

SWITZERLAND



© FRIEDRICH DÜRRENMATT

*Friedrich Dürrenmatt (1921–1990) is an internationally renowned dramatist whose tragic-comic approach to theater has been instrumental in shaping the themes of contemporary drama. The son of a Protestant pastor, Dürrenmatt was born in a small town near Bern, Switzerland. Although Dürrenmatt's religious background initially drew him to the ideas of Søren Kierkegaard, in later life he came to call himself "an uprooted Protestant." Dürrenmatt studied philosophy and literature at the University of Zurich, where he was continually tormented by a sense of guilt at being sheltered from Fascism. World War II became for him the decisive event of the twentieth century and left him with an irredeemable sense of spiritual despair. Dürrenmatt elaborated his pessimism about humankind into dramatic theory. According to him, tragedy as an art form could no longer convey the suffering and horror of the twentieth century. Neither could realistic art, which, Dürrenmatt argued, obscured the paradoxical nature of humanity. Theater had to create a contrived and artificial counterreality, which, with its use of the grotesque and comic, would reveal humanity's debasement. To convey the "fall of man," Dürrenmatt in plays like *The Visit* (1962) and *The Physicists* (1964) created a drama of two-dimensional figures whose exaggerated characteristics personify the loss of spiritual values. In *The Visit*, the bizarre Claire Zhanassian, the richest woman in the world, is the dehumanized product of the very power that she has gained. Dürrenmatt's great achievement as a playwright lies in that through the use of the grotesque and the absurd he is able to reinstate a moral vision into his pessimistic dramas.*

The Visit

CHARACTERS

(In order of appearance)

HOFBAUER (FIRST MAN)	SECOND GRANDCHILD
HELMESBERGER (SECOND MAN)	MIKE
WECHSLER (THIRD MAN)	MAX
VOGEL (FOURTH MAN)	FIRST BLIND MAN
PAINTER	SECOND BLIND MAN
STATION MASTER	ATHLETE
BURGOMASTER	FRAU BURGOMASTER
TEACHER	FRAU SCHILL
PASTOR	DAUGHTER
ANTON SCHILL	SON
CLAIRE ZACHANASSIAN	DOCTOR NÜSSLIN
CONDUCTOR	FRAU BLOCK (FIRST WOMAN)
PEDRO CABRAL	TRUCK DRIVER
BOBBY	REPORTER
POLICEMAN	TOWNSMAN
FIRST GRANDCHILD	

The action of the play takes place in and around the little town of Gullen, somewhere in Europe.

There are three acts.

ACT ONE

A railway-crossing bell starts ringing. Then is heard the distant sound of a locomotive whistle. The curtain rises.

The scene represents, in the simplest possible manner, a little town somewhere in Central Europe. The time is the present. The town is shabby and ruined, as if the plague had passed there. Its name, Gullen, is inscribed on the shabby signboard which adorns the façade of the railway station. This edifice is summarily indicated by a length of rusty iron paling, a platform parallel to the proscenium, beyond which one imagines the rails to be, and a baggage truck standing by a wall on which a torn timetable, marked "Fahrplan," is affixed by three nails. In the station wall is a door with a sign: "Eintritt Verboten."¹ This leads to the STATION MASTER's office.

¹ No Entrance.

Left of the station is a little house of gray stucco, formerly whitewashed. It has a tile roof, badly in need of repair. Some shreds of travel posters still adhere to the windowless walls. A shingle hanging over the entrance, left, reads: "Männer."¹ On the other side of the shingle reads: "Damen."² Along the wall of the little house there is a wooden bench, backless, on which four men are lounging cheerlessly, shabbily dressed, with cracked shoes. A fifth man is busied with paintpot and brush. He is kneeling on the ground, painting a strip of canvas with the words: "Welcome, Clara."

The warning signal rings uninterruptedly. The sound of the approaching train comes closer and closer. The STATION MASTER issues from his office, advances to the center of the platform and salutes.

The train is heard thundering past in a direction parallel to the footlights, and is lost in the distance. The men on the bench follow its passing with a slow movement of their heads, from left to right.

FIRST MAN: The "Emperor." Hamburg-Naples.

SECOND MAN: Then comes the "Diplomat."

THIRD MAN: Then the "Banker."

FOURTH MAN: And at eleven twenty-seven the "Flying Dutchman." Venice-Stockholm.

FIRST MAN: Our only pleasure—watching trains.

(The station bell rings again. The STATION MASTER comes out of his office and salutes another train. The men follow its course right to left)

FOURTH MAN: Once upon a time the "Emperor" and the "Flying Dutchman" used to stop here in Gullen. So did the "Diplomat," the "Banker," and the "Silver Comet."

SECOND MAN: Now it's only the local from Kaffigen and the twelve-forty from Kalberstadt.

THIRD MAN: The fact is, we're ruined.

FIRST MAN: What with the Wagonworks shut down . . .

SECOND MAN: The Foundry finished . . .

FOURTH MAN: The Golden Eagle Pencil Factory all washed up . . .

FIRST MAN: It's life on the dole.

SECOND MAN: Did you say life?

THIRD MAN: We're rotting.

FIRST MAN: Starving.

SECOND MAN: Crumbling.

FOURTH MAN: The whole damn town.

(The station bell rings)

THIRD MAN: Once we were a center of industry.

PAINTER: A cradle of culture.

1. Men.

2. Ladies.

FOURTH MAN: One of the best little towns in the country.

FIRST MAN: In the world.

SECOND MAN: Here Goethe slept.

FOURTH MAN: Brahms composed a quartet.

THIRD MAN: Here Berthold Schwarz invented gunpowder.¹

PAINTER: And I once got first prize at the Dresden Exhibition of Contemporary Art. What am I doing now? Painting signs.

(The station bell rings. The STATION MASTER comes out. He throws away a cigarette butt. The men scramble for it)

FIRST MAN: Well, anyway, Madame Zachanassian will help us.

FOURTH MAN: If she comes . . .

THIRD MAN: If she comes.

SECOND MAN: Last week she was in France. She gave them a hospital.

FIRST MAN: In Rome she founded a free public nursery.

THIRD MAN: In Leuthenau, a bird sanctuary.

PAINTER: They say she got Picasso to design her car.

FIRST MAN: Where does she get all that money?

SECOND MAN: An oil company, a shipping line, three banks and five railways—

FOURTH MAN: And the biggest string of geisha houses in Japan.

(From the direction of the town come the BURGOMASTER, the PASTOR, the TEACHER and ANTON SCHILL. The BURGOMASTER, the TEACHER and SCHILL are men in their fifties. The PASTOR is ten years younger. All four are dressed shabbily and are sad-looking. The BURGOMASTER looks official. SCHILL is tall and handsome, but graying and worn; nevertheless a man of considerable charm and presence. He walks directly to the little house and disappears into it)

PAINTER: Any news, Burgomaster? Is she coming?

ALL: Yes, is she coming?

BURGOMASTER: She's coming. The telegram has been confirmed. Our distinguished guest will arrive on the twelve-forty from Kalberstadt. Everyone must be ready.

TEACHER: The mixed choir is ready. So is the children's chorus.

BURGOMASTER: And the church bell, Pastor?

PASTOR: The church bell will ring. As soon as the new bell ropes are fitted. The man is working on them now.

BURGOMASTER: The town band will be drawn up in the market place and the Athletic Association will form a human pyramid in her honor—the top man will hold the wreath with her initials. Then lunch at the Golden Apostle. I shall say a few words.

TEACHER: Of course.

¹ Berthold Schwarz was a German monk who lived in the fourteenth century. The invention of gunpowder has been attributed to him and to many others.

BURGOMASTER: I had thought of illuminating the town hall and the cathedral, but we can't afford the lamps.

PAINTER: Burgomaster—what do you think of this?

(He shows the banner)

BURGOMASTER: *(Calls)* Schill! Schill!

TEACHER: Schill!

(SCHILL comes out of the little house)

SCHILL: Yes, right away. Right away.

BURGOMASTER: This is more in your line. What do you think of this?

SCHILL: *(Looks at the sign)* No, no, no. That certainly won't do, Burgomaster. It's much too intimate. It shouldn't read: "Welcome, Clara." It should read: "Welcome, Madame . . ."

TEACHER: Zachanassian.

BURGOMASTER: Zachanassian.

SCHILL: Zachanassian.

PAINTER: But she's Clara to us.

FIRST MAN: Clara Wäscher.

SECOND MAN: Born here.

THIRD MAN: Her father was a carpenter. He built this.

(All turn and stare at the little house)

SCHILL: All the same . . .

PAINTER: If I . . .

BURGOMASTER: No, no, no. He's right. You'll have to change it.

PAINTER: Oh, well, I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll leave this and I'll put "Welcome, Madame Zachanassian" on the other side. Then if things go well, we can always turn it around.

BURGOMASTER: Good idea. *(To SCHILL)* Yes?

SCHILL: Well, anyway, it's safer. Everything depends on the first impression.

(The train bell is heard. Two clangs. The PAINTER turns the banner over and goes to work)

FIRST MAN: Hear that? The "Flying Dutchman" has just passed through Leuthenau.

FOURTH MAN: Eleven twenty.

BURGOMASTER: Gentlemen, you know that the millionairess is our only hope.

PASTOR: Under God.

BURGOMASTER: Under God. Naturally. Schill, we depend entirely on you.

SCHILL: Yes, I know. You keep telling me.

BURGOMASTER: After all, you're the only one who really knew her.

SCHILL: Yes, I knew her.

PASTOR: You were really quite close to one another, I hear, in those days.

SCHILL: Close? Yes, we were close, there's no denying it. We were in love. I was young—good-looking, so they said—and Clara—you know, I can still see her in the great barn coming toward me—like a light out of the darkness. And in the Konradswiel Forest she'd come running to meet me—barefooted—her beautiful red hair streaming behind her. Like a witch. I was in love with her, all right. But you know how it is when you're twenty.

PASTOR: What happened?

SCHILL: (*Shrugs*) Life came between us.

BURGOMASTER: You must give me some points about her for my speech.

(*He takes out his notebook*)

SCHILL: I think I can help you there.

TEACHER: Well, I've gone through the school records. And the young lady's marks were, I'm afraid to say, absolutely dreadful. Even in deportment. The only subject in which she was even remotely passable was natural history.

BURGOMASTER: Good in natural history. That's fine. Give me a pencil.

(*He makes a note*)

SCHILL: She was an outdoor girl. Wild. Once, I remember, they arrested a tramp, and she threw stones at the policeman. She hated injustice passionately.

BURGOMASTER: Strong sense of justice. Excellent.

SCHILL: And generous . . .

ALL: Generous?

SCHILL: Generous to a fault. Whatever little she had, she shared—so good-hearted. I remember once she stole a bag of potatoes to give to a poor widow.

BURGOMASTER: (*Writing in notebook*) Wonderful generosity—

TEACHER: Generosity.

BURGOMASTER: That, gentlemen, is something I must not fail to make a point of.

SCHILL: And such a sense of humor. I remember once when the oldest man in town fell and broke his leg, she said, "Oh, dear, now they'll have to shoot him."

BURGOMASTER: Well, I've got enough. The rest, my friend, is up to you.

(*He puts the notebook away*)

SCHILL: Yes, I know, but it's not so easy. After all, to part a woman like that from her millions—

BURGOMASTER: Exactly. Millions. We have to think in big terms here.

TEACHER: If she's thinking of buying us off with a nursery school—

ALL: Nursery school!

PASTOR: Don't accept.

TEACHER: Hold out.

SCHILL: I'm not so sure that I can do it. You know, she may have forgotten me completely.

BURGOMASTER: (*He exchanges a look with the TEACHER and the PASTOR*) Schill, for many years you have been our most popular citizen. The most respected and the best loved.

SCHILL: Why, thank you . . .

BURGOMASTER: And therefore I must tell you—last week I sounded out the political opposition, and they agreed. In the spring you will be elected to succeed me as Burgomaster. By unanimous vote.

(*The others clap their hands in approval*)

SCHILL: But, my dear Burgomaster—!

BURGOMASTER: It's true.

TEACHER: I'm a witness. I was at the meeting.

SCHILL: This is—naturally, I'm terribly flattered— It's a completely unexpected honor.

BURGOMASTER: You deserve it.

SCHILL: Burgomaster! Well, well—! (*Briskly*) Gentlemen, to business. The first chance I get, of course, I shall discuss our miserable position with Clara.

TEACHER: But tactfully, tactfully—

SCHILL: What do you take me for? We must feel our way. Everything must be correct. Psychologically correct. For example, here at the railway station, a single blunder, one false note, could be disastrous.

BURGOMASTER: He's absolutely right. The first impression colors all the rest. Madame Zachanassian sets foot on her native soil for the first time in many years. She sees our love and she sees our misery. She remembers her youth, her friends. The tears well up into her eyes. Her childhood companions throng about her. I will naturally not present myself like this, but in my black coat with my top hat. Next to me, my wife. Before me, my two grandchildren all in white, with roses. My God, if it only comes off as I see it! If only it comes off. (*The station bell begins ringing*) Oh, my God! Quick! We must get dressed.

FIRST MAN: It's not her train. It's only the "Flying Dutchman."

PASTOR: (*Calmly*) We have still two hours before she arrives.

SCHILL: For God's sake, don't let's lose our heads. We still have a full two hours.

BURGOMASTER: Who's losing their heads? (*To FIRST and SECOND MAN*) When her train comes, you two, Helmesberger and Vogel, will hold up the banner with "Welcome Madame Zachanassian." The rest will applaud.

THIRD MAN: Bravo!

(*He applauds*)

BURGOMASTER: But, please, one thing—no wild cheering like last year with the government relief committee. It made no impression at all and we still haven't received any loan. What we need is a feeling of genuine sincerity. That's how we greet with full hearts our beloved sister who has been away from us so long. Be sincerely moved, my friends, that's the secret; be sincere. Remember you're not dealing with a child. Next a few brief words from me. Then the church bell will start pealing—

PASTOR: If he can fix the ropes in time.

(The station bell rings)

BURGOMASTER: —Then the mixed choir moves in. And then—

TEACHER: We'll form a line down here.

BURGOMASTER: Then the rest of us will form in two lines leading from the station—

(He is interrupted by the thunder of the approaching train. The men crane their heads to see it pass. The STATION MASTER advances to the platform and salutes. There is a sudden shriek of air brakes. The train screams to a stop. The four men jump up in consternation)

PAINTER: But the "Flying Dutchman" never stops!

FIRST MAN: It's stopping.

SECOND MAN: In Gullen!

THIRD MAN: In the poorest—

FIRST MAN: The dreariest—

SECOND MAN: The lousiest—

FOURTH MAN: The most God-forsaken hole between Venice and Stockholm.

STATION MASTER: It cannot stop!

(The train noises stop. There is only the panting of the engine)

PAINTER: It's stopped!

(The STATION MASTER runs out)

OFFSTAGE VOICES: What's happened? Is there an accident?

(A hubbub of offstage voices, as if the passengers on the invisible train were alighting)

CLAIRE: *(Offstage)* Is this Gullen?

CONDUCTOR: *(Offstage)* Here, here, what's going on?

CLAIRE: *(Offstage)* Who the hell are you?

CONDUCTOR: *(Offstage)* But you pulled the emergency cord, madame!

CLAIRE: *(Offstage)* I always pull the emergency cord.

STATION MASTER: *(Offstage)* I must ask you what's going on here.

CLAIRE: *(Offstage)* And who the hell are you?

STATION MASTER: *(Offstage)* I'm the Station Master, madame, and I must ask you—

CLAIRE: (Enters) No!

(From the right CLAIRE ZACHANASSIAN appears. She is an extraordinary woman. She is in her fifties, red-haired, remarkably dressed, with a face as impassive as that of an ancient idol, beautiful still, and with a singular grace of movement and manner. She is simple and unaffected, yet she has the haughtiness of a world power. The entire effect is striking to the point of the unbelievable. Behind her comes her fiancé, PEDRO CABRAL, tall, young, very handsome, and completely equipped for fishing, with creel and net, and with a rod case in his hand. An excited CONDUCTOR follows)

CONDUCTOR: But, madame, I must insist! You have stopped "The Flying Dutchman." I must have an explanation.

CLAIRE: Nonsense. Pedro.

PEDRO: Yes, my love?

CLAIRE: This is Gullen. Nothing has changed. I recognize it all. There's the forest of Konradswiel. There's a brook in it full of trout, where you can fish. And there's the roof of the great barn. Ha! God! What a miserable blot on the map.

(She crosses the stage and goes off with PEDRO)

SCHILL: My God! Clara!

TEACHER: Claire Zachanassian!

ALL: Claire Zachanassian!

BURGOMASTER: And the town band? The town band! Where is it?

TEACHER: The mixed choir? The mixed choir!

PASTOR: The church bell! The church bell!

BURGOMASTER: (To the FIRST MAN) Quick! My dress coat. My top hat. My grandchildren. Run! Run! (FIRST MAN runs off. The BURGOMASTER shouts after him) And don't forget my wife!

(General panic. The THIRD MAN and FOURTH MAN hold up the banner, on which only part of the name has been painted: "Welcome Mad—" CLAIRE and PEDRO re-enter, right)

CONDUCTOR: (Mastering himself with an effort)

MADAME. The train is waiting. The entire international railway schedule has been disrupted. I await your explanation.

CLAIRE: You're a very foolish man. I wish to visit this town. Did you expect me to jump off a moving train?

CONDUCTOR: (Stupefied) You stopped the "Flying Dutchman" because you wished to visit the town?

CLAIRE: Naturally.

CONDUCTOR: (Inarticulate) Madame!

STATION MASTER: Madame, if you wished to visit the town, the twelve forty from Kalberstadt was entirely at your service. Arrival in Gullen, one seventeen.

CLAIRE: The local that stops at Loken, Beisenbach, and Leuthenau? Do

you expect me to waste three-quarters of an hour chugging dis-
mally through this wilderness?

CONDUCTOR: Madame, you shall pay for this!

CLAIRE: Bobby, give him a thousand marks.

(BOBBY, her butler, a man in his seventies, wearing dark glasses, opens his wallet. The townspeople gasp)

CONDUCTOR: *(Taking the money in amazement)* But, madame!

CLAIRE: And three thousand for the Railway Widows' Relief Fund.

CONDUCTOR: *(With the money in his hands)* But we have no such fund,
madame.

CLAIRE: Now you have.

(The BURGOMASTER pushes his way forward)

BURGOMASTER: *(He whispers to the CONDUCTOR and TEACHER)* The lady is
Madame Claire Zachanassian!

CONDUCTOR: Claire Zachanassian? Oh, my God! But that's naturally quite
different. Needless to say, we would have stopped the train if
we'd had the slightest idea. *(He hands the money back to BOBBY)*
Here, please. I couldn't dream of it. Four thousand. My God!

CLAIRE: Keep it. Don't fuss.

CONDUCTOR: Would you like the train to wait, madame, while you visit the
town? The administration will be delighted. The cathedral porch.
The town hall—

CLAIRE: You may take the train away. I don't need it any more.

STATION MASTER: All aboard!

(He puts his whistle to his lips. PEDRO stops him)

PEDRO: But the press, my angel. They don't know anything about this.
They're still in the dining car.

CLAIRE: Let them stay there. I don't want the press in Gullen at the mo-
ment. Later they will come by themselves. *(To STATION MASTER)*
And now what are you waiting for?

STATION MASTER: All aboard!

*(The STATION MASTER blows a long blast on his whistle. The train leaves. Meanwhile, the
FIRST MAN has brought the BURGOMASTER's dress coat and top hat. The BURGOMASTER
puts on the coat, then advances slowly and solemnly)*

CONDUCTOR: I trust madame will not speak of this to the administration. It
was a pure misunderstanding.

(He salutes and runs for the train as it starts moving)

BURGOMASTER: *(Bows)* Gracious lady, as Burgomaster of the town of
Gullen, I have the honor—

(The rest of the speech is lost in the roar of the departing train. He continues speaking and gesturing, and at last bows amid applause as the train noises end)

CLAIRE: Thank you, Mr. Burgomaster.

(She glances at the beaming faces, and lastly at SCHILL, whom she does not recognize. She turns upstage)

SCHILL: Clara!

CLAIRE: *(Turns and stares)* Anton?

SCHILL: Yes. It's good that you've come back.

CLAIRE: Yes. I've waited for this moment. All my life. Ever since I left Gullen.

SCHILL: *(A little embarrassed)* That is very kind of you to say, Clara.

CLAIRE: And have you thought about me?

SCHILL: Naturally. Always. You know that.

CLAIRE: Those were happy times we spent together.

SCHILL: Unforgettable.

(He smiles reassuringly at the BURGOMASTER)

CLAIRE: Call me by the name you used to call me.

SCHILL: *(Whispers)* My kitten.

CLAIRE: What?

SCHILL: *(Louder)* My kitten.

CLAIRE: And what else?

SCHILL: Little witch.

CLAIRE: I used to call you my black panther. You're gray now, and soft.

SCHILL: But you are still the same, little witch.

CLAIRE: I am the same? *(She laughs)* Oh, no, my black panther, I am not at all the same.

SCHILL: *(Gallantly)* In my eyes you are. I see no difference.

CLAIRE: Would you like to meet my fiancé? Pedro Cabral. He owns an enormous plantation in Brazil.

SCHILL: A pleasure.

CLAIRE: We're to be married soon.

SCHILL: Congratulations.

CLAIRE: He will be my eighth husband *(PEDRO stands by himself downstage, right)* Pedro, come here and show your face. Come along, darling—come here! Don't sulk. Say hello.

PEDRO: Hello.

CLAIRE: A man of few words! Isn't he charming? A diplomat. He's interested only in fishing. Isn't he handsome, in his Latin way? You'd swear he was a Brazilian. But he's not—he's a Greek. His father was a White Russian. We were betrothed by a Bulgarian priest. We plan to be married in a few days here in the cathedral.

BURGOMASTER: Here in the cathedral? What an honor for us!

CLAIRE: No. It was my dream, when I was seventeen, to be married in Gullen cathedral. The dreams of youth are sacred, don't you think so, Anton?

SCHILL: Yes, of course.

CLAIRE: Yes, of course. I think so, too. Now I would like to look at the town. *(The mixed choir arrives, breathless, wearing ordinary clothes with green sashes)* What's all this? Go away. *(She laughs)* Ha! Ha! Ha!

TEACHER: Dear lady—*(He steps forward, having put on a sash also)* Dear lady, as Rector of the high school and a devotee of that noble muse, Music, I take pleasure in presenting the Gullen mixed choir.

CLAIRE: How do you do?

TEACHER: Who will sing for you an ancient folk song of the region, with specially amended words—if you will deign to listen.

CLAIRE: Very well. Fire away.

(The TEACHER blows a pitch pipe. The mixed choir begins to sing the ancient folk song with the amended words. Just then the station bell starts ringing. The song is drowned in the roar of the passing express. The STATION MASTER salutes. When the train has passed, there is applause)

BURGOMASTER: The church bell! The church bell! Where's the church bell?

(The PASTOR shrugs helplessly)

CLAIRE: Thank you, Professor. They sang beautifully. The big little blond bass—no, not that one—the one with the big Adam's apple—was most impressive. *(The TEACHER bows. The POLICEMAN pushes his way professionally through the mixed choir and comes to attention in front of CLAIRE ZACHANASSIAN)* Now, who are you?

POLICEMAN: *(Clicks heels)* Police Chief Schultz. At your service.

CLAIRE: *(She looks him up and down)* I have no need of you at the moment. But I think there will be work for you by and by. Tell me, do you know how to close an eye from time to time?

POLICEMAN: How else could I get along in my profession?

CLAIRE: You might practice closing both.

SCHILL: *(Laughs)* What a sense of humor, eh?

BURGOMASTER: *(Puts on the top hat)* Permit me to present my grandchildren, gracious lady. Hermine and Adolphine. There's only my wife still to come.

(He wipes the perspiration from his brow, and replaces the hat. The little girls present the roses with elaborate curtsies)

CLAIRE: Thank you, my dears. Congratulations, Burgomaster. Extraordinary children.

(She plants the roses in PEDRO's arms. The BURGOMASTER secretly passes his top hat to the PASTOR, who puts it on)

BURGOMASTER: Our pastor, madame.

(The PASTOR takes off the hat and bows)

CLAIRE: Ah. The pastor. How do you do? Do you give consolation to the dying?

PASTOR: *(A bit puzzled)* That is part of my ministry, yes.

CLAIRE: And to those who are condemned to death?

PASTOR: Capital punishment has been abolished in this country, madame.

CLAIRE: I see. Well, it could be restored, I suppose.

(The PASTOR hands back the hat. He shrugs his shoulders in confusion)

SCHILL: *(Laughs)* What an original sense of humor!

(All laugh, a little blankly)

CLAIRE: Well, I can't sit here all day—I should like to see the town.

(The BURGOMASTER offers his arm)

BURGOMASTER: May I have the honor, gracious lady?

CLAIRE: Thank you, but these legs are not what they were. This one was broken in five places.

SCHILL: *(Full of concern)* My kitten!

CLAIRE: When my airplane bumped into a mountain in Afghanistan. All the others were killed. Even the pilot. But as you see, I survived. I don't fly any more.

SCHILL: But you're as strong as ever now.

CLAIRE: Stronger.

BURGOMASTER: Never fear, gracious lady. The town doctor has a car.

CLAIRE: I never ride in motors.

BURGOMASTER: You never ride in motors?

CLAIRE: Not since my Ferrari crashed in Hong Kong.

SCHILL: But how do you travel, then, little witch? On a broom?

CLAIRE: Mike—Max! *(She claps her hands. Two huge bodyguards come in, left, carrying a sedan chair. She sits in it)* I travel this way—a bit antiquated, of course. But perfectly safe. Ha! Ha! Aren't they magnificent? Mike and Max. I bought them in America. They were in jail, condemned to the chair. I had them pardoned. Now they're condemned to my chair. I paid fifty thousand dollars apiece for them. You couldn't get them now for twice the sum. The sedan chair comes from the Louvre. I fancied it so much that the President of France gave it to me. The French are so impulsive, don't you think so, Anton? Go!

(MIKE and MAX start to carry her off)

BURGOMASTER: You wish to visit the cathedral? And the old town hall?

CLAIRE: No. The great barn. And the forest of Konradsw Weil. I wish to go with Anton and visit our old haunts once again.

THE PASTOR: Very touching.

CLAIRE: *(To the butler)* Will you send my luggage and the coffin to the Golden Apostle?

BURGOMASTER: The coffin?

CLAIRE: Yes. I brought one with me. Go!

TEACHER: Hip-hip—

ALL: Hurrah! Hip-hip, hurrah! Hurrah!

(They bear off in the direction of the town. The TOWNSPEOPLE burst into cheers. The church bell rings)

BURGOMASTER: Ah, thank God—the bell at last.

(The POLICEMAN is about to follow the others, when the two BLIND MEN appear. They are not young, yet they seem childish—a strange effect. Though they are of different height and features, they are dressed exactly alike, and so create the effect of being twins. They walk slowly, feeling their way. Their voices, when they speak, are curiously high and flutelike, and they have a curious trick of repetition of phrases)

FIRST BLIND MAN: We're in—

BOTH BLIND MEN: Gullen.

FIRST BLIND MAN: We breathe—

SECOND BLIND MAN: We breathe—

BOTH BLIND MEN: We breathe the air, the air of Gullen.

POLICEMAN: *(Startled)* Who are you?

FIRST BLIND MAN: We belong to the lady.

SECOND BLIND MAN: We belong to the lady. She calls us—

FIRST BLIND MAN: Kobby.

SECOND BLIND MAN: And Lobby.

POLICEMAN: Madame Zachanassian is staying at the Golden Apostle.

FIRST BLIND MAN: We're blind.

SECOND BLIND MAN: We're blind.

POLICEMAN: Blind? Come along with me, then. I'll take you there.

FIRST BLIND MAN: Thank you, Mr. Policeman.

SECOND BLIND MAN: Thanks very much.

POLICEMAN: Hey! How do you know I'm a policeman, if you're blind?

BOTH BLIND MEN: By your voice. By your voice.

FIRST BLIND MAN: All policemen sound the same.

POLICEMAN: You've had a lot to do with the police, have you, little men?

FIRST BLIND MAN: Men he calls us!

BOTH BLIND MEN: Men!

POLICEMAN: What are you then?

BOTH BLIND MEN: You'll see. You'll see.

(The POLICEMAN claps his hands suddenly. The BLIND MEN turn sharply toward the sound. The POLICEMAN is convinced they are blind)

POLICEMAN: What's your trade?
BOTH BLIND MEN: We have no trade.
SECOND BLIND MAN: We play music.
FIRST BLIND MAN: We sing.
SECOND BLIND MAN: We amuse the lady.
FIRST BLIND MAN: We look after the beast.
SECOND BLIND MAN: We feed it.
FIRST BLIND MAN: We stroke it.
SECOND BLIND MAN: We take it for walks.
POLICEMAN: What beast?
BOTH BLIND MEN: You'll see—you'll see.
SECOND BLIND MAN: We give it raw meat.
FIRST BLIND MAN: And she gives us chicken and wine.
SECOND BLIND MAN: Every day—
BOTH BLIND MEN: Every day.
POLICEMAN: Rich people have strange tastes.
BOTH BLIND MEN: Strange tastes—strange tastes.

(The POLICEMAN puts on his helmet)

POLICEMAN: Come along, I'll take you to the lady.

(The two BLIND MEN turn and walk off)

BOTH BLIND MEN: We know the way—we know the way.

(The station and the little house vanish. A sign representing the Golden Apostle descends. The scene dissolves into the interior of the inn. The Golden Apostle is seen to be in the last stages of decay. The walls are cracked and moldering, and the plaster is falling from the ancient lath. A table represents the café of the inn. The BURGOMASTER and the TEACHER sit at this table, drinking a glass together. A procession of TOWNSPEOPLE, carrying many pieces of luggage, passes. Then comes a coffin, and, last, a large box covered with a canvas. They cross the stage from right to left)

BURGOMASTER: Trunks. Suitcases. Boxes. *(He looks up apprehensively at the ceiling)* The floor will never bear the weight. *(As the large covered box is carried in, he peers under the canvas, then draws back)* Good God!

TEACHER: Why, what's in it?

BURGOMASTER: A live panther. *(They laugh. The BURGOMASTER lifts his glass solemnly)* Your health, Professor. Let's hope she puts the Foundry back on its feet.

TEACHER: *(Lifts his glass)* And the Wagonworks.

BURGOMASTER: And the Golden Eagle Pencil Factory. Once that starts moving, everything else will go. *Prosit.*¹

1. Your health.

(They touch glasses and drink)

TEACHER: What does she need a panther for?

BURGOMASTER: Don't ask me. The whole thing is too much for me. The Pastor had to go home and lie down.

TEACHER: *(Sets down his glass)* If you want to know the truth, she frightens me.

BURGOMASTER: *(Nods gravely)* She's a strange one.

TEACHER: You understand, Burgomaster, a man who for twenty-two years has been correcting the Latin compositions of the students of Gullen is not unaccustomed to surprises. I have seen things to make one's hair stand on end. But when this woman suddenly appeared on the platform, a shudder tore through me. It was as though out of the clear sky all at once a fury descended upon us, beating its black wings—

(The POLICEMAN comes in. He mops his face)

POLICEMAN: Ah! Now the old place is livening up a bit!

BURGOMASTER: Ah, Schultz, come and join us.

POLICEMAN: Thank you. *(He calls)* Beer!

BURGOMASTER: Well, what's the news from the front?

POLICEMAN: I'm just back from Schiller's barn. My God! What a scene! She had us all tiptoeing around in the straw as if we were in church. Nobody dared to speak above a whisper. And the way she carried on! I was so embarrassed I let them go to the forest by themselves.

BURGOMASTER: Does the fiancé go with them?

POLICEMAN: With his fishing rod and his landing net. In full marching order. *(He calls again)* Beer!

BURGOMASTER: That will be her seventh husband.

TEACHER: Her eighth.

BURGOMASTER: But what does she expect to find in the Konradswail forest?

POLICEMAN: The same thing she expected to find in the old barn, I suppose. The—the—

TEACHER: The ashes of her youthful love.

POLICEMAN: Exactly.

TEACHER: It's poetry.

POLICEMAN: Poetry.

TEACHER: Sheer poetry! It makes one think of Shakespeare, of Wagner. Of Romeo and Juliet.

(The SECOND MAN comes in as a waiter. The POLICEMAN is served his beer)

BURGOMASTER: Yes, you're right. *(Solemnly)* Gentlemen, I would like to propose a toast. To our great and good friend, Anton Schill, who is even now working on our behalf.

POLICEMAN: Yes! He's really working.

BURGOMASTER: Gentlemen, to the best-loved citizen of this town. My successor, Anton Schill!

(They raise their glasses. At this point an unearthly scream is heard. It is the black panther howling offstage. The sign of the Golden Apostle rises out of sight. The lights go down. The inn vanishes. Only the wooden bench, on which the four men were lounging in the opening scene, is left on the stage, downstage right. The procession comes on upstage. The two bodyguards carry in CLAIRE's sedan chair. Next to it walks SCHILL. PEDRO walks behind, with his fishing rod. Last come the two BLIND MEN and the butler. CLAIRE alights)

CLAIRE: Stop! Take my chair off somewhere else. I'm tired of looking at you. *(The bodyguards and the sedan chair go off)* Pedro darling, your brook is just a little further along down that path. Listen. You can hear it from here. Bobby, take him and show him where it is.

BOTH BLIND MEN: We'll show him the way—we'll show him the way.

(They go off, left. PEDRO follows. BOBBY walks off, right)

CLAIRE: Look, Anton. Our tree. There's the heart you carved in the bark long ago.

SCHILL: Yes. It's still there.

CLAIRE: How it has grown! The trunk is black and wrinkled. Why, its limbs are twice what they were. Some of them have died.

SCHILL: It's aged. But it's there.

CLAIRE: Like everything else. *(She crosses, examining other trees)* Oh, how tall they are. How long it is since I walked here, barefoot over the pine needles and the damp leaves! Look, Anton. A fawn.

SCHILL: Yes, a fawn. It's the season.

CLAIRE: I thought everything would be changed. But it's all just as we left it. This is the seat we sat on years ago. Under these branches you kissed me. And over there under the hawthorn, where the moss is soft and green, we would lie in each other's arms. It is all as it used to be. Only we have changed.

SCHILL: Not so much, little witch. I remember the first night we spent together, you ran away and I chased you till I was quite breathless—

CLAIRE: Yes.

SCHILL: Then I was angry and I was going home, when suddenly I heard you call and I looked up, and there you were sitting in a tree, laughing down at me.

CLAIRE: No. It was in the great barn. I was in the hayloft.

SCHILL: Were you?

CLAIRE: Yes. What else do you remember?

SCHILL: I remember the morning we went swimming by the waterfall, and afterwards we were lying together on the big rock in the sun, when suddenly we heard footsteps and we just had time to snatch

up our clothes and run behind the bushes when the old pastor appeared and scolded you for not being in school.

CLAIRE: No. It was the schoolmaster who found us. It was Sunday and I was supposed to be in church.

SCHILL: Really?

CLAIRE: Yes. Tell me more.

SCHILL: I remember the time your father beat you, and you showed me the cuts on your back, and I swore I'd kill him. And the next day I dropped a tile from a roof top and split his head open.

CLAIRE: You missed him.

SCHILL: No!

CLAIRE: You hit old Mr. Reiner.

SCHILL: Did I?

CLAIRE: Yes. I was seventeen. And you were not yet twenty. You were so handsome. You were the best-looking boy in town.

(The two BLIND MEN begin playing mandolin music offstage, very softly)

SCHILL: And you were the prettiest girl.

CLAIRE: We were made for each other.

SCHILL: So we were.

CLAIRE: But you married Mathilde Blumhard and her store, and I married old Zachanassian and his oil wells. He found me in a whorehouse in Hamburg. It was my hair that entangled him, the old golden beetle.

SCHILL: Clara!

CLAIRE: *(She claps her hands)* Bobby! A cigar.

(BOBBY appears with a leather case. He selects a cigar, puts it in a holder, lights it, and presents it to CLAIRE)

SCHILL: My kitten smokes cigars!

CLAIRE: Yes. I adore them. Would you care for one?

SCHILL: Yes, please. I've never smoked one of those.

CLAIRE: It's a taste I acquired from old Zachanassian. Among other things. He was a real connoisseur.

SCHILL: We used to sit on this bench once, you and I, and smoke cigarettes. Do you remember?

CLAIRE: Yes. I remember.

SCHILL: The cigarettes I bought from Mathilde.

CLAIRE: No. She gave them to you for nothing.

SCHILL: Clara—don't be angry with me for marrying Mathilde.

CLAIRE: She had money.

SCHILL: But what a lucky thing for you that I did!

CLAIRE: Oh?

SCHILL: You were so young, so beautiful. You deserved a far better fate than to settle in this wretched town without any future.

CLAIRE: Yes?

SCHILL: If you had stayed in Gullen and married me, your life would have been wasted, like mine.

CLAIRE: Oh?

SCHILL: Look at me. A wretched shopkeeper in a bankrupt town!

CLAIRE: But you have your family.

SCHILL: My family! Never for a moment do they let me forget my failure, my poverty.

CLAIRE: Mathilde has not made you happy?

SCHILL: (*Shrugs*) What does it matter?

CLAIRE: And the children?

SCHILL: (*Shakes his head*) They're so completely materialistic. You know, they have no interest whatever in higher things.

CLAIRE: How sad for you.

(*A moment's pause, during which only the faint tinkling of the music is heard*)

SCHILL: Yes. You know, since you went away my life has passed by like a stupid dream. I've hardly once been out of this town. A trip to a lake years ago. It rained all the time. And once five days in Berlin. That's all.

CLAIRE: The world is much the same everywhere.

SCHILL: At least you've seen it.

CLAIRE: Yes. I've seen it.

SCHILL: You've lived in it.

CLAIRE: I've lived in it. The world and I have been on very intimate terms.

SCHILL: Now that you've come back, perhaps things will change.

CLAIRE: Naturally. I certainly won't leave my native town in this condition.

SCHILL: It will take millions to put us on our feet again.

CLAIRE: I have millions.

SCHILL: One, two, three.

CLAIRE: Why not?

SCHILL: You mean—you will help us?

CLAIRE: Yes.

(*A woodpecker is heard in the distance*)

SCHILL: I knew it—I knew it. I told them you were generous. I told them you were good. Oh, my kitten, my kitten.

(*He takes her hand. She turns her head away and listens*)

CLAIRE: Listen! A woodpecker.

SCHILL: It's all just the way it was in the days when we were young and full of courage. The sun high above the pines. White clouds, piling up on one another. And the cry of the cuckoo in the distance. And the wind rustling the leaves, like the sound of surf on

a beach. Just as it was years ago. If only we could roll back time and be together always.

CLAIRE: Is that your wish?

SCHILL: Yes. You left me, but you never left my heart. *(He raises her hand to his lips)* The same soft little hand.

CLAIRE: No, not quite the same. It was crushed in the plane accident. But they mended it. They mend everything nowadays.

SCHILL: Crushed? You wouldn't know it. See, another fawn.

CLAIRE: The old wood is alive with memories.

(PEDRO appears, right, with a fish in his hand)

PEDRO: See what I've caught, darling. See? A pike. Over two kilos.

(The BLIND MEN appear onstage)

BOTH BLIND MEN: *(Clapping their hands)* A pike! A pike! Hurrah! Hurrah!

(As the BLIND MEN clap their hands, CLAIRE and SCHILL exit, and the scene dissolves. The clapping of hands is taken up on all sides. The townspeople wheel in the walls of the café. A brass band strikes up a march tune. The door of the Golden Apostle descends. The townspeople bring in tables and set them with ragged tablecloths, cracked china, and glassware. There is a table in the center, upstage, flanked by two tables perpendicular to it, right and left. The PASTOR and the BURGOMASTER come in. SCHILL enters. Other townspeople filter in, left and right. One, the ATHLETE, is in gymnastic costume. The applause continues)

BURGOMASTER: She's coming! *(CLAIRE enters upstage, center, followed by BOBBY)* The applause is meant for you, gracious lady.

CLAIRE: The band deserves it more than I. They blow from the heart. And the human pyramid was beautiful. You, show me your muscles. *(The ATHLETE kneels before her)* Superb. Wonderful arms, powerful hands. Have you ever strangled a man with them?

ATHLETE: Strangled?

CLAIRE: Yes. It's perfectly simple. A little pressure in the proper place, and the rest goes by itself. As in politics.

(The BURGOMASTER's wife comes up, simpering)

BURGOMASTER: *(Presents her)* Permit me to present my wife, Madame Zachanassian.

CLAIRE: Annette Dummermuth. The head of our class.

BURGOMASTER: *(He presents another sour-looking woman)* Frau Schill.

CLAIRE: Mathilde Blumhard. I remember the way you used to follow Anton with your eyes, from behind the shop door. You've grown a little thin and dry, my poor Mathilde.

SCHILL: My daughter, Otilie.

CLAIRE: Your daughter . . .

SCHILL: My son, Karl.

CLAIRE: Your son. Two of them!

(The town DOCTOR comes in, right. He is a man of fifty, strong and stocky, with bristly black hair, a mustache, and a saber cut on his cheek. He is wearing an old cutaway)

DOCTOR: Well, well, my old Mercedes got me here in time after all!

BURGOMASTER: Dr. Nüsslin, the town physician. Madame Zachanassian.

DOCTOR: Deeply honored, madame.

(He kisses her hand. CLAIRE studies him)

CLAIRE: It is you who signs the death certificates?

DOCTOR: Death certificates?

CLAIRE: When someone dies.

DOCTOR: Why certainly. That is one of my duties.

CLAIRE: And when the heart dies, what do you put down? Heart failure?

SCHILL: *(Laughing)* What a golden sense of humor!

DOCTOR: Bit grim, wouldn't you say?

SCHILL: *(Whispers)* Not at all, not at all. She's promised us a million.

BURGOMASTER: *(Turns his head)* What?

SCHILL: A million!

ALL: *(Whisper)* A million!

(CLAIRE turns toward them)

CLAIRE: Burgomaster.

BURGOMASTER: Yes?

CLAIRE: I'm hungry. *(The girls and the waiter fill glasses and bring food. There is a general stir. All take their places at the tables)* Are you going to make a speech?

(The BURGOMASTER bows. CLAIRE sits next to the BURGOMASTER. The BURGOMASTER rises, tapping his knife on his glass. He is radiant with good will. All applaud)

BURGOMASTER: Gracious lady and friends. Gracious lady, it is now many years since you first left your native town of Gullen, which was founded by the Elector Hasso and which nestles in the green slope between the forest of Konradswiel and the beautiful valley of Pückerried. Much has taken place in this time, much that is evil.

TEACHER: That's true.

BURGOMASTER: The world is not what it was; it has become harsh and bitter, and we too have had our share of harshness and bitterness. But in all this time, dear lady, we have never forgotten our little Clara. *(Applause)* Many years ago you brightened the town with your pretty face as a child, and now once again you brighten it with your presence. *(Polite applause)* We haven't forgotten you, and we haven't forgotten your family. Your mother, beautiful and robust even in her old age—*(He looks for his notes on the*

table)—although unfortunately taken from us in the bloom of her youth by an infirmity of the lungs. Your respected father, Siegfried Wäscher, the builder, an example of whose work next to our railway station is often visited—(SCHILL covers his face)—that is to say, admired—a lasting monument of local design and local workmanship. And you, gracious lady, whom we remember as a golden-haired—(He looks at her)—little red-headed sprite romping about our peaceful streets—on your way to school—which of us does not treasure your memory? (He pokes nervously at his notebook) We well remember your scholarly attainments—

TEACHER: Yes.

BURGOMASTER: Natural history . . . Extraordinary sense of justice . . . And, above all, your supreme generosity. (Great applause) We shall never forget how you once spent the whole of your little savings to buy a sack of potatoes for a poor starving widow who was in need of food. Gracious lady, ladies and gentlemen, today our little Clara has become the world-famous Claire Zachanassian who has founded hospitals, soup kitchens, charitable institutes, art projects, libraries, nurseries, and schools, and now that she has at last once more returned to the town of her birth, sadly fallen as it is, I say in the name of all her loving friends who have sorely missed her: Long live our Clara!

ALL: Long live our Clara!

(Cheers. Music. Fanfare. Applause. CLAIRE rises)

CLAIRE: Mr. Burgomaster. Fellow townsmen. I am greatly moved by the nature of your welcome and the disinterested joy which you have manifested on the occasion of my visit to my native town. I was not quite the child the Burgomaster described in his gracious address . . .

BURGOMASTER: Too modest, madame.

CLAIRE: In school I was beaten—

TEACHER: Not by me.

CLAIRE: And the sack of potatoes which I presented to Widow Boll, I stole with the help of Anton Schill, not to save the old trull from starvation, but so that for once I might sleep with Anton in a real bed instead of under the trees of the forest. (The townspeople look grave, embarrassed) Nevertheless, I shall try to deserve your good opinion. In memory of the seventeen years I spent among you, I am prepared to hand over as a gift to the town of Gullen the sum of one billion marks. Five hundred million to the town, and five hundred million to be divided per capita among the citizens.

(There is a moment of dead silence)

BURGOMASTER: A billion marks?

CLAIRE: On one condition.

(Suddenly a movement of uncontrollable joy breaks out. People jump on chairs, dance about, yell excitedly. The ATHLETE turns handsprings in front of the speaker's table)

SCHILL: Oh, Clara, you astonishing, incredible, magnificent woman! What a heart! What a gesture! Oh—my little witch!

(He kisses her hand)

BURGOMASTER: *(Holds up his arms for order)* Quiet! Quiet, please! On one condition, the gracious lady said. Now, madame, may we know what that condition is?

CLAIRE: I will tell you. In exchange for my billion marks, I want justice.

(Silence)

BURGOMASTER: Justice, madame?

CLAIRE: I wish to buy justice.

BURGOMASTER: But justice cannot be bought, madame.

CLAIRE: Everything can be bought.

BURGOMASTER: I don't understand at all.

CLAIRE: Bobby, step forward.

(The butler goes to the center of the stage. He takes off his dark glasses and turns his face with a solemn air)

BOBBY: Does anyone here present recognize me?

FRAU SCHILL: Hofer! Hofer!

ALL: Who? What's that?

TEACHER: Not Chief Magistrate Hofer?

BOBBY: Exactly. Chief Magistrate Hofer. When Madame Zachanassian was a girl, I was presiding judge at the criminal court of Gullen. I served there until twenty-five years ago, when Madame Zachanassian offered me the opportunity of entering her service as butler. I accepted. You may consider it a strange employment for a member of the magistracy, but the salary—

(CLAIRE bangs the mallet on the table)

CLAIRE: Come to the point.

BOBBY: You have heard Madame Zachanassian's offer. She will give you a billion marks—when you have undone the injustice that she suffered at your hands here in Gullen as a girl.

(All murmur)

BURGOMASTER: Injustice at our hands? Impossible!

BOBBY: Anton Schill . . .

SCHILL: Yes?

BOBBY: Kindly stand.

(SCHILL rises. He smiles, as if puzzled. He shrugs)

SCHILL: Yes?

BOBBY: In those days, a bastardy case was tried before me. Madame Claire Zahanassian, at that time called Clara Wäscher, charged you with being the father of her illegitimate child. *(Silence)* You denied the charge. And produced two witnesses in your support.

SCHILL: That's ancient history. An absurd business. We were children. Who remembers?

CLAIRE: Where are the blind men?

BOTH BLIND MEN: Here we are. Here we are.

(MIKE and MAX push them forward)

BOBBY: You recognize these men, Anton Schill?

SCHILL: I never saw them before in my life. What are they?

BOTH BLIND MEN: We've changed. We've changed.

BOBBY: What were your names in your former life?

FIRST BLIND MAN: I was Jacob Hueblein. Jacob Hueblein.

SECOND BLIND MAN: I was Ludwig Sparr. Ludwig Sparr.

BOBBY: *(To SCHILL)* Well?

SCHILL: These names mean nothing to me.

BOBBY: Jacob Hueblein and Ludwig Sparr, do you recognize the defendant?

FIRST BLIND MAN: We're blind.

SECOND BLIND MAN: We're blind.

SCHILL: Ha-ha-ha!

BOBBY: By his voice?

BOTH BLIND MEN: By his voice. By his voice.

BOBBY: At that trial, I was the judge. And you?

BOTH BLIND MEN: We were the witnesses.

BOBBY: And what did you testify on that occasion?

FIRST BLIND MAN: That we had slept with Clara Wäscher.

SECOND BLIND MAN: Both of us. Many times.

BOBBY: And was it true?

FIRST BLIND MAN: No.

SECOND BLIND MAN: We swore falsely.

BOBBY: And why did you swear falsely?

FIRST BLIND MAN: Anton Schill bribed us.

SECOND BLIND MAN: He bribed us.

BOBBY: With what?

BOTH BLIND MEN: With a bottle of schnapps.

BOBBY: And now tell the people what happened to you. (*They hesitate and whimper*) Speak!

FIRST BLIND MAN: (*In a low voice*) She tracked us down.

BOBBY: Madame Zachanassian tracked them down. Jacob Hueblein was found in Canada. Ludwig Sparr in Australia. And when she found you, what did she do to you?

SECOND BLIND MAN: She handed us over to Mike and Max.

BOBBY: And what did Mike and Max do to you?

FIRST BLIND MAN: They made us what you see.

(*The BLIND MEN cover their faces. MIKE and MAX push them off*)

BOBBY: And there you have it. We are all present in Gullen once again. The plaintiff. The defendant. The two false witnesses. The judge. Many years have passed. Does the plaintiff have anything further to add?

CLAIRE: There is nothing to add.

BOBBY: And the defendant?

SCHILL: Why are you doing this? It was all dead and buried.

BOBBY: What happened to the child that was born?

CLAIRE: (*In a low voice*) It lived a year.

BOBBY: And what happened to you?

CLAIRE: I became a whore.

BOBBY: Why?

CLAIRE: The judgment of the court left me no alternative. No one would trust me. No one would give me work.

BOBBY: So. And now, what is the nature of the reparation you demand?

CLAIRE: I want the life of Anton Schill.

(*FRAU SCHILL springs to ANTON's side. She puts her arms around him. The children rush to him. He breaks away*)

FRAU SCHILL: Anton! No! No!

SCHILL: No— No— She's joking. That happened long ago. That's all forgotten.

CLAIRE: Nothing is forgotten. Neither the mornings in the forest, nor the nights in the great barn, nor the bedroom in the cottage, nor your treachery at the end. You said this morning that you wished that time might be rolled back. Very well—I have rolled it back. And now it is I who will buy justice. You bought it with a bottle of schnapps. I am willing to pay one billion marks.

(*The BURGOMASTER stands up, very pale and dignified*)

BURGOMASTER: Madame Zachanassian, we are not in the jungle. We are in Europe. We may be poor, but we are not heathens. In the name of the town of Gullen, I decline your offer. In the name of humanity. We shall never accept.

(All applaud wildly. The applause turns into a sinister rhythmic beat. As CLAIRE rises, it dies away. She looks at the crowd, then at the BURGOMASTER)

CLAIRE: Thank you, Burgomaster. *(She stares at him a long moment)* I can wait.

(She turns and walks off)

Curtain

ACT TWO

The façade of the Golden Apostle, with a balcony on which chairs and a table are set out. To the right of the inn is a sign which reads: "ANTON SCHILL, HANDLUNG."¹ Under the sign the shop is represented by a broken counter. Behind the counter are some shelves with tobacco, cigarettes, and liquor bottles. There are two milk cans. The shop door is imaginary, but each entrance is indicated by a doorbell with a tinny sound.

It is early morning.

SCHILL is sweeping the shop. The SON has a pan and brush and also sweeps. The DAUGHTER is dusting. They are singing "The Happy Wanderer."

SCHILL: Karl—

(KARL crosses with a dustpan. SCHILL sweeps dust into the pan. The doorbell rings. The THIRD MAN appears, carrying a crate of eggs)

THIRD MAN: 'Morning.

SCHILL: Ah, good morning, Wechsler.

THIRD MAN: Twelve dozen eggs, medium brown. Right?

SCHILL: Take them, Karl. *(The SON puts the crate in a corner)* Did they deliver the milk yet?

SON: Before you came down.

THIRD MAN: Eggs are going up again, Herr Schill. First of the month.

(He gives SCHILL a slip to sign)

SCHILL: What? Again? And who's going to buy them?

THIRD MAN: Fifty pfennig a dozen.

SCHILL: I'll have to cancel my order, that's all.

THIRD MAN: That's up to you, Herr Schill.

(SCHILL signs the slip)

1. "Anton Schill, Merchandise."

SCHILL: There's nothing else to do. (*He hands back the slip*) And how's the family?

THIRD MAN: Oh, scraping along. Maybe now things will get better.

SCHILL: Maybe.

THIRD MAN: (*Going*) 'Morning.

SCHILL: Close the door. Don't let the flies in. (*The children resume their singing*) Now, listen to me, children. I have a little piece of good news for you. I didn't mean to speak of it yet awhile, but well, why not? Who do you suppose is going to be the next Burgomaster? Eh? (*They look up at him*) Yes, in spite of everything. It's settled. It's official. What an honor for the family, eh? Especially at a time like this. To say nothing of the salary and the rest of it.

SON: Burgomaster!

SCHILL: Burgomaster. (*The SON shakes him warmly by the hand. The DAUGHTER kisses him*) You see, you don't have to be entirely ashamed of your father. (*Silence*) Is your mother coming down to breakfast soon?

DAUGHTER: Mother's tired. She going to stay upstairs.

SCHILL: You have a good mother, at least. There you are lucky. Oh, well, if she wants to rest, let her rest. We'll have breakfast together, the three of us. I'll fry some eggs and open a tin of the American ham. This morning we're going to breakfast like kings.

SON: I'd like to, only—I can't.

SCHILL: You've got to eat, you know.

SON: I've got to run down to the station. One of the laborers is sick. They said they could use me.

SCHILL: You want to work on the rails in all this heat? That's no work for a son of mine.

SON: Look, Father, we can use the money.

SCHILL: Well, if you feel you have to.

(*The son goes to the door. The DAUGHTER moves toward SCHILL*)

DAUGHTER: I'm sorry, Father. I have to go too.

SCHILL: You too? And where is the young lady going, if I may be so bold?

DAUGHTER: There may be something for me at the employment agency.

SCHILL: Employment agency?

DAUGHTER: It's important to get there early.

SCHILL: All right. I'll have something nice for you when you get home.

SON and DAUGHTER: (*Salute*) Good day, Burgomaster.

(*The SON and DAUGHTER go out. The FIRST MAN comes into SCHILL's shop. Mandolin and guitar music are heard offstage*)

SCHILL: Good morning, Hofbauer.

FIRST MAN: Cigarettes. (*SCHILL takes a pack from the shelf*) Not those. I'll have the green today.

SCHILL: They cost more.

FIRST MAN: Put it in the book.

SCHILL: What?

FIRST MAN: Charge it.

SCHILL: Well, all right, I'll make an exception this time—seeing it's you, Hofbauer.

(SCHILL writes in his cash book)

FIRST MAN: *(Opening the pack of cigarettes)* Who's that playing out there?

SCHILL: The two blind men.

FIRST MAN: They play well.

SCHILL: To hell with them.

FIRST MAN: They make you nervous? *(SCHILL shrugs. The FIRST MAN lights a cigarette)* She's getting ready for the wedding, I hear.

SCHILL: Yes. So they say.

(Enter the FIRST and SECOND WOMAN. They cross to the counter)

FIRST MAN: Good morning, good morning.

SECOND MAN: Good morning.

FIRST MAN: Good morning.

SCHILL: Good morning, ladies.

FIRST WOMAN: Good morning, Herr Schill.

SECOND WOMAN: Good morning.

FIRST WOMAN: Milk please, Herr Schill.

SCHILL: Milk.

SECOND WOMAN: And milk for me too.

SCHILL: A liter of milk each. Right away.

FIRST WOMAN: Whole milk, please, Herr Schill.

SCHILL: Whole milk?

SECOND WOMAN: Yes. Whole milk, please.

SCHILL: Whole milk, I can only give you half a liter each of whole milk.

FIRST WOMAN: All right.

SCHILL: Half a liter of whole milk here, and half a liter of whole milk here. There you are.

FIRST WOMAN: And butter please, a quarter kilo.

SCHILL: Butter, I haven't any butter. I can give you some very nice lard?

FIRST WOMAN: No. Butter.

SCHILL: Goose fat? *(The FIRST WOMAN shakes her head)* Chicken fat?

FIRST WOMAN: Butter.

SCHILL: Butter. Now, wait a minute, though. I have a tin of imported butter here somewhere. Ah. There you are. No, sorry, she asked first, but I can order some for you from Kalberstadt tomorrow.

SECOND WOMAN: And white bread.

SCHILL: White bread.

(He takes a loaf and a knife)

SECOND WOMAN: The whole loaf.

SCHILL: But a whole loaf would cost . . .

SECOND WOMAN: Charge it.

SCHILL: Charge it?

FIRST WOMAN: And a package of milk chocolate.

SCHILL: Package of milk chocolate—right away.

SECOND WOMAN: One for me, too, Herr Schill.

SCHILL: And a package of milk chocolate for you, too.

FIRST WOMAN: We'll eat it here, if you don't mind.

SCHILL: Yes, please do.

SECOND WOMAN: It's so cool at the back of the shop.

SCHILL: Charge it?

WOMEN: Of course.

SCHILL: All for one, one for all.

(The SECOND MAN enters)

SECOND MAN: Good morning.

THE TWO WOMEN: Good morning.

SCHILL: Good morning, Helmesberger.

SECOND MAN: It's going to be a hot day.

SCHILL: Phew!

SECOND MAN: How's business?

SCHILL: Fabulous. For a while no one came, and now all of a sudden I'm running a luxury trade.

SECOND MAN: Good!

SCHILL: Oh, I'll never forget the way you all stood by me at the Golden Apostle in spite of your need, in spite of everything. That was the finest hour of my life.

FIRST MAN: We're not heathens, you know.

SECOND MAN: We're behind you, my boy; the whole town's behind you.

FIRST MAN: As firm as a rock.

FIRST WOMAN: *(Munching her chocolate)* As firm as a rock, Herr Schill.

BOTH WOMEN: As firm as a rock.

SECOND MAN: There's no denying it—you're the most popular man in town.

FIRST MAN: The most important.

SECOND MAN: And in the spring, God willing, you will be our Burgomas-
ter.

FIRST MAN: Sure as a gun.

ALL: Sure as a gun.

(Enter PEDRO with fishing equipment and a fish in his landing net)

PEDRO: Would you please weigh my fish for me?

SCHILL: (*Weights it*) Two kilos.

PEDRO: Is that all?

SCHILL: Two kilos exactly.

PEDRO: Two kilos!

(*He gives SCHILL a tip and exits*)

SECOND WOMAN: The fiancé.

FIRST WOMAN: They're to be married this week. It will be a tremendous wedding.

SECOND WOMAN: I saw his picture in the paper.

FIRST WOMAN: (*Sighs*) Ah, what a man!

SECOND MAN: Give me a bottle of schnapps.

SCHILL: The usual?

SECOND MAN: No, cognac.

SCHILL: Cognac? But cognac costs twenty-two marks fifty.

SECOND MAN: We all have to splurge a little now and again—

SCHILL: Here you are. Three Star.

SECOND MAN: And a package of pipe tobacco.

SCHILL: Black or blond?

SECOND MAN: English.

SCHILL: English! But that makes twenty-three marks eighty.

SECOND MAN: Chalk it up.

SCHILL: Now, look. I'll make an exception this week. Only, you will have to pay me the moment your unemployment check comes in. I don't want to be kept waiting. (*Suddenly*) Helmesberger, are those new shoes you're wearing?

SECOND MAN: Yes, what about it?

SCHILL: You too, Hofbauer. Yellow shoes! Brand new!

FIRST MAN: So?

SCHILL: (*To the woman*) And you. You all have new shoes! New shoes!

FIRST WOMAN: A person can't walk around forever in the same old shoes.

SECOND WOMAN: Shoes wear out.

SCHILL: And the money. Where does the money come from?

FIRST WOMAN: We got them on credit, Herr Schill.

SECOND WOMAN: On credit.

SCHILL: On credit? And where all of a sudden do you get credit?

SECOND MAN: Everybody gives credit now.

FIRST WOMAN: You gave us credit yourself.

SCHILL: And what are you going to pay with? Eh? (*They are all silent.*

SCHILL *advances upon them threateningly*) With what? Eh? With what? With what?

(*Suddenly he understands. He takes his apron off quickly, flings it on the counter, gets his jacket, and walks off with an air of determination. Now the shop sign vanishes. The shelves are pushed off. The lights go up on the balcony of the Golden Apostle, and the balcony unit*

itself moves forward into the optical center. CLAIRE and BOBBY step out on the balcony.
CLAIRE sits down. BOBBY serves coffee)

CLAIRE: A lovely autumn morning. A silver haze on the streets and a violet sky above. Count Holk would have liked this. Remember him, Bobby? My third husband?

BOBBY: Yes, madame.

CLAIRE: Horrible man!

BOBBY: Yes, madame.

CLAIRE: Where is Monsieur Pedro? Is he up yet?

BOBBY: Yes, madame. He's fishing.

CLAIRE: Already? What a singular passion!

(PEDRO comes in with the fish)

PEDRO: Good morning, my love.

CLAIRE: Pedro! There you are.

PEDRO: Look, my darling. Four kilos!

CLAIRE: A jewel! I'll have it grilled for your lunch. Give it to Bobby.

PEDRO: Ah—it is so wonderful here! I like your little town.

CLAIRE: Oh, do you?

PEDRO: Yes. These people, they are all so—what is the word?

CLAIRE: Simple, honest, hard-working, decent.

PEDRO: But, my angel, you are a mind reader. That's just what I was going to say—however did you guess?

CLAIRE: I know them.

PEDRO: Yet when we arrived it was all so dirty, so—what is the word?

CLAIRE: Shabby.

PEDRO: Exactly. But now everywhere you go, you see them busy as bees, cleaning their streets—

CLAIRE: Repairing their houses, sweeping—dusting—hanging new curtains in the windows—singing as they work.

PEDRO: But you astonishing, wonderful woman! You can't see all that from here.

CLAIRE: I know them. And in their gardens—I am sure that in their gardens they are manuring the soil for the spring.

PEDRO: My angel, you know everything. This morning on my way fishing I said to myself, look at them all manuring their gardens. It is extraordinary—and it's all because of you. Your return has given them a new—what is the word?

CLAIRE: Lease on life?

PEDRO: Precisely.

CLAIRE: The town was dying, it's true. But a town doesn't have to die. I think they realize that now. People die, not towns! (BOBBY appears) A cigar.

(The lights fade on the balcony, which moves back upstage. Somewhat to the right, a sign descends. It reads: "Polizei." The POLICEMAN pushes a desk under it. This, with the bench, becomes the police station. He places a bottle of beer and a glass on the desk, and goes to hang up his coat offstage. The telephone rings)

POLICEMAN: Schultz speaking. Yes, we have a couple of rooms for the night. No, not for rent. This is not the hotel. This is the Gullen police station.

(He laughs and hangs up. SCHILL comes in. He is evidently nervous)

SCHILL: Schultz.

POLICEMAN: Hello, Schill. Come in. Sit down. Beer?

SCHILL: Please.

(He drinks thirstily)

POLICEMAN: What can I do for you?

SCHILL: I want you to arrest Madame Zachanassian.

POLICEMAN: Eh?

SCHILL: I said I want you to arrest Madame Zachanassian.

POLICEMAN: What the hell are you talking about?

SCHILL: I ask you to arrest this woman at once.

POLICEMAN: What offense has the lady committed?

SCHILL: You know perfectly well. She offered a billion marks—

POLICEMAN: And you want her arrested for that?

(He pours beer into his glass)

SCHILL: Schultz! It's your duty.

SCHULTZ: Extraordinary! Extraordinary idea!

(He drinks his beer)

SCHILL: I'm speaking to you as your next Burgomaster.

POLICEMAN: Schill, that's true. The lady offered us a billion marks. But that doesn't entitle us to take police action against her.

SCHILL: Why not?

POLICEMAN: In order to be arrested, a person must first commit a crime.

SCHILL: Incitement to murder.

POLICEMAN: Incitement to murder is a crime. I agree.

SCHILL: Well?

POLICEMAN: And such a proposal—if serious—constitutes an assault.

SCHILL: That's what I mean.

POLICEMAN: But her offer can't be serious.

SCHILL: Why?

POLICEMAN: The price is too high. In a case like yours, one pays a thousand marks, at the most two thousand. But not a billion! That's

ridiculous. And even if she meant it, that would only prove she was out of her mind. And that's not a matter for the police.

SCHILL: Whether she's out of her mind or not, the danger to me is the same. That's obvious.

POLICEMAN: Look, Schill, you show us where anyone threatens your life in any way—say, for instance, a man points a gun at you—and we'll be there in a flash.

SCHILL: (*Gets up*) So I'm to wait till someone points a gun at me?

POLICEMAN: Pull yourself together, Schill. We're all for you in this town.

SCHILL: I wish I could believe it.

POLICEMAN: You don't believe it?

SCHILL: No. No, I don't. All of a sudden my customers are buying white bread, whole milk, butter, imported tobacco. What does it mean?

POLICEMAN: It means business is picking up.

SCHILL: Helmesberger lives on the dole; he hasn't earned anything in five years. Today he bought French cognac.

POLICEMAN: I'll have to try your cognac one of these days.

SCHILL: And shoes. They all have new shoes.

POLICEMAN: And what have you got against new shoes? I'm wearing a new pair myself.

(*He holds out his foot*)

SCHILL: You too?

POLICEMAN: Why not?

(*He pours out the rest of his beer*)

SCHILL: Is that Pilsen you're drinking now?

POLICEMAN: It's the only thing.

SCHILL: You used to drink the local beer.

POLICEMAN: Hogwash.

(*Radio music is heard offstage*)

SCHILL: Listen. You hear?

POLICEMAN: "The Merry Widow." Yes.

SCHILL: No. It's a radio.

POLICEMAN: That's Bergholzer's radio.

SCHILL: Bergholzer!

POLICEMAN: You're right. He should close his window when he plays it. I'll make a note to speak to him.

(*He makes a note in his notebook*)

SCHILL: And how can Bergholzer pay for a radio?

POLICEMAN: That's his business.

SCHILL: And you, Schultz, with your new shoes and your imported beer—how are you going to pay for them?

POLICEMAN: That's my business. *(His telephone rings. He picks it up)* Police Station, Gullen. What? What? Where? Where? How? Right, we'll deal with it.

(He hangs up)

SCHILL: *(He speaks during the POLICEMAN's telephone conversation)* Schultz, listen. No. Schultz, please—listen to me. Don't you see they're all . . . Listen, please. Look, Schultz. They're all running up debts. And out of these debts comes this sudden prosperity. And out of this prosperity comes the absolute need to kill me.

POLICEMAN: *(Putting on his jacket)* You're imagining things.

SCHILL: All she has to do is to sit on her balcony and wait.

POLICEMAN: Don't be a child.

SCHILL: You're all waiting.

POLICEMAN: *(Snaps a loaded clip into the magazine of a rifle)* Look, Schill, you can relax. The police are here for your protection. They know their job. Let anyone, any time, make the slightest threat to your life, and all you have to do is let us know. We'll do the rest . . . Now, don't worry.

SCHILL: No, I won't.

POLICEMAN: And don't upset yourself. All right?

SCHILL: Yes. I won't. *(Then suddenly, in a low tone)* You have a new gold tooth in your mouth!

POLICEMAN: What are you talking about?

SCHILL: *(Taking the POLICEMAN's head in his hands, and forcing his lips open)* A brand new, shining gold tooth.

POLICEMAN: *(Breaks away and involuntarily levels the gun at SCHILL)* Are you crazy? Look, I've no time to waste. Madame Zachanassian's panther's broken loose.

SCHILL: Panther?

POLICEMAN: Yes, it's at large. I've got to hunt it down.

SCHILL: You're not hunting a panther and you know it. It's me you're hunting!

(The POLICEMAN clicks on the safety and lowers the gun)

POLICEMAN: Schill! Take my advice. Go home. Lock the door. Keep out of everyone's way. That way you'll be safe. Cheer up! Good times are just around the corner!

(The lights dim in this area and light up on the balcony. PEDRO is lounging in a chair. CLAIRE is smoking)

PEDRO: Oh, this little town oppresses me.

CLAIRE: Oh, does it? So you've changed your mind?

PEDRO: It is true, I find it charming, delightful—

CLAIRE: Picturesque.

PEDRO: Yes. After all, it's the place where you were born. But it is too quiet for me. Too provincial. Too much like all small towns everywhere. These people—look at them. They fear nothing, they desire nothing, they strive for nothing. They have everything they want. They are asleep.

CLAIRE: Perhaps one day they will come to life again.

PEDRO: My God—do I have to wait for that?

CLAIRE: Yes, you do. Why don't you go back to your fishing?

PEDRO: I think I will.

(PEDRO turns to go)

CLAIRE: Pedro.

PEDRO: Yes, my love?

CLAIRE: Telephone the president of Hambro's Bank.¹ Ask him to transfer a billion marks to my current account.

PEDRO: A billion? Yes, my love.

(He goes. The lights fade on the balcony. A sign is flown in. It reads: "Rathaus."² The THIRD MAN crosses the stage, right to left, wheeling a new television set on a hand truck. The counter of SCHILL's shop is transformed into the BURGOMASTER's office. The BURGOMASTER comes in. He takes a revolver from his pocket, examines it and sets it down on the desk. He sits down and starts writing. SCHILL knocks)

BURGOMASTER: Come in.

SCHILL: I must have a word with you, Burgomaster.

BURGOMASTER: Ah, Schill. Sit down, my friend.

SCHILL: Man to man. As your successor.

BURGOMASTER: But of course. Naturally.

(SCHILL remains standing. He looks at the revolver)

SCHILL: Is that a gun?

BURGOMASTER: Madame Zochanassian's black panther's broken loose. It's been seen near the cathedral. It's as well to be prepared.

SCHILL: Oh, yes. Of course.

BURGOMASTER: I've sent out a call for all able-bodied men with firearms. The streets have been cleared. The children have been kept in school. We don't want any accidents.

SCHILL: (Suspiciously) You're making quite a thing of it.

1. One of the principal banks of England.

2. "City Hall."

BURGOMASTER: (*Shrugs*) Naturally. A panther is a dangerous beast. Well? What's on your mind? Speak out. We're old friends.

SCHILL: That's a good cigar you're smoking, Burgomaster.

BURGOMASTER: Yes. Havana.

SCHILL: You used to smoke something else.

BURGOMASTER: Fortuna.

SCHILL: Cheaper.

BURGOMASTER: Too strong.

SCHILL: A new tie? Silk?

BURGOMASTER: Yes. Do you like it?

SCHILL: And have you also bought new shoes?

BURGOMASTER: (*Brings his feet out from under the desk*) Why, yes. I ordered a new pair from Kalberstadt. Extraordinary! However did you guess?

SCHILL: That's why I'm here.

(*The THIRD MAN knocks*)

BURGOMASTER: Come in.

THIRD MAN: The new typewriter, sir.

BURGOMASTER: Put it on the table. (*The THIRD MAN sets it down and goes*) What's the matter with you? My dear fellow, aren't you well?

SCHILL: It's you who don't seem well, Burgomaster.

BURGOMASTER: What do you mean?

SCHILL: You look pale.

BURGOMASTER: I?

SCHILL: Your hands are trembling. (*The BURGOMASTER involuntarily hides his hands*) Are you frightened?

BURGOMASTER: What have I to be afraid of?

SCHILL: Perhaps this sudden prosperity alarms you.

BURGOMASTER: Is prosperity a crime?

SCHILL: That depends on how you pay for it.

BURGOMASTER: You'll have to forgive me, Schill, but I really haven't the slightest idea what you're talking about. Am I supposed to feel like a criminal every time I order a new typewriter?

SCHILL: Do you?

BURGOMASTER: Well, I hope you haven't come here to talk about a new typewriter. Now, what was it you wanted?

SCHILL: I have come to claim the protection of the authorities.

BURGOMASTER: Ei! Against whom?

SCHILL: You know against whom.

BURGOMASTER: You don't trust us?

SCHILL: The woman has put a price on my head.

BURGOMASTER: If you don't feel safe, why don't you go to the police?

SCHILL: I have just come from the police.

BURGOMASTER: And?

SCHILL: The chief has a new gold tooth in his mouth.

BURGOMASTER: A new—? Oh, Schill, really! You're forgetting. This is Gullen, the town of humane traditions. Goethe slept here. Brahms composed a quartet. You must have faith in us. This is a law-abiding community.

SCHILL: Then arrest this woman who wants to have me killed.

BURGOMASTER: Look here, Schill. God knows the lady has every right to be angry with you. What you did there wasn't very pretty. You forced two decent lads to perjure themselves and had a young girl thrown out on the streets.

SCHILL: That young girl owns half the world.

(A moment's silence)

BURGOMASTER: Very well, then, we'll speak frankly.

SCHILL: That's why I'm here.

BURGOMASTER: Man to man, just as you said. *(He clears his throat)* Now—after what you did, you have no moral right to say a word against this lady. And I advise you not to try. Also—I regret to have to tell you this—there is no longer any question of your being elected Burgomaster.

SCHILL: Is that official?

BURGOMASTER: Official.

SCHILL: I see.

BURGOMASTER: The man who is chosen to exercise the high post of Burgomaster must have, obviously, certain moral qualifications. Qualifications which, unhappily, you no longer possess. Naturally, you may count on the esteem and friendship of the town, just as before. That goes without saying. The best thing will be to spread the mantle of silence over the whole miserable business.

SCHILL: So I'm to remain silent while they arrange my murder?

(The BURGOMASTER gets up)

BURGOMASTER: *(Suddenly noble)* Now, who is arranging your murder? Give me the names and I will investigate the case at once. Unrelentingly. Well? The names?

SCHILL: You.

BURGOMASTER: I resent this. Do you think we want to kill you for money?

SCHILL: No. You don't want to kill me. But you want to have me killed.

(The lights go down. The stage is filled with men prowling about with rifles, as if they were stalking a quarry. In the interval the POLICEMAN's bench and the BURGOMASTER's desk are shifted somewhat, so that they will compose the setting for the sacristy. The stage empties. The lights come up on the balcony. CLAIRE appears)

CLAIRE: Bobby, what's going on here? What are all these men doing with guns? Whom are they hunting?

BOBBY: The black panther has escaped, madame.

CLAIRE: Who let him out?

BOBBY: Kobby and Lobby, madame.

CLAIRE: How excited they are! There may be shooting?

BOBBY: It is possible, madame.

(The lights fade on the balcony. The sacristan comes in. He arranges the set, and puts the altar cloth on the altar. Then SCHILL comes on. He is looking for the PASTOR. The PASTOR enters, left. He is wearing his gown and carrying a rifle)

SCHILL: Sorry to disturb you, Pastor.

PASTOR: God's house is open to all. *(He sees that SCHILL is staring at the gun)*
Oh, the gun? That's because of the panther. It's best to be prepared.

SCHILL: Pastor, help me.

PASTOR: Of course. Sit down. *(He puts the rifle on the bench)* What's the trouble?

SCHILL: *(Sits on the bench)* I'm frightened.

PASTOR: Frightened? Of what?

SCHILL: Of everyone. They're hunting me down like a beast.

PASTOR: Have no fear of man, Schill. Fear God. Fear not the death of the body. Fear the death of the soul. Zip up my gown behind, Sacristan.

SCHILL: I'm afraid, Pastor.

PASTOR: Put your trust in heaven, my friend.

SCHILL: You see, I'm not well. I shake. I have such pains around the heart. I sweat.

PASTOR: I know. You're passing through a profound psychic experience.

SCHILL: I'm going through hell.

PASTOR: The hell you are going through exists only within yourself. Many years ago you betrayed a girl shamefully, for money. Now you think that we shall sell you just as you sold her. No, my friend, you are projecting your guilt upon others. It's quite natural. But remember, the root of our torment lies always within ourselves, in our hearts, in our sins. When you have understood this, you can conquer the fears that oppress you; you have weapons with which to destroy them.

SCHILL: Siemethofer has bought a new washing machine.

PASTOR: Don't worry about the washing machine. Worry about your immortal soul.

SCHILL: Stockers has a television set.

PASTOR: There is also great comfort in prayer. Sacristan, the bands. *(SCHILL crosses to the altar and kneels. The sacristan ties on the PASTOR's bands)* Examine your conscience, Schill. Repent. Otherwise your fears will consume you. Believe me, this is the only way. We have no other. *(The church bell begins to peal. SCHILL seems relieved)*

Now I must leave you. I have a baptism. You may stay as long as you like. Sacristan, the Bible, Liturgy, and Psalter. The child is beginning to cry. I can hear it from here. It is frightened. Let us make haste to give it the only security which this world affords.

SCHILL: A new bell?

PASTOR: Yes. Its tone is marvelous, don't you think? Full. Sonorous.

SCHILL: (*Steps back in horror*) A new bell! You too, Pastor? You too?

(*The PASTOR clasps his hands in horror. Then he takes SCHILL into his arms*)

PASTOR: Oh, God, God forgive me. We are poor, weak things, all of us. Do not tempt us further into the hell in which you are burning. Go, Schill, my friend, go my brother, go while there is time.

(*The PASTOR goes. SCHILL picks up the rifle with a gesture of desperation. He goes out with it. As the lights fade, men appear with guns. Two shots are fired in the darkness. The lights come up on the balcony, which moves forward*)

CLAIRE: Bobby! What was that shooting? Have they caught the panther?

BOBBY: He is dead, madame.

CLAIRE: There were two shots.

BOBBY: The panther is dead, madame.

CLAIRE: I loved him. (*Waves BOBBY away*) I shall miss him.

(*The TEACHER comes in with two little girls, singing. They stop under the balcony*)

TEACHER: Gracious lady, be so good as to accept our heartfelt condolences. Your beautiful panther is no more. Believe me, we are deeply pained that so tragic an event should mar your visit here. But what could we do? The panther was savage, a beast. To him our human laws could not apply. There was no other way—(*SCHILL appears with the gun. He looks dangerous. The girls run off, frightened. The TEACHER follows the girls*) Children—children—children!

CLAIRE: Anton, why are you frightening the children?

(*He works the bolt, loading the chamber, and raises the gun slowly*)

SCHILL: Go away, Claire—I warn you. Go away.

CLAIRE: How strange it is, Anton! How clearly it comes back to me! The day we saw one another for the first time, do you remember? I was on a balcony then. It was a day like today, a day in autumn without a breath of wind, warm as it is now—only lately I am always cold. You stood down there and stared at me without moving. I was embarrassed. I didn't know what to do. I wanted to go back into the darkness of the room, where it was safe, but I couldn't. You stared up at me darkly, almost angrily, as if you wished to hurt me, but your eyes were full of passion. (*SCHILL begins to lower the rifle involuntarily*) Then, I don't know why, I left the balcony and I came down and stood in the street beside you.

You didn't greet me, you didn't say a word, but you took my hand and we walked together out of town into the fields, and behind us came Kobby and Lobby, like two dogs, sniveling and giggling and snarling. Suddenly you picked up a stone and hurled it at them, and they ran yelping back into the town, and we were alone. (SCHILL has lowered the rifle completely. He moves forward toward her, as close as he can come) That was the beginning, and everything else had to follow. There is no escape.

(She goes in and closes the shutters. SCHILL stands immobile. The TEACHER tiptoes in. He stares at SCHILL, who doesn't see him. Then he beckons to the children)

TEACHER: Come children, sing. Sing.

(They begin singing. He creeps behind SCHILL and snatches away the rifle. SCHILL turns sharply. The PASTOR comes in)

PASTOR: Go, Schill—go!

(SCHILL goes out. The children continue singing, moving across the stage and off. The Golden Apostle vanishes. The crossing bell is heard. The scene dissolves into the railway-station setting, as in Act One. But there are certain changes. The timetable marked "Fahrplan" is now new, the frame freshly painted. There is a new travel poster on the station wall. It has a yellow sun and the words: "Reist in den Süden."¹ On the other side of the Fahrplan is another poster with the words: "Die Passionsspiele Oberammergau."² The sound of passing trains covers the scene change. SCHILL appears with an old valise in his hand, dressed in a shabby trench coat, his hat on his head. He looks about with a furtive air, walking slowly to the platform. Slowly, as if by chance, the townspeople enter, from all sides. SCHILL hesitates, stops)

BURGOMASTER: (From upstage, center) Good evening, Schill.

SCHILL: Good evening.

POLICEMAN: Good evening.

SCHILL: Good evening.

PAINTER: (Enters) Good evening.

SCHILL: Good evening.

DOCTOR: Good evening.

SCHILL: Good evening.

BURGOMASTER: So you're taking a little trip?

SCHILL: Yes. A little trip.

POLICEMAN: May one ask where to?

SCHILL: I don't know.

PAINTER: Don't know?

1. "Travel in the South."

2. "The Oberammergau Passion Play," portraying the suffering and death of Jesus, is performed in the south German village every ten years.

SCHILL: To Kalberstadt.

BURGOMASTER: (*With disbelief, pointing to the valise*) Kalberstadt?

SCHILL: After that—somewhere else.

PAINTER: Ah. After that somewhere else.

(*The FOURTH MAN walks in*)

SCHILL: I thought maybe Australia.

BURGOMASTER: Australia!

ALL: Australia!

SCHILL: I'll raise the money somehow.

BURGOMASTER: But why Australia?

POLICEMAN: What would you be doing in Australia?

SCHILL: One can't always live in the same town, year in, year out.

PAINTER: But Australia—

DOCTOR: It's a risky trip for a man of your age.

BURGOMASTER: One of the lady's little men ran off to Australia . . .

ALL: Yes.

POLICEMAN: You'll be much safer here.

PAINTER: Much!

(*SCHILL looks about him in anguish, like a beast at bay*)

SCHILL: (*Low voice*) I wrote a letter to the administration at Kaffigen.

BURGOMASTER: Yes? And?

(*They are all intent on the answer*)

SCHILL: They didn't answer.

(*All laugh*)

DOCTOR: Do you mean to say you don't trust old friends? That's not very flattering, you know.

BURGOMASTER: No one's going to do you any harm here.

DOCTOR: No harm here.

SCHILL: They didn't answer because our postmaster held up my letter.

PAINTER: Our postmaster? What an idea.

BURGOMASTER: The postmaster is a member of the town council.

POLICEMAN: A man of the utmost integrity.

DOCTOR: He doesn't hold up letters. What an idea! (*The crossing bell starts ringing*)

STATION MASTER: (*Announces*) Local to Kalberstadt!

(*The townspeople all cross down to see the train arrive. Then they turn, with their backs to the audience, in a line across the stage. SCHILL cannot get through to reach the train*)

SCHILL: (*In a low voice*) What are you all doing here? What do you want of me?

BURGOMASTER: We don't like to see you go.

DOCTOR: We've come to see you off.

(The sound of the approaching train grows louder)

SCHILL: I didn't ask you to come.

POLICEMAN: But we have come.

DOCTOR: As old friends.

ALL: As old friends.

(The STATION MASTER holds up his paddle. The train stops with a screech of brakes. We hear the engine panting offstage)

VOICE: *(Offstage)* Gullen!

BURGOMASTER: A pleasant journey.

DOCTOR: And long life!

PAINTER: And good luck in Australia!

ALL: Yes, good luck in Australia.

(They press around him jovially. He stands motionless and pale)

SCHILL: Why are you crowding me?

POLICEMAN: What's the matter now?

(The STATION MASTER blows a long blast on his whistle)

SCHILL: Give me room.

DOCTOR: But you have plenty of room.

(They all move away from him)

POLICEMAN: Better get aboard, Schill.

SCHILL: I see. I see. One of you is going to push me under the wheels.

POLICEMAN: Oh, nonsense. Go on, get aboard.

SCHILL: Get away from me, all of you.

BURGOMASTER: I don't know what you want. Just get on the train.

SCHILL: No. One of you will push me under.

DOCTOR: You're being ridiculous. Now, go on, get on the train.

SCHILL: Why are you all so near me?

DOCTOR: The man's gone mad.

STATION MASTER: 'Board!

(He blows his whistle. The engine bell clangs. The train starts)

BURGOMASTER: Get aboard man. Quick.

(The following speeches are spoken all together until the train noises fade away)

DOCTOR: The train's starting.

ALL: Get aboard, man. Get aboard. The train's starting.

SCHILL: If I try to get aboard, one of you will hold me back.

ALL: No, no.

BURGOMASTER: Get on the train.

SCHILL: *(In terror, crouches against the wall of the STATION MASTER's office)*
No—no—no. No. *(He falls on his knees. The others crowd around him. He cowers on the ground, abjectly. The train sounds fade away)* Oh, no—no—don't push me, don't push me!

POLICEMAN: There. It's gone off without you.

(Slowly they leave him. He raises himself up to a sitting position, still trembling. A TRUCK DRIVER enters with an empty can)

TRUCK DRIVER: Do you know where I can get some water? My truck's boiling over. *(SCHILL points to the station office)* Thanks. *(He enters the office, gets the water and comes out. By this time, SCHILL is erect)* Missed your train?

SCHILL: Yes.

TRUCK DRIVER: To Kalberstadt?

SCHILL: Yes.

TRUCK DRIVER: Well, come with me. I'm going that way.

SCHILL: This is my town. This is my home. *(With strange new dignity)* No, thank you. I've changed my mind. I'm staying.

TRUCK DRIVER: *(Shrugs)* All right.

(He goes out. SCHILL picks up his bag, looks right and left, and slowly walks off)

Curtain

ACT THREE

Music is heard. Then the curtain rises on the interior of the old barn, a dim, cavernous structure. Bars of light fall across the shadowy forms, shafts of sunlight from the holes and cracks in the walls and roof. Overhead hang old rags, decaying sacks, great cobwebs. Extreme left is a ladder leading to the loft. Near it, an old haycart. Left, CLAIRE ZACHANASSIAN is sitting in her gilded sedan chair, motionless, in her magnificent bridal gown and veil. Near the chair stands an old keg.

BOBBY: *(Comes in, treading carefully)* The doctor and the teacher from the high school to see you, madame.

CLAIRE: *(Impassive)* Show them in.

(BOBBY ushers them in as if they were entering a hall of state. The two grope their way through the litter. At last they find the lady, and bow. They are both well dressed in new clothes, but are very dusty)

BOBBY: Dr. Nüsslin and Professor Müller.

DOCTOR: Madame.

CLAIRE: You look dusty, gentlemen.

DOCTOR: *(Dusts himself off vigorously)* Oh, forgive us. We had to climb over an old carriage.

TEACHER: Our respects.

DOCTOR: A fabulous wedding.

TEACHER: Beautiful occasion.

CLAIRE: It's stifling here. But I love this old barn. The smell of hay and old straw and axle grease—it is the scent of my youth. Sit down. All this rubbish—the haycart, the old carriage, the cask, even the pitchfork—it was all here when I was a girl.

TEACHER: Remarkable place.

(He mops his brow)

CLAIRE: I thought the pastor's text was very appropriate. The lesson a trifle long.

TEACHER: I Corinthians 13.¹

CLAIRE: Your choristers sang beautifully, Professor.

TEACHER: Bach. From the *St. Matthew Passion*.

DOCTOR: Güllen has never seen such magnificence! The flowers! The jewels! And the people.

TEACHER: The theatrical world, the world of finance, the world of art, the world of science . . .

CLAIRE: All these worlds are now back in their Cadillacs, speeding toward the capital for the wedding reception. But I'm sure you didn't come here to talk about them.

DOCTOR: Dear lady, we should not intrude on your valuable time. Your husband must be waiting impatiently.

CLAIRE: No, no, I've packed him off to Brazil.

DOCTOR: To Brazil, madame?

CLAIRE: Yes. For his honeymoon.

TEACHER and DOCTOR: Oh! But your wedding guests?

CLAIRE: I've planned a delightful dinner for them. They'll never miss me. Now what was it you wished to talk about?

TEACHER: About Anton Schill, madame.

CLAIRE: Is he dead?

TEACHER: Madame, we may be poor. But we have our principles.

CLAIRE: I see. Then what do you want?

TEACHER: *(He mops his brow again)* The fact is, madame, in anticipation of your well-known munificence, that is, feeling that you would give the town some sort of gift, we have all been buying things. Necessities . . .

DOCTOR: With money we don't have.

(The TEACHER blows his nose)

1. See I Corinthians 13:13: "But now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love."

CLAIRE: You've run into debt?

DOCTOR: Up to here.

CLAIRE: In spite of your principles?

TEACHER: We're human, madame.

CLAIRE: I see.

TEACHER: We have been poor for a long time. A long, long time.

DOCTOR: (*He rises*) The question is, how are we going to pay?

CLAIRE: You already know.

TEACHER: (*Courageously*) I beg you, Madame Zahanassian, put yourself in our position for a moment. For twenty-two years I've been cudgeling my brains to plant a few seeds of knowledge in this wilderness. And all this time, my gallant colleague, Dr. Nüsslin, has been rattling around in his ancient Mercedes, from patient to patient, trying to keep these wretches alive. Why? Why have we spent our lives in this miserable hole? For money? Hardly. The pay is ridiculous.

DOCTOR: And yet, the professor here has declined an offer to head the high school in Kalberstadt.

TEACHER: And Dr. Nüsslin has refused an important post at the University of Erlangen. Madame, the simple fact is, we love our town. We were born here. It is our life.

DOCTOR: That's true.

TEACHER: What has kept us going all these years is the hope that one day the community will prosper again as it did in the days when we were young.

CLAIRE: Good.

TEACHER: Madame, there is no reason for our poverty. We suffer here from a mysterious blight. We have factories. They stand idle. There is oil in the valley of Pückenried.

DOCTOR: There is copper under the Konradsw Weil Forest. There is power in our streams, in our waterfalls.

TEACHER: We are not poor, madame. If we had credit, if we had confidence, the factories would open, orders and commissions would pour in. And our economy would bloom together with our cultural life. We would become once again like the towns around us, healthy and prosperous.

DOCTOR: If the Wagonworks were put on its feet again—

TEACHER: The Foundry.

DOCTOR: The Golden Eagle Pencil Factory.

TEACHER: Buy these plants, madame. Put them in operation once more, and I swear to you, Gullen will flourish and it will bless you. We don't need a billion marks. Ten million, properly invested, would give us back our life, and incidentally return to the investor an excellent dividend. Save us, madame. Save us, and we will not only bless you, we will make money for you.

CLAIRE: I don't need money.

DOCTOR: Madame, we are not asking for charity. This is business.

CLAIRE: It's a good idea . . .

DOCTOR: Dear lady! I knew you wouldn't let us down.

CLAIRE: But it's out of the question. I cannot buy the Wagonworks. I already own them.

DOCTOR: The Wagonworks?

TEACHER: And the Foundry?

CLAIRE: And the Foundry.

DOCTOR: And the Golden Eagle Pencil Factory?

CLAIRE: Everything. The valley of Pückerried with its oil, the forest of Konradswiel with its ore, the barn, the town, the streets, the houses, the shops, everything. I had my agents buy up this rubbish over the years, bit by bit, piece by piece, until I had it all. Your hopes were an illusion, your vision empty, your self-sacrifice a stupidity, your whole life completely senseless.

TEACHER: Then the mysterious blight—

CLAIRE: The mysterious blight was I.

DOCTOR: But this is monstrous!

CLAIRE: Monstrous. I was seventeen when I left this town. It was winter. I was dressed in a sailor suit and my red braids hung down my back. I was in my seventh month. As I walked down the street to the station, the boys whistled after me, and someone threw something. I sat freezing in my seat in the Hamburg Express. But before the roof of the great barn was lost behind the trees, I had made up my mind that one day I would come back . . .

TEACHER: But, madame—

CLAIRE: *(She smiles)* And now I have. *(She claps her hands)* Mike. Max. Take me back to the Golden Apostle. I've been here long enough.

(MIKE and MAX start to pick up the sedan chair. The TEACHER pushes MIKE away.)

TEACHER: Madame. One moment. Please. I see it all now. I had thought of you as an avenging fury, a Medea, a Clytemnestra—but I was wrong. You are a warm-hearted woman who has suffered a terrible injustice, and now you have returned and taught us an unforgettable lesson. You have stripped us bare. But now that we stand before you naked, I know you will set aside these thoughts of vengeance. If we made you suffer, you too have put us through the fire. Have mercy, madame.

CLAIRE: When I have had justice. Mike!

(She signals to MIKE and MAX to pick up the sedan chair. They cross the stage. The TEACHER bars the way)

TEACHER: But, madame, one injustice cannot cure another. What good will

it do to force us into crime? Horror succeeds horror, shame is piled on shame. It settles nothing.

CLAIRE: It settles everything.

(They move upstage toward the exit. The TEACHER follows)

TEACHER: Madame, this lesson you have taught us will never be forgotten. We will hand it down from father to son. It will be a monument more lasting than any vengeance. Whatever we have been, in the future we shall be better because of you. You have pushed us to the extreme. Now forgive us. Show us the way to a better life. Have pity, madame—pity. That is the highest justice.

(The sedan chair stops)

CLAIRE: The highest justice has no pity. It is bright and pure and clear. The world made me into a whore; now I make the world into a brothel. Those who wish to go down, may go down. Those who wish to dance with me, may dance with me. *(To her porters)* Go.

(She is carried off. The lights black out. Downstage, right, appears SCHILL's shop. It has a new sign, a new counter. The doorbell, when it rings, has an impressive sound. FRAU SCHILL stands behind the counter in a new dress. The FIRST MAN enters, left. He is dressed as a prosperous butcher, a few bloodstains on his snowy apron, a gold watch chain across his open vest)

FIRST MAN: What a wedding! I'll swear the whole town was there. Cigarettes.

FRAU SCHILL: Clara is entitled to a little happiness after all. I'm happy for her. Green or white?

FIRST MAN: Turkish. The bridesmaids! Dancers and opera singers. And the dresses! Down to here.

FRAU SCHILL: It's the fashion nowadays.

FIRST MAN: Reporters! Photographers! From all over the world! *(In a low voice)* They will be here any minute.

FRAU SCHILL: What have reporters to do with us? We are simple people, Herr Hofbauer. There is nothing for them here.

FIRST MAN: They're questioning everybody. They're asking everything. *(The FIRST MAN lights a cigarette. He looks up at the ceiling)* Footsteps.

FRAU SCHILL: He's pacing the room. Up and down. Day and night.

FIRST MAN: Haven't seen him all week.

FRAU SCHILL: He never goes out.

FIRST MAN: It's his conscience. That was pretty mean, the way he treated poor Madame Zahanassian.

FRAU SCHILL: That's true. I feel very badly about it myself.

FIRST MAN: To ruin a young girl like that— God doesn't forgive it. *(FRAU SCHILL nods solemnly with pursed lips. The butcher gives her a level*

glance) Look, I hope he'll have sense enough to keep his mouth shut in front of the reporters.

FRAU SCHILL: I certainly hope so.

FIRST MAN: You know his character.

FRAU SCHILL: Only too well, Herr Hofbauer.

FIRST MAN: If he tries to throw dirt at our Clara and tell a lot of lies, how she tried to get us to kill him, which anyway she never meant—

FRAU SCHILL: Of course not.

FIRST MAN: —Then we'll really have to do something! And not because of the money— *(He spits)* But out of ordinary human decency. God knows Madame Zachanassian has suffered enough through him already.

FRAU SCHILL: She has indeed.

(The TEACHER comes in. He is not quite sober)

TEACHER: *(Looks about the shop)* Has the press been here yet?

FIRST MAN: No.

TEACHER: It's not my custom, as you know, Frau Schill—but I wonder if I could have a strong alcoholic drink?

FRAU SCHILL: It's an honor to serve you, Herr Professor. I have a good Steinhäger.¹ Would you like to try a glass?

TEACHER: A very small glass.

(FRAU SCHILL serves bottle and glass. The TEACHER tosses off a glass)

FRAU SCHILL: Your hand is shaking, Herr Professor.

TEACHER: To tell the truth, I have been drinking a little already.

FRAU SCHILL: Have another glass. It will do you good. *(He accepts another glass)*

TEACHER: Is that he up there, walking?

FRAU SCHILL: Up and down. Up and down.

FIRST MAN: It's God punishing him.

(The PAINTER comes in with the SON and the DAUGHTER)

PAINTER: Careful! A reporter just asked us the way to this shop.

FIRST MAN: I hope you didn't tell him.

PAINTER: I told him we were strangers here.

(They all laugh. The door opens. The SECOND MAN darts into the shop)

SECOND MAN: Look out, everybody! The press! They are across the street in your shop, Hofbauer.

FIRST MAN: My boy will know how to deal with them.

SECOND MAN: Make sure Schill doesn't come down, Hofbauer.

1. A kind of gin.

FIRST MAN: Leave that to me.

(They group themselves about the shop)

TEACHER: Listen to me, all of you. When the reporters come I'm going to speak to them. I'm going to make a statement. A statement to the world on behalf of myself as Rector of Gullen High School and on behalf of you all, for all your sakes.

PAINTER: What are you going to say?

TEACHER: I shall tell the truth about Claire Zahanassian.

FRAU SCHILL: You're drunk, Herr Professor; you should be ashamed of yourself.

TEACHER: I should be ashamed? You should all be ashamed!

SON: Shut your trap. You're drunk.

DAUGHTER: Please, Professor—

TEACHER: Girl, you disappoint me. It is your place to speak. But you are silent and you force your old teacher to raise his voice. I am going to speak the truth. It is my duty and I am not afraid. The world may not wish to listen, but no one can silence me. I'm not going to wait—I'm going over to Hofbauer's shop now.

ALL: No, you're not. Stop him. Stop him.

(They all spring at the TEACHER. He defends himself. At this moment, SCHILL appears through the door upstage. In contrast to the others, he is dressed shabbily in an old black jacket, his best)

SCHILL: What's going on in my shop? *(The townsmen let go of the TEACHER and turn to stare at SCHILL)* What's the trouble, Professor?

TEACHER: Schill, I am speaking out at last! I am going to tell the press everything.

SCHILL: Be quiet, Professor.

TEACHER: What did you say?

SCHILL: Be quiet.

TEACHER: You want me to be quiet?

SCHILL: Please.

TEACHER: But, Schill, if I keep quiet, if you miss this opportunity—they're over in Hofbauer's shop now . . .

SCHILL: Please.

TEACHER: As you wish. If you too are on their side, I have no more to say.

(The doorbell jingles. A REPORTER comes in)

REPORTER: Is Anton Schill here? *(Moves to SCHILL)* Are you Herr Schill?

SCHILL: What?

REPORTER: Herr Schill.

SCHILL: Er—no. Herr Schill's gone to Kalberstadt for the day.

REPORTER: Oh, thank you. Good day.

(He goes out)

PAINTER: (Mops his brow) Whew! Close shave.

(He follows the REPORTER out)

SECOND MAN: (Walking up to SCHILL) That was pretty smart of you to keep your mouth shut. You know what to expect if you don't.

(He goes)

FIRST MAN: Give me a Havana. (SCHILL serves him) Charge it. You bastard!

(He goes. SCHILL opens his account book)

FRAU SCHILL: Come along, children—

(FRAU SCHILL, the SON and the DAUGHTER go off, upstage)

TEACHER: They're going to kill you. I've known it all along, and you too, you must have known it. The need is too strong, the temptation too great. And now perhaps I too will join against you. I belong to them and, like them, I can feel myself hardening into something that is not human—not beautiful.

SCHILL: It can't be helped.

TEACHER: Pull yourself together, man. Speak to the reporters; you've no time to lose.

(SCHILL looks up from his account book)

SCHILL: No. I'm not going to fight any more.

TEACHER: Are you so frightened that you don't dare open your mouth?

SCHILL: I made Claire what she is, I made myself what I am. What should I do? Should I pretend that I'm innocent?

TEACHER: No, you can't. You are as guilty as hell.

SCHILL: Yes.

TEACHER: You are a bastard.

SCHILL: Yes.

TEACHER: But that does not justify your murder. (SCHILL looks at him) I wish I could believe that for what they're doing—for what they're going to do—they will suffer for the rest of their lives. But it's not true. In a little while they will have justified everything and forgotten everything.

SCHILL: Of course.

TEACHER: Your name will never again be mentioned in this town. That's how it will be.

SCHILL: I don't hold it against you.

TEACHER: But I do. I will hold it against myself all my life. That's why—

(The doorbell jingles. The BURGOMASTER comes in. The TEACHER stares at him, then goes out without another word)

BURGOMASTER: Good afternoon, Schill. Don't let me disturb you. I've just dropped in for a moment.

SCHILL: I'm just finishing my accounts for the week. (*A moment's pause*)

BURGOMASTER: The town council meets tonight. At the Golden Apostle. In the auditorium.

SCHILL: I'll be there.

BURGOMASTER: The whole town will be there. Your case will be discussed and final action taken. You've put us in a pretty tight spot, you know.

SCHILL: Yes. I'm sorry.

BURGOMASTER: The lady's offer will be rejected.

SCHILL: Possibly.

BURGOMASTER: Of course, I may be wrong.

SCHILL: Of course.

BURGOMASTER: In that case—are you prepared to accept the judgment of the town? The meeting will be covered by the press, you know.

SCHILL: By the press?

BURGOMASTER: Yes, and the radio and the newsreel. It's a very ticklish situation. Not only for you—believe me, it's even worse for us. What with the wedding, and all the publicity, we've become famous. All of a sudden our ancient democratic institutions have become of interest to the world.

SCHILL: Are you going to make the lady's condition public?

BURGOMASTER: No, no, of course not. Not directly. We will have to put the matter to a vote—that is unavoidable. But only those involved will understand.

SCHILL: I see.

BURGOMASTER: As far as the press is concerned, you are simply the intermediary between us and Madame Zachanassian. I have white-washed you completely.

SCHILL: That is very generous of you.

BURGOMASTER: Frankly, it's not for your sake, but for the sake of your family. They are honest and decent people.

SCHILL: Oh—

BURGOMASTER: So far we've all played fair. You've kept your mouth shut and so have we. Now can we continue to depend on you? Because if you have any idea of opening your mouth at tonight's meeting, there won't be any meeting.

SCHILL: I'm glad to hear an open threat at last.

BURGOMASTER: We are not threatening you. You are threatening us. If you speak, you force us to act—in advance.

SCHILL: That won't be necessary.

BURGOMASTER: So if the town decides against you?

SCHILL: I will accept their decision.

BURGOMASTER: Good. (*A moment's pause*) I'm delighted to see there is still

a spark of decency left in you. But—wouldn't it be better if we didn't have to call a meeting at all? *(He pauses. He takes a gun from his pocket and puts it on the counter)* I've brought you this.

SCHILL: Thank you.

BURGOMASTER: It's loaded.

SCHILL: I don't need a gun.

BURGOMASTER: *(He clears his throat)* You see? We could tell the lady that we had condemned you in secret session and you had anticipated our decision. I've lost a lot of sleep getting to this point, believe me.

SCHILL: I believe you.

BURGOMASTER: Frankly, in your place, I myself would prefer to take the path of honor. Get it over with, once and for all. Don't you agree? For the sake of your friends! For the sake of our children, your own children—you have a daughter, a son—Schill, you know our need, our misery.

SCHILL: You've put me through hell, you and your town. You were my friends, you smiled and reassured me. But day by day I saw you change—your shoes, your ties, your suits—your hearts. If you had been honest with me then, perhaps I would feel differently toward you now. I might even use that gun you brought me. For the sake of my friends. But now I have conquered my fear. Alone. It was hard, but it's done. And now you will have to judge me. And I will accept your judgment. For me that will be justice. How it will be for you, I don't know. *(He turns away)* You may kill me if you like. I won't complain, I won't protest, I won't defend myself. But I won't do your job for you either.

BURGOMASTER: *(Takes up his gun)* There it is. You've had your chance and you won't take it. Too bad. *(He takes out a cigarette)* I suppose it's more than we can expect of a man like you. *(SCHILL lights the BURGOMASTER's cigarette)* Good day.

SCHILL: Good day. *(The BURGOMASTER goes. FRAU SCHILL comes in, dressed in a fur coat. The DAUGHTER is in a new red dress. The SON has a new sports jacket)* What a beautiful coat, Mathilde!

FRAU SCHILL: Real fur. You like it?

SCHILL: Should I? What a lovely dress, Otilie!

DAUGHTER: *C'est très chic, n'est-ce pas?*¹

SCHILL: What?

FRAU SCHILL: Otilie is taking a course in French.

SCHILL: Very useful. Karl—whose automobile is that out there at the curb?

SON: Oh, it's only an Opel. They're not expensive.

SCHILL: You bought yourself a car?

1. *It's very smart, isn't it?*

SON: On credit. Easiest thing in the world.

FRAU SCHILL: Everyone's buying on credit now, Anton. These fears of yours are ridiculous. You'll see. Clara has a good heart. She only means to teach you a lesson.

DAUGHTER: She means to teach you a lesson, that's all.

SON: It's high time you got the point, Father.

SCHILL: I get the point. (*The church bells start ringing*) Listen. The bells of Gullen. Do you hear?

SON: Yes, we have four bells now. It sounds quite good.

DAUGHTER: Just like Gray's Elegy.

SCHILL: What?

FRAU SCHILL: Ottilie is taking a course in English literature.

SCHILL: Congratulations! It's Sunday. I should very much like to take a ride in your car. Our car.

SON: You want to ride in the car?

SCHILL: Why not? I want to ride through Konradsw Weil Forest. I want to see the town where I've lived all my life.

FRAU SCHILL: I don't think that will look very nice for any of us.

SCHILL: No—perhaps not. Well, I'll go for a walk by myself.

FRAU SCHILL: Then take us to Kalberstadt, Karl, and we'll go to a cinema.

SCHILL: A cinema? It's a good idea.

FRAU SCHILL: See you soon, Anton.

SCHILL: Good-bye, Ottilie. Good-bye, Karl, Good-bye, Mathilde.

FAMILY: Good-bye.

(*They go out*)

SCHILL: Good-bye. (*The shop sign flies off. The lights black out. They come up at once on the forest scene*) Autumn. Even the forest has turned to gold.

(*SCHILL wanders down to the bench in the forest. He sits. CLAIRE's voice is heard*)

CLAIRE: (*Offstage*) Stop. Wait here. (*CLAIRE comes in. She gazes slowly up at the trees, kicks at some leaves. Then she walks slowly down center. She stops before a tree, glances up the trunk*) Bark-borers. The old tree is dying.

(*She catches sight of SCHILL*)

SCHILL: Clara.

CLAIRE: How pleasant to see you here. I was visiting my forest. May I sit by you?

SCHILL: Oh, yes. Please do. (*She sits next to him*) I've just been saying good-bye to my family. They've gone to the cinema. Karl has bought himself a car.

CLAIRE: How nice.

SCHILL: Otilie is taking French lessons. And a course in English literature.

CLAIRE: You see? They're beginning to take an interest in higher things.

SCHILL: Listen. A finch. You hear?

CLAIRE: Yes. It's a finch. And a cuckoo in the distance. Would you like some music?

SCHILL: Oh, yes. That would be very nice.

CLAIRE: Anything special?

SCHILL: "Deep in the Forest."

CLAIRE: Your favorite song. They know it.

(She raises her hand. Offstage, the mandolin and guitar play the tune softly)

SCHILL: We had a child?

CLAIRE: Yes.

SCHILL: Boy or girl?

CLAIRE: Girl.

SCHILL: What name did you give her?

CLAIRE: I called her Genevieve.

SCHILL: That's a very pretty name.

CLAIRE: Yes.

SCHILL: What was she like?

CLAIRE: I saw her only once. When she was born. Then they took her away from me.

SCHILL: Her eyes?

CLAIRE: They weren't open yet.

CLAIRE: And her hair?

CLAIRE: Black, I think. It's usually black at first.

SCHILL: Yes, of course. Where did she die, Clara?

CLAIRE: In some family. I've forgotten their name. Meningitis, they said. The officials wrote me a letter.

SCHILL: Oh, I'm so very sorry, Clara.

CLAIRE: I've told you about our child. Now tell me about myself.

SCHILL: About yourself?

CLAIRE: Yes. How I was when I was seventeen in the days when you loved me.

SCHILL: I remember one day you waited for me in the great barn. I had to look all over the place for you. At last I found you lying in the haycart with nothing on and a long straw between your lips . . .

CLAIRE: Yes. I was pretty in those days.

SCHILL: You were beautiful, Clara.

CLAIRE: You were strong. The time you fought with those two railway men who were following me, I wiped the blood from your face with my red petticoat. *(The music ends)* They've stopped.

SCHILL: Tell them to play "Thoughts of Home."

CLAIRE: They know that too.

(The music plays)

SCHILL: Here we are, Clara, sitting together in our forest for the last time. The town council meets tonight. They will condemn me to death, and one of them will kill me. I don't know who and I don't know where. Clara, I only know that in a little while a useless life will come to an end.

(He bows his head on her bosom. She takes him in her arms)

CLAIRE: *(Tenderly)* I shall take you in your coffin to Capri. You will have your tomb in the park of my villa, where I can see you from my bedroom window. White marble and onyx in a grove of green cypress. With a beautiful view of the Mediterranean.

SCHILL: I've always wanted to see it.

CLAIRE: Your love for me died years ago, Anton. But my love for you would not die. It turned into something strong, like the hidden roots of the forest; something evil, like white mushrooms that grow unseen in the darkness. And slowly it reached out for your life. Now I have you. You are mine. Alone. At last and forever, a peaceful ghost in a silent house.

(The music ends)

SCHILL: The song is over.

CLAIRE: Adieu, Anton.

(CLAIRE kisses ANTON, a long kiss. Then she rises)

SCHILL: Adieu.

(She goes. SCHILL remains sitting on the bench. A row of lamps descends from the flies. The townsmen come in from both sides, each bearing his chair. A table and chairs are set upstage, center. On both sides sit the townspeople. The POLICEMAN, in a new uniform, sits on the bench behind SCHILL. All the townsmen are in new Sunday clothes. Around them are technicians of all sorts, with lights, cameras, and other equipment. The townswomen are absent. They do not vote. The BURGOMASTER takes his place at the table, center. The DOCTOR and the PASTOR sit at the same table, at his right, and the TEACHER in his academic gown, at his left)

BURGOMASTER: *(At a sign from the radio technician, he pounds the floor with his wand of office)* Fellow citizens of Gullen, I call this meeting to order. The agenda: there is only one matter before us. I have the honor to announce officially that Madame Claire Zachanassian, daughter of our beloved citizen, the famous architect Siegfried Wäscher, has decided to make a gift to the town of one billion marks. Five hundred million to the town, five hundred million to be divided per capita among the citizens. After certain necessary preliminaries, a vote will be taken, and you, as citizens of Gullen,

will signify your will by a show of hands. Has anyone any objection to this mode of procedure? The pastor? (*Silence*) The police? (*Silence*) The town health official? (*Silence*) The Rector of Gullen High School? (*Silence*) The political opposition? (*Silence*) I shall then proceed to the vote—(*The TEACHER rises. The BURGOMASTER turns in surprise and irritation*) You wish to speak?

TEACHER: Yes.

BURGOMASTER: Very well.

(*He takes his seat. The TEACHER advances. The movie camera starts running*)

TEACHER: Fellow townsmen. (*The photographer flashes a bulb in his face*) Fellow townsmen. We all know that by means of this gift, Madame Claire Zachanassian intends to attain a certain object. What is this object? To enrich the town of her youth, yes. But more than that, she desires by means of this gift to re-establish justice among us. This desire expressed by our benefactress raises an all-important question. Is it true that our community harbors in its soul such a burden of guilt?

BURGOMASTER: Yes! True!

SECOND MAN: Crimes are concealed among us.

THIRD MAN: (*He jumps up*) Sins!

FOURTH MAN: (*He jumps up also*) Perjuries.

PAINTER: Justice!

TOWNSMEN: Justice! Justice!

TEACHER: Citizens of Gullen, this, then, is the simple fact of the case. We have participated in an injustice. I thoroughly recognize the material advantages which this gift opens to us—I do not overlook the fact that it is poverty which is the root of all this bitterness and evil. Nevertheless, there is no question here of money.

TOWNSMEN: No! No!

TEACHER: Here there is no question of our prosperity as a community, or our well-being as individuals— The question is—must be—whether or not we wish to live according to the principles of justice, those principles for which our forefathers lived and fought and for which they died, those principles which form the soul of our Western culture.

TOWNSMEN: Hear! Hear!

(*Applause*)

TEACHER: (*Desperately, realizing that he is fighting a losing battle, and on the verge of hysteria*) Wealth has meaning only when benevolence comes of it, but only he who hungers for grace will receive grace. Do you feel this hunger, my fellow citizens, this hunger of the spirit, or do you feel only that other profane hunger, the hunger of the body? That is the question which I, as Rector of your high

school, now propound to you. Only if you can no longer tolerate the presence of evil among you, only if you can in no circumstances endure a world in which injustice exists, are you worthy to receive Madame Zachanassian's billion and fulfill the condition bound up with this gift. If not—(*Wild applause. He gestures desperately for silence*) If not, then God have mercy on us!

(*The townsmen crowd around him, ambiguously, in a mood somewhat between threat and congratulation. He takes his seat, utterly crushed, exhausted by his effort. The BURGOMASTER advances and takes charge once again. Order is restored*)

BURGOMASTER: Anton Schill—(*The POLICEMAN gives SCHILL a shove. SCHILL gets up*) Anton Schill, it is through you that this gift is offered to the town. Are you willing that this offer should be accepted?

(*SCHILL mumbles something*)

RADIO REPORTER: (*Steps to his side*) You'll have to speak up a little, Herr Schill.

SCHILL: Yes.

BURGOMASTER: Will you respect our decision in the matter before us?

SCHILL: I will respect your decision.

BURGOMASTER: Then I proceed to the vote. All those who are in accord with the terms on which this gift is offered will signify the same by raising their right hands. (*After a moment, the POLICEMAN raises his hand. Then one by one the others. Last of all, very slowly, the TEACHER*) All against? The offer is accepted. I now solemnly call upon you, fellow townsmen, to declare in the face of all the world that you take this action, not out of love for worldly gain . . .

TOWNSMEN: (*In chorus*) Not out of love for worldly gain . . .

BURGOMASTER: But out of love for the right.

TOWNSMEN: But out of love for the right.

BURGOMASTER: (*Holds up his hand, as if taking an oath*) We join together, now, as brothers . . .

TOWNSMEN: (*Hold up their hands*) We join together, now, as brothers . . .

BURGOMASTER: To purify our town of guilt . . .

TOWNSMEN: To purify our town of guilt . . .

BURGOMASTER: And to reaffirm our faith . . .

TOWNSMEN: And to reaffirm our faith . . .

BURGOMASTER: In the eternal power of justice.

TOWNSMEN: In the eternal power of justice.

(*The lights go off suddenly*)

SCHILL: (*A scream*) Oh, God!

VOICE: I'm sorry, Herr Burgomaster. We seem to have blown a fuse. (*The lights go on*) Ah—there we are. Would you mind doing that last bit again?

BURGOMASTER: Again?

THE CAMERAMAN: *(Walks forward)* Yes, for the newsreel.

BURGOMASTER: Oh, the newsreel. Certainly.

THE CAMERAMAN: Ready now? Right.

BURGOMASTER: And to reaffirm our faith . . .

TOWNSMEN: And to reaffirm our faith . . .

BURGOMASTER: In the eternal power of justice.

TOWNSMEN: In the eternal power of justice.

THE CAMERAMAN: *(To his assistant)* It was better before, when he screamed
"Oh, God."

(The assistant shrugs)

BURGOMASTER: Fellow citizens of Gullen, I declare this meeting adjourned.

The ladies and gentlemen of the press will find refreshments
served downstairs, with the compliments of the town council.

The exits lead directly to the restaurant.

THE CAMERAMAN: Thank you.

(The newsmen go off with alacrity. The townsmen remain on the stage. SCHILL gets up)

POLICEMAN: *(Pushes SCHILL down)* Sit down.

SCHILL: Is it to be now?

POLICEMAN: Naturally, now.

SCHILL: I thought it might be best to have it at my house.

POLICEMAN: It will be here.

BURGOMASTER: Lower the lights. *(The lights dim)* Are they all gone?

VOICE: All gone.

BURGOMASTER: The gallery?

SECOND VOICE: Empty.

BURGOMASTER: Lock the doors.

THE VOICE: Locked here.

SECOND VOICE: Locked here.

BURGOMASTER: Form a lane. *(The men form a lane. At the end stands the
ATHLETE in elegant white slacks, a red scarf around his singlet)* Pastor.
Will you be so good?

(The PASTOR walks slowly to SCHILL)

PASTOR: Anton Schill, your heavy hour has come.

SCHILL: May I have a cigarette?

PASTOR: Cigarette, Burgomaster.

BURGOMASTER: Of course. With pleasure. And a good one.

*(He gives his case to the PASTOR, who offers it to SCHILL. The POLICEMAN lights the
cigarette. The PASTOR returns the case)*

PASTOR: In the words of the prophet Amos—

SCHILL: Please—

(He shakes his head)

PASTOR: You're no longer afraid?

SCHILL: No. I'm not afraid.

PASTOR: I will pray for you.

SCHILL: Pray for us all.

(The PASTOR bows his head)

BURGOMASTER: Anton Schill, stand up!

(SCHILL hesitates)

POLICEMAN: Stand up, you swine!

BURGOMASTER: Schultz, please.

POLICEMAN: I'm sorry. I was carried away. *(SCHILL gives the cigarette to the POLICEMAN. Then he walks slowly to the center of the stage and turns his back on the audience)* Enter the lane.

(SCHILL hesitates a moment. He goes slowly into the lane of silent men. The ATHLETE stares at him from the opposite end. SCHILL looks in turn at the hard faces of those who surround him, and sinks slowly to his knees. The lane contracts silently into a knot as the men close in and crouch over. Complete silence. The knot of men pulls back slowly, coming downstage. Then it opens. Only the DOCTOR is left in the center of the stage, kneeling by the corpse, over which the TEACHER's gown has been spread. The DOCTOR rises and takes off his stethoscope)

PASTOR: Is it all over?

DOCTOR: Heart failure.

BURGOMASTER: Died of joy.

ALL: Died of joy.

(The townsmen turn their backs on the corpse and at once light cigarettes. A cloud of smoke rises over them. From the left comes CLAIRE ZACHANASSIAN, dressed in black, followed by BOBBY. She sees the corpse. Then she walks slowly to center stage and looks down at the body of SCHILL)

CLAIRE: Uncover him. *(BOBBY uncovers SCHILL's face. She stares at it a long moment. She sighs)* Cover his face.

(BOBBY covers it. CLAIRE goes out, up center. BOBBY takes the check from his wallet, holds it out peremptorily to the BURGOMASTER, who walks over from the knot of silent men. He holds out his hand for the check. The lights fade. At once the warning bell is heard, and the scene dissolves into the setting of the railway station. The gradual transformation of the shabby town into a thing of elegance and beauty is now accomplished. The railway station glitters with neon lights and is surrounded with garlands, bright posters, and flags. The townfolk, men and women, now in brand new clothes, form themselves into a group in front of the station. The sound of the approaching train grows louder. The train stops)

STATION MASTER: Güllen-Rome Express. All aboard, please. *(The church*

bells start pealing. Men appear with trunks and boxes, a procession which duplicates that of the lady's arrival, but in inverse order. Then come the TWO BLIND MEN, then BOBBY, and MIKE and MAX carrying the coffin. Lastly CLAIRE. She is dressed in modish black. Her head is high, her face as impassive as that of an ancient idol. The procession crosses the stage and goes off. The people bow in silence as the coffin passes. When CLAIRE and her retinue have boarded the train, the STATION MASTER blows a long blast) 'Bo—ard!

(He holds up his paddle. The train starts and moves off slowly, picking up speed. The crowd turns slowly, gazing after the departing train in complete silence. The train sounds fade)

The curtain falls slowly

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Chart the important events in Claire Zachanassian's life.
2. Explain why Anton Schill becomes a victim of greed. Does he atone for his past sins?
3. How does the town rationalize its actions?
4. What moral issues does the play confront?
5. Does the play offer any hope for the future? Explain.
6. To what extent is the play's exaggerated and unrealistic style effective in conveying the author's message?