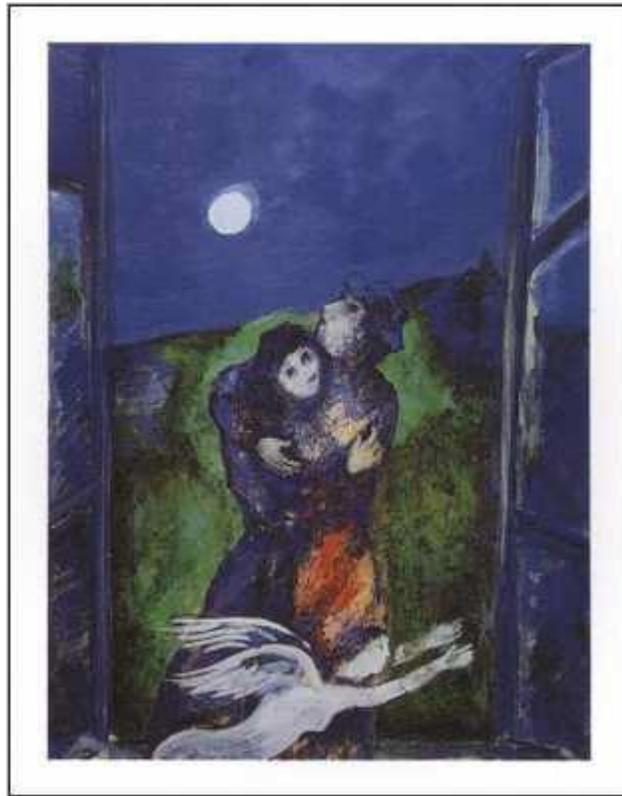


WILHELMSTRASSE

A PLAY IN TWELVE SCENES



Marc Chagall, "Lovers In Moonlight"

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CHARACTERS

SAMUEL 28 & 31, of average height and looks. He wears glasses which with his thinning hair set off his general mordant, condescending nature. He is only as tall as Rica, and much less healthy looking. He corrects Rica's English in short, quick bursts as if not really spoken to anyone.

RICA 25 & 28, as beautiful a Teutonic specimen as exists. Her hair is blond, her eyes are blue, she is tall and athletic, full-bodied, but seemingly not a pound overweight. She talks with a noticeable German accent; her command of English varies from scene to scene depending on the time of her stay in New York and the proximity to it. Often she hesitates to translate in her head what has just been said and what she is about to say, frequently nodding with an awkward hesitant delay. When she becomes upset, her command abandons her.

PRODUCTION NOTES

Essential are the differences in tenor and feel of the scenes in Berlin as opposed to those scenes in New York. In Berlin, SAMUEL is removed, almost to the point of rudeness, or at least tries to be that way, often not succeeding as hoped. The New York scenes have an easy insouciance that would be abjectly inappropriate in the Berlin scenes.

Part of this play's gestalt is the *voyage physique* the characters take. The relative chronology of scenes, the actor's movement and the sights they encounter are fundamental to its fullness. The play should be produced as a multi-medium elucidation. I suggest the use of several slide projectors being employed, simultaneously projecting photographs of the places and the sights flashed against the black, back wall of the theater as the play progresses. Not as an object for interaction for the actors, but merely as the vision of the actors; the seeing of what they see.

Music will be indispensable in establishing the differences in time and place between the scenes. Before each scene where there is a change in time or place, music should be the first clue to the change. Preceding the Berlin scenes, I recommend classic German dirges, Kurt Weill music etc. The New York scenes can be designated by anything from punk rock, the Ramones, to Bob Dylan; that is New York based music (e.g. Subterranean Home Sick Blues, Road to Ruin)

TIME AND PLACE

ACT ONE:

- Scene 1: Small outdoor café, Greenwich Village, New York City, May 1996
- Scene 2: Bahnhof Zoo Train Station, Berlin, November 1998
- Scene 3: In the café at the Hotel Adlon, Berlin, November 1998
- Scene 4: Washington Square Park, New York City, April 1996
(one month prior to Scene 1)
- Scene 5: On the Ku'daam in Berlin, November 1998
- Scene 6: Rica's apartment, Berlin, November 1998

ACT TWO:

- Scene 7: New York and Berlin: Various times between 1996 - 1998
- Scene 8: Unter de Linden and Bebelplatz, Berlin, November 1998
- Scene 9: Small café, Greenwich Village, New York City, October 1995
(three months prior to Scene 4)
- Scene 10: Wilhelmstrasse, Berlin, November 1998
- Scene 11: Rica's apartment, Berlin, November 1998
- Scene 12: Outdoor café, Greenwich Village, New York City, August 1995
(three months prior to Scene 8)

SCENE 1

May 1997. A café in the West Village, NYC. SAMUEL sits at a table reading. RICA rushes in. She carries a large purse and immediately searches through it. As they speak, SAMUEL folds the paper and watches her search.

RICA

Hi. Sorry.

SAMUEL

Hey there. I was beginning to worry, it's not like you to be late. Any trouble?

RICA

No, I just got caught up. There's a lot of shit to do.

(RICA searches a long moment, then stops, exhaling)

SAMUEL

Relax, you've got time. Are you gonna want something to eat?

(she nods)

Then I think we better order, service usually blows here.

(SAMUEL tries and fails to catch the attention of an offstage waitress. They share sad smiles. Pause)

Your year is up, you're going home....We knew, we knew someday—but still.

RICA

Yes!

(SAMUEL reaches out, takes hold of her hand. They hold a long moment. Then, RICA rummages again)

SAMUEL

Got everything?

RICA

Except for my sunglasses. I can't find them.

SAMUEL

The ones we bought, the black ones? That sucks, they looked great on you.

RICA

Yes they did.

SAMUEL

Yes?—Not even a pretense of modesty?

RICA

With you?

SAMUEL

Good point.

RICA

Everything's ready. I'm all packed, the car comes at three. I'll get to the airport by four. I'm very good in that way.

SAMUEL

Of course you are. Orderly. Precise.

SAMUEL and RICA

(together)

German.

RICA

Ja, very German.

(they smile at each other. RICA pulls things out of her bag. SAMUEL watches with fondness, then begins seriously)

SAMUEL

And how come we never slept together?

RICA

Samuel?

SAMUEL

Rica?....Well?

RICA

We have talked about this before.

SAMUEL

Really?

RICA

Every single time we got together

SAMUEL

Hmph, go figure....Must've been one time I forgot?

RICA

I don't think so.

SAMUEL

No? Huh....Not at my aunt's funeral. That would've been bad form.

RICA

Remember: Before the service. Down in the *shoul*.

SAMUEL

Oh yeah that's right!—Yeah that was bad form.—But you gotta admire my persistence.

RICA

Do I?

SAMUEL

Yes! And you can't blame me for trying.

(RICA smiles seductive and nods. Again, SAMUEL waves for service in vain. She stops searching, grows forlorn)

SAMUEL

That's me, consistent and persistent. I'm very "sistent." Insistent, existent. Don't knock it, we *sistent* types, we make the best lovers. Get you there every time.

RICA

I doubt.

SAMUEL

Nope, it was in Cosmo so it must be true. Women hide all their secrets there. Lead with some terrifying headline to keep men away. "8 Ways to Tell Him He's Awful. And two that'll *really* hurt."

RICA

Samuel—

SAMUEL

But us *sistent* types, the best lovers. Lab-tested true. It's in our hunter mentality—

RICA

Samuel!....I will miss you.

SAMUEL

(pause)

I know. I'm just trying to....Me too. You know, you do?

(she nods, pause)

Did you pack the Chagall print carefully?

RICA

I packed it very carefully. I put it in a tube and taped each end of the tube three times. Then I put the whole thing in, uh, the white....

SAMUEL

Gauze.

RICA

Then I wrapped it in towels and reinforced it with string.

SAMUEL

Anal retention *is* the way to a man's heart.—Promise me you'll carry on.

RICA

You shouldn't have bought it for me.

SAMUEL

I wanted you to have something to remind you of me.

RICA

Are you concerned I could forget about you?

SAMUEL

I'm concerned you could forget *how much*—about me.

(they stare, then slowly, she leans and presses her lips to his. They hold a long tender moment and stay up close)

RICA

Put away your fears Samuel.

SAMUEL

I'm Jewish. If I do that, what will I have left?

RICA

Just me—and no concerns about me.

(searching again)

Do you write letters well?

SAMUEL

I read them pretty well....Especially if they're from someone I've had *sex* with.

RICA

You're impossible.

SAMUEL

I do so try to be. It's a gift.

RICA

Fuck it! I can't find these *fucking* glasses!

SAMUEL

I love when foreigners curse in English. Ask for directions in Europe, nobody says a word. They stare at you with these vacant exotic faces. But stub a toe—all of a sudden its David Mamet characters. Fuck! Shit! Motherfucker!

RICA

We don't have good words for fuck. It sums all your anger and pain.

SAMUEL

Yes it does. As in *fucking* waitress!

(calling out to get the waitress's attention)

She should be taken out and shot. You're good at that right?

(he turns to RICA. They smile fondly at each other)

RICA

Thank you Samuel.

SAMUEL

For what, lacking any presence whatsoever?

RICA

I didn't know what to expect when I came. I was nervous, I didn't know any one. I was very alone.

SAMUEL

You wouldn't've been for long.

RICA

You could have been more difficult towards me. I never would thought it possible. It has been so extraordinary. Getting to know you, getting to, in my own way....

SAMUEL

Please don't....We don't want to start me crying all over again, do we?

(she nods stoically, then puts things back in her bag)

Besides, this isn't an end my dear Rica. You're not getting away from me that easily. Simply running off back to the *Führerland*. You're gonna have to run a lot *führer* than that to be rid of me.

RICA

Very cute.

SAMUEL

Danke.—Nope, this's just a challenging respite in what's destined to be a life-long love affair. Or a perverse pathological stalking depending on your vantage point. Okay?

(she smiles and nods)

Good....Now that we've got that taken care of—this place is unfuckingbelievable.

(he waves offstage and responds to the failure. She smiles)

RICA

Samuel.

SAMUEL

Anyway it's gonna take a while to get my Mother off the ledge. Not just a Shiksa, oh no. That was good enough for my brother, but I'm going *all* the way. A genu-wine Deutsche fräulein.

RICA

(warmly)

My little Jewish boy.

SAMUEL

My little Nazi girl....And since you're leaving me here, hopelessly pining and
woebegone, you can buy.

RICA

I always do.

SAMUEL

I'll pretend I didn't hear that.

RICA

Bitte.

SAMUEL

But I'll expect to be kept in the style I've grown accustomed to.

RICA

Poor. I will try. I got notice just today. I start work two weeks after I return. There's a
month before school starts. The firm wants me to be acclimated so I can work through
the year.

SAMUEL

Acclimated. Lucky you, gainful employment. A bona fide ambulance chaser. Mazel
tov.

RICA

Stop.

SAMUEL

The year's been worth it. A job when you graduate, huge German firm in Frankfurt.
Getting to know *me*, the best part of course.

RICA

What is happening with that foundation?

SAMUEL

They're still thinking. I may not be *Yewish* enough for them. Imagine that?

RICA

I can imagine.

SAMUEL

Oh no, you'd be surprised. I got it in me when I need it, when it's to my benefit. Make a couple Torah references, talk with my hands waving, drop a Yiddish *vord*, partake in the ritual "Katz's - 2nd Ave Deli argument. "*Oh, but da brisket dare. Oooyeeee!*"

RICA

(laughing, she hits him playfully)

Samuel stop it! That's terrible, what you say.

SAMUEL

Yes it is. But there's gotta be some benefit to this Jewish thing. I use it when it works for me.

RICA

You should be ashamed.

SAMUEL

I should be many things. Ashamed, employed.—*Fucking ordering!* This's unbelievable!

(SAMUEL stands, waves excessively offstage. He gives a big, open-arm shrug and turns to RICA who laughs at him)

What?! Well it is!

(RICA laughs further. He waves her off, then smiles at her)

Sure, laugh at me....Yeah, you wait and see.—You're gonna miss *die scheisse* out of me.

SCENE 2

November 1998, three years after Scene 1. RICA meanders a Bahnhof Zoo train platform. A speaker announces a train from Linz, Austria. SAMUEL enters wan, holding a valise. She doesn't see him as he views her uneasily. She turns and runs excitedly to him, stopping short before touching.

RICA

There you are.

SAMUEL

Yes, here I am.

(she envelops him in a big hug. It is long, slow, happy)

RICA

I'm so happy to see you! I can't believe you are here!

SAMUEL

I am. I'm here.

RICA

Yes, but I can't believe it! After almost three years, I can't!

SAMUEL

I promise I am....Here, let me see you.

(they disengage)

RICA

You look good! You look the same!

SAMUEL

I look the same, I suppose that's good. Just balder. Three years older, six years balder.

RICA

Stop, you look good. It's wonderful, *mein gott*, so wonderful your being here. It's—oh!

(she hugs him again harder)

SAMUEL

Ooff!....I forgot what a great hugger you are. You always hold on like it's the last time you ever will again. I always loved that.—Come, let me look at you.

(they let go again)

RICA

What?—It's me too, ja? You still remember?!

SAMUEL

I still remember....You look beautiful Rica. You do, you're still—utterly breathtaking.

RICA

Stop it. No I don't, not now, there's no sun. You don't see me, you see what you want.

SAMUEL

I see you—my little Nazi girl.

RICA

Ja, ha ha! My little Jewish boy.

SAMUEL

Your hair, your eyes, *your size!*—The Aryan poster child. Strong and firm. An ideal, the *embodiment* of a eugenic vision.

RICA

You will stop that. You embarrassed me.

SAMUEL

Embarrass. It's true, look at you! Perfectly built, perfectly proportioned—

RICA

Why do you—

SAMUEL

Unwavering, unrelenting. *Uncompromising.*

RICA

Samuel why are you saying that?!

SAMUEL

(pause, calmer)

Hitler forbid his soldiers to marry *just* German women, did you know that?—They needed to be Aryan, have blonde hair, blue eyes, truly Saxon in nature, not tainted by any *foreign* influence. Though he wasn't, which is the world's greatest fucking irony ever.

RICA

What is the matter?

SAMUEL

(pause)

Nothing's the matter. Everything's right, everything's fine.

(SAMUEL moves pensively about the platform)

It's a lovely day, not a cloud in the sky. Here I am in Germany, in Berlin. All this way, just a weary New Yorker. Here to visit and enjoy and *love*. Right? Isn't that—great?

RICA

What is wrong?

(SAMUEL tries, then only shakes his head)

You look tired.

SAMUEL

I'm very tired.—I'm sorry, forgive me. It's been a very long day.

RICA

We'll go to a café. You can get coffee and rest.

SAMUEL

Let's do that. I'll feel better then.

RICA

Ja, we will. It will be like New York, there is a place like Washington Square Park.

SAMUEL

I'd like that very much. I've been at traveling since seven this morning.

RICA

Seven, no. That's too long for this train from Linz.

SAMUEL

I didn't come directly from Linz.

RICA

Why?—Samuel why?

SAMUEL

The second day's meetings were canceled today.

RICA

Canceled, how come?

SAMUEL

It just was.

RICA

What do you mean? Did something go wrong—

SAMUEL

Rica, it's noth—

RICA

Samuel if something please, please tell me if something....

SAMUEL

It just was. And I don't, I can't—all right?

RICA

(pause)

Why didn't you come early? What did you do today?

SAMUEL

I took a train to Munich.

RICA

München, why? I would have met you.

SAMUEL

I know, I knew you would have.—There were some things I needed see there.

(they look at each other tentatively)

RICA

München is very beautiful, I was there once as a young girl. Our sixth form took a trip.

SAMUEL

(a condemnation)

You should.

RICA

(pause)

Did you see the glockenspiel?

SAMUEL

Mmn. It's extraordinary.

RICA

And the Frauenkirche? *Marienplatz*, the main square. All the people walking, the vendors on the street.

SAMUEL

(pause)

I saw *Marienplatz*. The *Residenz*, Old Town Hall, *Hofbrauhaus*, all of it.—I saw as much as one can in five hours.

RICA

(pause)

With only two days here I decided which sights we will see. Many I have not seen myself yet so it will be the first time for both. Two intrepid travelers explore the big city.

SAMUEL

I understand.

RICA

There is *Schloss Charlottenberg*, the Royal Palace. And *die Pergammon* museum.

SAMUEL

I don't want to go to museums.

RICA

Yes you do, you always do. *I know*, you dragging me each week to exhibits. *Die Pergammon* is very famous. It has this Greek architecture structure, *ein altar*, an altar.

SAMUEL

Rica listen—

RICA

Almost intact since early times, it's quite unique. The lines to get in can be impossible.

SAMUEL

Rica....I want to see the Nazi sights.

RICA

Was?—What are you talking, I know what you are like when there is a museum like this.

SAMUEL

The Reich's Chancellery, SS headquarters, the Bunker, everything—I want to see them.

RICA

I don't....I'm not sure where they are.

SAMUEL

We'll buy a guidebook, there's probably a bookstore in the terminus.

RICA

It's a German book store.

SAMUEL

They'll have tour books.

RICA

It'll *be* in German!

SAMUEL

There'll be *books* for tourists!....They'll have one in English.

RICA

Samuel....

SAMUEL

Just—let's go see them. Okay, will you do that, will you take me?—Can we go together?

(RICA makes no noticeable response)

It's great to see you Rica, I've missed you very much....I've missed our time we shared.

SCENE 3

Shortly following previous scene. SAMUEL and RICA sit in the café of the Hotel Adlon. He holds a guidebook as he surveys the room. Her stare bears down upon him.

RICA

This place is very famous, it's full of history. It's probably in your book.

SAMUEL

Is it?

(he turns to the index, then the pages. She watches closely)

“Hotel Adlon, one of Europe’s grandest hotels, has been rebuilt! The original, host to luminaries T.E. Lawrence and Charlie Chaplin”—they didn’t know about Chaplin then—“was the acme of style and luxury. The forerunner was destroyed in the war’s final days, but this new version aspires to the same opulence.”

(he looks around)

Satin draperies, inlaid gold fixtures—very *Edwardian*.—“If you can’t afford a drink, look in and imagine when Berlin was Europe’s cultural capital.”....We can afford a drink here.

RICA

Yes we can....Samuel—

SAMUEL

So come, tell me. How’s it living in Berlin? To become the *seat* of government again.

RICA

I don’t feel settled yet. It’s been too short, five months. The city is growing fast with government returning and all the construction in the East. It’s very busy changing.

SAMUEL

For the better I hope.

RICA

Ja, I think, definitely. Just very much sometimes with everything.

SAMUEL

You'll get used to it. I live in Chelsea now, you get used to any sort of banging. And socially?

RICA

Socially what?

SAMUEL

C'mon Rica, I always handled your *gentleman callers* in New York.

RICA

By making fun of them.

SAMUEL

Yer *damn* right. They weren't me, they deserved it.

RICA

(she smiles and nods)

There is no one in particular. I haven't time.

SAMUEL

You're too picky.

RICA

You often tell me. I'm not sure. And you?

SAMUEL

The usual, excuses and women. Why change when it's served me so well so far.

RICA

Happily alone.

SAMUEL

I guess so.—Maybe that's us, alone together forever. A *tragic* sort of love affair.

RICA

(pause)

It doesn't seem like it's been three years.

SAMUEL

Does it seem more or less?

RICA

Longer because of the changes. There have been so many. When I was young change didn't seem possible. Things were forever and what you knew could not be any other way....It was childish, ja? Immature perhaps is better.

SAMUEL

Perhaps inexperienced is best.

RICA

(pause)

Things aren't forever one way even when sometimes you wish they were....I have looked forward to your coming. Since I knew, since your letter.—It's funny I should be so excited, and funny I am so pleased at that.

SAMUEL

I was afraid you would be more *conflicted*, apprehensive to see me.

RICA

I am not conflicted about you Samuel. I can't imagine ever being so....Ask me Samuel.

SAMUEL

And *work*?—How's work going?

RICA

It goes slowly.

SAMUEL

I would expect. I never really thought about it, but you make the ideal applicant. Fluent in English, you've lived in the States, New York. You have some insight into the people.

RICA

Some, not all.

SAMUEL

No, not all, that madness takes *years* to develop....Determining the reparations for Jewish slave labor. Volkswagen's lawyer, quite a *beaucoup* job.—*Das Volke*, the *People's* car....Negotiating, bargaining, *defending*, it doesn't quite roll off my tongue.

RICA

Fortunate you get used to everything.

SAMUEL

(pause)

Who would've think you'd work on this after you went home. *Meine* elusive *Liebe* is—what's the right word, the opposition, the counter party? I'm not very good at legalese.

RICA

You could fool me.

SAMUEL

Mmn.—But I'm sure you're as diligent as ever. Goes slowly does it?

RICA

It's *very* frustrating!

SAMUEL

(he smiles at her)

Of course. Everything that doesn't work *exactly* as you wish is very frustrating to you. The jukebox at Boo's, the Hell's Angel with the directions to Killington.

RICA

That's not true! He did it on purpose! We should have confronted him.

SAMUEL

All he'd've done was lie again to you then beat the *crap* outta me.

RICA

But these Jewish organizations don't see! We never get anywhere!

SAMUEL

Your work?

RICA

We go round with the same arguments. We say this, they say that. We offer, they counter with something—*ridiculous!* It's impossible, they know it! It would cripple us, it would cripple the country! They can't pry blood from a brick.

SAMUEL

Then make your bricks without straw.

(she looks at him confused by his comment)

It's something a predecessor decreed.—The saying's: you can't draw blood from a stone.

RICA

(pause)

How much can we give? What is enough, ten billion, twenty? *A hundred?* You tell me?

SAMUEL

They're trying to find equivalence—without accepting it doesn't exist and never can.—And it's all so vulgar and tawdry, to them too. The limits of their recompense, the inability to achieve a small shred of parity, only makes them feel weak and helpless all over again.—A recurring downward cycle of shame and disappointment.

RICA

It will never be enough, we know this. You cannot put a price on life. Will it do good to bankrupt us? Is it better if we no longer existed?—No matter what we say, it's an insult, an offense. What number would not be? You cannot pay for that, you can't compensate.

SAMUEL

No, you can't.

RICA

Not because we don't want, not because of that. Because it is wrong! They want this, but it is wrong and we are not in a position to say. They don't see, you cannot reach agreement! They don't understand! *They don't even try!*

SAMUEL

(imitating)

"Ja woal, herr commandant, I see nut-tiiiiing!"

(he breaks into a forced laugh; she stares at him, bemused)

Sergeant Shultz, Hogen's Heroes?—No, I guess they never syndicated that into Germany.

RICA

It's a television show?

SAMUEL

A *merry* band of Allied prisoners in a camp make their German captors look like idiots.

RICA

How?

SAMUEL

How?—They had a tunnel under their barracks, a radio transmitter in a teapot and a lookout under the *German shepherd* dog house....And there was monocled *commandant* and a fat sergeant named Shultz, who they bribed with chocolates and always said his catch phrase in a fatuous voice, "*I see nut-tiiiiing!*"

RICA

What does fatuous mean?

SAMUEL

Foolish. Stupid.

RICA

Is it very amusing to make fun of war?

SAMUEL

A little more so if you won.

RICA

Those years were not good for Germany.

SAMUEL

Rica it was a television—

RICA

I don't care! This's a *great* country, you must understand this! This country of Goethe and Nietzsche and Schopenhauer. This is the country of Beethoven, Brahms and Bach. And Einstein!

SAMUEL

And Hitler.

RICA

(pause)

Our past has many centuries to it, not just this last.—We are the people of all of our past and we've brought so much to the world. Enlightenment and understanding and beauty.

SAMUEL

I know.

RICA

And it has taken us *very* long to get back to where we are.

SAMUEL

I am sorry for that.

RICA

That is nothing for you to be sorry about.

SAMUEL

I know that too....And anyway, what does that matter to us?

(they stare hard at each other)

RICA

I remember my grandfather, as an old man. He had been in the army when young, not active before but was called up as everyone was.—As a little girl I would look at his war pictures. He had them still, in a drawer he never opened. But *I* opened and saw....He was handsome, *mein Grossvater*. A young handsome—*Soldat*. A cadet.

SAMUEL

Yes.

RICA

But it was different, he was not the grandfather I knew. I knew an old man, smelling of cigars and spearmint schnapps.—I was only six, he died when I was not much older.

SAMUEL

I'm sorry.

RICA

(pause)

We would visit him, all my family and I. He was always pulling me to him, always catching and kissing me, calling me his *Schmetterling*, his butterfly.—And all I wanted was run away, to escape the grasp of this smelling old man, *mein Grossvater*.

SAMUEL

That's adorable.

RICA

Yes, it is.—And I would say as I looked at his war pictures, I would ask, pointing, "*Wer ist das Grossvater? Who is this?*"....I was young, I could not understand that this big strong army cadet in the picture was the same aged slight man trying to hold me.

SAMUEL

That's always how it is when you see grandparents when they were young. These dashing young men with their alluring flapper brides.

RICA

It wasn't that, it was different.—He was not the same man, a girl of five could tell. There was no relation with that man in the picture. He was lost in the war, in its *auswirkungen*, its aftermath. What was left of Germany, the conscious, caught in that *zeitgeist*, that—

SAMUEL

Yes—we use it in English.

RICA

(pause)

He was a defeated man in the defeated nation. Some never recovered occupation and division of the country, the Russian mobilization tearing apart families and countrymen. It was demoralizing....Then through the rise of the West and *die Wirtschaftswunder*, the *Economic Miracle*, resuscitation of the people and culture. Prosperity returned to our half. And everyone with *our national amnesia*—it was not for *mein Grossvater*. He never forgot what he witness—perhaps, what he'd done. And with this memory, his eyes turned off forever.—An old man remained, existing but not living. The only life sign, his only joy, chasing and catching his little *Schmetterling* Rica—who always ran away.

SAMUEL

Rica....

RICA

Always holding and kissing her, at times with tears in his eyes and on his cheeks. As if kisses and tears could wash the mark from her, defeat and shame—*Das Germanness*....I thought of *mein Grossvater* often when I came back after my time in New York.—I wonder if he would understand my travels, my need to go beyond these borders. I hope he would still be proud of his little Butterfly who flew all that far away to escape.

SCENE 4

April 1996, one month prior to Scene 1. SAMUEL sits on a bench in Washington Square Park with a drink and pretzel. RICA enters carrying a book bag.

RICA

Hey! Sorry I'm late.

SAMUEL

Not a problem. Anything up?

(they kiss on both cheeks and then she sits besides him)

RICA

Nein. I was at the law library doing research. There was a line to checkout my briefs.

SAMUEL

I'd camp out on that line myself. Bad joke, sorry. What're we doing?

RICA

I need sunglasses.

SAMUEL

Cheap?

(she nods)

We'll go to St. Marks, it'll be a real New York experience for you. A little bit Turkish bazaar, a little bit plain *weird* bizarre. Let me finish this first.—Two intrepid travelers explore the big city. So much city, so little time. Too much me.

(they look at each other deeply. Then he stands and strolls)

April in Washington Square Park. Class chums, drug dealers, bulbs sprouting on trees.—A *variety* of buds available.

RICA

I didn't get your joke.

SAMUEL

Oh, friends, marijuana, those little sprouts on the—

RICA

No not that, the other. The briefs.

SAMUEL

Uhhh, well—underwear, they're sometimes called briefs. The short white ones.

RICA

Why?

SAMUEL

Beats me the hell out of me. Probably to distinguish from the long underwear that used to be worn in *ye olden* times.

RICA

Brief as in short?

SAMUEL

That's my bet. Ain't English fun?—And when you *fill 'em barely* as I do, *uhhh....*

RICA

What do you mean?

SAMUEL

Nothing.

RICA

What?

SAMUEL

Not on your life!

RICA

No *please*, Samuel, you can't do that!

SAMUEL

Oh yes I can, and I just have.

(she stares beseeching as he fights looking at her)

Oh don't do that, you know I can't—Why do I do this? The briefs, *filling* them.

(she shakes her head, not understanding)

Ufff, god Rica. It's a Jewish thing actually, always blame the tribe. A small—in that region. If you're doing this on purpose—

RICA

No, what?!

SAMUEL

A small penis! A small schvantz!?! *Ah!* A small schmeckel, putz. *Ja, verstanden?!*

RICA

Ich habe dich verstanden.

SAMUEL

Yes, those ring a bell. Good. Knew one had to be German or Yiddish or whatever.

(she nods, then a long uncomfortable silence)

RICA

It's a Jewish thing?

SAMUEL

That's the story I'm sticking to.

RICA

Yes? Why is that?

SAMUEL

Payback for Jackie Mason's success.—Jewish men *are* big penises, but have small ones. That's why we *need* big wallets. It's small reward, no pun intended. All very Freudian really: Displacement, insecurity, *envy*. Freud, a classic Jew. Mother issues up the ass.

RICA

And Austrian!

SAMUEL

I know! I can only imagine how small his penis was!

(she swats at him playfully and he cowers from it)

RICA

No, that's not true.

SAMUEL

No?—You know how big Freud's penis was?

RICA

(she hits him again)

I mean *Austrians*, Germans.

SAMUEL

Ouch. Great, another reason to hate you guys.

RICA

Jealous.

SAMUEL

Ab-so-lutely. One large wallet begets envy which begets the need for another large wallet. That's an old Jewish koan. K-O-A-N, a paradox. Not Cohen, the big-nosed *Juden* in the admin.

RICA

Samuel, you know I don't like that! Putting down like that!

SAMUEL

And leave all the fun to you Nazis. *Nevah!*

RICA

Samuel don't! You always—

SAMUEL

Sshhh, okay. All right.

RICA

You always do it and it bothers me.

SAMUEL

Oh *please*, I'm not that bad.

RICA

You are! You know you are! And I've told you many times—

SAMUEL

All right, enough.

RICA

It hurts me. And I've asked you and you don't lis—

SAMUEL

All right enough, *enough already!*

(a long cross moment in silence)

RICA

It's not a laughing matter.

SAMUEL

Well you know what, I don't need a fucking lecture from you on sensitivity.

RICA

Then you need one from somebody!

(an angry pause returns)

RICA - cont'd

When you make fun of Jews I cannot avoid thinking their treatment, and my country's share in it. It reminds me whether I want to be or not. And everyone else too.—We still pay greatly for that as I recognize well we should.—But it affects me, how the people think of Germans. There's still such hate, fifty years later. It seems to feed endlessly, finding new reasons, new advocates to restart. Much is said in words, yet much more is felt in stillness.—I know, I can tell it.

SAMUEL

Today it's the *Victims'* tyranny that outlasts the oppression.

RICA

(pause)

To see the response of faces when they hear my accent. Austrians, even some Dutch sound the same, but they assume German.—Once this old woman who heard me speak to a policeman asked me where I was from. I looked at her carefully. She was short and dark-haired, dressed well, prosperously.—I told her Holland—just to see....“Oh,” she said, ‘that’s nice, your being here.’” Then she smiled. It seemed real, genuine.—I remember feeling satisfied....I’ve been tempted many times to do it again.

SAMUEL

(pause)

I don't want it to be this big thing between us. I'm not judging, I have no desire to pronounce sentence.

RICA

That is very dear to me Samuel.

SAMUEL

Rica you have to handle your angst your way. I know this, I accept it.—Please leave me to mine.

RICA

That luxury Germans are not gifted. We are not yet deemed trustworthy of knowing how to express regret. It is not accepted even when we do.—Jews and Germans are together always, a tragic pair. As long as these thoughts are repeated and let pass, we can never be free of it....It cannot be a joke Samuel.

SAMUEL

You know what, this's bullshit. I haven't done wrong here. You want sunglasses or not?

RICA

In a minute.

SAMUEL

No, *now*.

RICA

Samuel in a minute.

(pause; SAMUEL angrily throws away the pretzel)

What can you expect with the circumscription you people do?

SAMUEL

Circumscription?

RICA

Ja, *was*? Is that not the right....?

SAMUEL

That's very comical. No it's not the right word. The word's circumcision.

RICA

(playful)

Ahhh. Okay, ja.—Don't make fun of me!

SAMUEL

I know, I'm sorry. It's not nice....But you *have* named the new gay men's magazine!

RICA

Samuel! Don't make fun!

SAMUEL

"*The Circumscription*," a Foreskin Quarterly. Who could pass up a straight line like that! *We are* known for our comedy.

RICA

So you keep telling. I don't see why.

SAMUEL

Ah ha ha, *was gut*.

RICA

Yes I am. I'm very funny.

SAMUEL

Oh right, your senses of humor—*legendary*. What is an encore after raiding Poland, bird calls? Twirling plates on sticks? Or just that ol' tedious World Domination skit again.

RICA

No, we tap dance down Main Streets.

SAMUEL

Oh yes, I can see it now. A little Goose Step Two Step.—Hunh? Yeah? Give it to me.

RICA

That's very quick.

SAMUEL

Thank you very much ladies and gentlemen. Two shows a night. Try the veal!

(RICA rushes to hug him. They hold on tightly)

Maybe now you'll sleep with me....Let's get you some sunglasses.

SCENE 5

Berlin, shortly after Scene 3. SAMUEL and RICA walk on Kurfuerstandaam. He carries the guidebook.

RICA

Samuel what do you tink of this street?

SAMUEL

Look very commercial. What is it?

RICA

This is the Ku'daam. It is short for the Kurfuerstandaam.

SAMUEL

Kunfirst....

RICA

Kurfuerstandaam.

SAMUEL

Kurfuerstandaam?

(she nods. Next is said in phonetical English, not French)

It's very "tres chic."

RICA

This is the most prestigious shopping street in all of Berlin. Definitely in all of Germany. This is where all the, how would you say....

SAMUEL

Obscenely overpriced.

RICA

(she smiles)

There is a Gucci and Burberrys. And Tiffany's and Harrods.

SAMUEL

No Saks Fifth Avenue, huh?

(she looks about)

No, I'm sure not. No "New York" retailers.

RICA

(pause)

There's even a Gap and a Banana Republic.

SAMUEL

Add a Starbucks, you'll have *all* the Unholy Trinity.—I worry about this unforgivable crime American has perpetrated on the world. Gap, McDonald's and pizza by the slice.

RICA

And movie stars with fake breasts.

SAMUEL

Yes, true, there are some good aspects.—*This's* why everybody should hate us....
Someday if I have the cash to buy my wares here, Mother'll be so very proud.

RICA

And surprised.

SAMUEL

Yes she would be, *smart* ass.—I have this travel fantasy that the dollar'll be so strong I'll buy all these outlandish things like *kilos* of Beluga or thousand dollar Armani suits.

RICA

Yes. Or jewelry, *shoes*. Like at the art auction when we put in fake bids.

SAMUEL

Yeah something like that, something *unrepentantly* expensive. Where it's *gauche* but it's like, "What the fuck, I got money to burn." Throwing local tender like it's Monopoly money, like it isn't even real.

RICA

Ja, sounds good.

(RICA nods uneasily; his mood dims noticing her anxiety)

SAMUEL

That was a special evening. Going there dressed up, with you on my arm....It never works out that way though, with the dollar.—But it's a hell of a fun dream.

(his eyes roves the street)

I like the architecture, the pastiche design. The elements of antiquity pinioned in between more contemporary forms. Some Bauhaus, others, much older.

RICA

I enjoy the differences. They seem to give it more character, truer to life. The way people are, really. Unsure, changing. Never too much this way or that forever.

SAMUEL

It's *peculiar*, the juxtaposition between eras and schools. Almost schizophrenic, as if they couldn't make up their minds when they were zoning.

RICA

Some survived the war, enough to rebuild. Mostly not.—Most all rubble or made that way shortly after.—The bombing of German cities had been quite effective. Dresden, Hamburg, Berlin in particular....Look in your book Samuel—look under *Kristallnacht*.

(SAMUEL searches the book with a look to RICA)

SAMUEL

“*Kristallnacht*, Crystal Night, the sound of broken glass. November 9th 1938, thirty-six Jews were murdered and thousands others hurt in an escalation of Nazi violent anti-Semitism. Attacks by SA men in civilian clothes gave the impression of spontaneous outbursts. In Berlin, passers-by watched as twenty-three synagogues were destroyed.

RICA

The next day they—ugh, my English has gotten so bad. *Erlassen*, put in, made into law?

SAMUEL

Enacted.

RICA

They enacted laws against Jewish businesses, all were *Aryanized* with no compensation or repayment of loss....From then on, Jewish ownership of stores or shops of any kind—

SAMUEL

Verboten.

RICA

(pause)

It reminds me of New York more than any other Berlin street. With people bustling and tourists, all the diverse languages you hear. It has the confidence one feels in New York.

SAMUEL

We call that sophistication when we're being kind to ourselves.

RICA

It's that too yes, but it's more than that. It's the freedom in the choices and the style. It speaks to Germans today, our aspirations of esteem though they are so radically different from then....I like it, I often come to walk here alone and think about my time there.

SAMUEL

It seems very special.

RICA

The Ku'daam was always special. A *jewel* of Europe, model of German independence and commerce....There were several Jewish businesses here and here were some of the worst transgressions.—Beatings and burnings and others too difficult to read....On this lovely street, one of the most famous in all the world.

SCENE 6

Berlin, later that night. SAMUEL and RICA enter her apartment, a small room with a futon, felt chair, wood table and chest. A print of Chagall's "Lovers in Moonlight" hangs on the wall. He peruses the space and though the apartment is immaculate, she arranges miscellany.

SAMUEL

Rica it's great.

RICA

It's small.

SAMUEL

It's not, it's plenty big.

RICA

It's very small.

SAMUEL

But it's quaint. Reminds me of your place in New York, your personality all over it.

RICA

I haven't had time to put it together. I only moved here recently and have kept busy.

(he turns to see the Chagall print hanging prominently)

SAMUEL

La Chagall peinture. "Lovers in Moonlight."—Chagall and his wife emigrated to France from Russia in the mid Twenties when his dreams for the Revolution soured in the reality of Stalin. Later they had to escape Paris too when the Panzers rolled in.

RICA

Was he known mostly for his good timing?

SAMUEL

(smiling faintly)

No...War obtruded in their perfect world, their lovely little idyll.—The evocative texture of nighttime, windows framing forlorn lovers. An angel below *signifies?* A blessed connection, a taunt at humanity for ephemerality?—Their embrace more protective than sexual. Vague faces inquiring of themselves, not each other, wondering if they can capture forever in this one instant.—*It's magnificent....*Transfers well, *nicht wahr?*

RICA

It's the first thing I arranged when I moved here. "Where to put it, where would Samuel want it hanging?" That's a lot of pressure.—It's become a symbol for me of my home. Wherever I am living, wherever I am at, it's there with me, a groundwork and a comfort. I like to look at it before bed.—And before I leave for work in the morning.

SAMUEL

(pause)

Your apartment is charming Rica. It's very warm and inviting.

(she smiles appreciatively. SAMUEL roves further)

But Rica dear, where do you sleep?

RICA

On the futon.

SAMUEL

That pulls out?—That must be comfortable.

RICA

More than you would suppose.

SAMUEL

I'm very delicate.

(RICA begins turning the futon out)

SAMUEL

Can I help?

*(a look tells the absurdity of the question. SAMUEL sits.
With the conversation, she completes the bed preparations
with a sheet, quilt and bed pillows taken out of the chest)*

RICA

What do you think of the soon-to-be-again German capital?

SAMUEL

(pause, grave)

It's very historic.

RICA

Yes, it is. I like that now. I didn't at first. It can be oppressive.

SAMUEL

I would imagine so.

RICA

When I first was back after the year in the States, I felt very out of place. I was not as German as I left.

SAMUEL

New York can have that effect on you.

RICA

It wasn't New York. My absence from Germany had changed my perception of it. We were not what I thought we were. We live simple lives, the same as people anywhere. I always assumed that not to be. Germany hadn't changed so but a sheet was removed—

SAMUEL

A veil—a veil had been lifted.

RICA

(pause)

A veil had been lifted from my eyes. I could see us clearly as we are, not as we are brought up to believe.

SAMUEL

How is that?

RICA

All through Europe, Austrians and the French, *Italians*, they don't like us. They don't *know* us, but they don't like us. We can tell when we travel through their countries.

SAMUEL

You have to expect that.

RICA

When we travel through your country.

(SAMUEL registers this as RICA continues making the bed)

SAMUEL

My country isn't always the paragon of tolerance and charity we hold ourselves up to be.

RICA

That's an odd expression, my country. I don't know why, we don't refer to Germany as that. I expect we don't feel the *satisfaction* Americans do. Is that the word? I think so.

SAMUEL

I know what you mean.

RICA

It implies a sense of pride that has never felt quite right to say. Even now.

SAMUEL

I can understand that.

RICA

As can I. What has occurred, *has* occurred.—Everybody wants to remind us. We don't want that, we want to move on. You cannot always be reminded. But what can you do with people's attitudes. You accept it is that way. They expect my shame. They *want* my shame.

SAMUEL

I never did.

RICA

(pause)

No Samuel. You never did....It is strange being together with our roles reversed. I now the tour guide and you the tourist.

SAMUEL

I always enjoyed that power. It helped to level the playing field between us.

RICA

(pause)

How lucky to know each other only in these two cities. When they talk of the 20th Century thousands of years from now, they will speak of New York and Berlin even if they no longer exist.—Not as we do, you and I. Not as all we have known together, as everything for us.—But they will talk.

(she finishes, sits down formally, then looks firmly at him)

What happened in Linz?

SAMUEL

Please Rica, I'm tired. All I want to do is—

RICA

Something has occurred and I will know it.

(a long pause. SAMUEL starts disquietingly calm)

SAMUEL

Time returned. Time went back.

RICA

What was? How?

SAMUEL

I don't know, but it was me. It had to be me.

RICA

Tell me.

SAMUEL

(pause)

I was late for the meeting. You know, I'm never late, I didn't get a wake up call.

RICA

Ja, I do.

SAMUEL

(pause)

When I came in, the meeting had long begun. Representatives from the Louvre and Alte Pinakothek and some other institutes repatriating art to rightful owners. But I'm the youngest so it's already like—and when I was introduced, a *pall* fell over the room.

RICA

A what?

SAMUEL

A pall, a gloom.—A silence just hung there....We didn't think of it. My name, we don't necessarily think about those things anymore, not as instinctively as we used to. People my age—we feel the same. We feel connected, like everyone else. Not exactly but close. *Especially* in New York!....My mother, it's always on her mind. Always concerned with acting a certain way, *too* showy, *too* flashy, not wanting to come off *too* Jewish. She *actually* still says this. She never hears her name aloud without believing everybody thinking, "Jew, Jew." It's a reaction, an exposed nerve. Then *immediately*, awareness.

RICA

Of what?

SAMUEL

Of being second class in America, of not belonging.—Still needing to be grateful for being here I guess. Surviving, for helping others escape and survive, I'm not sure.

RICA

Ja.

SAMUEL

(pause)

If we'd known, I wouldn't've come! The foundation would've sent someone else. I don't want to be an impediment. Hell, we have a *mixed* staff for good reasons. Maybe they'd have been more receptive to dealing with one of their own.

RICA

What does that mean, impediment?

SAMUEL

Impediment. To impede, to block. To stand in the—

RICA

Ja ja, *verstanden*.

SAMUEL

(pause)

As soon as I said my name, you could see the change in their faces. *I* could see it, I've seen it before. Disappearing smiles, rooms instantly tense.—I've seen anti-Semitism before, little bullshit things, an asshole cop, some douche bags in my own fraternity. But this was real, this was authentic. Several were German. These blonde, confident Teutonic—it's a whole other league....I just knew we weren't getting what we needed.

RICA

What was that?

SAMUEL

Records, listings. Transfer details, bills of sale. Who they took it from, where they sent it, whereabouts of certain works even, I don't know. We were hoping, you begin to hope.

RICA

Of course.

SAMUEL

And they have them, you know they do. It would be very *un-German* not to keep records. Not to be *precise* as to possession and location, meticulous as you Germans are. And the *Führer* was quite the art hound, our favorite little Austrian art student. He and corpulent *ReichsMarshall* Goering, besides systematically killing millions of people and depredating every country in Europe, on their lunch breaks they were busy too! Executing the most expansive unrestrained pillaging of art in *history*! Because some thing's are worth doing right! Everything on a grand scale! And specializing as their tastes ran to Northern European works, Germanic peoples, the Delft School, what a supply they choose from! All the wealthy Jewish families in France! And many not Jewish, but mostly Jews. Rothschilds and Schlosses and David-Weils, *hundreds* of others. Carting them back to Germany, to Austria, to their own collections or museums or *Nationale Galerien*.—To Linz, the *Führer*'s childhood home, where he was to build the *Uber-Museum*, greatest in all the world, as a testament to his *ego* and his *might* and the glory of the Thousand Years Reich! But darn, *no*, that didn't happen, that didn't pan out. But many of mankind's supreme works were destroyed! Or lost in the process, never to be found again. Never to be seen or treasured or adored for what they are. Art! High art! Life-affirming creations! The direct opposite of all *their* intentions! And still 50 years later, Degas' "*Gabrielle Diot*," Morisot's "*Woman in White*." Manet, Corot, Renoir, the list goes on. Bonnard. *Picasso*! Hundreds, literally *hundreds* of them!.... And every once in a while one'll turn up, *suddenly reappear*, in the home of a wealthy aristocrat who's died. Some *Von* somebody who's been hiding it secretly all these years in their *solarium*, in their boardroom or library, knowing full well where it came from. How they "*bought*" a work by a great master, Vermeer or Courbet, on the sly, on the Q.T., for a fraction of what it was worth, what it would cost on the open market.

RICA

Maybe they didn't know.

SAMUEL

Oh *please* Rica.

RICA

All I am saying is—

SAMUEL

Of course they knew! They've known for *years!*

RICA

But Samuel maybe they—

SAMUEL

They've been *secretly hiding* them!

RICA

Maybe they didn't know! Maybe they were never told! It could be that!

SAMUEL

They've got the provenance, they know where it comes from!

RICA

And all these years, if they hadn't known—

SAMUEL

But they did!

RICA

If they hadn't known and never found and had been mistaken about the—

SAMUEL

They did know!—

RICA

Truth! And you may be mistaken! You may be mis—

SAMUEL

THEY HAVE A PROVENANCE! THEY'VE GOT THE FUCKING PROVENANCE!

(a long pause)

RICA

I don't know what that is.

SAMUEL

(pause, calmer)

It's a listing, a resume or travelogue for a work. The day an artist finishes a painting to every owner who's ever possessed, no one buys a painting like this without it...Looted works have no listing from 1935 to 46, or if so, they were forged by crooked French *quislings* who profited by selling plundered art to Nazis at cut-rate prices. The buyer, the dealer, Berlin, Vichy all pretending the Rothschilds decided suddenly to get rid of all their Impressionists.—Hitler hated Impressionism, thought it *depraved and degenerate*, wouldn't hear of one in his collection.—What a *bourgeois* eye the boorish fuck had.

RICA

And you didn't get your records?

SAMUEL

(pause)

The German representatives claimed there was filing troubles and recently a fire. And what they thought they had, wasn't really what they had or wasn't where they thought it was or some other such bullshit.—We never got a straight answer.

RICA

Maybe it was true. Maybe it was, and all the rest, all of it—maybe you just thought it.

SAMUEL

(pause)

I've seen it before. The way they said my last name, with contempt and derision.—I was Jewish, they weren't helping a Jew.—The meeting ended two hours later.

RICA

And you took the early train to *München* the next morning.

*(SAMUEL moves to his bag, crouching down besides it.
After a moment, RICA gets undressed in silence)*

SAMUEL

I'm sorry, I should've taken a hotel room.

RICA

Berlin hotel rooms make New York's look large. Two hundred dollars for a shower not big enough to turn in and a bed for two that fits only one.—I would not have you come all this way to suffer that.

SAMUEL

Thank you. I didn't mean to be a trouble to you.

RICA

(pause)

It is not a trouble Samuel. You have come and traveled a great distance to see me. I think traveling far is a part of our link, a common bind for us....You will sleep on the right.

SAMUEL

Is that a question or a command?

RICA

(pause)

It is a request.

SAMUEL

Rica....

(he only nods. RICA gets into bed)

Rica I need to—

RICA

Tomorrow....tomorrow Samuel....Come to bed now.

(he remains crouching near his bag)

End of the First Act

ACT II, SCENE 7

(A split scene: RICA's apartment and Washington Square Park. SAMUEL sits and roams around a park bench, as does RICA in her apartment. He has paper & pen; she, a computer. Sometimes they read, sometimes they talk aloud)

RICA

Hallo, my Jewish boy! Three months and I miss New York already very much. Green grocers and cabbies, even the street people. (How is our *Pink* lady by the Gap. Has *he* left the stoop yet?) Certainly I miss the better liquor pours and extra fries with gravy.

SAMUEL

How about missing me?

RICA

Germany is featureless to me, old and stuffy like a fat poodle. Life moves in long segments, not the short pulses of New York. There is more time but less that is vital. How unaware I lived here before. I know my home is elsewhere, yet I expected always to feel at ease here.—I miss you very much Samuel.

SAMUEL

Rica dear it's about time! I knew I was irreplaceable to you. You couldn't fool me with that detached, unapproachable beauty. Sure, your resolute chastity was excellent subterfuge, but I could tell.—You want me.

RICA

Samuel, dream what you will. Sorry it has been long since my last note. My schedule has been impossible with graduating. Several firms were interested which was pleasing. (Yes my year paid off well) Graduation was nice, my extended family was there.

SAMUEL

Boy don't I have *that* recurring nightmare.

RICA

I am glad to hear the foundation has taken you full time. Jewish enough after all.—Will it bring you to Europe some day? Maybe it is a sign as I am growing more fatalistic. You don't agree but I feel that I move towards somewhere and it gives great value and comfort to my choices.—If you visit, will you rekindle my fascination? Will I just be another girl to you? I suspect, but you must write the truth.

SAMUEL

Sorry Rica, I'm not answering that as you know only too well where you stand. I wish you didn't, it might give me some more leverage with you. Or at least less ridiculous.

RICA

Ciao Samuel, now six months into my post and it is concerning. Not the hours or work, but the gravity it brings. It all seems very adult and of another life. You and New York were a daydream and Germany is real now.—Six years after Unification it is hard, more than expected. Everybody wonders have we bitten too much. We are not afraid, but a silent doubt creeps in. Are we are too different after these years?

SAMUEL

Dear Rica, I am no help as real life I *work* to avoid. My days deal in facsimiles and representations people and places. Daydreams are the provender in my pretend world.—I have little advice for you my Nazi girl. Just paint your life with all the spirit and freedom it can hold....I think of you often—Samuel.

RICA

Gutes Neues Jahr aus Deutschland Samuel! Come see *our* symbols and depictions. Here bitter and sweet allow past reminders to trail into today. After the Wall fell, no one questioned how or was worried about his share. We were together after forty-five years.—But now healing is slow and we cannot rise above *this* wall.—Still there are reunions; brothers, old lovers thought dead in Soviet gulags. I watch them touch faces they faintly recognize as if reaching *into* the mirror. I wish I could share in what they learn: Recovery, acceptance, overcoming....You should be here with me for this.

SAMUEL

Rica, how Germany handles its revival, its influence and power, all the world watches carefully. I find navigating one's path an impossible task. Destinations shift and the

SAMUEL - cont'd

ability to pilot the future is always beyond my ken. Projecting that task to Germany, is a mission worthy of philosopher-kings and sadly, they are in short supply these days.

RICA

Samuel you wrote last of German self-thoughts today. You must realize your word choices are alien to our thinking now. We were not a sovereign nation when we reunited. We had to petition the Allied nations before reconciling. It is a bitter pill not talked of much. To many we are a large threatening rectangle in middle Europe, but we can be a force for peace too. That has also been in our past.—But concerns exist, so to unite permission is needed from past captors and enemies.

SAMUEL

Rica do you include us in your definition of enemies and captors?

RICA

(long pause)

We don't think of America as our enemy. Our consideration fastens around you as our liberators and protectors these years. For my time there, for your history and sacrifices, I cry now when I hear your National anthem, not our own. America dreams what it should be. It fails of course, but it fails at greatness when all else fail at mediocrity.—If Germany's future is together, we will need to dream.

SAMUEL

(pause)

Rica to me a person is defined by the challenges they accept. I feel the best among us take on what the vast majority would not even dare to venture at.—But as a life-long daydreamer, I am reminded of the deviation between dreams in one's mind and the nightmare they often turn into.—Be special as you are, and I will always support you.

RICA

How close you are to me Samuel. Sometimes I cannot express it and feel foolish doing. I don't see you, I don't know if we ever will, yet it remains.—Do we value that we are so similar or unique to each other? Why at the start did we feel so in comfort together?

SAMUEL

Because we're both so incredibly good-looking?

RICA

I only notice now apart, how solitary each of us is. We two are outside of our places and it pleases me that we are together in our own way....Samuel I have something to tell you. I want you to promise it's all right. I am sure you will say it, I am unsure it will be true.

SAMUEL

Oh *goddamn it*, she's getting married. Fuck, shit, motherfucker....Rica, if you get married, I swear to God I'm plunging to my death off the Chrysler Building. And you know how much I hate going above 23rd Street, let alone midtown.

RICA

Samuel no, it isn't that....I have changed law firms to a more prestigious one, very old and respected. They are moving me to Berlin, I will be there in the spring.

SAMUEL

Oy, bigger bucks, cooler digs, why wouldn't I be happy? You get your swishy post and my vigil lives on!

RICA

Samuel my firm defends *Volkswagen*. They are our largest client as we handle all their Legacy affairs across International borders.—Our case now is their settlement with Jewish organizations several in New York though some too in Israel.

(he stops stone still)

The company has agreed to pay for its forced Jewish labor during the war. Payments will go to the living, to families of the deceased and to a fund for remembrance....It is one of the first cases Samuel and much will depend on its outcome, more even for Germany as we hope to get beyond the past.

(long pause, representing the passage of time)

Samuel, where are you? I haven't heard from you in some time. You have found another obsession besides me? I suspect that day will come but my mind says it cannot occur.—Your last few letters have been short, nearly perfunctional.

SAMUEL

Perfunctory.

RICA

When you write at length I feel your presence as we were in New York. I turn pages and look up your words, feeling your thoughts over me. (And *ja*, your desire too.)...But when without somehow I feel your presence more. There are fragments and the pieces strike out and then our precious time becomes unstable and frail.—I search for your attention instead of having it at my command. I am unaccustomed to that.—In those moments I forget *how much* about you...Write soon.—Write of yourself.

SAMUEL

(pause)

Rica I can come to Germany. I will be in Austria two days for a meeting. I can come when it's done....I'll accept it either way, but I must know soon to plan.—Shall I come?

SCENE 8

Berlin, the day following the last scene. RICA and SAMUEL are “standing” on the center pathway of Unter de Linden. He carries the guidebook and circles the tableau surveying the surroundings. RICA watches him.

RICA

This is *Unter den Linden*.

SAMUEL

What does that mean?

RICA

Beneath the Lime Trees.

SAMUEL

The *Lime*?

(RICA nods and SAMUEL continues walking)

It has a very regal aspect. *Imperious*.

RICA

It is a triumph path. Official celebrations throughout German history, coronations and parades, have taken place here. Since before Metternich and the Bismarck. It ends in *Brandenburger Tor*.

SAMUEL

I see the arch.

RICA

Down there was the dividing line between East and West Berlin. There is a dotted line marked on the road where the wall stood.

SAMUEL

And this was the route? Down here, this way?

SAMUEL – cont'd

(no response. He turns back to the tableau)

The way the trees are aligned, and all so scrupulously maintained—it's gorgeous.

RICA

Yes it is. When I moved here in April, it was just coming into bloom then. The *ein, die Knospe*. Washington Square Park, on the branches?

SAMUEL and RICA

(simultaneously)

The buds.

RICA

(pause)

They had broken out in these little white flowers.—With their small leaves in the wind, like a broken pillow when they came loose. The beauty, you cannot imagine it now in the cold when they are dying but it was very beautiful.

SAMUEL

I believe it.

RICA

A glorious white halo, so full of hope, drifting down among the streets and the passersby....I remember it like a painting in a museum, the forms familiar but the details, vague.—I wish I could have captured that forever.

(they share a brief look, then RICA turns to take in the tableau. SAMUEL searches the book)

The people were moving by without noticing, very busy with the lives. They didn't think. They didn't even notice the magnificence falling down around them. As if it happens everyday, as if it is always like this everyday and always will be.

SAMUEL

(reading)

“The first saplings were planted by the *Great Elector*?”

RICA

(pause)

Friedrich Wilhelm.

SAMUEL

“To line the *Tiergarten*. The arch, modeled on the Acropolis, is a symbol of German unity. Napoleon took the horse-drawn chariot that tops the gate but it was returned years later. Revolutionaries of 1848 and 1918 met under its gilded form, but later it became a favorite for Nazi torch-lit marches.

(SAMUEL closes the book and walks the street anxiously)

I can just imagine it. Like in a *Riefenstahl* film, battalions of brown-shirts strutting by as bands played and the faithful cheered, pouring out “*Deutschland uber Alles*”They were so satisfied with themselves then. *Pleased* with their country and their *Führer*.

(SAMUEL’s gaze settles on RICA)

RICA

I want you to see this.—This plaza is *Bebelplatz*.

(RICA leads him to a glass square cut in the pavement.

SAMUEL bends, stares down into it a long moment)

SAMUEL

It’s shelves. A room with shelves. All white—but bare, nothing on them.

RICA

It is “The Empty Library.” It represents the *Buchverbrennung*, the burning of books.—Read in your book, under *die Buchverbrennung*.

(he searches momentarily, with a wary glance at her)

SAMUEL

“On May 11, 1933, Propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels ordered the burning of thousands of books, mostly Jewish authors like Mann, Remarque and Einstein along with foreigners H.G. Wells, Ernest Hemingway and Jack London. Any book that conflicted with the prevailing Nazi ideology fueled the flames.”

(SAMUEL moves to the cut in the pavement again. RICA moves behind to a bronze plaque embedded in the ground)

RICA

Here.

(SAMUEL walks to her. He reads to himself, then aloud)

SAMUEL

“Where they start by burning books, they’ll end by burning people.” Heinrich Heine, German Jewish Poet.—1871.

(SAMUEL looks to RICA, then down at the plaque again)

RICA

We have attempts. The totality cannot be eclipsed so we atone for the incidents that led to it.—It is in the specific that we stop the general from repeating.

SAMUEL

Do we ever really stop it?

(he moves back to the cut)

RICA

Comprehension is tricky sometimes, and *selective* always. One must choose to understand then be able to accept what is undeniable....I comprehend what happened here and verily I accept that it did.—But I don't I understand how.

SAMUEL

And what good is that? Acknowledgment without reassurances? I sorry but really. Acceptance and contrition, its pretty cold comfort they afford.

RICA

(pause)

I cannot solve the world. I too live from day to day unsure of my future, unnoticing much with my busy life....But it starts with me.

(he looks down into the cut and stares there throughout)

SAMUEL

Where are the other sights?

RICA

(pause)

This way, further down *Unter den Linden*. Down to the left—on *Wilhelmstrasse*.

SAMUEL

The Bunker, the *Luftwaffe*, the Reich—

RICA

They're *all* there....the ones that you want.

SCENE 9

November 1995, six months before Scene 4. RICA and SAMUEL are sitting inside a café in the West Village of Manhattan. They are reading the newspaper, SAMUEL earnestly while RICA holds one lost in thought.

RICA

Samuel....why are you ashamed to be Jewish?

SAMUEL

S'cuse me?

RICA

Is that the right word?

SAMUEL

It's *a* word, all right.

RICA

You are, aren't you? You know.

SAMUEL

*Do I?....*What brings this on?

RICA

The review of this movie.

(she shows him the paper)

SAMUEL

The solemn duty of every Jew: Explain Woody Allen to the Gentile world.

RICA

Just parts of him.

SAMUEL

Always the Jewish part, never the young Asian girl part.

RICA

Please Samuel, I want to understand.—Sometimes I think I do. Not *you*.

SAMUEL

God forbid.

RICA

But all of it, I know I can't. But I want to.

SAMUEL

I prefer to think I'm discerning. A man is judged by the people he dislikes. And *personally* Hasidic chic, black pinstripes in the summer heat—*not* good unless you're playing baseball in the Bronx.

RICA

If you're not going to be serious—

SAMUEL

Which leads to the lack of athletic prowess. Of course *there's* Sandy Koufax, the *Michael Jordan* of the Jews. Won't play Yom Kippur.

RICA

Be serious Samuel. Will you please?

SAMUEL

(pause)

It's kind of an odd question coming from you.

RICA

Because I'm German?

SAMUEL

Because you're German.

RICA

(pause)

Conflicted is the vachvord for my generation. There is this incredible *Gewicht*, mass, that hangs over us....We Germans have a hard nature. We used to search for answers before, now we don't, hoping no else will.—Now the answers are so, we don't want anyone to search....We all read this book when young. It talks of people after the war, Berliners, who go to this nightclub crowded with all kinds, aristocrat and laborer. A band plays music but people sit silent, anxious, waiting commencement.—With much salute, they are handed at a time, an onion, a knife and uh, *schneidebrett*, a board, to cut on?

SAMUEL

A cutting board. A chopping block.

RICA

The music builds to a pitch. At an appointed moment, the people cut into the onion, carving to the center. Slowly, with the smell and juice, they begin to cry. Then they cry greatly with such force. Only with the tears and pain, do they then speak of things hidden deep within. Only in those moments do they acknowledge the acts, feel shame and remorse, disgust with themselves.—But eventually the music ends and quickly the people leave. Back to their silences....It's not true, *fiction*. But I remember it still after so long.

SAMUEL

I can understand why.

RICA

(pause)

This's the German way now, perhaps always so *stoisch*. Stoic. So rigid we need an onion and knife to release emotions, to let us approach the past.—*I hate that! I hate us that!*—Forever we have had two speeds, extreme and asleep. We are so afraid of the first, that for too long it has been the last....And I enjoy so much in you, Americans, *Jews*. Your feelings, your emotions, *all* of them, everything you feel—it's okay, it's good.

SAMUEL

Yes it is.

RICA

You see, I don't understand. You say, but you don't always feel that way.

SAMUEL

It's complicated Rica and it's not a topic I really care to discuss.

RICA

Please Samuel.

SAMUEL

What, I don't even know if I can explain it!—I don't quite understand it myself.

RICA

You have such defense, such opposition.

SAMUEL

It's not opposition, it's more discomfort. Embarrassment, *mortification*.

RICA

Why? What about you?

SAMUEL

It's not *me* I'm defensive about. I'm all right, *I'm* fine! It's the other guys. Don't group me in with that crowd.

RICA

What do you mean?

SAMUEL

The stereotype, the *prototype*! Your typical New York Jew. Pushy, argumentative, always complaining. *Cheap!* But not cheap, that's an easy cliché for bigots.—Specific, *particular*. Things *exactly* as they want. I can't stand to be in restaurants, I hear them a mile away. We have pretty sharp radar for each other. I got the maximum self-loathing model, endorsed by Phillip Roth.

RICA

I believe. Go on.

SAMUEL

*Ja wool....*And I shudder at the sight and sound. *Masters* of the scene. Not content getting their way, but wanting clear victory. *Needing* it, leaving no room for retreat.— But the rival is only some receptionist or an unaware attendant who didn't come through quick enough. Then pounce! A scene *ha-ha!* never pass up a chance for that! And not happy unless *everybody* hears. What's the point if nobody hears it. The *Coleslaw* Jews!

RICA

What are the—

SAMUEL

“I didn't *ask* for Cole slaw! I don't care if it comes, I don't want it, take it back. *Don't leave it there!* Remove it from the table *and* the bill. I don't want it, I didn't order it, I'm not paying for it.” *God almighty.*

(he sneers derisively at this)

Don't they realize how everyone *sees* them? How difficult they make it for me?

RICA

How do they make it difficult?

SAMUEL

We're not all like that but everybody crowds us together! I spend so much time convincing people, “I'm not like that, I'm not like them.”

RICA

Yes.

SAMUEL

Some of us are quiet and shy and don't *need* to be out front and loud. But they aren't the ones you see. The others, they stick in people's minds, feed their prejudices.

RICA

Not everyone is prejudice.

SAMUEL

Prejudiced is the natural human state. In concentric rings outward from the black hole of yourself. Then your family and friends. Then your religion or your country. *Your football team.*

RICA

We don't consider that prejudice in Germany.

SAMUEL

Well you people set the gold standard didn't you? Not that you're wrong about those others. Daimler launched a new self-cleaning oven—seats six Jews, bud dump bump.

RICA

SAMUEL! That's not funny!

SAMUEL

No I know, I'm—

RICA

That's not funny! How can you say?! How can you joke?!

SAMUEL

I know, I'm only kidding.

RICA

I don't care! You shouldn't say such things!

SAMUEL

That's easy for you to say, you guys fared better.

RICA

You're Jewish, you of all people shouldn't make fun.

SAMUEL

But why not me, maybe it should be me?

RICA

Be serious!

SAMUEL

You think I'm kidding, I'm not. Let me tell you, it's a lot fucking easier. Safer, probably smarter, and *definitely* easier. Maybe that's the lesson: can't cry anymore, laugh in its face. It's enough already buying into this *covenant* but always ending with the short stick. We say *Chosen*, we never question "For what?" Inquisitions and Holocausts? In *God's* name, because of it. Laid to waste for *His* greater glory, it's risible. The obstinacy to remain true after all that. The arrogance of believing "*you know*." You know the truth, you know the word. Despite the *repetitive facts* of history, *your* suffering is special. *That* thinking, *that's* fucking laughable. I can understand why they hate us.

RICA

Samuel—

SAMUEL

I'm not saying "Don't believe in God." You want to believe in some fantasy *Unmoved* creator of everything, go ahead, go *nuts!* Don't include *me* in that subversive act, but if that helps you sleep and survive, *believe*. *Follow!* But for *God's* sake recognize this insane compulsion makes you choose and defend your choice with your *life*. It feeds our unquenchable thirst to find *others* wrong. There are natural things, earthly, *human* differences. Our colors, our size, how intelligent we are. The way we laugh, how often we sneeze, who we want to sleep with! We can do *nothing* about those, we don't need to craft artificial ones. Which version of God we worship? Whose *myth* got it right? That doesn't *have* to exist! That tears at wounds, that puts men to *fucking* killing each other! People kill Jews because they're Jewish! That's all! Because who their parents are and what their grandparents believed! Don't they fucking understand this?!

(he stops. He's gone too far. They stare a long moment)

No wonder you won't sleep with me. Forgot the golden rule: Politics and religion—surest way of never getting laid.

(RICA smiles wanly. SAMUEL is dismayed as his outburst)

It's a burden, a handicap.—It's a risk. I didn't ask for it, I didn't have a choice.—The least we can all do is lighten our load....Do you understand what I'm saying, do you?

(she nods and he pauses)

How do you say that in German, "Do you understand?"

RICA

Verstanden.

SAMUEL

Verstanden?

(she nods; long pause, then quietly firm)

Will we ever be in love?—I just want to know. Before I lose my heart, before I lose my head, my more cherished mechanism.

RICA

Stop.

SAMUEL

I know there's a gap. How could I not, god look at you. Talk about shikshas, oy gavolt.

RICA

Look at *you!* Look at how much you are when you are with me....When you explain a painting, when you show me New York, when you tell me about your mother—even when you talk of your many hatreds.

SAMUEL

My only true expertise.

RICA

Mostly when you explain yourself.—I like how you think. Especially how you think of me. As I wish I am, as I wish others could think of me.

SAMUEL

Others view you as you view yourself.

RICA

No Samuel, you see me as I see myself. Or as I wish to see myself but cannot. I am *seen* by others. Beautiful, strong—German....Never as much as when I see myself through your eyes. A woman, a girl, your Rica—special and ordinary in one all the same time....I wish only you could see yourself through my eyes. All that I see of you, all that you mean to me—how beautiful *you* are....I wish somehow I could understand you.

SAMUEL

It may not be very pretty.

RICA

I think it will. Either way, it will be you....Shame is an unseen affliction. Within there is something dying, but outside there is nothing, except the painted-on mask there to hide it.—Like *Schwarzwald*, the Black Forest trees I saw when young, some infection grows slow, deeper with each passing year.—Shame I know also....Please Samuel.

SAMUEL

(pause)

Randy Newman sings this one song, called "*Dixie Flyer*." It wasn't on the charts, it was barely on the radio once or twice—but one late night in college and it came on. It's about this plane *The Dixie Flyer* that a boy and his Mom are taking to Louisiana after the father's been sent off to war. In the song, they're flying over the land of Texas, heading to New Orleans. The family's Jewish, living in the South, and the boy's never met the other side of his family.—In the third verse all his distant aunts and uncles come down to New Orleans from the Bayou hinterlands to meet them. And the boy is "*watching what the Gentiles do. And doing what the Gentiles do. Hell they want to be Gentiles too. Who wouldn't there, wouldn't you?*"....He pauses a beat, and sings—"An American Christian. *Goddamn!*—And right after he says that, there's this, this riff.

RICA

This what?

SAMUEL

This horn run. It's in the background. "*An American Christian, goddamn! Banna bump bah!*"....And it's as if he's saying—*my god*, isn't that the greatest thing you could ever be? So safe and secure, so firmly accepted and established in this, *God's* country with *God's* religion....I remember hearing that and feeling—yeah, that's it. That's what's been missing. That element and connection—it's all you should want to be. It's all anyone could ever want to be.

(pause, then with muted awe)

An American Christian—hunh, goddamn.

SCENE 10

Berlin, just following Scene 7. RICA and SAMUEL walk in silence down Wilhelmstrasse. Anxious and agitated, he searches the buildings as if they might offer some clue.

SAMUEL

It was here....It was here?

(he turns to RICA who doesn't respond, then to the street)

It was right fucking here.

(SAMUEL searches the guide, frantically. Rica watches)

RICA

Samuel, you must remember time has passed.—You must understand we have moved on as people and a nation. What is past has a place in the present and the future but it should not dominate it.

SAMUEL

The Reich's Chancellery, Wilhelmstrasse.—Behind, the bunker. The Bunker!....The War Ministry, Wilhelmstrasse. Luftwaffe, Gestapo Headquarters, Wilhelmstrasse! *The SS!*

(SAMUEL paces, scanning the buildings)

When you think about it, if you just stop and think!—The ideas, the planning. Orders. *Directives!* I can't—I can't fucking....

RICA

Now and tomorrow stand on the past, but are above it for a reason. Because they contain hope and uncertainty.

SAMUEL

What is that there?

RICA

When the past can only contain fact.

SAMUEL

On the windows of that building?

RICA

Where? I don't....

SAMUEL

Right there! On that building's windows. *There!*

RICA

They are *ausschneidefiguren*. Uh....

SAMUEL

They're cut-outs.

RICA

Ja, cut-outs. Paper cut—

SAMUEL

They're cardboard cutouts!

(SAMUEL views frantically the buildings and the street)

RICA

Yes. Little children probably cut them for a class or a school project.

SAMUEL

Children? What, what is that building?

RICA

I don't know.

SAMUEL

What is it doing with cut-outs on it?

RICA

I don't know, it's a kindergarten maybe.

SAMUEL

It's a kindergarten?

RICA

Maybe, I don't know.

SAMUEL

*It's a kindergarten?!—*No. That's not....

RICA

We don't know! Please Samuel—

SAMUEL

That's not right! That's not *fair!*

RICA

We all must try Samuel, we must try to move on!

SAMUEL

It's *indecent* to even bring children here! To even let them anywhere *near—*

RICA

Nobody can live with that always. It was a long time ago. It was so very—

SAMUEL

Don't you know what this street was? Don't you?

RICA

Not anymore.

SAMUEL

Don't you know what they did here, what they thought?!

RICA

But not anymore!

SAMUEL

What they wanted and *tried!* What they *actually* did!

RICA

Samuel, it's been fifty years! It has been so long! Hasn't it been long—

SAMUEL

THEY BUILT A FUCKING KINDERGARTEN HERE!

(SAMUEL paces wildly. Pause, RICA begins calm, firm)

RICA

We all must try to progress. To move on, to more forward. If we are forever to be—

SAMUEL

(overlapping)

No Rica.

RICA

Reminded and have it brought up before us and before anyone bothers—

SAMUEL

No!

RICA

Before anyone tries to know us now, to know who we are and how we've—

SAMUEL

NO! NO!

(SAMUEL searches the book. He speaks to himself)

They built a kindergarten here.—A *fucking* kindergarten!

SCENE 11

RICA's apartment, shortly after previous scene. They enter in silence. RICA sits composed on the bed as SAMUEL moves to the chair, holding the guidebook. Several moments pass before they speak.

RICA

Will you talk to me?

SAMUEL

What is there to say?

RICA

What does that mean? Explaining what is going on in you.

SAMUEL

Don't you know?

RICA

You tell me.

SAMUEL

I wouldn't know what to say. And frankly, I don't even know if I want to.

RICA

Why not?! Why now, what has happened?

SAMUEL

Oh c'mon Rica!

RICA

Is it Hitler?! Is it the Nazi's, is that it?!

SAMUEL

No, it's the *fucking* weather!

(SAMUEL rises and roves the room. RICA begins calmly)

RICA

It's past Germany, it is our past. I cannot change that. I cannot alter what has transpired before. It is something from so long. *You know*. Why now? Tell me this.

SAMUEL

I don't know.

RICA

Yes, you do!

SAMUEL

Rica I can't—

RICA

You do know! I want you to tell me!

SAMUEL

WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM ME! To bleed for you on command like some fucking circus act! Some manipulated puppet on a string!

(SAMUEL moves about. RICA again begins calmly)

RICA

Yes, you do know. You always know.

SAMUEL

What do you want me to say Rica?

RICA

What is the truth, what you are thinking.

SAMUEL

Oh *c'mon!* Like I'm going to tell you.

RICA

What has made you this way, when after all—

SAMUEL

(overlapping)

Please Rica!

RICA

After all this time you have been—

SAMUEL

What do you expect me to say?!—

RICA

Okay and all right with *everything!* It has been punch lines, it has been humor! But *now* you have turned against me!

SAMUEL

WHAT DO YOU WANT! Answers! Names, whereabouts, bills of Sale! Bright lights, sodium pentathol, is that what this is?! Vee have *vays* of making you *talk!*

RICA

(pause)

Samuel—

SAMUEL

Because it all ends. It all ends if I do. Us, *we*, you and I...all of it—ends....And I can't have that. I can't after all this time.

RICA

What can there be that can do that to us?—My little Jewish Boy can lose his love for his little Nazi girl?

SAMUEL

No Rica, that's not possible.

RICA

Ja, I believe....*München?* So much city, so little time....We must Samuel, talk and say and get past.—What is there now of us, if we don't?

SAMUEL

(pause)

I want to understand Rica, I need to understand it.

RICA

Yes Samuel.

SAMUEL

I need to tell you....

(he staggers around the apartment squeezing the guidebook mindlessly, seeking courage in the scattered bric-a-brac)

I went straight to the *Marienplatz*. "Go see the glockenspiel," everyone says. "You have to see the glockenspiel."

RICA

Ja.

SAMUEL

And I did. It's exceptional. Gothic and gorgeous, the intricate craftwork, so elaborate, so Bavarian.—And the church and Royal Palace and Old Town Hall, stunning. *Astounding* really. They're all right there, just a few blocks apart. You can see them all so quickly.

RICA

I have been.

SAMUEL

(pause)

I was trying to keep busy. I had gone there for it, to visit, to *see* it—but now that I was in Munich, I kinda lost my nerve. Imagine that, *me*....So I hustled to the *Hofbrauhaus* to

SAMUEL – cont'd

get a beer instead. How can you be in Munich and not go to the *Hofbrauhaus*, it would be a crime, right?...But it's still early, I got there very early.—It's not the first time I've had a nooner you know, you and I have together. So I did and the beer felt good and warm in my system. So I had another, to keep busy, to keep going, to keep it—

RICA

Yes.

SAMUEL

And the second beer felt better and warmer and I felt so welcomed there. But I looked at my watch and there was still so much time until the train to Berlin.

RICA

I understand.

SAMUEL

Three and a half *hours* left. I can't drink that much.

RICA

And you went there.

SAMUEL

Nobody can drink that much.

RICA

You went there Samuel.

SAMUEL

I did Rica, I did, I had to.—I mean sixth forms do it for the same reason, ja? To learn and remember. For the same morbid, morose—

RICA

Tell me what you saw.

SAMUEL

(pause)

It's *so* close, it's not even a train, it's a fifteen minute *tram* ride. Only a couple stops on the city's tram system. Like a Subway stop, like the 9 we took to Columbia that time.

RICA

I remember.

SAMUEL

And you get off the tram and the people are all hustling on and off as if nothing, as if nothing ever happened there.

RICA

It was long ago.

SAMUEL

Mothers with their children, old women with packages. Men in suits and kids after school, all busy, all going on with their lives.

RICA

Of course, it was long ago!

SAMUEL

You get off the tram and there are no *signs* for it. To tell you where to go, to tell you which direction. All the bustle and commotion, I don't understand, people must come.

RICA

They do.

SAMUEL

Tourists must come. I know it's October and it's cold and it's not the season, but *year round*, certainly during the summer, people must come to see it.

RICA

Samuel they do.

SAMUEL

But there are no signs!—You walk outside the station stumbling around searching and all that's there is this large street map on the wall outside. That's all, just this enormous—*map!* So I go to look but it's *huge!* The whole city taking up the whole station wall, I can't find *one* street! And maybe it's not there? Maybe it's not 'cause I'm searching and I can't find it.

RICA

Verstanden.

SAMUEL

But there's this old woman there and she's waiting, I don't know for what. For a ride, for her daughter or grand kids to pick her up, I don't know, but she's watching me search this map. And she's old and small and looks like this bundled-up depiction of the old country, with this rich impasto, this Dutch Master, Potato-Eater visage. Expressionless and dark. Where the carved *incisions* on her face tell the story of a bleak existence far beyond my capacity to. And maybe it's my backpack. Or my sneakers because only we Americans wear sneakers everywhere we go. That's how Europeans know, because *they know!* And she knew. She knew what I was looking for.

RICA

Yes.

SAMUEL

And when this bus pulled into the station just then, she motioned to catch my attention, then she pointed towards a bus. More she flailed, with this thick arm, this thick, viscous—and she nodded her head. She just nodded her head and I nodded in reply. I nodded and smiled....then I got on the bus. I just—I went and got on the bus.

RICA

Samuel....

SAMUEL

She had been there. She had to've been there. She's probably lived her whole life in that town, she had that look. The type that's born and lives and dies within a few *miles*, a few hundred *yards* of where she was born. She's never been to *Wilhelmstrasse*. She's

SAMUEL – cont'd

probably never even been to Berlin. 'Cause who could move there after that? To that town, to that place, no one would. So she had to've been there and *stayed!*

RICA

I understand.

SAMUEL

Do you?!—Do you?! Because I don't. *I don't!* I, *I can't!* As hard as I—

RICA

Samuel—

SAMUEL

Do you know what they did there?!

(he continues roving, wringing the book, thoughtlessly)

I walked the grounds. There's nothing left now but building foundations. These rectangular curbs, outlines of the living quarters, if you can call them that. A foot, eighteen inches high. Rows and rows of them, there must be fifty, a *hundred!* I just kept walking by them, one after another. You walk a path down the middle, they're on both sides, foundation after foundation so stark and desolate, you can't escape them!

RICA

I know.

SAMUEL

And the path leads off into the woods. And you walk to a house, this meaningless little stone house like something out of a *Grimm's* tale. Some dark and perverted *Hanzle and Gretl* gingerbread house like the home of a blacksmith or a collier. And the door is open. The door is open, inviting you to go in. Inviting you, *drawing* you, so you go in because you have to, because there's something there, something dark and sinister as in a nightmare. Something menacing and baleful. As if all that came before wasn't enough, the foundations and the grounds, the bleakness of the sky and the iron gate door with words on it, "Through work, Freedom." As if *all* that wasn't, there's something *death* there, something *deadly!* And you walk up the slate gray steps into this gingerbread house, this *deadly* gingerbread house that should've been home to a family, should've

SAMUEL – cont'd

known children and dogs but there are ovens there. There are ovens there to kill me!
Three ovens to kill me! JEWISH ME! THERE ARE OVENS THERE TO KILL ME!

RICA

STOP IT! STOP IT!

(long pause)

That is not me Samuel, that is not me there.

SAMUEL

How can you say that? If not you who then?

RICA

That is not me!

SAMUEL

No?!

RICA

That is our past! That is our history!

SAMUEL

Too convenient.

RICA

That's forty years before my born!—

SAMUEL

(overlapping)

Too fucking convenient!

RICA

Before my parents are born Samuel!

SAMUEL

But it's in you! It's who you are! It *is* you!

RICA

IT'S NOT IN ME! IT'S NOT IN ME! I was not here! I was not alive!

SAMUEL

But it's your people! The German people!

RICA

It is not my people! It was those people, those people then! They are gone! They are dead and gone!

SAMUEL

But they were Germany!

RICA

They were not Germany! They were not! They were crazy. They, they were lunatics! But we are not. We are now, they are not.

SAMUEL

But they were! And something deep in the German psyche, wrought in the character and soul allowed it to happen *here!*

RICA

That's insane!

SAMUEL

The Will to Power. Destined to rule, designed to conquer!

RICA

Insane and absurd!

SAMUEL

And that's part of you! They're a part of you!

RICA

THEY'RE NOT A PART OF ME! THEY ARE NOT A PART! You! Your country. You have killed, is that you?! Is that who you are?

SAMUEL

It's not the same!

RICA

Why not the same?! Why is it not?! Are you who killed Indians?! Who killed slaves?!

SAMUEL

That's not the same!

RICA

Millions too! Torn from their country. *Hanged and burned!*

SAMUEL

But the Jews Rica! *Jews!*

RICA

Yes, Jews! Are they somehow better?! Is the loss of their lives somehow more?!

SAMUEL

I can't understand it!

RICA

Do you think I can?!

SAMUEL

I can't comprehend! Butchery, cold-blooded savagery! My *outrage* at the massacre!

RICA

What is is your outrage?! Where is your outrage for yourself?! Your past! You have killed as surely as I! If I'm accountable so are you! Where is your outrage for yourself?! Where is it?!...I will tell you, it is gone. It is gone Samuel, gone away! Time takes it away. Time moves on and allows you to live again. It allows a people to live again!

SAMUEL

That's too fucking easy!

RICA

To live with shame! To live with humility!—To survive and exist under the shadows of the past. It is *time* that does this! It has happened to you, it has happened to others.

SAMUEL

It's too goddamn soon!

RICA

It is time and it is now! Now is time for me, for my people! For *my* country!

SAMUEL

IT CAN'T BE!

(SAMUEL throws the guidebook against the Chagall print smashing it. It crashes to the ground. Long pause ensues)

RICA

Samuel listen to me. *Listen!*—We have wronged. *Yes!* What occurred, what was done, I can't explain. No one can.—But we are not the only ones and it is not me. That is not me Samuel, that is not who I am. You know this. You know me, and you know this.

(he does not respond)

Is it my role to take this? Is it the character I get to play, we, all my friends, my generation gets to play? Descendents, the lineage of that terrible past? The children, the children's children and on forever.—You have a need, your need is taking, lashing out and our part is to take that lashing, to stand as an object for your beating? Then I will take it. *I will take it!* I will play my role to perfection because I can. I have trained, I have been practiced and I can take it.—But make no mistake, it is I who grant you your role. You may force mine on me with your loss and your claim, but accepting of my role grants you yours. What value has your claim, your *equivalence* if I don't *honor* it! If I don't say, "*Here Samuel, take this from me Rica!*" ...I am German Samuel. Look at me and *see!* See me and have no doubt!—I am German.

(no answer, RICA moves away from SAMUEL)

I will answer your question, your favorite to ask....because you had not gone through. For all your thinking, for all your reflection, you had not known Germans and yourself. How you are, how you feel inside....As much as I may have, how could I love someone who didn't know himself enough to know me? What is it someone offers, when they are

RICA – cont'd

offering everything they are, but don't know who they are?...An imitation of love. It is a representation, a wonderful facsimile—but not love, it isn't love Samuel. As much as I wished, as much as you wanted it to be.

(RICA moves to the broken picture but stops)

It is time. You must recognize this. If not you, if not through you and I...It must eventually be time.

(she starts picking up the picture remains. She stops when he speaks, but does not turn to him)

SAMUEL

The sound of broken glass.

(she remains still)

As I took the train into Germany from Austria yesterday—after that meeting and those people—I couldn't help but think of all those who had taken this train before. Not just the Germans jews, members of *my* extended family—but from Poland and France and Holland and Italy all of them. *This* train was death.—Some had taken the same route I was riding now, but they were riding to their deaths....And here I was, on vacation, riding through this magnificent country—to see this beautiful, *beautiful* girl that I have loved so ever since I first saw her....They are with me Rica. Those Jews of Europe, the Jews of whenever, the Jews of everywhere, they are with me now. They are....And they have been with me always.

SCENE 12

August 1995, two months prior to Scene 8. (NOTE: there should be no break from previous scene as the actors move directly from last to this) RICA sits in a Greenwich Village café studying orientation pamphlets. SAMUEL moves by, looking for a seat. He searches then notices her. Her English is hesitant when she speaks.

SAMUEL

Excuse me, is this seat taken?

RICA

No.

SAMUEL

You mind?

(RICA shakes her head. SAMUEL sits, noticing the pamphlets)

SAMUEL

Thanks. There isn't an empty table what with the first days. Nobody knows where to go or what to do, myself included. Orientation's a pain, huh?

RICA

Excuse, I'm do not....

SAMUEL

(indicating towards pamphlets)

You're going through orientation?

RICA

Oh, ja.

SAMUEL

Yeah, we had ours yesterday, School of Fine Arts. Quite the pain in the ass. Yourself?

RICA

Myself?

SAMUEL

What are you studying?

RICA

(confused)

The class schedules and times.

SAMUEL

No, I mean what discipline, what field?

RICA

Ah! Legal.

SAMUEL

Law student, excellent. Your mother must be happy. Are you here full time?

RICA

No. I am doing one year in a program.

SAMUEL

I figured that accent wasn't from an Outer Borough. Norse, Saxon, something like that?

RICA

Yes I am. I am German.

SAMUEL

German, super! A *real* blonde in the city.

RICA

Pardon? I don't....

SAMUEL

Nevermind. It's a joke and not a funny one at that. Have you been to New York before?

RICA

Ja, once. When I was a little girl.

SAMUEL

Cool. I bet it hasn't changed that much.

RICA

Ja, very. It seems bigger.

SAMUEL

By the way, I'm Samuel.

RICA

Samuel?—I am Ulrike.

SAMUEL

Hello Ul, Ulrike, pleasure to meet you.

(she nods as they shake hands)

SAMUEL

That's quite a mouth full, your name. I can never manage that guttural choking thing you need to speak German well.—Do you have a nickname, something your friends call you?

RICA

Ja, Rica.

SAMUEL

Rica? You mind if I call you that?

(she shakes her head)

Thank you. Some people have a gift for foreign languages, I've a gift for cursing in them. And your last name?

RICA

Vas?

SAMUEL

Your surname.

RICA

Ahh. Harwig. (pronounced HAAR-vig)

SAMUEL

Harwig. With the “w” as a “v”?

RICA

Ja. That you say well. And yours?

SAMUEL

And my—oh my last name? Oh. Goldstein.

RICA

Goldstein.

SAMUEL

Yup.

(an awkward pause)

RICA

Goalshtine?

SAMUEL

Uh huh huh—*yeah*. That’s uh, that’s it all right.

RICA

What? Is there something....

SAMUEL

No no—there isn't. It uh—just sounds a little more *German* when you say it.

RICA

It can be a German name.

SAMUEL

In my case it is. My family was from Germany originally.

RICA

Yes? Ah.

SAMUEL

Yeah, how 'bout that.

(another awkward pause)

RICA

It is a Jewish name?

SAMUEL

(pause)

Yes it is.

End of Play