young away—. We struggle to keep our children from the moment they're born… And it's a struggle we're destined to lose. That's the way of the world: our children never really belong to us. As for other people… even our best friends are only guests in our lives; they get up from the table when they've finished—and vanish back into their own lives. It's perfectly natural… Which doesn't prevent us from being pleased—truly pleased—when someone finds his way back again. You can be sure of that, Julian.

(Shakes JULIAN's hand.)

WEGRAT: —I trust that as long as you're in Vienna, I'll see you here often? That would give me real pleasure.

JULIAN: Of course.

JOHANNA: *(From off.)* The carriage is here, Father.

WEGRAT: I'm coming. *(To JULIAN.)* You've been gone so long. I want to hear everything that's happened to you—and your plans for the future.

JULIAN: I'll go with you, if you'd like.

WEGRAT: Thank you, but I would like it even more if you stayed right here and had lunch with us.

JULIAN: Well—

WEGRAT: I won't be long. The children will keep you company, as they did in the old days… You'll stay, won't you? Good. *(Exits.)*

(A long pause.)

FELIX: Why didn't you go away with her?

JULIAN: It wasn't your mother's fault. If there is any guilt, it's mine alone. I'll tell you everything.

(FELIX nods.)

JULIAN: We had arranged to go away together. We were going to leave in secret because your mother naturally wanted to avoid explanations and arguments. We intended to write after we'd been gone a few days. The time of our departure was set. He… the man that was to become her husband, he went to Vienna for a few days to attend to the paperwork for the wedding that was to take place in a week. *(Pause.)* The carriage that was to take us away had been ordered. When we parted that night, we were certain that we would be together the next morning and never separate again. —It turned out differently. —You must forget that it's your mother that we're talking about, Felix; and listen as though it were the story of two strangers—then you'll understand.

FELIX: Go on.

JULIAN: I had come with him to Kirchau on a wonderful summer morning…as you know. I had only planned to stay a few days. More than once I intended to leave before it was too late: but I stayed on. And *(Smiling.)* inevitably, we slipped into sin, bliss, destiny, betrayal—and dreams. It was really more of a dream than anything else. It was only after that last parting that was supposed to last only one night—after I returned to the little inn where I was staying and started to prepare for the trip—that I realized what had really happened and what was about to happen. It was as though I were waking from a dream. Only then, in the quiet of the night as I stood before the open window, did I realize that the next morning would determine my whole future. And I felt a tremor of fear run through me. Below I could see the road I had traveled. It ran into the open countryside, climbed the hills, and disappeared in the infinite distance—where it led to a thousand unseen roads, all of which, at that moment, I was still free to follow. My future was waiting for me beyond those hills,

a future radiant with glory and adventure, waiting… But for me alone. In order to seize it and savor it, I needed absolute freedom and no responsibilities. And I was amazed that I had been so ready to give up the freedom of my youth, the fulfillment of my destiny… for what?—For a passion that for all its sweetness and ardor had begun like so many others and was destined to end—had to end—as it always does.

FELIX: Destined to end?…Had to end?

JULIAN: Yes. The minute that I could imagine the end, it was in a sense already over. And to wait for the inevitable is to suffer it a thousand times. I knew that and I was afraid of it. Of course, I also knew that I was about to betray a creature who had given herself to me with absolute trust— But anything seemed better to me then—not just for me, but even for her—than such a slow, miserable, unworthy end. And all of my scruples were drowned in the overwhelming desire I had to live free of commitments and responsibilities. I didn't wait for morning. Before the stars had set that night, I was gone.

FELIX: You ran away…

JULIAN: Call it what you want. —Yes, I ran away; just as right and just as wrong, just as thoughtless and just as…cowardly as any other fugitive…filled with the same fear of pursuit and the same joy of escape. I'm not hiding anything from you, Felix. You're young; perhaps you understand how I felt at that moment even better than I do today. I didn't feel the slightest remorse. The feeling of freedom was intoxicating— At the end of the first day I was already further away than any milestone could mark. I could barely picture her face, the face of the woman who had awoken that morning to a crushing disappointment. I could barely recall the sound of her voice.

FELIX: No, it's not true! You couldn't have forgotten her that fast, you couldn't have moved on like that without feeling any remorse! This must be some kind of penance. You're making yourself out to be worse than you are.

JULIAN: I'm just telling you the truth. You must hear it. She was your mother, and I'm the one who abandoned her. And I'll tell you something else: that time right after my escape was the brightest and richest time in my life. Never before and never again did I revel in such a glorious sense of my own youth and freedom, never again was I so completely the master of my gifts and my life… Never again was I as happy as I was then.

FELIX: *(Calmly.)* And what if she had killed herself?

JULIAN: I think I would have thought I was worth it—at that time.

FELIX: And perhaps at that time you really were. —And I'm sure she did want to kill herself. To put an end to the lies and the misery, as countless women have done before her. I'm sure she also thought of confessing the truth to the man she married. But of course it's easier to get through life when you don't have to carry the burden of reproach—or of forgiveness.

JULIAN: And if she had confessed—?

FELIX: It wouldn't have helped anyone, of course. I understand. So she said nothing. She said nothing when she came home from the wedding—nothing when the child was born—nothing when her lover entered her husband's house again ten years later—nothing to the very last day… Such things happen everywhere…

JULIAN: And few have the right to judge—or to condemn.

FELIX: I don't presume to do either. I can't even grasp that now I should see a betrayer and a betrayed when just an hour ago I saw people that I loved who were in the most

straightforward relationship to one another. And I can't begin to feel I'm someone other than the person I thought I was before today. The truth you tell me has no power… A vivid dream would mean more to me than this story of the distant past. Nothing has changed…nothing. The memory of my mother is as sacred to me as it was before. And the man in whose house I was born, the man who cared for me and loved me in my childhood and my youth, and who—who loved my mother—that man means just as much to me now as he did before—perhaps even more.

JULIAN: And yet, Felix, however little power this truth may have for you now—there is one thing that you cannot deny: it was as my son that your mother bore you…

FELIX: Cursing you.

JULIAN: …And as my son that she raised you…

FELIX: Hating you.

JULIAN: At first, yes. Then forgiving me, and finally—don't forget this—as my friend. —And on her last evening what did she talk to you about? —About those days when she experienced the greatest joy a woman can experience.

FELIX: And the greatest misery.

JULIAN: Do you think she didn't know that you would come and ask to see that painting?… Do you think your request was anything other than your mother's last greeting to me? —Do you understand, Felix?… And this very minute—don't deny it—you can see it—the painting you held in your hand yesterday, the painting in which your mother looks at you—looks at you the same way she looked at me on the brilliant and sacred day she lay in my arms and conceived you. —And no matter what you feel now, whatever doubt and confusion, you now know the truth; your mother herself wanted you to know it, and it's no longer possible for you to forget that you're my son.

FELIX: Your son—that's only a word. An echo in the void— I look at you, I know it, but I can't grasp it.

JULIAN: Felix!

FELIX: No. Now that I know, you've become more of a stranger to me than you were before. *(He turns away.)*

ACT IV

HERR VON SALA's garden. His white ground-level villa is on the left; it has a wide terrace with six stone steps leading into the garden. A wide glass-paneled door leads from the terrace into the salon. In the foreground is a small pond surrounded by a semicircle of young trees. A tree-lined path runs from here diagonally across to stage right. At the beginning of the path, near the pond, are two columns each topped with the marble bust of a Roman emperor. A semicircular high-backed stone bench is under the trees on the right of the pond. In the background, there is a slender fence, barely visible through thinning shrubbery. Behind the fence a wood now in autumn colors begins a gentle climb upwards. A pale blue autumn sky is above. Quiet. —The stage remains empty for a time.

SALA and JOHANNA enter from the terrace. JOHANNA is dressed in black, and SALA wears a gray suit with a dark overcoat thrown over his shoulder. —They're slowly coming down the stairs.

SALA: Isn't it a little chilly for you?

(He puts his coat around JOHANNA's shoulders. They slowly descend into the garden.)

JOHANNA: You know what I'm thinking…? That this is our day—that it belongs to us alone. We called it up, and if we wanted to, we could keep it… Everyone else is just a guest in our world today. Don't you agree? I

suppose it's because you once forecast this day.

SALA: I did?

JOHANNA: Yes… when Mother was still alive… And now it's here. The leaves are red, a golden mist is hanging over the woods, and the sky is pale and distant, just as you said… and the day is even more beautiful and more melancholy than I could ever have imagined. And I'm spending it in your garden, my reflection in your pond. *(She stands looking down into the pond.)* And yet we can no more preserve this golden day than this water can hold my image after I'm gone.

SALA: It's strange—this balmy air already hints of winter and snow.

JOHANNA: What do you care? When that hint becomes a reality, you'll be long gone into another spring.

SALA: What do you mean?

JOHANNA: Well, there isn't a winter like ours where you're going, is there?

SALA: *(Pensively.)* No, not like ours. *(Pause.)* And what will you do, after I'm gone?

(JOHANNA looks at him. He's looking into the distance.)

JOHANNA: Haven't you been gone for a long time? And aren't you quite far away from me even now?

SALA: What are you talking about? I'm right here… What will you do, Johanna?

JOHANNA: I'm going away—like you.

(SALA shakes his head.)

JOHANNA: Soon. While I still have the courage. Who knows what would become of me if I stayed here?

SALA: As long as you're still young, every door is open, and the world waits for you behind each one of them.

JOHANNA: It's only when you're on your own that the world is wide and skies are infinite. That's why I want to go away.

SALA: That's easier said than done. To actually do it, you have to make preparations and have a plan. You talk as if all you had to do was sprout wings and fly into the distance.

JOHANNA: To be determined to do it—is the same as having wings.

SALA: Aren't you afraid, Johanna?

JOHANNA: There's a little bit of fear in any desire worth having.

SALA: Where will it lead you?

JOHANNA: I'll find my way.

SALA: You can choose the road you travel, but not who you'll meet on the way.

JOHANNA: You think I don't know that all of my experiences won't be wonderful? I know that some will be ugly and common.

SALA: And how will you bear that?… Will you be able to?

JOHANNA: I don't intend to be as honest with everyone as I am with you. I'll lie—and I'll do it with pleasure. I won't always be happy and I won't always be sensible. I'll make mistakes and I'll suffer. That's how it has to be.

SALA: You know all this in advance, and still…

JOHANNA: Yes.

SALA: But why?… Why do you want to go away?

JOHANNA: Because I want to look back on my life one day and shudder—as you can only do when you've tried everything. Just as you must feel when you look back on your life. Isn't that right?

SALA: Sometimes, yes. But it's in those moments that you realize nothing is really past—it's here again in the present. And the present is becoming the past. *(He sits down on the bench.)*

JOHANNA: What do you mean?

(SALA covers his eyes with his hands and sits silent.)

JOHANNA: What's the matter? Where are you?

(A light wind stirs the leaves, and many fall to the ground.)

SALA: I'm a little boy riding my pony across an open field. My father calls to me. My mother is waiting at the window, waving, with a gray silk shawl wrapped over her dark hair… I'm a young lieutenant standing on top of a hill announcing to my superiors that enemy soldiers are lurking behind the thicket, ready to attack, and below I see bayonets and buttons gleaming in the noontime sun… I'm lying alone in a drifting canoe looking into the dark blue summer sky, and unspeakably beautiful words are forming in my mind—more beautiful than any I was ever able to put on paper. I'm resting on a bench in a balmy park, and Helen is sitting next to me; and under the magnolia tree Lilli is playing with a blonde English boy, and I hear them laughing and chattering… I'm walking through rustling leaves with Julian and we're talking about a painting: two old sailors with weatherbeaten faces sitting on an overturned boat, gazing sadly out at the infinite sea. And I feel their misery more deeply than the painter who painted them, more deeply than they themselves would feel it if they were really alive… And all that, all that, is here in the present—All I have to do is close my eyes and all that is closer to me than you are, Johanna, if I don't see you and you remain silent.

(JOHANNA is looking at him wistfully.)

SALA: The present—what is that, anyway? Can we embrace a moment like we clasp a friend in our arms—or an enemy who's pressing against us? Isn't a word already a memory the moment it's spoken? Isn't the note that begins a tune already a memory even before the song ends? Isn't your entrance into this garden already a memory, isn't it as much a part of the past as the footsteps of those who died long ago?

JOHANNA: No, it can't be that way. It's too sad.

SALA: *(Back in the present again.)* Why?… It's at times like this that we know we can never really lose anything.

JOHANNA: If only you had forgotten and lost everything— and I could be everything to you now!

SALA: *(Somewhat astonished.)* Johanna!—

JOHANNA: *(Passionately.)* I love you!

(Pause.)

SALA: In a few days I'll be gone, Johanna. You know that.

JOHANNA: Yes, of course I know that. Are you afraid that I'm suddenly going to clutch at you like a simpering girl with dreams of eternal love? —No, that's not my way… But I wanted to tell you that I love you. I'm allowed to do that just once, aren't I? —Do you hear? I love you! And I hope you'll hear it one day just as I'm saying it now—at a moment just as beautiful as this one… a moment in which we'll no longer exist for each other at all.

SALA: Johanna, you can be sure of one thing: the sound of your voice will never leave me— But why are we talking about parting forever? We'll see each other again…perhaps in three years…or in five… *(Smiling.)* Perhaps by that time you'll be a princess, and I'll be the king of some buried city… Johanna—what are you thinking?

(JOHANNA pulls the cape closer around her.)

SALA: Are you cold?

JOHANNA: No.—But I have to go.

SALA: You're in a hurry?

JOHANNA: It's getting late. I want to be home before Father gets back.

SALA: How strange! —Today you're hurrying home so as not to worry your father, and in a few days…

JOHANNA: He won't be expecting me then. Goodbye, Stephan.

SALA: Until tomorrow, then.

JOHANNA: Yes, until tomorrow. Goodbye then.

(They begin to walk away together.)

SALA: Listen, Johanna— what if I asked you to stay?

JOHANNA: No, I have to go.

SALA: No, I mean, what if I asked you to stay with me—for…a long time.

JOHANNA: You have a strange way of joking.

SALA: I'm not joking.

JOHANNA: Are you forgetting that you're…going away?

SALA: There's nothing to prevent me from staying if I don't want to go.

JOHANNA: You'd stay for my sake?

SALA: I didn't say that. Perhaps for my own.

JOHANNA: Oh no, you mustn't give up the trip. You would never forgive me if I kept you from going.

SALA: Do you think so? *(Watching her intently.)* What if we both went?

JOHANNA: What?

SALA: I'm asking if you'd like to come with me…as my wife, of course, since we must consider formalities.

JOHANNA: You want me to—

SALA: Why does that move you so much?

JOHANNA: With you?… With you?

SALA: Don't misunderstand me, Johanna. You wouldn't have to be tied to me forever. We could simply say goodbye to each other when we came back—if we wanted to. I know I can't fulfill all your dreams—I know that very well… You don't have to tell me now. I wouldn't want you to say anything you might regret.

JOHANNA: *(Has been looking at him as though she wanted to drink in his words.)* No, I won't say anything… I won't say anything at all.

SALA: *(Gives her a long look.)* Think about it and let me know in the morning.

JOHANNA: Yes. *(She looks at him for a long time.)*

SALA: What is it?

JOHANNA: Nothing. —Till tomorrow. Goodbye now.

(He escorts her through the garden door and she exits).

SALA: *(Comes back and stops at the pond.)* As if I were trying to find her reflection…

(He stares at the ground in front of him. JULIAN enters and breaks the silence.)

JULIAN: And you want to leave this glorious place so soon?

SALA: Hopefully, I'll be coming back, Julian.

JULIAN: I hope so too—for both our sakes.

SALA: You say that as though you doubted it…

JULIAN: Well, yes—I was thinking of that article in the paper. Some of the places you have to pass through really do seem to be extremely dangerous right now.

SALA: Exaggerations. In my opinion, there's nothing behind that article except the jealousy of English scientists. What you read was taken from the *London Daily News*, where that article appeared over three weeks ago. —By the way, have you seen Felix?

JULIAN: He came to see me last night. And this morning I called on him. He wanted to see the painting I did of his mother twenty-three years ago—and one thing led to another and I ended up telling him everything.

SALA: You did? *(Pensively.)* And how did he take it?

JULIAN: He was perhaps more emotional than I had anticipated.

SALA: Well, I hope you didn't expect him to fall into your arms like the long-lost son in a melodrama.

JULIAN: No, of course not. —I told him everything, without sparing myself in the least. That's why he felt the injustice done to his mother's husband more powerfully than anything else. But that won't last. Soon he'll realize that in a higher sense, no real wrong was done. People like Wegrat weren't made to possess anything—neither a wife nor children. They provide refuge and shelter—but never really a home. Do you understand what I mean? People like Wegrat are destined to sacrifice themselves for others; they find a satisfaction in their sacrifice that might strike others as meager… You're not saying anything?

SALA: I'm listening.

JULIAN: And you have nothing to say?

SALA: Well, it's possible to play scales even when the violin is cracked…

(It gradually grows darker during the scene.)

SALA: Who's there?

FELIX: *(On the terrace.)* It's me. I hope I…

SALA: Oh Felix! Please join us.

FELIX: *(Coming down.)* Good evening, Herr von Sala. —Good evening, Herr Fichtner.

JULIAN: Good evening, Felix.

SALA: I'm glad to see you. I wasn't expecting you until tomorrow morning. Have you made up your mind already?

JULIAN: Am I intruding?

FELIX: Oh no. It's not a secret. —I accept your offer, Herr von Sala, and I'd be grateful if you'd speak to Baron Ronsky.

SALA: *(Shaking FELIX's hand.)* I'm so pleased… *(Turns to JULIAN.)* It's about our Asiatic expedition.

JULIAN: What?… You're joining the expedition?

FELIX: Yes.

SALA: Have you talked it over with your father?

FELIX: I will this evening. —But that's just a formality. I've already made up my mind.

SALA: I'll talk to the Baron today. But he already knows everything he needs to about you.

IRENE: *(Calling from offstage.)* Hello…!

SALA: Excuse me, gentlemen. *(Exits.)*

JULIAN: You're going away?

FELIX: Yes, I'm very happy to have the opportunity.

JULIAN: You understand the real nature of this undertaking?

FELIX: In any case, I'll actually be doing something and I'll broaden my horizons.

JULIAN: Couldn't you find all that in something where the expectations were a little more hopeful?

FELIX: Probably. But I don't want to wait.

IRENE: *(Still on the terrace with SALA.)* I just couldn't leave Vienna without keeping my promise.

(IRENE contiues to speak as she comes down the steps with SALA.)

IRENE: You really do have a wonderful place here— Good evening, Julian. Good evening, Lieutenant.

SALA: You should have come a little earlier—you would have seen everything in sunshine. *(Pointing to the stone bench.)* Won't you sit down?

IRENE: Thank you. I hope I'm not interrupting an important discussion, gentlemen?

SALA: No, not at all.

IRENE: But you're all looking so serious. —Perhaps I'd better go.

SALA: Oh, no, don't do that—

FELIX: If Fraulein Herms would excuse us for a minute…

IRENE: Of course.

FELIX: I wanted to ask what steps I should take regarding my present commission…

(FELIX continues speaking as he slowly walks off with SALA.)

IRENE: Why so mysterious? What's going on?

JULIAN: No mystery. Apparently the young man wants to join the expedition. So naturally they have things to discuss.

IRENE: *(Who's been looking from JULIAN to FELIX and back.)* Julian—it's him, isn't it?

(JULIAN does not reply.)

IRENE: You don't need to answer. I haven't been able to think of anything else since we talked… I can't understand why I didn't realize it before. It's so obvious—it's him… And he's twenty-three! To think that when you chased me from your door, I was worried that you might kill yourself!… And there goes your son.

JULIAN: What good does it do me? He doesn't belong to me.

IRENE: Just look at him! He's there, alive, and young, and handsome! Isn't that enough? *(She gets up.)* And I was ruined!

JULIAN: What?

IRENE: Don't you understand? Ruined forever!

JULIAN: No, I had no idea.

IRENE: Well, you couldn't have helped me anyway. *(Pause.)* Goodbye. Forgive me. Tell them whatever you want. I'm leaving before I learn anything else.

JULIAN: What's the matter with you? Nothing has changed.

IRENE: Is that what you think?… To me, these twenty-three years have suddenly taken on an entirely different meaning! —Goodbye.

JULIAN: Goodbye. Until we meet again.

IRENE: Do you even care if we do? Do you?… Oh now you're upset… There you go again, making me feel sorry for you. *(Shaking her head.)* That's just like you. Well, what can one do?

JULIAN: Pull yourself together—here they come.

SALA: So, that should take care of everything.

FELIX: I'm very grateful to you. But now I do have to go.

IRENE: Are you going into town, Lieutenant? I'd be happy to give you a lift if you like.

FELIX: Thank you.

SALA: But Fraulein Herms…? That was rather a short visit!

IRENE: Yes, I still have a few errands to run. I'm going back into the wilderness tomorrow, and it'll probably be a while before I get to Vienna again. —Are you coming, Lieutenant?

FELIX: Goodbye, Herr Fichtner. And in case I don't see you again…

JULIAN: We'll see each other again.

IRENE: People will think it's the Herr Lieutenant with his Frau Mamma. *(She throws JULIAN a last glance.)*

(SALA accompanies IRENE and FELIX up to the terrace. JULIAN remains behind, walking up and down. After a while, SALA comes back.)

JULIAN: You're sure that your appeal to Baron Ronsky will be successful?

SALA: If I hadn't already received his assurances in the matter, I would never have mentioned it to Felix.

JULIAN: Why are you doing this, Sala?

SALA: Because I like Felix, and I prefer traveling in pleasant company.

JULIAN: And it never occurred to you that the thought of losing him might be painful to me?

SALA: Oh please, Julian! You can only lose what belongs to you. You know that as well as I do. What gives you the right to claim him as yours?

JULIAN: Doesn't the fact that I need him give me any rights? —Don't you understand, Sala, he's my last hope?… That I have nothing and no one now except him?

SALA: And what good would it do you if he stayed? Even if he felt something like filial affection towards you, how would that help you?… How could he or anyone else help you?…You're afraid of being alone? Wouldn't you be just as alone now with a wife at your side? With children and grandchildren at your feet, wouldn't you still be just as alone?… If you had kept your money, your fame, your genius—do you really think that then you wouldn't be alone?… Even with a parade of revelers following us wherever we go—we'd still have to walk down the road alone… those of us who have never belonged to anyone but ourselves. Growing old is a lonely business for people like us. And it's only the fool who fails to realize that in the end he can only depend on himself.

JULIAN: And what about you, Sala—you think you don't need anyone?

SALA: I'm able to get what I need—and that includes keeping people at a certain distance. It isn't my fault that others haven't always realized that.

JULIAN: That's right, Sala. You've never loved anyone in this world.

SALA: Perhaps not. Have you?… To love means to live for the sake of another. I'm not saying that's a desirable state of affairs, but in any case, I'm pretty sure that neither of us has ever come close to it. What does what you and I have to offer the world have to do with love? Passion, tenderness—yes, but not love. Has either of us ever made a sacrifice that didn't gratify our own vanity?… Have we ever hesitated to betray and deceive decent people in order to gain an hour of happiness?… Have we ever risked anything important—and I don't mean out of whim or recklessness—for the benefit of another?… Has either of us ever given of ourselves without expecting something in return? We can shake on this, Julian. I whine a little less than you, that's the only difference between us… But you know this just as well as I do. We may try to fool ourselves, but we never succeed. In the depth of our souls, Julian, we've always known exactly what to think of ourselves! —It's getting chilly, let's go indoors.

(They begin to walk up the stairs.)

JULIAN: All that may be true, Sala. But you'll grant me this: if there's anyone in the world who shouldn't make us pay for our mistakes, it's the person who owes us his very existence.

SALA: It's not a question of making you pay. Your son has a mind for what is essential, Julian. You said so yourself. And he knows this: that one hasn't done very much for someone if all he has done is set him loose into the world.

JULIAN: Then let things be the same as they were before he knew anything. I'll just be an ordinary friend like I was before. But he can't just leave me like this… I can't stand it. Do I deserve that he should run away from me?… Even if everything that I thought was decent and true in me—even my affection for this young man who is my son—even if I were just deluding myself—right now I love him… Do you understand, Sala? I love him and the only thing I ask from him before I lose him forever is that he should believe that I do…

(Darkness falls. They go up to the terrace and enter the salon. —The stage is empty for a time. The wind increases. JOHANNA enters from the right through the tree-lined path and walks slowly past the pond until she reaches the terrace. —She stops. She appears to be in a state of great agitation. She hears a noise and hurries back down the stairs, and remains standing in front of the pond. She looks into the water.)

ACT V

In WEGRAT's garden. DOCTOR REUMANN is sitting at a small table, writing something in his notebook.

JULIAN: *(Entering quickly by way of the veranda.)* Is it true, Doctor?

REUMANN: *(Standing up.)* Yes.

JULIAN: She's disappeared?

REUMANN: She's been gone since yesterday afternoon. She left no word and took nothing—she just left and hasn't returned.

JULIAN: What could have happened?

REUMANN: We have no idea. Maybe she lost her way and will soon come back. Or maybe she suddenly decided to… if we only knew what.

JULIAN: Where is everyone?

REUMANN: We agreed to meet here again at ten. I've been to all the hospitals and anyplace where there was a possibility of finding a trace of her… The Professor has probably made a report to the police by now.

(FELIX enters in haste.)

FELIX: Nothing?

REUMANN: Nothing.

(JULIAN offers FELIX his hand.)

JULIAN: Where have you been?

FELIX: At Herr von Sala's.

REUMANN: Why?

FELIX: I thought he might have some idea of where she was. But he doesn't know anything. Or so it seemed. If he knew anything—if he knew anything definite, he'd have told me. I'm sure of that. He was still in bed when I got there. When he heard that Johanna had disappeared, he turned very pale… He doesn't know anything.

(Enter WEGRAT.)

WEGRAT: Nothing?

(Everyone shakes his head. JULIAN takes his hand.)

WEGRAT: *(Sits down.)* They wanted details, what could I tell them?… I don't know anything… It's a complete mystery to me. *(Turns to JULIAN.)* Yesterday afternoon she left for

her usual walk… *(Turns to FELIX.)* Did you notice anything strange about her?… I'm absolutely certain she wasn't planning anything when she left home… that she had no intention of leaving for good.

FELIX: How can you be so sure?

WEGRAT: It's true, she wasn't very forthcoming—especially since her mother died. —Do you think it's that…Do you think it could be that, Doctor?

(REUMANN shrugs his shoulders.)

FELIX: Did any of us even know her? Who really cares enough about anyone else to actually know them?

REUMANN: Perhaps it's good that we don't—otherwise we might go mad out of sympathy. *(Pause.)* But I have to get back to my patients; I have a few calls that can't be postponed. I'll be back. *(Exits.)*

WEGRAT: To think that you can watch someone grow up, see the child become a girl, the girl a woman…exchange hundreds of thousands of words with her… and then one morning she gets up from the table, takes her hat and her coat, and leaves…without so much as a farewell… and you have no idea where she's gone to, whether into the void or into a new life!…

FELIX: Whatever happened, Father—she had always wanted to go away. She told me that much.

WEGRAT: *(Shaking his head, perplexed.)* Everything drifts away…intentionally or unintentionally…but away it goes…

FELIX: Father, we don't know what happened. It's possible that Johanna decided something impulsively, but will change her mind. She may be back in a couple of hours or days.

WEGRAT: Do you think so?… Do you think that's possible?

FELIX: It's possible—yes. But if she doesn't come… Of course, Father, I'll give up the plan I talked to you about yesterday. Under these circumstances, I can't think of leaving you and going so far away for so long.

WEGRAT: *(Turning to JULIAN.)* Now he wants to sacrifice himself for my sake!

FELIX: Perhaps I could even arrange to be transferred here.

WEGRAT: No, Felix, you know very well I could never accept that.

FELIX: It wouldn't be a sacrifice, Father. —I can't possibly leave you now!

WEGRAT: Oh Felix—yes, you can—you can. You can't stay here for my sake—I won't let you. What good would it do me if you gave up this expedition that you've set your heart on? I could never forgive you if you gave it up, and I could never forgive myself if I let you. Be happy that you found a way that may lead you to everything you've always wanted. That makes me happy, too. You'll regret it the rest of your life if you miss this opportunity.

FELIX: But so much, so very much, seems to have changed since yesterday—for you and for me.

WEGRAT: For me—perhaps. But it doesn't matter. I won't accept such a sacrifice from you. Perhaps if I thought it would do me any good. But I wouldn't have any more of you if you stayed… I'd have less… I'd have nothing at all. We mustn't make matters even worse by betraying ourselves. We'll get over whatever disaster may be befalling us somehow, no matter how terrible it turns out to be. But if we violate our true selves, that can never be undone. *(Turns to JULIAN.)* Isn't that so, Julian?

JULIAN: Absolutely.

FELIX: Thank you, Father. I appreciate you making it so easy for me to agree with you.

WEGRAT: That's good, Felix… During the few weeks left before you leave, we'll have many chances to talk—perhaps more than ever before. How little we all really know each other!… I'm so tired. We've been up all night.

FELIX: Why don't you lie down a little, Father?

WEGRAT: Lie down… You'll stay here?

FELIX: Yes, of course, I'll stay right here. What else is there to do?

WEGRAT: I keep racking my brains… Why didn't she say anything to me? Why did I know so little about her? Why were we so far apart? *(He goes.)*

FELIX: And that man has been lied to—all his life—by all of us.

JULIAN: There's no sin, no crime, no betrayal in this world that is irredeemable. Is this the only thing that can never be atoned for and forgotten?

FELIX: Do you really not understand?… Here a lie was made eternal. I can't forget that. And it was my mother that told the lie—and you who forced her to tell it—and I am the lie, as long as I keep on passing for someone I'm not.

JULIAN: Then let's tell the truth, Felix. —I'll face any judge you choose, submit to any sentence that's passed. —Am I the only one to be damned eternally? Am I to be the only one who has made a mistake who will never be able to say, "I've atoned"?

FELIX: It's too late for that. A confession is worthless unless the guilty party can make reparation. And the time for that, as you surely know, is long past.

(Enter SALA.)

FELIX: Herr von Sala! Do you have any news?

SALA: Yes. —Stay here, Julian. I'm glad to have a witness. *(To FELIX.)* Are you still determined to join the expedition?

FELIX: Yes.

SALA: So am I. But it's possible that one of us will change his mind.

FELIX: Excuse me?

SALA: One might think it wasn't right to undertake such a journey with someone who could want to shoot you if he really knew you.

FELIX: Herr von Sala! Where is my sister?

SALA: I don't know. But last night, just before you came, she said a final goodbye to me. Her parting words were: "Until tomorrow." So you can understand why I was surprised when you called on me this morning. You see, yesterday, of all days, I asked Johanna to become my wife—which seemed to unsettle her very much. I'm not telling you this in order to make myself seem better than I am. The motive for my proposal was not to right some wrong—I suppose it was just a whim—like so many of the things I do. But I want you to know the truth. —I thought I'd better tell you this before we sleep in the same tent or descend into the bowels of the earth together.

FELIX: *(After a long pause.)* We won't be sleeping in the same tent.

SALA: What?

FELIX: Your journey won't last that long.

(A long silence.)

SALA: So… I think I understand you. Are you sure?

FELIX: Absolutely— *(Pause.)*

SALA: Did Johanna know?

FELIX: Yes.

SALA: Thank you for telling me. —Well, we can shake hands now, can't we? Well?… It's not customary to refuse your hand to a man on the ground.

(FELIX gives him his hand. Then:)

FELIX: And where is she?

SALA: I don't know.

FELIX: You have no idea? Did she have any friends that I don't know about?

SALA: Not that I'm aware of.

FELIX: Do you think she's alive?

SALA: I don't know.

FELIX: You're not willing to say anything else, Herr von Sala?

SALA: I have nothing else to say. Farewell, and good luck on your trip. Give my regards to Baron Ronsky.

FELIX: Are we seeing each other for the last time?

SALA: Who can know?

(FELIX gives him his hand.)

FELIX: I'm going to hurry to my father. I need to tell him what I just learned from you.

(SALA nods.)

FELIX: *(To JULIAN.)* Goodbye. *(Exits.)*

(JULIAN and SALA start to leave together. SALA suddenly stops.)

JULIAN: Why are you hesitating? Let's go.

SALA: It's strange to *know* for certain. But I won't submit to it as long as I'm still here—even if that were only to be another hour…

JULIAN: So you believe it, then?

SALA: *(Gives JULIAN a long look.)* …Do I believe it…? He behaved very well, your son… "We won't be sleeping in the same tent."… Not bad! I couldn't have said it better myself…

JULIAN: Are you coming?

SALA: I didn't tell him about a strange hallucination I had before coming here. I think it was a…

JULIAN: What? Tell me!

SALA: Before I left my house—right after Felix left—I went back into my garden—that is, I walked through it—in a strange state of agitation. As I walked by the pond, it seemed to me that at the very bottom…

JULIAN: Sala!

SALA: The water has a blue-green sheen, and in the morning the shadows of the beeches fall on it. Strangely enough, yesterday Johanna said, "The water can't hold my image…" It felt like a challenge to destiny… And when I passed by the pond, it seemed to me that… the water held her image after all.

JULIAN: That's not possible!?

SALA: Possible—or not…what does that matter to me now? It would only interest me if I were going to be alive a year from now or even an hour.

JULIAN: You intend to…?

SALA: Of course. You don't think I would wait, do you? That would be too painful. *(With a laugh.)* Who's going to give you your cues now, my friend? Yes, it's all over… Where is it all now?… No closer and no further away than those marble steps leading into the mysterious depths… Perhaps your son will find out whether the three hundred and twelfth step is the last one—and if he doesn't, it will make little difference to him— Don't you agree he behaved very well?… It seems to me that a better generation is growing up now—with more poise if less spirit— Send your regards to heaven, Julian.

(JULIAN makes a movement to follow him.)

ARTHUR SCHNITZLER (1862–1931)

Arthur Schnitzler was one of the most famous of all of the great personalities in Vienna at the turn of the last century. Schnitzler wrote over twenty-five plays in addition to numerous stories, novellas, and novels. From before 1900 until 1925, Schnitzler was more talked about, and his plays were more performed on the stages of Germany and Austria, than any other writer.

Sigmund Freud wrote Schnitzler a letter in 1922 in honor of his sixtieth birthday, describing the writer as his artistic doppelgänger. "Whenever I am absorbed in one of your beautiful creations, I invariably seem to find beneath their poetic surface the very suppositions, interests, and conclusions that are also mine… I have formed the impression that you know through intuition…everything that I have discovered by laborious work on other people."

Schnitzler was both a Jew and a critic of the Austrian monarchy, contributing to the censorship of his work in his lifetime and by the Nazis after his death. His work ultimately suffered the same fate as the Viennese culture that he was describing: it vanished into obscurity after World War I.

His best-known play today is probably *Reigen*, a.k.a. *La Ronde*. This work was the basis for *The Blue Room* by David Hare. Audiences may also be familiar with *Anatol*, an early work (1893) consisting of seven scenes variously controversial, censored, or banned for immorality. Neither of these plays accurately represents the breadth or depth of Schnitzler's genius, what Benedict Nightingale describes as his "inquisitive, complex, formidably moral intelligence."

"If previous ages tended blindly to ignore their geniuses," writes John Simon, "ours is all too ready to crown as genius the nearest trendy hack. One of the very few masters not fully acknowledged even posthumously is the Viennese playwright-fiction writer Arthur Schnitzler."

MINT THEATER COMPANY

Established in 1992, Mint Theater Company exists to bring new vitality to worthy but neglected plays. Mint excavates buried theatrical treasures, reclaiming them for our time through research, dramaturgy, production, publication, and a variety of enrichment programs and advocates for their ongoing life in theaters everywhere. Mint has a keen eye for work that, no matter when it was written, speaks to the challenging questions of our own day. Mint's 2001 Obie Grant recognized its success in combining "the excitement of discovery with the richness of tradition. When it comes to the library," the citation reads, "there's no theater more adventurous." Mint's Drama Desk Award (2002) recognizes the importance of Mint's mission of "unearthing, presenting and preserving forgotten plays of merit." *Worthy But Neglected: Plays of the Mint Theater Company*, an anthology of seven rediscoveries, is a lasting embodiment of Mint's mission and an important tool in the effort to broaden its reach.

Lost plays rediscovered by Mint have included the New York premieres of Arthur Schnitzler's *Far and Wide* (*Das weite Land*), Harley Granville-Barker's *The Voysey Inheritance*, and *Welcome to Our City* by novelist Thomas Wolfe; the first New York performance in over fifty years of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the first New York revivals of the Pulitzer Prize–winners *Alison's House* by Susan Glaspell and *Miss Lulu Bett* by Zona Gale, as well as D.H. Lawrence's *The Daughter-in-Law* and J.M. Barrie's *Echoes of the War*. Mint strives to expand the canon of plays considered worthy of production and study in theaters, schools, and libraries. In the last few years, Cecily Hamilton's *Diana of Dobson's*, Githa Sowerby's *Rutherford and Son*, and *The Voysey Inheritance*—all produced by Mint—have received productions at other theaters in the U.S. and Canada, bringing new vitality to plays that have lain fallow for years, some for nearly a century. Visit www.minttheater.org for more information.