

THE GOOD GERMAN

by

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A GUIDE TO PRONUNCIATION

VOGEL--pronounced "Fogel", beginning with the "f" sound.

GRAETI--rhymes with "matey".

BRAUN--pronounced "brrown" with a slightly rolled "r".

SIEMI--pronounced "ZEE-mee".

SIEMEN--pronounced "ZEE-men".

BRAUNSTEIN--pronounced "brown-shtein" to rhyme with "fine".

SPAETZLE--pronounced "SHPETZ-luh"

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

TIME: The Nazi Era

PLACE: GERMANY

The living room of the home of Karl and Gretel Vogel. A certain formality in the dialogue in Scene One is intentional and appropriate.

AT RISE: GRETEL enters from outside. She is followed, hesitantly, by BRAUN. GRETEL wears a nurse's uniform. Braun wears clothes that are not new and don't really fit.

GRETEL
Come in, it's all right.

BRAUN
Are you sure?

GRETEL
You're going to be fine, you know.

BRAUN
I don't know any such thing. How can I know that?

GRETEL
Because I tell you.

BRAUN
If I believed everything women told me...

GRETEL
The world would be much better off.

BRAUN
The world is not my great concern.

GRETEL
Just wait here, I have to explain you to my husband.

BRAUN
He doesn't know I'm coming?

GRETEL
No.

BRAUN
My god! Why haven't you told him?

GRETEL
Because he'll disapprove.

BRAUN
I'll leave.

GRETEL
He disapproves of many things on principle...but only on principle. Karl is very cerebral, but if you're already here you're real, not a theory. He'll like you.

BRAUN
Why? I'm not easy to like.

GRETEL
I've managed. And he'll do it because I ask him to.

BRAUN
I prefer not to be housed by someone who disapproves of me on principle.

GRETEL
(Indulgently)
It's just a "mild philosophical distaste". You can debate it with him, Karl loves to argue.

BRAUN
Now I have to justify myself philosophically. I can't even protect myself physically.

GRETEL
I told you, you're safe here.

BRAUN
Graeti, this is not going to work.

GRETEL
(Sternly)
You will address me as Frau Vogel in this house. Maybe later Gretel, but never Graeti. We discussed this.

BRAUN
You should have told him about me. You should have told me about him...

GRETEL

Would I be married to him if he weren't a good man? Now relax, if you can, and get used to things. This is your home now.

Gretel exits through door leading to the rest of the house. Braun paces nervously, torn about what to do. Finally he decides to leave, opens the door to the outside and starts out. Halfway out, he pauses. He has nowhere else to go and knows it. Defeated, he returns to the house.

SIEMI enters hurriedly from the other rooms. Siemi is voluble, effusive, kind, friendly. Throughout the play, Siemi is dressed in civilian clothes. He crosses to Braun with great solicitude.

SIEMI

You poor man, I am so sorry for your troubles. So very sorry. Such a loss...

BRAUN

(Taken aback)

You know?

SIEMI

Frau Vogel just told us. It is almost too much to take in, such a tragedy. I offer my deepest condolences.

BRAUN

Thank you.

SIEMI

But you must not think you are alone. We will help you, sir. We will do all that we can, not that anyone can truly...

BRAUN

Most kind.

SIEMI

I am still stunned by the enormity ...Please excuse me for rushing at you in your grief, but one wants to do something. What can we do, is there any way at all that we can help?

Enter Gretel and KARL VOGEL, her husband.

BRAUN
There is nothing...a new life...

SIEMI
Of course, we must start now...

GRETEL
Siemi...if I may...

SIEMI
Oh. I'm so sorry.

GRETEL
Herr Braun...May I present my
husband, Herr Professor Doctor
Vogel...Karl, this is Herr Braun.

There is no handshake. A vestige of a bow from Braun, a nod
of the head from Karl.

BRAUN
An honor, Herr Professor Doctor.

KARL
My pleasure, sir.

GRETEL
You seem to have met Herr Tauber.

SIEMI
My dear, sir, I do apologize. I am
Siemen Tauber.

Siemi does shake hands, heartily.

BRAUN
An honor, sir.

SIEMI
But call me Siemi, please,
everyone does.

Braun smiles coolly. He has no intention of taking such
liberties.

SIEMI
(continuing)
Graeti, we must help your cousin.

GRETEL
Of course we must. Herr Braun is
going to live with us for the time
being, if that's all right with
you, Karl.

Karl hesitates.

BRAUN

It is an imposition. I quite understand, sir. I will go elsewhere.

GRETEL

You have nowhere to go.

BRAUN

I will manage.

SIEMI

You would be most welcome to stay with me, Herr Braun.

BRAUN

I could not...

SIEMI

My accommodations are embarrassingly large. They've mistaken me for someone important...

GRETEL

No, Siemi.

SIEMI

Please, it would be an honor, as well as a pleasure. I live quite close by, you could visit Graeti and Karl easily...

GRETEL

That won't be necessary, Siemi. Will it, Karl?

KARL

You will stay with us, of course, Herr Braun. Whatever we can do is scarcely enough. The loss of your wife and child...Impossible to imagine.

BRAUN

One's imagination is forcibly expanded these days. It seems anything is possible.

SIEMI

Well, we can not know God's ways.

BRAUN
My house was not set afire by God.

SIEMI
No, of course...

GRETEL
(Sharply)
Wilhelm, you are upset. Let me show you where you will sleep. I'm sure Siemi will excuse you.

SIEMI
Good heavens, of course. This is not the time for...

BRAUN
If you will excuse me, gentlemen.

KARL
(Formally)
Herr Braun.

BRAUN
Herr Professor Doctor Vogel...Herr Tauber.

SIEMI
Anything at all that we can do, anything at all.

Gretel leads Braun off.

SIEMI
(continuing)
Can you imagine it, Karl? Your wife, your child, your house, gone in an instant.

KARL
I don't think I'd survive the loss of my Graeti.

SIEMI
I know what you mean.

KARL
No...I don't mean what I'd do. I mean who I would become without her. Graeti's the source of all of my decency...Well, you saw how reluctant I was to take this poor man in.

(more)

KARL (cont'd)

Your first impulse was compassion. I was thinking of the nuisance, the bother of it.

SIEMI

That's understandable, Karl.

KARL

You didn't hesitate and he's a complete stranger. If you and Graeti hadn't shamed me into it, I might well have turned him away. I'm ashamed to say it, but it's true.

SIEMI

You would have done just as you did. The difference between you and me, Karl, is that you not only think before you act, you think *why* you act. It's not unkindness, it's caution, it's being thoughtful, it's good sense that you don't have the good sense to hide. If we all confessed to our reluctance to be decent...well, good heavens, that's what hypocrisy is for.

KARL

We've been friends for too long, you forgive me too much.

SIEMI

I know what a decent man you are in your heart. You've put up with me for all these years, haven't you?...I hope your cousin plans to return to work as soon as possible. Work is the best cure. When I lost my mother, if I hadn't had my work...well, you remember what I was like.

KARL

Yes, I remember.

SIEMI

You stood with me then, Karl, and I know I wasn't easy to take. I even thought of asking if I could move in with you and Graeti myself.

KARL

You know you could have.

SIEMI

You would have done it, I know it.
I'll never forget your kindness
...and I won't listen to you
denigrating yourself now...Well,
work is the thing. It will see one
through. What is the poor man's
profession?

KARL

I have no idea, I know nothing
about him.

SIEMI

Has he lost everything? Will he
need new papers?...You can let me
know when he's more himself. He
seems to be in shock right now
...Whatever I can do, anything at
all.

KARL

I know, Siemi. Thank you.

SIEMI

I'm just happy I'm in a position
to help my friends, otherwise,
what's the point of all the hard
work?

KARL

You see, you've just met him and
already you consider him your
friend. I don't know how you do
it, but I do admire it.

SIEMI

I must go. You'll say goodbye to
Graeti for me?

KARL

Of course.

SIEMI

And tell your cousin not to
despair...oh, that sounds so
presumptuous. I don't know what to
tell the man in such a situation.
I feel so inadequate.

KARL

We all are. Good night, Siemi.

SIEMI

Good night...And Karl, don't be so hard on yourself. It's what you do in the end that counts, not how graciously you do it.

Siemi exits. Gretel enters from rest of the house.

KARL

How is he?

GRETEL

Frightened.

KARL

Of course...I'm sorry that I was so slow to offer our house...

GRETEL

It's all right.

KARL

No, it's not. I was selfish. All I could picture was the inconvenience, a stranger always in the house, a stranger at meals, a stranger in the evening...If I were a better person I wouldn't have thought of myself first.

GRETEL

You are a good person, Karl.

KARL

I'm a self-centered one, and we both know it. We have such a good life together I'm reluctant to share it, even with your poor cousin.

GRETEL

Karl, he's not my cousin. I lied.

KARL

Why?

GRETEL

To protect him.

KARL

From what? Who is he?

GRETEL

He's just a man I know from the hospital. I thought you'd be alone. I had to say something to protect him from Siemi.

KARL

From Siemi? What are you talking about? I don't know a kinder soul--

GRETEL

Siemi has been your friend for years...

KARL

(interrupting)

And yours.

GRETEL

...and you trust him.

KARL

Of course...Trust him with what?

GRETEL

But he's also a member of the Defense Service.

KARL

(dismissively)

A glorified clerk. Siemi's no policy maker. He took an opportunity to work that presented itself, and rightly so. See how he's prospered? But it hasn't changed him.

GRETEL

He's still a party member.

KARL

Siemi isn't capable of hurting anyone...and what reason would he have?

GRETEL

You don't know what Siemi is capable of. None of us know what anyone is capable of.

KARL

I don't know Siemi? You might as well tell me I don't know you.

GRETEL

You are such an innocent
sometimes. Herr Braun is a Jew.

KARL

...A Jew? Are you certain? He
doesn't look like one.

GRETEL

Many don't.

KARL

Oh, you can usually tell...

GRETEL

You had Jewish colleagues at the
university, you saw them lose
their posts.

KARL

Professor Edelstein. A few in the
physics department...There were
valid reasons.

GRETEL

You know how they are treated.

KARL

There were valid reasons.
Edelstein, for instance...

GRETEL

Karl, we don't have to go into
that again.

KARL

I don't want you to think it was
arbitrary, that's all...

GRETEL

Losing their jobs was only the
beginning. They are being
persecuted.

KARL

Some laws have been passed...it is
not significant.

GRETEL

What I said about his family and
his house was true, but the people
who did it knew his wife and child
were inside when they set it on
fire.

KARL

Surely not.

GRETEL

That's why they did it.

KARL

I can't believe that.

GRETEL

These things are happening all the time...

KARL

Someone did it *deliberately*?

GRETEL

Yes. And they are not the only ones.

KARL

I haven't heard of things like this. What do you mean, all the time?

GRETEL

It's true.

KARL

Rumors, over reactions...

GRETEL

No, it's true.

KARL

I've read nothing about it.

GRETEL

The papers aren't printing it...You spend all of your time in a chemistry lab...

KARL

How do you know about such things?

GRETEL

I'm a nurse, I see the results. Herr Braun is here not only because he has no home, he has no safe place to go to at all. He fears for his life.

KARL

Graeti...what is going on? How do you know this Jew?

GRETEL

I met him through the hospital.

KARL

His family was killed and he came straight to you?

GRETEL

The fire was a couple of months ago. He's been hiding ever since.

KARL

Am I to understand this man is a fugitive?

GRETEL

He needs help.

KARL

Is he a fugitive?

GRETEL

He's lost his family, he's lost his home, he has no papers, he's done no wrong to anyone...

KARL

But he's a Jew, you said.

GRETEL

He's done no wrong to anyone by being a Jew.

KARL

Then why is he a fugitive?

GRETEL

Because he is a Jew. Because they want to deport him.

KARL

He can't be deported unless he's violated some law.

GRETEL

The laws are illegal.

KARL

Laws are not illegal, by definition.

GRETEL

Don't be a pedant, Karl. These laws are wrong.

KARL

Will you grant that a nation has a right to govern itself?

GRETEL

Of course.

KARL

Is it unreasonable to decide who is and is not a member of that nation? Or can anyone declare "I am a German" and expect others to treat him accordingly? Half the world would be German, if they could.

GRETEL

They're not declaring anything. They live here, they were born here.

KARL

They were born here, but are they truly part of our people? If the Jews had a country do you think they would allow everyone to live there? How long before it would no longer be theirs?

GRETEL

I don't want to debate with you. You always win.

KARL

Perhaps because I'm right?

GRETEL

You're logical, that doesn't make you right. No one lives by logic.

KARL

How else shall we make our laws?

GRETEL

By decency. Just common decency would do, if it were ever tried.

KARL

...So you are asking me to harbor a fugitive. A man I don't know, and a Jew at that. Why should I?

GRETEL

Because you're a good man, Karl. Because he is a victim of persecution. Because he has suffered great loss, because without your help he is in great peril...

KARL

None of which is my responsibility.

GRETEL

You would help a man you saw struck by a car. Do it like that, instinctively.

KARL

Those are not my instincts. You give me too much credit. In theory I would help a man who was hit by a car. In practice...like most people I would cross the street to avoid the mess and the obligation.

GRETEL

Then do it for me. Do it because I ask you to.

KARL

Must you reduce it to that? You know I can't say no to you...How long do you intend to have him here?

GRETEL

Until it's safe for him to leave.

KARL

How long will that be?

GRETEL

Karl, I have no idea. A few days, a week or so...I wouldn't have brought him here if there was any choice. Perhaps we can get him out of the country, maybe not...

KARL

We?...Graeti how far are you asking me to go against my beliefs?

GRETEL

Just let him stay here, Karl. Do that much for me.

KARL

What does he do? Where will he work?

GRETEL

He can't work, he has no papers.

KARL

Siemi has offered to help there.

GRETEL

Siemi must not be involved! Do not involve Siemi!

KARL

You misjudge Siemi. You know he'd do anything to help us.

GRETEL

He'd do anything *you* asked him to, Karl. Or just about anything. But I don't know where he draws the line and Herr Braun can't afford to find out.

KARL

So he's to be in the house, underfoot, at all times?

GRETEL

Ingrid is taking a job at the Grundig factory for more money they we can offer. He can take her place.

KARL

Is he a cook? Is he a housekeeper?

GRETEL

I'm sure he can do it...He was a waiter. He'll be no trouble, Karl, I promise.

KARL

When you said he was your cousin
... I think that's the first time
you ever lied to me.

GRETEL

Yes. It is.

KARL

That alone tells me how important
it is to you.

GRETEL

He'll be no trouble, Karl, I
promise.

KARL

You can't promise that...They are
a whiney people, they take
advantage, they press and push...

Braun enters, stands helplessly.

GRETEL

Yes, Herr Braun.

BRAUN

I am sorry to trouble you.

GRETEL

What is it?

BRAUN

I have no towel, no soap.

Gretel crosses to exit.

KARL

Let him get it.

Gretel exits. The two men study each other warily for a
moment.

KARL

(continuing)

I have no intention of eating
kosher food.

BRAUN

I don't eat kosher.

KARL

And I hope you don't intend to
pray.

BRAUN

Pray?

KARL

Davening, is that what you call it? No davening, no whirling of chickens over your head. There will be none of that in this house. Keep your superstitions to yourself, if you please.

BRAUN

You don't want me in your house, do you, Herr Professor Doctor?

KARL

Would you? I know nothing about you except that my wife wishes me to help you, and you're a Jew.

BRAUN

And you have a "mild philosophical distaste" for Jews.

KARL

I am prepared to judge you on your own merits.

BRAUN

Everyone is prepared to judge me these days.

KARL

My wife is not to wait upon you. You will tend to yourself and be as inobtrusive as possible, like any other domestic.

BRAUN

I am to be your servant?

KARL

It should be familiar enough. You are a waiter, are you not? My wife said you were.

BRAUN

Of course...As you say, Herr Professor Doctor, I will stay out of your way as much as possible. I have no desire to call attention to myself.

KARL

That alone would set you apart
from your race...Well, we will
see. You can start by making me
some tea.

BRAUN

Certainly, Herr Professor Doctor.
Right away, sir.

Braun exits.

END SCENE ONE

SCENE TWO

SCENE: The same.

TIME: Months later.

AT RISE: Karl and Gretel are seated in the living room after dinner. Gretel is reading while Karl reads/comments on the newspaper.

KARL

"Throngs of cheering Frenchmen lined the streets to celebrate the anniversary of the arrival of the liberating German forces in Paris." Surprisingly courteous of the French, wouldn't you say?

GRETEL

What have we liberated them from, exactly?

KARL

Themselves, apparently. I've never met a Frenchman in my life whom I could imagine cheering. Seems there are actually throngs of them.

GRETEL

Paris is so beautiful.

KARL

Yes. And light and gay, now that our troops are there.

GRETEL

They are difficult people, but so romantic.

KARL

Very rational people, actually. Unpleasant, but they *think* well.

GRETEL

And you admire that.

KARL

I admire anyone who bothers to think at all these days.

Braun enters with a tray holding after dinner drinks and a plate of cookies. He serves Gretel first.

GRETEL

Thank you, Wilhelm.

BRAUN

You're welcome, madame...Herr Professor Doctor?

KARL
(of cookie)
What is this carboniferous
excrescence?

BRAUN
Springerle.

Karl nibbles one suspiciously.

KARL
How did you acquire it?

BRAUN
I baked it, Herr Vogel.

KARL
You are not greatly gifted at your
calling, are you?

BRAUN
It is not truly my calling.

KARL
What is, besides skulking in the
kitchen?

GRETEL
It's not as easy as it seems, Karl.

KARL
A simple cookie...

GRETEL
Can you do it?...I'll make some
for you tomorrow.

Karl waves Braun away.

KARL
That will be all.

Braun exits.

GRETEL
He does the best he can.

KARL
Must you always take his part?
He's not a child, let him defend
himself.

GRETEL
He's in a very vulnerable position.

KARL

He's a grown man, he's articulate,
if making a cookie is too
difficult for him, let him say so.
I'll listen to him.

GRETEL

You know it's not about a cookie.

KARL

It's about a cookie, it's about
spaetzle like rocks, it's about
burned sausage...Oh, all right.
You're correct. It *is* about him.
He's such an unpleasant presence.
He manages to be both craven and
insolent at the same time.

GRETEL

You're still getting used to each
other.

KARL

He shivers like one of those
little hairless dogs, as if I
might kick him in passing.

GRETEL

He's afraid of you.

KARL

That's ridiculous.

GRETEL

Most people are a little afraid of
you, Karl. Even I, sometimes.

KARL

(Hurt)

No, Graeti, you don't mean that.
You're not afraid of me.

She shrugs, dismissing it.

GRETEL

You can be so disdainful of
people's weaknesses...You might
try being friendly to him.

KARL

He could try being friendly to me.

GRETEL

He's not in a position to be familiar with you. You are, if you choose...

KARL

Graeti, I've done everything you've asked me to do. I even got the papers for him...

GRETEL

Did you? Wonderful!

Karl gives her identification papers from his pocket.

KARL

I can't tell you how heartily I disapprove of this. I'm ashamed to be a part of it.

GRETEL

You *have* told me. I know you did it for me. He will be so grateful.

KARL

So is it necessary that I *like* the man as well?

GRETEL

With time you'll grow fond of each other.

KARL

It's been six weeks. One grows fond of a stray *dog* in six weeks. Jews take longer, apparently.

GRETEL

That's cruel, Karl.

KARL

(Sincerely)

I'm sorry, I know it is. I apologize...It's not easy for me, Graeti. I have contempt for the man...Help me.

GRETEL

Get to know him and the contempt will go away.

KARL

What if it doesn't?

GRETEL

Then you must struggle to be nice anyway. Sometimes tolerance is just good manners.

KARL

You are so good.

GRETEL

No one interesting is ever all *that* good...I must go.

KARL

Where?

GRETEL

There's a meeting at the hospital.

KARL

Now? It's very late for a meeting.

GRETEL

It's the only time we can all do it...Besides, Siemi is coming over, isn't he?

KARL

You're not leaving because of Siemi, are you?

GRETEL

I just meant you'd have company. I won't be too late.

He rises to embrace her.

KARL

You're not really ever afraid of me, are you?

GRETEL

Your scorn is frightening. It hurts without a word.

KARL

I wouldn't hurt you for the world. You are my world.

GRETEL

And you are mine.

KARL

What is the problem with you and Siemi lately? He's the nicest man.

GRETEL

Siemi is nice, but he isn't good.
You are good, but you're not
always nice.

KARL

I don't know what that means.

Gretel hands the papers to Karl.

GRETEL

You give these to him. It will
break the ice.

Gretel calls into exit leading to rest of house.

GRETEL

(continuing)

Good night, Wilhelm. Thank you for
dinner.

Braun enters as Gretel is exiting the house.

BRAUN

Thank you, Frau Vogel. Good night.

Gretel exits, Braun is about to retreat to the kitchen.

KARL

Well, then.

BRAUN

Sir?

KARL

Well, then...how are matters
proceeding?

BRAUN

I'm doing the dishes at the moment.

KARL

Come in, sit.

Braun steps further into the room, does not sit.

KARL

(continuing)

I meant how, uh, how are you
accommodating to your life here?

BRAUN

Fine...Very well, thank you.

KARL

Can't be easy for you, I don't suppose.

BRAUN

You and your wife have gone to a great deal of trouble, it is so good of you...

KARL

It is no problem for my wife to be good, sir. She *is* good. For me it's a labor. I am not good although she insists on believing that I am. I try to meet her expectations ...Sit down. Sit, sit.

Braun sits uneasily.

KARL

(continuing)

My predecessor as head of the department, Professor Doctor Edelstein, was Jewish, you know. He had a good mind for chemistry, not of the first rank, but very high among the second rank.

BRAUN

I see.

KARL

I liked Edelstein well enough.

BRAUN

Where is he now?

KARL

I have no idea. There were certain deficiencies in his curriculum vitae and he was let go. Unfortunate matter. I signed a petition to have him kept on but there was nothing more I could do, I believe.

BRAUN

And you took his position?

KARL

I didn't *take* it. I was offered the position because I was qualified.

BRAUN

I see.

KARL

Are you suggesting there was any reason I should not be head of the department?

BRAUN

Of course not. I know nothing about the situation. I'm sure you are highly qualified.

KARL

(Pause)

Well, the point is, Edelstein and I got along quite amicably despite our differences.

BRAUN

And your differences were...?

KARL

I refer to his religion, of course.

BRAUN

Edelstein was a religious man?

KARL

Not in the slightest, he was a scientist.

BRAUN

Like yourself.

KARL

Of course...See here, Braun, you are making this needlessly difficult. I bring this up to show that the two of us got along perfectly well despite his Jewishness.

KARL

(continuing)

I am not a prejudiced man...Well, I'm hardly perfect, but I don't let my prejudice interfere with my sense of fairness.

BRAUN

That's very good of you, sir.

Karl studies him to see if he's being mocked.

KARL

Somewhat against my better judgement, at the insistence of my wife, I got you these.

Karl offers the identification papers.

BRAUN

Papers, you got me papers! Oh, my God...How did you do it?

KARL

From a rather shifty student draftsman at the arts college.

BRAUN

They look so real.

KARL

I was informed the young man has talent at this sort of thing. I told him they were for my "cousin." He seemed amused. Also a Jew, I suspect.

BRAUN

I have an identity again! You must know how important this is.

KARL

My wife gave me a list of your particulars that claimed "publisher" as your profession. Aren't you over-reaching? Wouldn't it make sense to admit that you're a waiter?

BRAUN

I'm not a waiter.

KARL

My wife said you were.

BRAUN

That must have seemed simpler at the time.

KARL

My wife doesn't tell me lies because it's "simpler".

BRAUN

Sometimes a small--emendation--of the facts is proper.

KARL

That may be how you live, but it shows how little you know of her...What sort of publisher are you?

BRAUN

You would not have heard of my firm. We are very minor.

KARL

Perhaps I'll acquaint myself. I read a great deal.

BRAUN

We do small things, pamphlets, wedding announcements, calendars...W.F. Braun, Verlag.

KARL

W.F.? Is that you?

BRAUN

Wilhelm Friedrich Braun.
(Waves papers)
And I am Wilhelm Braun again!

KARL

What is your real name?

BRAUN

Braun, my name is Braun.

KARL

What is your Jewish name?

BRAUN

...My grandparents were named Braunstein if that's what you mean.

KARL

Many resent that, you know. If a man is called Fountainbleau, one expects a Frenchman.

BRAUN

Do I need to identify myself so that people treat me differently?

KARL

Don't you think others have a right to know who they're dealing with? In a way I prefer the long black coats and those ridiculous side curls. At least there's no mistake about their identity.

BRAUN

I'm as repelled by those people as you are. The first time I saw them on the street I thought they were witches. I'm not a Jew like that. They're an embarrassment, not just to me, to most of us who live in the modern world. Just as I imagine the Mennonites must be an embarrassment to you.

KARL

Mennonites? What have I to do with those religious imbeciles?

BRAUN

As much as I have to do with the men in black coats and the ridiculous side curls.

KARL

They are your co-religionists, are they not?

BRAUN

I have no religion. I don't go to temple, I'm a modern man, I believe in nothing, as do you. I share no customs with those people, I speak no Yiddish. My language is German, my culture is German, my thoughts are German. How am I Jewish?

KARL

If you're not really a Jew, declare yourself a Christian and be done with it. There are no requirements to be a Christian, you need not really believe any of it, no one of intelligence does.

BRAUN

I could not do that.

KARL

Do you think you're a Hindu, born into a caste? If anyone asks if you're a Jew, simply deny it. Within a generation or two the stain would be gone completely.

BRAUN

I had not finished. I don't do things the world thinks of as Jewish. I am not "Jewish." I am German...And I am a Jew. I would never deny being a Jew. I'm not a brave man, I'll run and hide and do what I must to stay alive; but that is my core, that is the one thing I won't do. I will not deny being a Jew, ever.

KARL

If you are not "Jewish" then you're a Jew only because the world says you're a Jew.

BRAUN

With respect, sir, I am a Jew because *I* say I'm a Jew.

KARL

No one would ever know.

BRAUN

I would know. My father would know. My grandfather, my great grandfather, my great great grandfather...

KARL

You see, you want to remain separate. Given the chance to join the rest of the world, you decline because of, what?, ancestor worship?...You know what all of those dietary laws are really about, don't you?

BRAUN

I assume they have to do with health.

KARL

Nonsense. Are Jews healthier than other people, do they live longer?
(more)

KARL (cont'd)

They are about separateness. It's a way of saying "we are not you, we are the people who mutilate our boy babies and don't eat such and so." They wish to declare themselves different--ergo better--than the rest of the world.

BRAUN

You seem to have made a study of it.

KARL

I have certainly thought about it. One wants to be fair. If I had a Turk hiding in my house I would think about Islam...Of course there is more to contemplate with Islam. They have a genuine history.

BRAUN

A "genuine" history.

KARL

Oh, there have been major accomplishments in early science and mathematics within the Arab culture. The Jews...well, it is a quicker study, no offense intended.

BRAUN

Why should you suddenly worry about giving offense?

KARL

Their contributions to the world have been few and almost always by insinuating themselves into the cultures of other peoples. Take Einstein, for instance. Excellent work, I give you that, but solidly within the German scientific tradition, building on the work of Planck and Maxwell. His education was German, his science was German, his language was German, his colleagues were German, his tradition was German...

BRAUN

And now he's an American.

KARL

Which makes my point. The Jews attach themselves to whatever larger, healthy host is available, take full advantage, but maintain their separateness. Even Moses, to take the prime example. Smuggled into the Pharaoh's family and raised as a prince, if one is to believe the story--and it is a perfect metaphor for the usurpation of a culture, is it not? Raised as an *Egyptian* prince. Elevated to the heights by an unsuspecting host, raised and treated like one of their own until he betrayed them.

BRAUN

I am sorry you disapprove of me.

KARL

I was merely expressing an irritation...I hope you're not taking any of this personally.

BRAUN

I was not aware that I inspired quite so much carefully reasoned resentment.

KARL

Good heavens, we're just having a discussion. I'm engaging you in conversation.

BRAUN

That's not necessary.

KARL

Look here, Braun, I'm making an effort to be friendly.

BRAUN

Please don't.

KARL

I enjoy a difference of opinion.

BRAUN

It seems that I am the difference.

KARL

Would you like a change of topic?
How about politics? Do you want to
talk about the war? The idiot
Hitler?

BRAUN

You don't like Hitler?

KARL

That repugnant little Austrian
peasant? Do you realize what he
has done to this country?

BRAUN

I have some idea.

KARL

Yes, well, of course you do...

There is a loud, persistent knock on the door. Braun reacts
with alarm.

KARL

(continuing)

Well, what are you waiting for? Or
should I get it?

BRAUN

Who could it be?

KARL

Siemi, I imagine. Good God, man,
don't go through life on your
knees.

More banging at the door, a muffled cry of "Karl!"

KARL

(continuing)

Siemi, as I said.

Karl starts towards the door, Braun finally hurries before
him to fulfill his job. Braun opens the door, Siemi hurries
in.

BRAUN

Good evening, Herr Tauber.

SIEMI

Yes, yes, good evening Braun.
Karl, I have to talk to you.

KARL
We were having a discussion of
your Herr Hitler.

SIEMI
Not now, Karl.
(To Braun)
You will excuse us.

Braun exits to rest of house.

KARL
What is it?

SIEMI
Sit down, Karl.

KARL
Such drama.

SIEMI
Please, Karl. Sit down...I have
bad news.

KARL
What?

SIEMI
Why was Graeti out tonight?

KARL
She was at a meeting at the
hospital. What is it, is she hurt?

SIEMI
She was seen in the company of
some--disreputable elements--
innocently, I'm sure...She
shouldn't have run, they told her
not to run...

KARL
What happened!

SIEMI
She was shot.

KARL
Oh, my God!

SIEMI

They were doing their duty, she should not have run when they told her...I don't mean it was her fault...

KARL

How is she, is she all right?

SIEMI

She's dead, Karl.

Karl slumps wordlessly in upon himself in shock.

SIEMI

(continuing)

I can't tell you how sorry...it was a horrible mistake. When they realized who she was they called me immediately.

KARL

(Almost incoherently)

Dead?

SIEMI

She died instantly, there would have been no pain...

KARL

Graeti?

SIEMI

Karl, my dear, dear friend, I don't know what to say to you. I loved her too...Braun!

Braun enters, wiping his hands on a towel.

SIEMI

(continuing)

Get some schnapps, liquor of some kind, whatever you have.

BRAUN

What's wrong?

SIEMI

Frau Vogel has been killed.

BRAUN

Oh, my god, no! Graeti, Graeti, Graeti! No, no!!

Braun is near hysteria.

BRAUN
(continuing)
Oh, oh, oh, oh!!

Braun's reaction is in stark contrast to Karl who is in silent shock. Both Karl and Siemi look at Braun as the curtain falls.

END SCENE TWO

SCENE THREE

The same. Months later. The stage is empty. There is a knock on the door. Braun enters from rest of house, pauses, uncertain what to do. The knock comes again, louder. Still Braun hesitates.

SIEMI

(Off)

Braun!...it's Siemen Tauber.

Braun goes to door, opens it. Siemi enters.

SIEMI

(continuing)

You are the slowest man at opening doors. Are you hiding from something?

BRAUN

I was in the other part of the house...

SIEMI

I'm joking, Braun, don't look so horrified. Is Karl home?

BRAUN

Not yet. I expect him soon.

SIEMI

Think I might have a beer?

BRAUN

We're out of beer, sir. The Professor Doctor doesn't care for it.

SIEMI

Perverse of him, isn't it? Wine then?...If it's not a problem. If you're busy, I can fetch it myself.

BRAUN

I'm happy to do it.

SIEMI

Thank you, Braun. Very nice of you.

Braun exits, Siemi seats himself. Braun returns with a glass of wine.

SIEMI

(continuing)

Oh, thank you...Sorry to be a baby like this but I need a little coddling today...I'm rather upset. I really hate this job. I'm not a politician, I'm not a soldier.

(more)

SIEMI (cont'd)

I have some administrative skills,
it seemed a good opportunity...Who
could have known?

BRAUN

It must have its compensations.

SIEMI

The uniform commands a certain
respect, but I refuse to be one of
those people who strut around in
it when they don't have to. Graeti
won't allow it in this house,
either...Wouldn't.

BRAUN

Why don't you resign?

SIEMI

We're at war, man. I'd be at the
front dodging bullets from
deserters within the hour...I
shouldn't burden you with this,
but I'm still so shaken...I've
just seen my first killing.

BRAUN

A killing?

SIEMI

Well, I didn't just see it, I was
part of it. God awful...They're
dragging us desk people out to
participate in it now. They seem
to think it will give us an
appreciation of what our field
people are going through.

BRAUN

You're been to the front?

SIEMI

Oh, good Lord, no. I'd hide under
the bed rather than go to the
front. No, this was here in the
city. They'd dug some poor
homosexuals out from under a rock.
Miserable wretches. I mean to say,
what does homosexuality have to do
with anything anyway?

BRAUN

It's a serious offense.

SIEMI

Is it? Do you think so?

BRAUN

It's unnatural. It's disgusting.

SIEMI

Well, maybe you're right....At any rate these poor buggers, if I may call them that, were to be shot...They were the most pathetic, unthreatening bunch...I know they're inferior, I understand that, but it's not as if they can pollute society for very long, is it? I mean to say they've effectively rendered themselves barren by their behavior, haven't they? It's not likely they'll get each other pregnant. It's not like they're Jews or gypsies, breeding like rats.

BRAUN

Jews are not homosexuals.

SIEMI

No?

BRAUN

It's against their religion I believe. I believe I heard that somewhere.

SIEMI

Really? Who would have thought it? Well, personally, I don't see how one man's morality is anyone else's business--but don't tell my comrades I said that. Ferocious Lutherans, most of them, although they won't admit it. Have you noticed how cruel morality makes a man?...Curious, that about the Jews, if true. When you consider all the other things they get up to.

BRAUN

What other things?

SIEMI

I can't say, exactly. General decadence, I suppose...Don't they?

BRAUN

I have no idea...If you'll excuse me I should look to dinner...

SIEMI

Oh, stay around, would you? I like talking to you and I'd really rather not be alone right now. Just until Karl comes back. Do you mind?

BRAUN

Of course.

SIEMI

Oh, good. Please sit down. You're so formal all the time and yet you've been here long enough to feel like family.

BRAUN

I am family.

SIEMI

(Laughing)

Of course you are. I'm an idiot. For a moment I completely forgot. Although actually I meant *my* family, but then Karl is closer to me than any of my real relatives...I'm jabbering--it was very upsetting...Colonel Kleinhof told me to give the order to fire. As if it would be good for me, teach me how to command men, that sort of thing. Well, I didn't want to see these pitiful creatures *shot*.

BRAUN

It's not as if they were Jews.

SIEMI

Good Lord, Braun, you sound as bloodthirsty as the Colonel. Show a little Christian mercy. The Jews are not as bad as they're painted, I'm sure.

BRAUN

Oh, I assumed...well, I don't know what. People say so many things.

SIEMI

A lot of that is just what one says. Filthy French, dirty Jews, lazy Arabs...One doesn't really mean anything, it just fills up the sentence, like swearing. It does no harm.

BRAUN

But the government says many things as well.

SIEMI

A good deal of that is propoganda, you know. I mean you do know that. They're not really drinking the blood of Christian babies...That sort of thing is intended for the great unwashed, we're not expected to believe it.

BRAUN

Those are the stories we're told.

SIEMI

And you believe them. Very patriotic of you, I'm sure. Goebbels would be pleased...Look here, it's really not necessary to swallow everything they say. Most of that government crowd are uneducated, uncultured louts. I know that's what Karl thinks and I don't disagree with him. Where we part company is his belief that we ought to have an *intelligent* man as our leader. Karl is biased towards intelligence, but it rather frightens the rest of us. The fact is, I don't think that's necessary. Hitler has a plan, he has an agenda, he has a direction. That will carry us along, especially now that we're at war. A more clever man would have found a way to avoid it but do you know, he seems to have been right. We're winning.

BRAUN

And what he says about the Jews is not true?

SIEMI

Karl says no serious scientist he knows buys all of that pure Aryan race stuff. There are good and sufficient reasons to want to get rid of them without this "impurity" hysteria. Where we must fear them is culturally. Given the opportunity they will supplant our values and our beliefs with their own. If I think and act like a Jew, if my ideas are Jew ideas, what difference if I mate with them or not? The damage is done.

BRAUN

Did you give the order to shoot?

SIEMI

What would you have done? I mean, seriously.

BRAUN

I don't know.

SIEMI

There's no way to know until you're in that situation. But what choice did I have? I said "fire" and closed my eyes--as if that made a difference. But I was trying to keep some part of myself back from it, I was trying to deny them my true participation. Ridiculous, childish. Like closing your eyes so no one can see you...

BRAUN

I understand what you felt.

SIEMI

Do you? Thank you...But that wasn't the worst of it. Afterwards, one of them was still alive. The Colonel ordered me to take my pistol and finish the job.

Siemi lapses into silence for a moment.

SIEMI

(continuing)

What a horrible business...I had made eye contact with this man before they were shot, you see. They'd been beaten a bit before we arrived--a rifle butt does nothing good to a man's face--and they were bloody and covered with mud and mucus and some of them were crying but this one, well, he was just looking at me. He wasn't pleading or whining, he was just looking at me, rather calmly, one man to another, as if he understood that I didn't want to be there any more than he did. I remember thinking, what could he have done so terrible to deserve this...My hand was shaking so much I was afraid I'd miss him, or just wound him further so I leaned down to get really close and the Colonel stopped me and told me to do it from a standing position because of the splatter. That was very delicate of him.

BRAUN

And you shot him?

SIEMI

I had to, didn't I? I think he understood that.

BRAUN

You saved him from further suffering.

SIEMI

"Saved" him? I killed him...

BRAUN

Someone else would have.

SIEMI

Yes, of course, but *I did*...I always wondered if I *could* kill a man, but I never wanted to find out...Frightening, the things we're capable of...The good Colonel informed me that it gets easier.

(more)

SIEMI (cont'd)

And he thought that I'd find that dreadful reassurance comforting.

Siemi drains the wine in a gulp.

SIEMI

(continuing)

Some of these Prussian types...I try to be a mole and just stay out of sight...And they've become even louder these days, with the advance into Russia. Some of them appear to think Stalin has invited us to a garden party--but they're getting very serious about things now, Braun. You must be careful when you go shopping.

BRAUN

Why me?

SIEMI

I mean everyone must. I was stopped the other day myself when I was in civilian clothes. You always carry your papers, don't you?

BRAUN

Of course.

SIEMI

They're in good order?

BRAUN

Of course.

Siemi is quietly expectant.

BRAUN

(continuing)

I mean...would you like to see them?

SIEMI

If you'd like me to.

BRAUN

Certainly.

Braun shows his papers. A nervous moment while Siemi studies them.

SIEMI

Ah...

BRAUN

Something wrong?

SIEMI

You're a publisher?

BRAUN

Yes, that's right.

SIEMI

I thought Karl said you were a waiter.

BRAUN

There was some confusion right after the fire, I may have blurted something...I am a publisher. We lived over my shop, it was destroyed as well.

SIEMI

Terrible thing. What god awful misfortune...Well, these are excellent. They'll do very nicely...Karl really shouldn't be out this late. It's unwise. Especially after that horrible business with his wife.

BRAUN

He hasn't really recovered.

SIEMI

I know, I know. I'm glad you're here for him, Wilhelm--if I may call you that.

BRAUN

Of course.

SIEMI

He needs somebody. I'd give anything to see him happy again.

BRAUN

How would you recognize it?

They share a laugh.

KARL ENTERS from outside, carrying a Christmas tree. Karl is trying to contain some deeply felt emotions, part anger, part grief.

SIEMI
Ho, it's Kris Kringle.

BRAUN
I'll get the stand.

Braun exits into rest of house.

KARL
Help me with this damned thing.

Braun enters immediately with a prepared stand for the tree. Siemi helps with the tree.

SIEMI
Did you go all the way to the
Black Forest for this?

KARL
It feels like it. I have enough
needles down my back.

SIEMI
You should have let me get it for
you.

KARL
I'm perfectly capable.

SIEMI
Did you get a good one? You know
your esthetic sense is a bit
impaired.

KARL
I know no such thing.

They get the tree in the stand then step back to view it.

SIEMI
A triumph. I misjudged you. You
have the soul of a Michelangelo.

Karl is clearly troubled.

SIEMI
(continuing)
What's wrong?

KARL

I don't know what to do next.
Graeti always did it.

SIEMI

Oh, Karl, I'm so sorry.

Siemi puts a hand on Karl's arm to comfort him, Karl moves away from it.

KARL

I'm all right.

SIEMI

I haven't done a tree since my
mother passed away. I always felt
that yours and Graeti's was mine
too.

BRAUN

There are no candles. I thought
perhaps a paper chain instead.

SIEMI

Yes, excellent, very good,
Wilhelm...What do you think, Karl?

Karl nods.

BRAUN

We have only old newspaper, but
I've prepared some.

Braun exits into rest of house. Karl slumps into his chair.

KARL

She loved Christmas. I always
thought it was such nonsense.
Braun said it would be a tribute
to her to have a tree so...

He stops, unable to continue.

SIEMI

He's quite right...You two seem to
have become rather friendly.

KARL

Hardly.

SIEMI

He anticipates your wishes.

KARL

(Of tree)

I can't look at it, it reminds me of her so much...Forgive me, this is a hard season. She was like a little girl at Christmas...Sorry.

Braun enters strips of newspaper and a pair of scissors for each man.

SIEMI

There's nothing wrong with grieving. You needn't be ashamed of it.

BRAUN

It's best to let your emotions come out.

KARL

(Angrily)

I don't need you two old women telling me about my emotions.

SIEMI

He's feeling better already. Get another scissors, Wilhelm. Join us.

BRAUN

Really?

SIEMI

Of course. It will make faster work, won't it, Karl.

KARL

Fine.

Braun exits again.

SIEMI

He's really a very nice man, Braun.

KARL

Is he?

Braun enters with another pair of scissors.

SIEMI

(To Braun)

Here, share with me.

Braun and Siemi share their paper, Karl sits apart.

Braun demonstrates how to make a chain, the others join in.

SIEMI

(continuing)

Well, this is very domestic, isn't it?...It's a very nice tree, Karl. Isn't it, Wilhelm?

BRAUN

It's a lovely tree.

SIEMI

You chose well, Karl. Who would have thought you had it in you?

KARL

I appreciate your efforts, Siemi, but I would rather not be jollied into conviviality.

SIEMI

Of course...May I offer you a glass of your wine?

KARL

I had three schnapps before I bought the tree. Alcohol has not improved my mood.

SIEMI

How about you, Wilhelm? Will you join me in a little Christmas cheer?

KARL

No.

SIEMI

No, what?

KARL

You may have as much as you like but "Wilhelm" will not join you.

SIEMI

Why not?

KARL

I don't care to waste my wine on him.

SIEMI

Karl! How rude.

BRAUN

That's quite all right. I don't need any.

SIEMI

Well...Amazing how depressing the holidays can be...This is perhaps not the time but I got you both a present...Marzipan...An owl for you, Karl, because of your great wisdom.

Siemi gives them the shaped marzipan figures.

SIEMI

(continuing)

And a rabbit for you, Wilhelm. No particular significance, I happen to like rabbits.

BRAUN

My son used to love marzipan.

SIEMI

You must miss him terribly.

BRAUN

I think of him every day.

(In sudden tears)

...Oh, my poor boy!

SIEMI

Oh, Wilhelm, I'm so sorry. If I had known--how foolish of me.

Braun sobs loudly.

KARL

(Sharply)

Can I never grieve without you wailing louder?

SIEMI

Karl, how unkind.

KARL

He's always carrying on like a damned...Je...gypsy. Do you have any Mediterranean blood, by any chance?

BRAUN

I'm very sorry. How inconsiderate of me to show that I care about those I love.

KARL

(Furiously)

Are you suggesting I do not?

SIEMI

Karl, please...

KARL

Shall I rend my garments and cover myself in ashes? Would that be Old Testament enough for you? Do you expect me to howl and keen? Should I ululate like one of your hags in black?

BRAUN

I'm sorry to have offended you.

Braun starts to exit.

KARL

(Sharply)

Stay here!

SIEMI

Perhaps I should go.

KARL

Because I mourn with dignity doesn't mean I don't grieve as much as any man.

BRAUN

There's no dignity in sorrow, there's only pain.

KARL

You *dare* to instruct me about dignity? You? I'm surprised your tongue doesn't cleave to your mouth when you speak the word.

SIEMI

I'll leave you two to it. I'll talk to you tomorrow, Karl. Wilhelm, another time soon, I hope.

Neither pays any attention to Siemi except to wait for him to leave. Siemi exits.

KARL

Is this your notion of "dignity"?

Karl produces a book from his pocket.

BRAUN

What is it?

KARL

I would have thought you could smell it from there. W.F. Braun, Verlag. That's you, isn't it? Wilhelm Friedrich "Braun?"

BRAUN

I have published many books.

KARL

Pornography is the truth of it.

BRAUN

...They are novels for special tastes.

KARL

You are a pornographer!

Karl tosses the book to the floor and pointedly wipes his hands on his pants.

KARL

(continuing)

Now talk to me about dignity.

BRAUN

It's a translation from the French...

KARL

You are disgusting.

BRAUN

One doesn't always have the opportunities to publish great art.

KARL

But one does have the opportunity to refuse to publish filth. You chose to do this.

BRAUN

It was business, there was a niche where they would permit me...I have done other books...Poetry. Schiller, Goethe, daring new poets, too...You don't understand. It was business. For a Jew there are not many opportunities, we go where we are allowed.

KARL

You have excuses for everything. It's always the rest of the world that's at fault, never you. Do any of you have any honor?

BRAUN

Could you ever admit we have a virtue? You see only what you want to see. You say we're only good for lending money and then you curse us for doing it well. If we have any fault, it's "how Jewish", if we succeed, it's "how Jewish!" And if we do brilliantly, then it's not the Jew, it's the German in the Jew. What would you have me do? If there's a place I can flourish, I go there.

KARL

Like a weed, sprouting from a dung heap. You lied to me. First you told me you were a waiter...

BRAUN

I never claimed that. I am not ashamed of what I do...

KARL

You have no shame, it is a virtue foreign to you people.

KARL

(continuing)

You have dishonored this house. I have taken you in out of charity and you have repaid me by deceit and dishonor. How typical. I was foolish enough to treat you with the trust and courtesy I would show to anyone else. I should have known, I should have known.

Braun starts to exit.

KARL
(continuing)
Stay where you are, sir!

BRAUN
I don't deserve this vilification.

KARL
Oh, *now* you have dignity. It's too late for such posturing. It's not in your blood. To my shame I've exposed my friends to you as if you were a decent human being. What on earth made a woman like my wife take pity on a swine like you?

BRAUN
(Suggestively)
Well, what do you *suppose* she saw in me? My moral rectitude? She got enough of *that* at home.

Pause. Karl is deeply stunned for a moment. Then he crosses to Braun.

KARL
What are you implying?

BRAUN
Nothing.

Karl slaps Braun.

KARL
My wife?...

Karl slaps Braun again. Braun puts up his hands to protect his face.

KARL
(continuing)
My wife?...

Karl slaps him again.

KARL
(continuing)
My wife?...

BRAUN
...I meant nothing...nothing happened...

Karl slaps him again and again and again, raging. His blows land on Braun's protective hands. Karl throws Braun to the floor and kicks him.

KARL
You--Jew!

Karl continues to kick Braun who tries to crawl away. Karl continues to call him Jew as if it were the worst thing he could think of, punctuating each kick with the word.

KARL
(continuing)
Jew!...Jew!...Jew!

Braun crawls almost all the way to the exit to the outside.

KARL
(continuing)
Out! I want you out!

BRAUN
I have nowhere to go!

KARL
Out!

BRAUN
Please...

KARL
Out!

BRAUN
Please, they'll kill me.

KARL
Out!

BRAUN
I loved her, too!

Karl screams wordlessly, wrenches the door open and with a final volley of kicks and curses he gets Braun out of the door on his hands and knees, then slams the door.

Spent by the effort, Karl catches his breath then walks to the entrance to the rest of the house and exits. The stage is empty briefly, the Karl enters again, carrying a glass of wine. He then sits in his chair and looks at the tree.

The door to the outside opens slowly. Cautiously Braun enters with the key to the door still in his hand.

As quietly as possible he closes the door and then sits against it, his arms wrapped around his knees, making himself as inconspicuous as possible.

Karl is aware of Braun but he does not look at him huddled by the door. After a moment he picks up the paper chain and starts working on it again.

CURTAIN

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

SCENE ONE

TIME: Months later

SCENE: The same.

AT RISE: Karl is reading the newspaper.

Enter Braun with a tray with cookies and after dinner drinks. Karl absently tastes the cookie. Braun sits and takes a glass for himself.

KARL

(From newspaper)

Our victorious troops are pushing
the Americans back into the sea.
Rubbish. Where is Bastogne,
exactly?

BRAUN

I have no idea.

KARL

Hitler promises surgical removal
of the Allied abscess...Fairy
tales, they print nothing but
fables and myth...Next they'll
tell us Tristan and Isolde are
winning battles single-handedly.
Quadruplehandedly, whatever it
is...This is delicious, Braun.

BRAUN

Thank you. The trick is to not
overwork the dough.

KARL

Oh, yes?

BRAUN

Lightly, lightly, that's the
secret.

KARL

Glad to hear it.

BRAUN

People tend to knead too
vigorously. It wasn't easy getting
the butter. I had to do some
ration trading with Frau Hegler.

KARL

You overestimate my interest in
the subject...but a good cookie.

BRAUN

Thank you.

Braun sits with his own drink. Karl returns to the newspaper.

KARL

(Newspaper)

There's supposed to be a paper
shortage and yet they keep
publishing this catalogue of lies.

BRAUN

How did you like the carrots? They
were stringy, weren't they?

KARL

What?

BRAUN

I thought the carrots were stringy.

KARL

Carrots were fine.

BRAUN

I don't see why a war means you
get stunted carrots.

KARL

Good god, man, listen to yourself.

BRAUN

It's what I have to offer. What
else do I have to talk about?

Knock on the door.

KARL

Thank God.

BRAUN

Are we expecting Siemi tonight?

KARL

I certainly hope so.

BRAUN

I wish you'd let me know ahead of time, I would have made more cookies. Don't eat any more of them until he's had some.

Braun goes to the door. Siemi enters.

SIEMI

Wilhelm! How nice to see you.

BRAUN

Hello, Siemi. We've missed you lately.

SIEMI

I've missed you, too.

KARL

Hello, stranger. Where have you been?

SIEMI

Oh, fighting the good fight, you know. Holding off the barbarian hordes while you two revel in the joys of domesticity.

KARL

"Joys" may be overstating it.

BRAUN

I do my best. Nothing's ever good enough for him. You don't know how hard it is these days to even put food on the table...

KARL

I am content, Braun. Please, don't start that refrain again.

SIEMI

It's always so peaceful here with you two.

BRAUN

I have some beer for you.

SIEMI

Oh, good man. How thoughtful. That would be wonderful, thank you.

Braun exits to rest of house.

SIEMI

(continuing)

I wasn't joking. Your home really is a haven for me. The rest of the world is--pfff--what shall I call it? Hideous. Tedious. Unbelievable. Commonplace. It's like the world is collapsing around our ears but it all happens so slowly it's not alarming, it's just annoying.

KARL

It's going badly, isn't it?

SIEMI

The war? At best we can make it very costly for them to get to Berlin. But stop them?...I'm not really involved in any of that, of course.

Braun enters with beer.

SIEMI

(continuing)

Thank you, Wilhelm.

KARL

Siemi says we're losing.

BRAUN

Really?

SIEMI

You sound pleased.

BRAUN

Of course not. I'm surprised, the newspaper is so positive.

SIEMI

Well, you can always count on the newspapers...Now, for god's sake, Wilhelm, don't tell anyone that I'm pessimistic. I'll be dragged out and shot as a defeatist.

BRAUN

Who would I tell? I only speak to the butcher.

SIEMI

I mean it, there are no two sides on this issue.

BRAUN

Of course.

KARL

You seem tired, Siemi.

SIEMI

Exhausted. They have me overseeing the Jewish transportation. There's not a one of them who doesn't claim it's a mistake that he was chosen to go. He knows so-and-so, he's been assured of such-and-such...the women hold up their babies--as if I would separate a woman from her baby. What do they expect me to do, raise it myself? And the bribes, and the tears...

BRAUN

Where are you sending them?

SIEMI

East. Poland, Czechoslovakia...

BRAUN

What will happen to them?

SIEMI

They'll be resettled elsewhere.

BRAUN

I hear, one hears...rumors.

SIEMI

This would be from the butcher? What's his name?

BRAUN

Just whispers while standing in line...Just gossip. It comes from no one I know.

KARL

You shouldn't dignify gossip by repeating it.

SIEMI

You're a hard man, Karl. Who doesn't like a good piece of gossip? And why not, it's usually more interesting than the truth. The military runs on it...They're being sent to labor camps, Wilhelm. If they work hard they'll be fine until some other home out of the country is found for them. It's those rumors that make things harder. They come thinking god-knows-what and the men are sometimes forced to get brutal. A few louts enjoy it but it's very wearing on morale for most of them. The thing is, one has only so much sympathy to go around. After the fiftieth or the hundredth falls to his knees and kisses your boots it's just tiresome.

KARL

This is horrible. I had no idea this was going on.

BRAUN

I've heard things. Surely there's another way to treat them.

SIEMI

Frankly, I think it's a question of the openings into the rail cars being too small, there are too many people being squeezed through too small a space. But as a group it's amazing how docile they are. It's like dealing with frightened sheep. Get a few going in the right direction and the rest follow.

KARL

This is very callous of you.

SIEMI

I'm just reporting how it is. Do you know how the soldiers get them in the villages?

(more)

SIEMI (cont'd)

They stand outside and yell,
"Jews, come out!" The Jews look
out the window, see the other Jews
who are already there, and just
file out to join them. Can you
imagine us behaving like that? Why
don't they fight back? That's the
incomprehensible part. Any man
would fight back. But not the Jews.

KARL

Perhaps because you have the
weapons and they don't.

SIEMI

But there's the fallacy, you see.
The soldiers are always
outnumbered. If they rushed the
guns, a few would die but they
could overpower them, turn the
guns around. Even at the camps
there are never more bullets than
there are Jews. They are too
selfish to sacrifice themselves,
for the group. They'll do anything
to survive another five minutes no
matter how degrading those minutes
may be.

KARL

Are you listening to yourself?
These are humans, not sheep. Rush
the guns? What sort of madness is
that? Why should they need to
sacrifice themselves? Why do you
talk about survival at all? What
do they have to survive?

SIEMI

...No real reason, of course.
They'll be treated well enough in
the camps.

BRAUN

They are frightened.

KARL

As they should be. I would be too,
with armed soldiers strutting
around.

SIEMI

Initially, but you would get over it, Karl. You have reserves of pride to fall back on. You weren't born frightened, you haven't lived that way...How about you, Wilhelm? Would you be frightened?

BRAUN

Under what circumstances?

SIEMI

If soldiers were calling for you to come out.

BRAUN

Why would they do that?

SIEMI

Or if you were being herded into a box car.

BRAUN

I would hope I would react like any good German. Why can't they just leave them alone?

SIEMI

Because left alone they won't go away. It's been made clear enough for years now that they aren't welcome. But they cling, you can't shake them off, they won't let go, they won't go away.

BRAUN

They have nowhere else to go.

SIEMI

But why is that? They are the most despised group in the history of the world. They are welcome nowhere. We have offered them to other countries by the boatload, no one wants them.

KARL

That may be a sin of Christianity rather than a fault of the Jews.

SIEMI

They were slaves in Babylonia,
they were slaves in Egypt, the
Romans hated them so much they
kicked them out of Judea. This was
all pre-Christianity. They are
hated for reasons beyond religion.

BRAUN

But why? They are such a small
number of people.

SIEMI

If you consider millions a small
number.

BRAUN

Who are they harming? They're just
trying to live their lives.

SIEMI

And infest ours. They think
themselves superior to the rest of
the world. They want all that we
have but only to keep it for
themselves. Let one enter and it's
like the camel's nose in the tent.
One gets in, he brings in others.
Soon the tent is full and the
original owner is forced out and
only the "chosen" remain.

BRAUN

They...they don't seem...

SIEMI

You've known a few, I suppose?
Personally, I mean?

BRAUN

...Here and there.

SIEMI

Pleasant enough, weren't they?
That's part of the danger, some of
them are quite charming. Getting
to know them individually is not
a good idea. Like having a pet
snake. One can grow fond of
anything on an individual basis.
It's hard to truly hate anyone you
actually know in person.

KARL

Hate, Siemi? Why are you talking about hatred? You've never hated anyone.

SIEMI

Why are we so afraid to admit to it? It's the most natural emotion of all. Because that's not what good little Christians feel? Because our mothers tell us to be nice? Then why do we have it in us? Why is it always so close to the surface, waiting to explode? The Russians were our friends a matter of months ago, now they're subhuman beasts and we *hate* them and we are *happy* to hate them. We enjoy hating them.

KARL

Enjoy?

SIEMI

We revel in it. We love to hate. It is so liberating to be given permission, to be encouraged to indulge the most intense of our passions. That's Hitler's genius, that's what that egomaniacal little runt understood instinctively, it feels *good* to hate. What other emotion makes you feel so alive? Can one feel one's blood bubbling and skin prickling whenever the Turks are mentioned because one *loves* the whole swarthy bunch of them? No. But can just the mention of their name set your heart pounding if you *hate* them? How long can you feel joy? A minute, two? Happiness, whatever that is? Once a month, once a year? Even lust goes away after you've had sex. You can hate all day, all year, you can hate for a lifetime. It's the one reliable, lasting passion in the human makeup. You can feel the same intense arousal, the pressure in your head, the racing of your heart, the churning in your stomach any time, every time, all the time...

KARL

Siemi, stop this. It's vulgar.

SIEMI

It's genius, Karl. How else could such a man become our leader? We were adrift, we weren't certain who we were anymore, our history alone was not enough so he told us who we were by telling us who we were not. We are Those who are not Them!...He circumvented our intelligence, he ignored our minds and went straight for the heart.

BRAUN

I can't listen to any more of this.

Braun starts to exit into rest of house.

SIEMI

Why, are you immune? Or is it just the word "hatred" that you object to? Would it sound better with a different name? What if we call it something more acceptable, oh, "patriotism", for instance? Don't you believe it's wonderful? Try it! Join a few thousand of us, come to a rally, listen to the music, march with your heart in your throat and your guts in your head and your lungs bellowing "Heil Hate! Heil Hate! Heil Hate!"

Siemi is on his feet and parading in a self-parody, throwing out his arm in the Nazi salute.

KARL

Stop it, Siemi. Stop it! Stop it!

Siemi stops and collapses within himself.

SIEMI

It's killing me, Karl. The things I have to do...

KARL

Don't let them...

SIEMI

You don't understand. The things I have to do, they become the things I want to do. It's impossible to see these people as human any more! I know it's wrong, I know what you think of it, it's what I think of it, too, but I can't help it, it's how I *feel*!

KARL

I don't understand this. How did this happen to you? You were no more prejudiced than anybody else.

SIEMI

But it was always there, crawling just under the skin, dying to get out...I can't escape from it now, I have to scratch and out it leaps. It's killing me, Karl, it's overwhelming me.

KARL

You sound like someone I don't know.

SIEMI

I know how I sound. It appalls me to listen to myself, I would not have stayed in the same room with such a man three years ago...but at the same time I know it's true. I know it's true and I know it's not true and that's what's ripping me apart! If I could just give in entirely, just let go and let it carry me away the way some of them do...

KARL

I don't know what to say to any of this, Siemi. I don't know how to help you with it.

SIEMI

But what I said is true.

KARL

Some of it is true. That doesn't make it more palatable. A few years ago none of us would have spoken like this.

SIEMI

A few years ago none of us really faced it. I've given up the hypocrisy.

KARL

Anti-Semitism is the natural state of the Western mind and the struggle against it the mark of a civilized man. You've given up the struggle, Siemi.

BRAUN

One of you hates the Jews. One merely dislikes them. Is there a difference to the Jew?

KARL

(sharply)

Ask the ones in the boxcar.

SIEMI

They're using Jew hunters now.

BRAUN

(Involuntarily)

Oh, god.

KARL

Jew hunters?

BRAUN

I've heard of them. People who find Jews and turn them in.

KARL

Find them where?

BRAUN

On the street. In a cafe. Anywhere.

KARL

How do they find them?

SIEMI

At this point with all the obvious ones gone it takes one to know one. Almost all of the hunters are Jews themselves. That's how they stay out of the camps. They have quotas to make sure they remain diligent.

BRAUN
How can they tell?

SIEMI
Well, that's the problem, isn't it? How can one tell? One can ask, I suppose. Are you a Jew, Karl?

KARL
No.

SIEMI
Are you a Jew, Wilhelm?

BRAUN
I don't understand.

SIEMI
Are you a Jew?

BRAUN
Is this a game?

SIEMI
Are you a Jew?

KARL
This is ugly, Siemi. One doesn't ask one's friends such things. It's insulting.

SIEMI
It's such a simple question, I just want to make a point. Are you a Jew, Wilhelm?

BRAUN
No.

SIEMI
You are not a Jew?

BRAUN
No, I'm not a Jew.

SIEMI
There you are, you see. How is one to know anymore? What sane man wouldn't deny it? Thus the Jew hunters.

BRAUN
Maybe there aren't any left to find.

SIEMI

People are hiding them, some out of perfectly understandable motives, I'm sure. Even commendable motives...But anyone harboring a fugitive can end up going to a camp himself.

BRAUN

You wouldn't send a real German, would you?

SIEMI

I wouldn't. They would.

(Looking at Karl)

Do you understand the seriousness? Anyone hiding a Jew can be treated like a Jew himself.

KARL

You already said that. Why are you telling me?

SIEMI

In case you know anyone who might be thinking of sheltering one. He would be putting himself in grave danger. It's important to know the law. You're a believer in the law.

KARL

Some laws are not right.

SIEMI

Because they're unnatural?

KARL

Because they're wrong. Siemi, I'm going to ask you to go now. I'm feeling very tired.

SIEMI

Are you all right?

KARL

Yes, I'm fine. Just tired.

SIEMI

I should have kept it to myself.

KARL

You can always tell me what you think. I don't have to agree. I'm just tired.

SIEMI

Of course.

(To Wilhelm)

Take good care of him.

BRAUN

I do.

SIEMI

Good night, Karl.

KARL

Good night.

BRAUN

Good night.

SIEMI

Goodbye, Wilhelm.

Siemi exits.

BRAUN

He knows!

KARL

No.

BRAUN

He knows about me!

KARL

If he does, he won't do anything about it.

BRAUN

Why not?

KARL

He's your friend.

BRAUN

My friend? Did you listen to what he said?

KARL

He's *my* friend. He would do nothing to harm you out of loyalty to me. He won't allow himself to know.

BRAUN

Did you not hear that symphony of hate?

KARL

Our loyalty is deeper than that.

BRAUN

I have heard of brothers
denouncing each other to save
their own skin.

KARL

Those are Jews.

BRAUN

And this man is your friend.

KARL

I don't want to hear from you just
now.

BRAUN

You are friends with a man
dripping in blood.

KARL

Leave me alone. I've had enough
for one night.

BRAUN

He has the run of your house, the
benefit of your friendship, a
claim on your emotions...

KARL

Can't you be quiet even to save
yourself? I'm this close to
joining Siemi! This close! We were
raised the same, we heard the same
voices, the same slurs, we
breathed in the same air...Don't
you understand how easy it is to
give in to it? Do you know how
much effort of mind and will it
takes to resist?

BRAUN

Do you think I lack someone to
hate?

KARL

Us?

BRAUN

Us? I am us.

KARL

I have enough weight on me now, don't add your self-importance. This is not about you, it's not about the Jews, don't flatter yourself. This is about the destruction of the most cultured nation in the world. Bach and Beethoven and Goethe and Schiller and Kant and Schopenhauer...German is the very *language* of science. And now, centuries of honor and dignity and humanity gone in a generation. My country is bleeding its integrity from self-inflicted wounds...

BRAUN

Because of your treatment of the Jews.

KARL

No. Because Siemi is right, because we have surrendered ourselves to hatred. You were not special, you were just convenient....

BRAUN

Not special? How many thousands of people is he cramming onto those trains? There are no Jews left in the city! How can you say we're not special!

KARL

Self important, even in your destruction? You are victims, if you weren't here he would have found others. Did you plan it, did you make new laws, did you organize, did you implement, did you make choices, did you even resist? It's not about the victim, it's about the axe! My country has made a machine for self-destruction and you are convenient fuel.

BRAUN

You will betray me.

KARL

You have just betrayed yourself.

BRAUN

I knew you'd gloat that I denied
I was a Jew. What of it? Shall I
volunteer to be more fuel for your
machine?

KARL

So easy for you, done in an eye
blink. I would never have done it.

BRAUN

Should I doom myself for pride? Do
you think we've survived for
thousands of years by pride? We've
survived by surviving, we've eaten
the slops from your table, we've
licked your boots, we've debased
ourselves in all the ways you've
demanded. Is there anything that
we can do so you will allow us our
pride?

KARL

Fight back. Stand up and fight
back. Die for your pride, if need
be. Earn it.

BRAUN

You will turn me over to him,
won't you?

KARL

No.

BRAUN

You will. You keep me here only
because of your wife.

KARL

I kept you because she died in
your cause. You're still here
because you're my only reminder of
her belief in me...I know you
weren't her only Jew, I've figured
that out. She was helping to
smuggle you people out of the
country, wasn't she?...If only she
had succeeded.

BRAUN

There's nothing to keep you from
betraying me now. Nothing binds me
to you, not love, not family, not
money. You don't even like me.

KARL

If you have any redeeming virtue,
I've not seen it.

BRAUN

You would never allow yourself to
like someone like me. You think
you're superior.

KARL

And yet I've taken you into my
home, I've given you food and
shelter.

BRAUN

As an exercise in something, what,
self-control? Always with a fine
film of contempt.

KARL

That's the difference between me
and Siemi. He thinks one would
grow fond of a pet snake. I can
only tolerate it. But I'm not
doing this for you. It's never
been for you.

BRAUN

Why? You're not a good man.

KARL

No, I'm not good. I'm never more
than an inch from slipping into
Siemi's skin. I feel every
churning twist of the gut that he
does. I'm just like everybody else
except I still cling to the
principle of decency. People like
you survive only because of the
tenuous grasp on decency of people
like me.

BRAUN

Despite your contempt.

KARL

Because of my shame for my
contempt.

BRAUN

If it depends on your contempt
I'll always be safe because you
have an inexhaustible supply.

KARL

Don't you understand how impotent good people feel to see their countrymen behaving like hooligans and bullies and we can only stand by and watch?

BRAUN

Why don't you do something about it?

KARL

What can one man do?

BRAUN

Take your own advice. Fight back.

KARL

I am. I'm fighting back with you. You're a Jew, but you're my Jew and I'm keeping you. You're my resistance and my penance in one.

BRAUN

So you do it to prove you're superior to me. Your final act of contempt...I won't stay in a house where I'm despised. I don't trust your decency. Siemi knows, he'll be back. You think you can count on his friendship to protect you, but it won't, any more than your contempt will protect me. He'll be back and you'll probably suffer as a result. I think you'd almost like that, it would make you a martyr and it would prove to you that I'm everything you think I am. Well, I won't give you the satisfaction of betrayal any more than you'll give it to me. I'm leaving this house.

KARL

I have never prevented you from going.

Braun walks to the door and then stops. Karl watches. There is a long moment of indecision.

BRAUN

There are no places for me to live out there. Only places to die.

Karl continues to watch. Braun is torn but ultimately his fear is the stronger. He turns to Karl, imploring with a look.

BRAUN
(continuing)
You can't ask me to kill myself.

Karl watches.

BRAUN
(continuing)
I wouldn't last a minute.

Another long moment of hesitation, but it is now clear to both of them that Braun can't make himself leave.

KARL
(as if nothing has
happened)
Have we any tea?

BRAUN
(enormous relief)
Yes. Shall I make you a cup?

KARL
And one more of those delicious
cookies if we have enough for each
of us. Then tell me again how you
managed to make them so light.
Very little scientific study has
been made of the actual chemistry
of cooking, did you know that?

Karl picks up the newspaper and pretends to read it again.

KARL
(continuing)
I'd be interested to hear your
thoughts on the subject.

With gratitude, close to tears, Braun takes the tray with the drinks and exits into the kitchen.

CURTAIN

END SCENE

ACT TWO

SCENE TWO

TIME: Months later.

SCENE: The same.

Karl sits, reading the newspaper. Braun enters with the tray holding an after dinner drink. Karl feels absently on the tray for a cookie without looking up, finds none.

BRAUN

I made nothing. I have neither
flour nor sugar.

KARL

It's not important.

A knock on the door. Braun exits immediately into the rest of the house. Karl rises and crosses to the door.

KARL

(continuing)
Who is it?

SIEMI

Siemi.

Karl opens the door, Siemi enters. To Karl's surprise, Siemi embraces him. Karl accepts it with surprise.

SIEMI

(continuing)
Hello, my friend.

KARL

Hello...How are you?

SIEMI

Ah, well. Grand and glorious, as
you see.

KARL

Yes, ever an impressive sight.

SIEMI

Is Wilhelm here?

KARL

Where else would he be?

SIEMI

Of course. Such a pair of stay-at-homes...Not that there's any place left to go.

Siemi calls into the rest of the house.

SIEMI

(continuing)

Wilhelm! Come out, come out...Bring the champagne, it's time for a celebration.

KARL

A celebration? Is the war over?

SIEMI

Alas, not yet. I've been promoted to Major.

Braun enters from rest of the house. He does not bring anything.

KARL

Congratulations.

SIEMI

Everyone above me has been killed...or blown his brains out. Same result. So they finally recognized my merits.

KARL

Does it mean anything in practical terms?

SIEMI

Not really. Snipers shoot the higher ranks first, so I'm a better target.

KARL

What snipers?

SIEMI

Here, in the city.

BRAUN

The Allies are in the city?

SIEMI

Not yet. These are partisans. Resistance fighters, whatever you want to call them.

KARL

We're killing each other now?

SIEMI

Killing is infectious...That's why I'm not wearing my uniform now...although I could probably be shot by some of my more officious comrades for that, too.

KARL

Be careful.

SIEMI

I'm not sure how to do that, anymore. Do you have room for another in here?

KARL

The Allies must be close.

SIEMI

The Americans are about 150 miles from here, the Russians considerably farther, thank god.

BRAUN

Then it's almost over!

SIEMI

A month. Two, maybe. They've become quite frantic about finishing our work while we can.

BRAUN

But you're done, your work is finished.

SIEMI

Not quite, I'm afraid.

KARL

There are no Jews left, Siemi.

SIEMI

It seems there are always some left. All of us have made our little exceptions. Mistresses, grand parents, orphans, all squirreled away in attics and basements and hidey-holes...Some in plain sight.

(more)

SIEMI (cont'd)

There are hundreds of them still in this city alone because of the kindness of my colleagues...Sadly, it's time to give them up. We're under great pressure, people are turning on their colleagues. Officers have been shot.

BRAUN

But it's over, it's all over!

SIEMI

For some...One of those they caught was a former student at your university, Karl. A draftsman turned forger. One of his "clients" betrayed him to us and he has betrayed many of his clients in return, of course. He kept a list. It seems he had some plans for blackmail. You almost admire his ambition.

KARL

Why are you telling us this?

SIEMI

I'm not the only one who has seen the list.

KARL

When did you become aware of this list?

SIEMI

Several months ago.

Braun starts to exit.

SIEMI

(continuing)

Stay, Wilhelm.

BRAUN

No...

SIEMI

Join us.

BRAUN

I think I should go.

Siemi takes out a pistol. He does not point it.

SIEMI

Do stay. I think this will interest you.

KARL

Put that away.

SIEMI

I know, it's indecorous. It makes people uncomfortable at first... But I've grown rather accustomed to it.

KARL

There will be no guns in this house.

SIEMI

It eliminates the need to explain everything. Indulge me for a moment, please.

Braun is hanging in indeterminate space, half way to the door, halfway to the men.

SIEMI

(continuing)

Wilhelm?

Braun joins the men.

SIEMI

(continuing)

Thank you. I understand that this is awkward for you.

KARL

If you've known for months...

SIEMI

I thought I was pretty clear in my warning, without actually insulting anyone. I hoped you would take care of this problem yourself.

KARL

How? Should I betray myself by betraying someone else?

SIEMI

Well, that's exactly the dilemma I faced.

(more)

SIEMI (cont'd)

Should I betray my friendship by betraying my friend? My two friends, let me say. Please remember that, you're both my friends. But now the stakes are higher. If I don't betray my friends, my colleagues will betray me. The cost of that is... unacceptable, as I'm sure you understand.

BRAUN

There must be a compromise that's possible.

SIEMI

Too late to strike a bargain.

BRAUN

Don't say that, there must be something, some arrangement, some way we can do business...

KARL

(Sharply)

Don't do this to yourself.

BRAUN

Will you allow me to negotiate for myself? There's always a way to accommodate one another...

SIEMI

Quiet now, Wilhelm.

BRAUN

Quiet? You ask me to be quiet when my life is at stake? While you two discuss me as if I'm some abstract concept? I'm here, I'm alive...

Siemi lifts the pistol. Braun falls silent immediately.

SIEMI

You see, Karl? It's quite eloquent in its own way.

KARL

This is unforgivable, Siemi.

SIEMI

Don't say that. You'll forgive me, it's not my wish, none of this is my desire. We all have to forgive one another.

BRAUN

What about those who aren't able to? Will I even be around to forgive you?

SIEMI

Must you be so shrill? I'm trying to explain things to you rationally.

KARL

There can be no rational discourse when one of us holds a gun.

SIEMI

Very well.

Siemi places the gun where it is equidistant from all of them.

SIEMI

(continuing)

Now can we discuss a rational solution?

BRAUN

Rational? The topic itself isn't rational! You're talking about my life!

SIEMI

I'm talking about everybody's life. Mine, if nothing changes here. Karl's if he does nothing to change it.

BRAUN

And mine in any case. You two just want to find a way to save yourselves.

KARL

What happens if I continue to hide him?

SIEMI

"Hide" is not the operative word anymore. His presence is known.

(more)

SIEMI (cont'd)

They'll come for him in a day or two if I don't bring him in now. There's no longer any question of your protecting him, Karl. Even I can't do that anymore. In a way your participation now is only formal. Either you give him up willingly or they take him away...Sorry, Wilhelm, I know how that must sound.

BRAUN

No, you don't.

KARL

And if I "formally" refuse to give him up?

SIEMI

Then you will pay the consequences, and I must decide whether I will formally turn you in or pay the consequences myself. Wilhelm will pay in any event.

BRAUN

Oh, my god.

KARL

And if he leaves?

SIEMI

Who can say? He can try to hide somewhere else, he can run towards the Americans, he could get lucky.

BRAUN

And if I'm not lucky?

SIEMI

You can hope to be lucky.

KARL

What will happen if I give him up?...Truthfully, Siemi.

SIEMI

If you had done it earlier he would have gone to a camp and there, perhaps...he would have had a chance. Now, I can't be sure they would bother with the transportation.

BRAUN
I can't believe this.

KARL
You can't expect me to turn him
over knowing what he faces.

SIEMI
What else can you do?

KARL
I can continue to protect him.

SIEMI
How? Throw your body in front of
him? They would use two bullets
instead of one. We still have
enough ammunition for that. Or
they might decide to take you in
for what they call "questioning"
to see if you know anyone else
whose courage is too great for his
own good.

KARL
It's not courage.

SIEMI
Stubbornness?

KARL
...Just decency.

SIEMI
That is a very frail defense.

KARL
Tissue thin. But it's all we have.

BRAUN
I won't be discussed this way!

SIEMI
This is not about you.

BRAUN
And I won't be ignored! If I'm to
die anyway I'm going to be part of
it!...I should take your gun and
shoot you!

SIEMI
Of course you should! Why do you
think I put it there?

All three become intensely aware of the gun and their respective distances from it.

SIEMI

(continuing)

Do you remember I told you how they don't resist? How they almost never grab a gun from a guard and turn it on him?

BRAUN

It's a test of some kind! You want to see what I'll do!

Braun is quivering with fear and indecision.

SIEMI

They'll suffer violence like a whipped dog but they won't use it in their own defense.

BRAUN

It's a trick! I know it's a trick!

SIEMI

How strange that is.

BRAUN

You want to humiliate me!

SIEMI

Oh, I don't need to do that.

Braun can not force himself to take the two steps necessary to grab the gun.

BRAUN

If I do you'll shoot me!

KARL

It's shameful to torment him.

SIEMI

I wanted you to see. He's not worth a sacrifice.

KARL

Because he's weak and cowardly? Who needs protection more? Braun, do what you think you should.

BRAUN

I'm staying here. They may not really know, it may be a trick...

KARL
It's not a trick.

BRAUN
I won't go out there.

SIEMI
Karl has sheltered you for months.
If you stay he'll suffer for it.

BRAUN
He'll suffer? What about me? What
about me?...Then force me to go,
throw me out. I'm not leaving
otherwise.

KARL
I won't do that.

BRAUN
I can't commit suicide for you!
That's what you want, isn't it?
You want me to remove myself
entirely. I won't. I won't.

KARL
And I won't send you away. For
some problems there is no solution.

SIEMI
Shall we all await the apocalypse
together then?

BRAUN
Why have I been cursed like this?

SIEMI
You people cursed yourself when
you invented your god.

KARL
Everyone invents a god.

SIEMI
Perhaps they invented the wrong
one.

Braun steps forward quickly and grabs the gun. He points it
at Siemi, his hand shaking.

SIEMI
(continuing)
Well, at last.

BRAUN
Now let's see *you* rush the guns!

KARL
Braun...don't.

BRAUN
(to Siemi)
I should kill you!

Karl steps in front of Siemi, protecting him.

KARL
No, Braun.

BRAUN
Why shouldn't I shoot you,
too?...No answer? It's hard to be
so "intelligent" with a gun in
your face, isn't it? Are you
frightened?

KARL
Yes.

BRAUN
Then remember this, I want you to
remember this, I *demand* that you
remember this.

Braun points the gun away from them and starts towards the door.

KARL
Where will you go?

BRAUN
(shrugs)
To get lucky.

SIEMI
Shall I give him the bullets?

Siemi looks at Karl, questioningly.

KARL
He has no bullets?

SIEMI
I'm not suicidal just yet.

BRAUN
You'd send me out with an empty
gun?

SIEMI

If I give him the bullets he might
shoot an innocent soldier.

BRAUN

"Innocent?"

SIEMI

Should I favor his life over
someone else?

BRAUN

The soldier has bullets!

SIEMI

The world gave them to him, I
didn't.

KARL

Siemi...we owe him the bullets. We
owe him that much.

Siemi gives bullets to Braun who doesn't know how to get them
into the gun.

SIEMI

He doesn't even know how to work
a gun.

BRAUN

I will learn.

SIEMI

You'll find it's not so easy to
use it on a man.

KARL

I suspect he'll learn how to do
that, too.

Braun manages to get the bullets into the gun, loads and
cocks it.

BRAUN

Goodbye, Herr Professor Doctor.
Siemi. It has been a very
interesting visit.

Braun opens door, turns to face them.

BRAUN
(continuing)
Now *I* curse *you*. I curse you
equally. May you rot in hell as
long as man has memory.

SIEMI
Man's memory is very short.

BRAUN
Not mine.

Braun exits.

KARL
...Does he have any chance?

SIEMI
About as much as we do.

Karl looks out window at the city.

KARL
Nothing will ever be the same
after this.

SIEMI
But will it ever change?

CURTAIN

THE END