

SCENE 1

EXT: Georg Trakl is looking out from a window. He is smoking a cigarette, looking at the camera in an unfocussed way. Silence.

The picture petrifies as the initial titles come up.

When these are finished, it "de-petrifies" and he becomes alive again.

The sound of a Schubert piano sonata begins to be heard.

SCENE 2

INT: Same as scene 1, but seen from within the room, the music room in a middle-class house in Salzburg, beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Georg Trakl is still looking out. He is similarly dressed (trousers and shirt) to the girl who is playing on a baby grand (blouse and skirt).

She finishes the sonata and does a few practice trills while Georg "comes to".

Grete Trakl

It is good to have a brother who listens.  
If you were listening.

Georg Trakl

I was transported: far from here.

Grete

(laughs)  
It is not so bad here! You are so gloomy.

Georg

It is a vile city and I wish I were  
somewhere else: far from here.

Grete

Always so gloomy. Go away and write a  
poem about it.

Georg

(comes from the window to stand behind  
Gretl and puts his hands on her  
shoulders. They are both comfortable)

I will. After I've been out for a drink  
with Buschbeck.

Gretl

You will show me? Keep nothing from  
me?

(Her hand reaches to his. A momentary  
contact before he pulls away.)

Georg

Play again, please, Gretl. Something  
by Liszt.

(Gretl stands and looks through the  
manuscripts in the music stool, picks  
one out and puts in on the stand.)

Gretl

Be my page-turner.

Georg.

(laughs). Your slave, in every way.

(He sits next to her on the edge of  
the piano stool. Their bodies touch.  
He lights up another cigarette. Gretl

sniffs the smoke.)

Gretl

That is more than tobacco.

Georg

Don't tell Papa. You know how he goes on.

(She begins to play through the piece. Smoke rises. Her hands on the keys, his on his cigarette, then on the page as he turns it. After a time the camera goes out through the window and into a park with autumn trees. The music fades into a voiceover of "Musik Im Mirabell")

### SCENE 3

INT: a bar in Salzburg. Georg and Erhard Buschbeck, his closest friend, sit together. A waiter brings beer. Erhard pays. They drink.

Erhard

I feel your interest in the literary circle is waning.

Georg

(lights a cigarette)

It is true. I come away depressed, rather than inspired.

Erhard

That won't do. These last poems you have read to us, I like them. They show promise.

Georg

No thanks to the Apollo Literary

circle.

(they drink and smoke for a while.)

Erhard

Karl says he'll come by later.

Georg

Then I must go. I owe him money.

Erhard

You owe me money. Twenty crowns  
as I remember.

Georg

(laughs, and picks up the local  
paper from the table.)

You are my good friend. Look, my  
piece here on Salome, in the culture  
page. They are going to pay me five  
crowns for this.

Erhard

(looking at the paper with GT)

Believe it when you have them  
in your pocket.

Georg

But it is a start. Five crowns.  
I have credit now. Herr Ober!

(calls for another round)

Erhard

(tsks, but smiles a bit)

We must find somewhere to  
publish your poems.

Georg

I need a rich patron. If others

can do it, why not I?

Erhard

I am your only patron so far,  
and I am broke from buying drinks  
for you. We will find someone to  
publish. I have ideas.

Georg

Good man. You are a good friend,  
and repayment and reward will come  
to you. Let us go before Karl gets  
here. His demands for cash will  
sour the atmosphere.

Erhard

(they drink up)

Where to?

Georg

Judengasse, maybe. A few drinks  
first.

Erhard

I have no money for whores, you  
know.

Georg

(grunts) Let's go anyway.

#### SCENE 4

EXT: an alley in Salzburg at night.  
Some lights in the darkness show  
the window panes like mirrors. EB  
and GT are walking down arm in arm.  
EB is the worse for wear. It is  
quiet apart from EB trying to sing.  
Two prostitutes in a doorway laugh  
at them.

Georg

Ladies, I beg you, do not mock  
the afflicted. Or the drunk.

1<sup>st</sup> prostitute

It's our young gentleman. Good  
evening, sir.

2<sup>nd</sup> prostitute

Anything you're wanting this  
evening, Herr Trakl?

Georg

Buy us a drink?

1<sup>st</sup> prostitute  
(to 2<sup>nd</sup> prostitute)

I thought it worked the other way;  
clients brought us drinks.

Georg

In one way or another, we all  
prostitute ourselves to live. I  
will read you a new poem for a bottle  
of schnapps.

Erhard

Georg, I'm pissed. Need to  
lie down.

Georg

Up, my friend! Excelsior!

1<sup>st</sup> prostitute

The cheapest things in the world:  
Poetry and men's promises.

Georg

There is some blame in your comment.

I did not ask to be a man,  
or a poet.

1<sup>st</sup> prostitute

And so? We are what we are.

Erhard

And I'm pissed. Had enough.  
(he slumps onto the floor)

Georg

(shakes him down as if to tidy  
him up. He pulls coins from EB's  
jacket, and gives one to the  
2<sup>nd</sup> prostitute)

If you can take him home this  
is for you. He's only in  
Kapuzinerstrasse.

2<sup>nd</sup> prostitute

His family will be pleased to see  
us propping him up at the door.

Georg

They'd be pleased to see me  
even less. Ring the bell and run  
away. Number 27. Family Buschbeck.

1<sup>st</sup> prostitute

(to 2<sup>nd</sup>)  
Come on, Gelinde. The nuns of the  
night to the rescue.  
(to EB) What's your name?

Erhard

Name's Erhard

1<sup>st</sup> prostitute

More of the "er" than the "hard"  
tonight I'll guess. Come on, son,  
Upsa. Let's get you home.

(off they go)

Erhard  
(in the distance)

You smell nice. Who are you?

SCENE 5

EXT: immediately after the above. Georg counts the money he stole from Erhard. He is happy. In the shop window's red reflection he looks Mephistophelean. He enters a bar a few doors down. He goes through twin doors.

SCENE 6

INT: A busy bar, loud, lights, smoke and fast music from a gypsy group at the bar's end. He goes to the near end of the bar and get's the waiter's attention. Waiter brings schnapps and beer on a tray.

GT stands in the shadows and looks around; slow pan across the people, drunks, students, whores. He knocks back the schnapps then lights up. Sitting with a couple of men is a younger prostitute, with hair and face reminiscent of Gretl. GT stares at her for a long time while the music plays, watches her hands, looks up, sees a mirror above her with him staring into it. One of the men with the prostitute pays up and leaves. GT lights up again and takes over the man's seat.

Georg

You're new. What do they call you?

Other man

She's busy.

Georg

I don't remember saying a damn word to you.

Other man

Listen, asshole, she's busy with me.

Georg

Who's he? Your pimp? Get rid of the bastard.

Prostitute

Calm down boys. We're all finished for the night so let's have a peaceful drink. Ok? Ok?

(the men grunt and suck on their beers. GT offers cigarettes.)

I'm Minette.

Georg

How much?

Prostitute

I told you, I'm finished for the night. If you're interested tomorrow, straight fuck, twenty crowns.

Georg

Seems reasonable. Cheers, cheers.

(Later - the man and girl have gone. GT sits alone with 4 schnapps glasses in front of him. The bar is still busy. The musicians are chatting to each other in a break. People seem to give GT a wide berth. The two prostitutes from earlier enter)

Ladies! Did you get him home? Sit with me. Let me buy you some

wine.

(they sit on either side of him)

1<sup>st</sup> prostitute

Our poet! Still upright?

Georg

I am never drunk. Not even a  
sea of schnapps is enough.

(He knocks them all back, orders 2  
Wines and a beer. For a while the  
prostitutes chat to each other across  
him. He finishes his beer, puts out  
his cigarette and interrupts them.)

I will give you a poem -

(recites "Nocturne")

(there is silence at the end. He  
turns to the older woman, pushes back  
her hair over her ear, gazes at her  
earring then rests his forehead  
against her neck.)

1<sup>st</sup> prostitute

Poor child. You are quite crazy,  
aren't you?

Georg

I am never crazy enough.

#### SCENE 7

INT: In GT's house in Mozartplatz,  
Salzburg. All is quiet. It is very  
late with everyone else asleep. He  
goes down a corridor into his room -  
a small bare room with a bed, ward-  
robe and a desk. He sits on the  
edge of his bed for a while, gets up  
again and goes back down the corridor.  
Mirrors at the corridor's end

reflect him. He pushes open a door and enters a much more comfortable bedroom. A mirror opposite shows him entering.

Georg

Gretl? Are you asleep?

(She stirs but doesn't seem to wake. He gazes on her. She rolls over, showing colouring like the prostitute. her nightgown has become undone at the front. Tentatively GT opens the collar. From behind we see him feasting his eyes on her breasts. Another light appears outside. He covers her up and moves to leave the room. We hear his mother as he closes the door.)

Mother

What is it? Why are you up?

Georg

I was on my way to bed. I thought I heard Gretl calling.

Mother

Is she ok?

Georg

Yes, she's asleep. All is well.

(as he closes the door we can see Gretl's eyes, and that she hasn't been asleep at all.)

SCENE 8

INT: In the brothel. GT closes a door behind him as Minette sits on her bed. She unclips her hair and takes her shoes off.

Minette

I didn't think you'd be up for it today. Not after what you drank yesterday.

Georg

Twenty crowns, you said.  
(places them on the table)

Minette

That's right. You can wash over there.

(he goes to a wash basin, pours water then strips. Back view of him washing his cock. Next back view of him going over to her. Her eyes widen and she laughs.)

You are up for it.

(she strokes and wanks him. After a while, she gets onto her hands and knees, pulling up her dress.)

Either hole. He who pays the piper.

(GT fits himself behind her and works up to orgasm. As he comes he looks up and sees not Minette but Gretl in a mirror. He can't stop himself.)

Oh God! Gretl! Gretl!

(Embarrassment and shame kick in once he's finished. He fumbles around to get dressed, saying

"sorry")

Minette  
(douching on the bidet)

Don't be silly. You can catch  
Your breath. This Gretl is lucky  
To have such a lover.

Georg  
She's not my lover. Not really.

Minette  
Whatever you say.

(GT leaves quickly to - )

#### SCENE 9

EXT: GT passes through the streets  
without taking notice of his  
surroundings. He sits by the river.  
Turbulent music, with a superimposition  
of his sister's hands on the keyboard.  
He stares into the distance.)

#### SCENE 10

INT: the basement of an apothecary,  
Salzburg. GT and an older man work  
quietly. There is an air of peace.

Georg  
I can hardly read some of these  
doctors' handwriting. What is this,  
do you think?

Hinterhuber  
Ah, Doctor Kleber's script. Tincture  
of Laudanum, I would say. It's what  
he usually prescribes.

Georg

Ah, so.

(He begins to make up a liquid)

Hinterhuber

(pensively)

Not much of a life for a lad,  
down here in the gloom.

Georg

I like it here. It is quiet.  
You pay me enough for my cigarettes  
and drink.

Hinterhuber

Your father, rest his soul, used to  
say that what you spend on drink  
would keep a whole family alive.

Georg

(smiles and laughs)

I have vices; I admit.

(after a pause)

I have a journal wanting to print  
some of my work.

Hinterhuber.

Good! You have been putting  
yourself about?

Georg

No, my friend Buschbeck does  
this for me. I could not stand  
such asking, or rejections.

Hinterhuber.

So, which journal? Will you  
become famous and leave me to run  
the White Angel on my own?

Georg

(laughs)

Not just yet. It is the Brenner,  
in Innsbruck

Hinterhuber

Tell me when you're published and  
I'll get Maklova's to get a copy in  
For me.

(A bell rings, H stops what he's  
doing and goes noisily upstairs.  
Georg goes to the bottom of the  
stairs, checks all is clear then goes  
to the bottles/boxes and steals  
various contents. He secretes them  
in his coat pocket, then lights up  
a cigarette and drifts off. A clock  
ticks - dissolve into shadows, then -)

#### SCENE 11

INT: a dark, shadowy church. The  
camera pans down sculptures and  
faces of saints, cripples and lepers  
and recumbent dead in tombs. Church  
music in the distance. The tick of  
the clock changes into a monk's slow  
pace through the shadows. GT and his  
friend Karl Borromaus Heinrich are  
sitting quietly together in the nave  
under a shaft of light. Voiceover of  
Sebastian in Dream. KBH in an attitude  
prayer.

GT

I'm sorry. I did not know.

KBH

You did not know because I did  
not tell you; there is no need  
for apology, my friend.

GT

You said you had something to show me?

KBH

I came her shortly after my father's death and I saw something that affected me deeply. Whether it comforts or disturbs, I do not know. See, up there -

(he points to a ledge under windows where a small bird sits and puffs up its feathers. A few seconds later it launches itself off, flashes briefly in the cold light then is lost in the nave.)

Just that. You saw, yes? Our lives, which we decorate with such rituals and finery, seem to be no more than that: a brief portion of existence, soon lost; experienced only in a brief light between one darkness and the next. The bird is swallowed by the darkness just as we are swallowed by the swift passage of time. There is no meaning here. There is no plan, nor is there God.

(A priest comes from the shadows and Sits near them)

Priest

I heard some of your words, my son. If you wish to go to the confessional or merely unburden yourself, I am at your disposal.

KBH

No. No thank you. I do not think you can help.

Priest

Perhaps you lack faith.

KBH

Faith? What you call faith, I call self-deception. It is of no use to me. I would rather hear truth.

Priest

The faith of Christ is founded upon revealed truth.

KBH

No; you should be the first to admit it is built on faith and faith alone. Show me some proof, even some tiny circumstantial evidence that God exists and I will have faith. Until you can show me, I put my faith in nothing but doubt. Show me just once, where God is.

Priest

But He is all around: within us and without us.

KBH

All I see is nothing. Is God, then, nothing?

Priest

Please have some respect in the House of the Lord!

KBH

What respect does this god show  
to us, in our pitiful houses?  
children are born deformed; men  
kill each other; innocent people  
spend years in incurable agony;  
they lose control of their bladders  
and bowels and you tell me the main  
culprit deserves respect!

GT

Come, Karl, we should leave.

(he helps him up and gets him out).

## SCENE 12

EXT: outside the church, immediately  
afterwards. KBH stands huddled  
and fighting for control)

GT

Whether it is exactly as the church  
says or no, the words of Christ  
pierce through our pain and woe.  
all things are resolved there:  
they must be. Do you not see? It  
is too terrible if it is as you  
say. Let us face pain with hope,  
not despair.

KBH

Who talks of despair?

(a few flecks of snow start to  
fall)

O my brother, we must be men of  
stone.

GT

Let us go and drink some more.  
It is better in the bar than  
in the church.

SCENE 13

INT: a quiet bar. GT and KBH  
get settled behind a table)

GT

I am sorry. It is a terrible  
thing to lose your father.  
A tragedy.

KBH

He was ill, very ill. He had  
been ill for a long time and  
had almost bankrupted himself  
going to spas and looking for  
a cure.

(they drink and smoke in silence)

The funeral itself was quite  
pleasant. It was a nice September  
morning, at the burial ground at  
Anif. I was allowed to say a few  
words.

GT

Of what did you speak?

KBH

Small things. My memories of  
him and his endurance against  
all the pain he had gone through.

and of how a father is almost as close to you as your own face is, so close you can never really see or know him properly. Of how when someone's life ends we should not make an abstraction of their death, nor should we forget the individual amongst the drivel of the afterlife and God.

GT

Please, do not upset yourself. I only ask from curiosity; and envy. I wish I had had the strength to speak when my father died.

KBH

It is strange. I was not upset at the time. More numb than anything I think. All I could feel was disbelief and contempt at the behavior of his family. I want nothing more to do with any of them. Filthy scavengers! Jews! No, I shouldn't say that. Even Jews would have more respect for gentile dead.

Imagine - hardly was his coffin nailed down than they were at our house telling me about the money and the heirlooms he'd promised them! And precious little I'd seen of any of them while we were trying to finance his rest cures! And damn all help they offered, even though I now have to support my mother and all my sisters. Acch!

(spits in the sawdust)

There was nearly murder done, I tell you, Trakl.

(GT motions for more wine and passes out cigarettes)

It surprised me, what you said earlier outside the church.

GT

Mmm?

KBH

About the words of Christ. I will tell you what I think - I only hear the real you when I read your poems. I do not hear anything there about religion or a christian god. I only hear about the true darkness, against which stand only the silent, strong images of the heart, whose meaning is always half-hidden from us.

There is no real sharing, no real understanding or meeting in this world. All we are faced with is the silence and the enigma, exactly as your poems state. You have captured the heart's depths, almost reveal the eyes behind the soul's mask, but suggest that here is merely another enigma.

(silence as they drink)

You said you might have something for me.

GT

Ah, yes.

(he takes a small paper package from his inner pocket and pushes it over to KBH.)

Be careful, though. It is strong; top quality.

KBH

How much?

GT

I shouldn't.

KBH

No, how much?

GT

10 crowns then.

(money changes hands. Scene dims)

#### SCENE 14

INT: GT's bedroom, later that night. He is lying with a chloroform bottle and a pad, pretty stoned. A book of Rimbaud's poetry lies on the bed, a pencil and piece of paper on the side. It is quiet. A knock on the door.)

Gretl

(pushing the door open)

Georg? Are you there?

GT

Uhh. It's very late. I'm wasted.

Gretl

You've not been around. I need to talk to you.

GT

(struggles up and lights a cigarette)

So, talk.

Gretl

(sits on bed)

I am going to Vienna. To the Music conservatory.

GT

Vienna? Why are you going there?

Gretl

I said, to go to the conservatory. There's nothing here in Salzburg for me.

GT

Nothing? What do you mean, nothing?

Gretl

For my music, silly. Oh, you thought I meant you, didn't you? You are out of it.

GT

Vienna.

(lies back)

Vienna. I'll never see you. Can't you stay? Or come back at weekends?

Gretl

No, they work right through.

(she stretches out on the single bed by the side of GT, on her side facing away.)

GT

You're leaving me?

Gretl

I have to go, you know that. You are the only reason I've stayed here.

GT

But not enough to keep you.

Gretl

(turns over and lies against him)

You could come to Vienna.

GT

I don't know anyone there. I'd need to find a job, get money.

Gretl

You will know me. You'll get a job.

GT

When you say things, they sound so easy. Almost as if I could do them.

(they snuggle together and doze off, GT with his arm around his sister's shoulder)

SCENE 15

INT: A lively bar. An oompah band with an accordionist is playing tunes that people sing and dance to. Smoke; noise. GT and Buschbeck sit at the corner of a table full of similar-aged men. Much drinking is taking place.

GT

Last night. Gretl told me she's going to Vienna.

EB

She finally got round to telling you, then?

GT

You knew?

EB

She can't stay in the provinces  
if she wants to join the  
virtuosi.

GT

You knew? How did you know?

EB

She told me. We do see each  
other now and again.

GT

She told you?

EB

She's told you too now, so  
let's get over it and drink.

(GT looks at him suspiciously, gets  
into his beer and lights a  
cigarette. There is some ribaldry/  
insults being traded with the  
next table. At the GT sees Gretl  
with a dragoon in full dress. It  
is actually Minette. GT cringes  
into the shadows)

There's nothing stopping you  
going to Vienna, too. I'm  
going there in September. I  
have my place confirmed at the  
Institute.

GT

Everyone's going to Vienna.

EB

(leaning in towards GT)

Have you heard about Karl?

GT

You seem to hear everything before me.

EB

I don't exist in my own little hermetic world, do I? I'm sociable: I talk to people.

GT

What about Karl?

EB

He's in hospital. He took a bad overdose last night.

GT

What?

EB

Heroin

GT

What? Is he ok?

EB

Do you mean is he still alive? last thing I heard he was.

GT

Oh.

EB

Where's he get it from, Georg?  
You know people will be asking.  
You'll be in deep shit if it  
was you.

GT

My god. Poor Karl.

EB

You don't realize, not everyone  
has the constitution you've got.

GT

I will make it up to him.  
Somehow I will make it right.

EB

I should leave well enough  
alone. You always mess up.

(as they drink, with GT writing  
on the back of an envelope, an  
altercation starts with men on the  
next table, one of whom is very  
drunk & pukes on the floor.)

Man on GT table

Oh, you swine! Mt best shoes. Get  
the fucker out!

Man on next table

It's nothing. Forget it.

Man on GT Table

The bastard puked on my shoes.

(Man lifts offender up, who swings a punch. 1<sup>st</sup> man hits him back. A general melee starts between the 2 tables. The band plays louder and the bar tenders step out from behind the bar to sort it out.)

GT

(to EB)

Time we were going.

EB

What, miss this fun?

GT

Work to do.

(GT sidles out. As he passes the untended bar he reaches behind, steals a bottle of schnapps and heads out the door.)

## SCENE 16

INT: back in his room. GT is alone, slowly working through the schnapps and versions of "Untergang". Camera sees him in the mirror, writing.  
Voiceover of the drafts.

SCENE 17

EXT: later, in a snowy park, early morning. GT is crashed out in the snow, empty bottle in one hand, poem clutched in the other. A dog-walker nudges him and wakes him.

Dog Walker

You ok?

GT

Yes, yes.

(Dog walker moves away. GT reads through the poem and is satisfied)

SCENE 18

INT: Café Maximilian. Very high-class and fin de siècle. GT sits between two high windows. A table in front of him has an empty coffee cup and a paper. He is brooding into the distance while activity swirls around him. Rich, well-dressed people compared to him GT looks like a country bumpkin. A string quartet is playing Schubert. A waiter brings him out of his reverie by setting down a little tray with 2 shot glasses. Waiter picks one up.

Waiter

A drink in return for those you bought the other night.

GT

I did? I rarely recognize people  
in the daytime. Cheers.

Waiter

Cheers.

(He stands by GT for a little  
while in silent companionship  
until someone calls for him)

Must go.

GT

Another coffee please. Also,  
Do you know Herr Von Ficker?

Waiter

The literary gent? From the  
Brenner Circle? Yes I know him.  
You expect him?

GT

(nods)

Waiter

I will let you know.

(Gt falls back into his thoughts.  
After awhile four very well-dressed  
men enter. An air of opulence about  
them. They settle round a table,  
give orders. The activity in the  
rest of the room fades while GT  
focuses on them. The manager goes  
over to welcome them. Camera looks  
from behind them towards GT who is  
only a black shape between the  
windows. The waiter returns.

Herr von Ficker. Actually two  
Herr von Fickers. Were you  
wanting Herr Ludwig or Herr

Rudolf?

GT

(searching in his pocket)

Ludwig von Ficker. Please,  
give him my card.

(Waiter takes it over on a tray.  
Camera pulls back as he approaches  
them and passes the tray to L v F,  
with an undertone of conversation  
and gesture towards GT. L v F turns  
the card over in his fingers,  
takes off his pince-nez, almost  
as if reluctant to meet. Equally  
slowly GT rises. He walks across  
to the seated party. L v F rises.  
GT just stands there. L v F puts  
out his hand. Friendship is obvious.)

L v F

Herr Trakl, we meet at last.

(they shake hands)

Gentlemen; our poet, Georg  
Trakl.

(He makes intros. GT smiles,  
pumps hands. They make space for  
him and he sits.)

#### Scene 19

EXT: a summer early morning  
In the Tyrolean hills. A long  
Shot resolves to 3 men walking  
Uphill, - L v F, his brother Rudolf  
and GT. First 2 are dressed for  
hiking, GT less so.

GT

How much further until the top?

R v F

No more than five kilometers

GT

Mmmf

(after a while they stop where  
the lane hairpins)

I will stop for a smoke, I'll  
catch you up.

L v F

We'll wait for you at the top  
farm if we don't see you before.

(they go into the mist, talking.  
GT lights up. Everything is crystal  
clear. Bird songs gradually resolve  
into the intro of Mahler's 1<sup>st</sup>. After  
a reverie, the sound of horses and  
a trap coming uphill. A well-dressed  
countryman is driving; his wife and 2  
daughters in Sunday best sit behind  
him chatting.

the driver, also in his best, pulls  
the horses to a stop at the level  
bit of the hairpin)

Driver

Morning!

GT

Good morning, Sir! And ladies!

Driver

A lovely morning, God be praised.

GT

Yes. Yes, it is.

Driver

If you are going up, you can  
climb on.

GT

I am indeed. Thank you.

(He jumps up next to the driver  
and smiles at the girls. Driver  
engages him in small talk. GT  
offers him a cigarette. Driver  
refuses, pulls out his pipe and  
gives the reins to GT while he  
fills and lights. They go into  
the mist.

Up on the top, they drive through  
meadows. L v F & R v F are sitting  
outside a farmhouse by the side of  
the track. R v F gets up and waves.  
Driver stops.)

R v F

Herr Graf! You are teaching our  
young friend the ways of  
idleness.

Driver

Ah so! All friends together.  
This is good. Come, ladies,  
stretch your legs.

(the women descend. A farmer's  
wife appears with a trayful of  
schnapps glasses. Farmer comes  
out to pay respects.

Farmer's wife

Good morning, Sir. For you all.

Driver

Cheers!

(they all salute each other and  
Drink, even the girls. As GT puts  
His glass back, his hand touches  
One of the girl's. They smile.  
The older men talk of local doings.  
GT sighs in deep contentment.  
Another schnapps is brought.)

Driver's wife

Ho! You will have us sleeping this  
afternoon.

Girl

(to GT)

Were you coming from church?

GT

No, this is my sacrament, my  
morning mass.

(Voiceover of "Ruh & Schweigen"  
As the party gets back in the  
Trap and farewells are said. They  
Go their separate ways. Sound of one  
Of the girls singing "Ging Heut  
Morgen ubers Feld" as the three  
Men walk on into the forest.)

## SCENE 20

INT: GT's house in Salzburg.  
Angry voices. An argument in a  
Room off a corridor. Camera walks  
towards the noises. A middle-aged

woman in black comes out of the room, head down. Camera goes into the room. GT and 2 other men there. One is about GT's age: the other substantially older and thicker-set.)

GT

Now Mama is upset too.

Older man

She has to know the facts. She Can't stay in her fantasy forever. There have to be changes.

Third Man

It can't be as bad as you say.

Older Man

(spinning an account book round  
To him)

You look. You find some more money.

Third man

But dad always made it work.

Older man

Dad was up to here with mortgages and loans he never told anyone about. That's how you all lived: credit and promises.

GT

There must be some money for us.

Older man

(with a sigh)

I shouldn't even be here. I should be back in Mexico looking after my own affairs, not trying to sort out a bankrupt estate.

Third man

What can we do?

Older man

You can let Helmut and Heinrich go,  
And you and Georg run the shop.

(Cries of protest from the other two)

You and Georg run the shop.  
If you take no pay and work all hours you will just clear the mortgages, I think. This place will have to be rented out; you will all have to make shift for yourselves. Your Mama will have to go with Mitzi...

GT

What about me?

Older man

There is nothing for beer money.  
Or wine money or schnapps money.  
You are on your own now.  
Grown into man's estate.

GT

What about Gretl? The conservatory is not cheap.

Older man

I know. The last bill is still unpaid. We shall have to talk about Gretl.

Third man

What is to say? She is the one amongst us with talent.

(nothing more is said. Older man shrugs. GT and third man leave the room in silence.)

GT

Fritzl, I'll be straight with you. I'm broke. Can you lend me twenty crowns?

Third man

You're broke. We're all broke.

GT

I wouldn't ask but I'm desperate. He'll give me nothing.

Third man

What do you do with it? you're still working aren't you?

GT

(non-committal)

Or ten crowns if you can't manage twenty.

Third man

(begrudgingly gives him some coins)

And I want these back. I've got  
fuck-all you know.

GT

Thanks. You're a good brother.

(they go outside)

She's not the only one with talent.

Third man

Ah yes, The Brenner. Your poems are  
obviously earning you enough to keep  
you in poverty.

GT

My time will come. We can only do  
What we can do.

Third man

Which doesn't involve shopwork by  
The sound of it.

## SCENE 21

INT: later, in his room. Some wine  
And cigarettes on his bedside table.  
He is reading a letter, from Gretl.  
It is cold and unloved in the room.

Gretl's voice

"September, Vienna. My dearest brother,  
I don't know the address you have in

Innsbruck, but know you will be coming home from time to time, so I write to you there hoping you'll get this soon.

Vienna is busy again. There are lots of parties and the conservatory is good for me. One of the teachers was a pupil of Liszt, so I feel more confident tackling the master's work. I hope I can stay here, but I know things are difficult for the family. Wilhelm wrote to me explaining. With God's help we will find a way through.

Dear Buschbeck helps me also; - I will never go hungry as long as Erhard is here to buy me a schnitzel! Can you not come to Vienna, my dearest brother? in spite of parties and gaiety around me it is lonely without you. I miss something of me when you are not here. Your little devil, Gretl.

PS I saw your poem "Rosenkranzlieder" in the last issue of Brenner. So beautiful. Thank you.

(GT puts down the letter, strokes his fingers on the paper; lies back with a cigarette and recites "Fuer Die Schwester")

## SCENE 22

EXT: A park in Salzburg, late autumn. GT walks alone. Autumnal music. He is lonely and bored, facing the camera. A figure in black walks down the arcade. GT jumps up, runs down after.

GT

Gretl! Gretl!

(the figure turns a corner. When he gets there he can see no-one. He sits again, pulls out a cigarette packet but it's empty. Throws it on the floor.

Back at the camera. Abject)

I must leave this god-forsaken place.

SCENE 23

INT: a working man's bar in  
Innsbruck. GT sits at a table with  
three other men in workclothes.  
They play cards. All have a few  
coins in front of them. They smoke.  
The waitress brings beer.

GT

Ah, kings!

(lays his cards down and takes the  
little pot)

1<sup>st</sup> man

Damn, I was sitting here with queens.

(all throw their cards in. 2<sup>nd</sup> man  
stacks and shuffles)

GT

I must keep an eye on the time.

2<sup>nd</sup> man

On the evening shift? Or is the  
wife waiting?

1<sup>st</sup> man

Arms folded, so; with rolling-pin  
in hand?

(they all laugh)

GT

I'm giving a reading in museumstrasse.  
Seven o'clock. Evening shift,

I suppose.

2<sup>nd</sup> man

Reading? What are you reading?

GT

(picks up an envelope)

My poems. Or some of them.

(other men exchange glances)

1<sup>st</sup> man

You write poetry.

GT

I am a poet. That is what I do.

1<sup>st</sup> man

Why?

GT

Why?

1<sup>st</sup> man

To what purpose?

GT

(losing trick, as he does all the next few)

Because it is what I must do.

2<sup>nd</sup> man

Poems will not feed your children,

nor pay the rent. Unless you're  
Goethe of course.

GT

But poetry is the only thing that  
outlasts us all. Isn't it?  
Homer, Virgil, Vogelweide,  
Aschenbach. Everything else is  
mere history. Because poetry is  
the nearest we get to truth.

(loses another trick)

I am, I suppose, trying to contain  
the truth into words; or trying  
to find the real world within  
this one.

3<sup>rd</sup> man

Do you think you will succeed?  
Do you think words can do that?

GT

I can try. Or go mad in the attempt.

(laughs as he loses the next trick  
and his money)

I'm out. I have to go now.

Men

(Cheers, all the best, etc)

(GT leaves)

2<sup>nd</sup> man

Hey, you forgot your poems!

(GT returns, picks up the envelope  
and goes again)

3<sup>rd</sup> man

Poetry, eh? Poor sod, looking  
for truth.

(they all laugh)

1<sup>st</sup> man

Your deal. Let's play a different  
game.

#### SCENE 24

EXT: GT outside a lecture hall, staring  
at the board with his name on it,  
under Robert Michel's. A little  
snow is falling. The board says 7 pm.  
He stands at the door, immobile. Time  
passes. Eventually a church bell  
chimes 7. He takes a deep breath and  
goes in.  
Camera follows him down the corridor.  
A lighted room full of men and smoke  
at the end. At the door a desk with  
someone sitting behind it.)

Man at desk

Good evening. We are just about  
to start.

(GT stands there)

Just the one ticket?

GT

Yes, just one.

Man

Thirty pfennig

(GT digs around, puts some coins  
on the table)

Sit where you can.

(GT goes into the heat,  
sweating already with nerves.  
At the platform, L v F sees him  
and waves him over. GT pushes  
through)

L v F

Georg! You're cutting it fine.  
I'd almost given up on you.  
You're not too drunk or  
blitzed, are you?

GT

No, I'm fine. I'm fine.

(sits down on the empty seat  
on the dais. A well-dressed man  
in the next seat introduces himself)

RM

Allow me, I am Robert Michel.  
I am pleased to meet you.  
I look forward to hearing your  
work.

GT

Thank you. And I yours.  
Although I am very nervous.

RM

A virgin reader, eh?

(laughs, then notices GT's ticket  
on top of his envelope.)

and you bought a ticket to  
hear yourself?

(laughs again)

Herr von Ficker, we must give  
our friend a full refund.

(L v F calls the meeting to order, and begins to talk. GT drifts off, going through his papers. Eventually he surfaces, hearing his name.)

L v F

Herr Trakl's work graces the pages of every issue of the Brenner. I commend it to you and hope my pleasure in it will be shared by yourselves. It is a unique voice which will sound on long after ours. Georg, please.

RM

(leans over to GT)

Pretend you have never seen your poems before; as if you had just found them.

(GT goes up and reads and gradually gets into the swing. His voice deepens, then slows. The audience grows less restive, totally silent then disappears from his gaze. "Helian" sounds out. The camera pans up to the skylight, through to the stars.)

## SCENE 25

INT: the entrance hall of Schloss Hohenburg, R v F's home. The main doors are open looking out onto a pleasant evening. L v F, R v F, their wives and another well-dressed couple are getting ready to go out. GT is there as well. There is relaxed conversation, good humour and laughter.

R v F

Are you sure you won't come with us?  
There is always a good welcome and  
good food at the Wilder Mann. Our  
treat.

GT

Thank you, but I have something to  
get on with this evening and need  
a little solitude. Thank you, though.  
You are more than kind.

L v F

Your loss, Georg. Still, your loss  
will be literature's gain.

(They go off down the castle drive,  
arm in arm with a couple of dogs in  
tow. One starts a drinking song and  
the others join in. The singing and  
laughter fade into the evening. GT  
goes into the drawing room, knocks  
back a brandy, lights a cigarette and  
goes into the grounds. He ambles  
through the twilight. Moonlight grows.  
On the wood's edge deer are grazing.  
Utter tranquility. At length he  
stops on a bench below a wayside cross.  
He rests his head against the wood  
of the cross)

GT

At the forest edge I am far  
from everything. Thank you, Lord.

(After a time he retraces his steps.  
In the darkness he gets back to the  
Castle, lights a candelabra and puts  
A flagon of wine on a mat on top of  
The grand piano. He drinks, smokes,  
Then plays the slow movement of the  
Moonlight Sonata. A voiceover of  
"Hohenburg". The garden outside fills  
With eyes and ghosts. He finishes,

Lights up again and sits at the  
Keyboard, eyes closed.)

SCENE 26

INT: Coffee-house in Vienna, mid-  
morning. A large table with smart  
people around it, smoking and  
talking.  
At the door GT and L v F enter from  
outside.

L v F

Come on in, Georg. I'll introduce  
you to Kraus and a few of the  
others. This is the heart of what's  
going on in Vienna these days.  
Want a coffee?

GT

Please. And schnapps on the side.

L v F

Not too early?

GT

Never too early for schnapps.

(Kraus sees them and calls them over)

Karl Kraus

Herr von Ficker! Good morning. Whoosh,  
Oskar, make room for our friends  
from the provinces.

(Oskar Kokoschka sidles out of the chair)

And this is our poet, I guess?

(GT acknowledges and shakes)

Welcome to Vienna, and to all the  
Viennese worth knowing.

Everyone, your attention please.  
I think you've all met Herr von  
Ficker, but today we have the  
pleasure of meeting his protégé,  
Herr Georg Trakl.

(GT nods around table, sheepishly)

Allow me: - Bessie and Adolf Loos,  
Max von Esterle, Karl Roeck, Hermann  
Bahr, Oskar Kokoschka, Else  
Lasker-schuler.

(noises of welcome all round.  
GT and L v F sit down on either  
side of K K. A waiter comes with  
Coffee and schnapps.)

KK

(to GT)

How are you finding Vienna?  
Are you comfortable here?

GT

I have a room with a bed and  
a desk. It is all I need.

E L-K

We shall have to look after you  
properly. It's not much fun with  
just a bed and a desk.

OK

I thought you could get lots of  
fun with just a bed and a desk,  
Else.

E L-K

(slaps OK playfully)

You! We don't want our new friend getting the wrong idea of us here in the big city.

(to GT)

Have you people here in town?

GT

One of my sisters, and a couple of school-friends.

E L - K

No amours yet?

GT

No.

E L - K

We must see what we can do for you.

GT

No, I'm fine.

E L -K

We'll see if we can't seduce you into our cosmopolitan vices.

OK

Don't listen to her, Georg.  
At heart, she's another extreme bourgeois.

E L - K

Ha! Come to my soiree on Friday  
and you'll see for yourself how  
bourgeois we are.

GT

That would be nice. Thank you.

OK

I'll see you there, too.  
Else always feeds us starving  
artists.

E L -K

Investing in the country's culture,  
I call it.

(the conversation buzzes around GT  
as he drinks his coffee. At length,  
to E L- K and KK)

I must go now. I have arranged  
to meet my sister.

(He bows and leaves)

KK

(to L v F)

So that's our new Novalis.  
I have read his offerings in the  
Brenner, of course, and approve.  
Of his writings, if not of him.  
Rumour has it he leeches off you.

L v F

(laughs)

You have to pay the price for having  
A protégé. It's true he's my unpaid

guest much of the time. But he's no problem; just another lost soul, really. Give him a few grains of cocaine and a carafe of wine and he's happy.

KK

Mmm. As long as you're happy too.

L v F

He's good company when he's not being shy or paranoid. But that's by the by. Were he the worst houseguest in the world I'd still support him. He has genius and I am able to give him the time and space to express it. I look at some of his work and think, I would give anything to have written even one of those poems; even one line. He will outlive all of us, I think.

KK

I bow to your judgment,  
Ludwig. I've not known you  
be wrong before.

(scene fades as KK's attention is drawn  
away by someone else)

## SCENE 27

INT: a bar in Vienna with booths and mirrors above them. GT is sitting in one alone with a beer and a newspaper, looking up as people come in and out. the door crashes open and a woman's laugh rings out. It is Gretl, with EB, who puts his hand on her shoulder after holding the door open for her. She is looking at EB with a smile and

flushed face. GT does not move.  
Gretl and EB slide into the booth  
next to GT and sit close together.  
Unnoticed, GT watches their reflection  
over his newspaper. They organize  
themselves and he hears them order.  
They talk in undertones, GT  
catching snatches of conversation.

Gretl

...for a while. He's always late...

EB

....all day. Somewhere quieter.....

(they break off as drinks come)

Cheers. The loveliest lady in  
Vienna....

Gretl

Flatterer. You know where flattery.....

(GT sees his sister nuzzle EB's ear  
then sees them kiss mouth to mouth.  
He is seething behind the paper but  
does not know what to do. Some time  
on the clock passes but he doesn't move)

...can't be coming. Should we  
Go somewhere else?.....

EB

.....

Gretl

(laughs)

(they both get up and leave,  
paying as they go. GT puts his  
paper down, in a fury, stares  
into camera shot)

SCENE 28

EXT: Camera follows GT through drizzle  
In the dark to his room. He sits  
There trying to write. Sniffs drugs,  
Goes back out, wanders around aimlessly.  
Sits in the rain. Piano music and  
A voiceover of one of his poems)

SCENE 29

INT: GT outside a door in a rundown  
apartment block. He bangs on the  
door. OK opens it after repeated  
Knocking)

OK

Trakl! You look rough!

GT

I was out on the street. You  
said I could call on you.

OK

Sure, come in.

(GT picks up his case and enters)

Ah, when you said out on the street,  
you really meant, out on the street?

GT

The landlord threw me out.

OK

Capitalist swines, all of them.  
In, make yourself comfortable.

(GT looks around. There isn't  
Really anywhere comfortable. There  
Is a large canvas on OK's easel,  
The "Windsbraut" nearing completion)

GT

I won't disturb you if you are  
busy.

OK

Sit. There's beer in the cupboard.  
I'm just getting on with this.

I thought you had a job in the  
War Ministry.

GT

That didn't last.

(rummages in the cupboard)

One for you?

OK

Thanks.

(Time goes by. OK paints. GT smokes  
and stares into the middle distance)

GT

(at length)

Someday, I will paint a picture.  
Such a picture.

OK

(stamping his foot)

Oooof! I had forgotten you were here!  
You gave me a shock!

GT

(laughs, and comes over to have a  
close look at OK's brushwork.  
Camera passes over the picture.)

A woman with you in the bridal bed.  
Who is she?

OK

I never kiss and tell.

GT

Sorry, I do not intend any  
indelucacy. I mean, is she  
yours?

OK

(sits down)

To tell the truth, I do not  
know. Sometimes I feel she is  
this close, almost within me;  
and other times it is as if she  
has hardly met me and we were  
mere acquaintances.

GT

We struggling artists, what do we expect? Rich women throwing themselves at our feet?

OK

It would be nice. I am sick of penury and loneliness.

(they drink and smoke)

But what do you know about such difficulties?

GT

(sharply)

I know everything there is to know about the unattainable. Believe me, I am well-schooled and skilled in it.

OK

Sorry. Every man has his own cross, it's true. Tell me about that picture you will paint.

GT

A portrait, naturally

OK

And?

GT

An image of that which I strive for in my poems. Countenance: is mask; and Mask is countenance. The

Most impersonal thing in  
the world. So it will be.

OK

You are being both paradoxical  
and controversial. Attempt to  
prove to me that a countenance  
is impersonal.

GT

You will see, when I have  
painted the picture. But even  
without such a proof; consider:  
the cities of the world are seas  
of faces, each pretty much the  
same as the next. Even more so to  
our eyes, the negro and the  
Chinaman; faces that slacken  
into the same dullness when  
uninformed by thought and that  
show the same instinctive grimaces  
when reacting. Where is the personal  
in this? There are too many  
people, all attempting to be  
different, for there to be any  
real differences.

OK

No. no, I cannot agree. Each  
man is his own independent  
universe, ultimately personal,  
and his face is where history,  
feelings, truth and lies are  
constantly painted in a million  
subtle ways. The more dismissive  
of our fellow man, of the individual  
we become, the quicker we risk  
inviting the Mammon forces of greed,  
power and war to destroy the world.

GT

Risk? You think it is only

risk? I tell you, it will  
happen, assuredly.

OK

How can the certainty of war  
and all be accepted? Only  
by madmen!

GT

(going over to the picture)

Have you not heard? It is  
a world of madmen.

Listen, I have a poem for you.

(2<sup>nd</sup> half of "Nacht")

OK

I find your pessimism sad.

GT

If I say that optimism is found  
only in the simple soul, you will  
not take it the wrong way?

OK

No. I would toast you with  
another beer, which you will  
fetch for us.

(GT gets beer, sits and they  
Clink bottles)

I give you, the simplicity of  
Vision, which describes the  
Eternal blue beyond the tempest.

GT

And I give you, the subtlety  
of the mask, which the storm  
does not penetrate.

(they drink; GT offers cigarettes)

Special cigarettes.

OK

(lighting up)

Yow. Ooof

GT

Tincture of opium.

OK

Else is having one of her  
parties tonight. Let's get loaded  
and go.

GT

I've been to my favourite chemist.  
I have some more stuff.

OK

Excellent. Good man.

SCENE 30.

EXT: Looking from outside, there is  
a view through the French windows  
of a well-appointed town house. A  
crowd of people partying within, some

in fancy dress, with a photographer.  
E L-S flutters round the men.  
Lots of laughter. There is a  
back-drop where people pose and  
have photos taken. Camera focuses  
on GT who walks to the window and  
looks out at the camera. Camera  
pulls back into the darkness.

Next shot from interior. GT  
looking out and seeing a ghost/  
Gretl (?)

### SCENE 31

EXT: After the party, OK & GT  
moving slightly uncertainly towards  
a bar. As they get to the door,  
Sigmund Freud walks past them with  
a briefcase and stick.  
They go in the bar. A youthful  
Hitler is sitting on a bar stool.  
Over in the corner a youthful Lenin  
and Stalin are sitting. (these are  
peripheral)  
OK & GT slide into a settle and GT  
orders wine. OK is rather the  
worse for wear.

GT

You've got some money on you?

OK

A bit. A crown I think.

(rummages in his pocket, pulls  
out some coins)

GT

Fine. That'll do.

(they sit and drink in silence,  
both wasted. After a time a shadow  
falls over the glass GT is ruminating  
over. He looks up. It is Gretl,  
obviously angry.)

Gretl

They said you'd be here.

GT

They were right. We're here.  
Oskar, we're here, yes?

OK

(mumbles)

Gretl

Why didn't you show up?  
You said you'd come.

GT

I was there.

Gretl

You're lying. You stood me up.

GT

I was there. So was Buschbeck.

Gretl

And what if he was?

GT

You had your tongue halfway  
down his throat, that's what.

Gretl

I can do what I want. What do  
you think, I need to ask your  
permission?

GT

But with Buschbeck. He was my  
best friend.

Gretl

A better friend to you than all  
these drunks and Jews you go  
around with now.

GT

It's not right, you and  
Buschbeck.

Gretl.

What's not right? Don't tell me  
what's right and what's not.  
What about you and that Shuler  
woman? There's something that's  
not right. They say she goes  
with anyone, and a Jew into the  
bargain.

GT

Don't insult Else. She's nice to  
me.

Gretl

Nice to you? And I'm not?  
I'm yours....I'm your sister  
for god's sake.

GT

(is silent. Gretl flounces out)

OK

What? What was that?

GT

Just my sister popping in  
to say hello.

(lights up and stares into the  
distance)

### SCENE 32

INT: a bar in Vienna

EB

(pushes a beer to GT)

On me.

GT

Thanks. I'm broke.

EB

Were you ever not?

(they laugh, but something hangs between them)

How's it going?

GT

OK. Not so good. Pretty site actually. I hate this place. The Viennese, the fakery.

EB

I thought you were in with the arty crowd.

GT

Oh, they're ok. They can be fun, but ...

EB

What?

GT

I don't think any of them can help me.

EB

Aren't you making a bit of a name for yourself?

GT

None of them understand what I'm trying to get at.

EB

What about von Ficker, and Kraus? They support you, don't

they? Surely that must give you some pleasure. And your writing these days; you said it was starting to satisfy you.

GT

Ah, but you cannot trust those sort of pleasures.

(silence for a while)

EB

Would you be happier back home in Salzburg?

GT

There is no home for me there anymore. They all turned against me. Hard as stone, all of them. Even Gretl doesn't speak to me anymore.

EB

(takes a sigh)

You've not heard from Gretl recently?

GT

We had a row a few weeks ago. I think. I was stoned.

EB

She's not told you then?

GT

Told me what?

EB

She's gone to Berlin.

GT

Berlin? What's she gone there for?

EB

She's gone to Berlin and got married.

GT

(silent)

EB

I had a letter from her last week.

GT

Tell me you're joking.

EB

Big joke, uh? She went to Berlin and got married.

GT

She's crazy. Don't they put crazy people in hospital instead of letting them get married?

EB

(shrugs, finishes his beer and orders more)

GT

She's just upped and left?  
No more conservatory. No more  
Me.....

EB

Mmmm. Gone.

GT

Married? Who?

EB

Someone called Albert Langen.

GT

Langen, the publisher? I've  
met him. He's twice her age.  
For god's sake. She really  
is crazy. Married.

(they both retreat into their  
own thoughts)

### SCENE 33

Int: Vienna Hauptbahnhof. GT with  
young girl, 8 or 9 years old, one  
of L v F's daughters, whom he's  
chaperoning to Innsbruck. It is cold  
and they're muffled up. He carries bags  
and she skips along the platform.  
Bustle and train noises.

Cassie v F

Come on, Uncle Trakl! I can see  
our compartment.

Railway Master

(opening door for her)

There you go, young miss.

C v F

Thank you, my good man.

GT

(pulls himself and bags up behind Her. He gives a wry grin to the Railway master)

Eight going on eighteen.

RM

(laughs)

Have a good journey.

#### SCENE 34

INT: in the railway compartment.  
Cassie and GT are alone. C looks out of the window, cold and pensive.

GT

Don't be sad, little one.  
We'll soon be in Muhlau. Are you cold?

C v F

Oh no, Uncle Trakl. I'm not cold or sad. I was looking forward to seeing Mama and Papa and all the things we'll do.

GT

Good, good. You will not miss school?

C v F

(laughing and slapping him on the knees)  
Uncle Trakl, you are peculiar?  
How can anyone miss school?

GT

(leaning conspiratorially)  
I will tell you a secret. I hated school.

C v F

Did you hate all of it?

GT

Yes. All of it. Except for Uncle Buschbeck. He and I were always friends. Having a friend: this makes much bearable.

C v F

Ilse is my best friend.

GT

She is from where?

C v F

Her parents have a farm near Kaiserberg. Ilse has invited me for Easter.

GT

That will be nice

C v F

If Papa allows.

GT

Is there anything he will not allow?

C v F

Papa is very strict.

GT

(laughs and lights a cigarette)

C v F

Look! Look! Such a lovely fire burning. We will have lots of fires at Christmas. And all the forest huts will have fires in the grates and hot drinks! I am excited already.

GT

Yes, it will be good.

C v F

And perhaps we will take a fiaker up to Reith or Seefeld if the road is clear. Or a lovely sleighride, with rugs over our knees.

It is you who are sad, Uncle Trakl. Why, now that Christmas and

the holiday are coming?

GT

I am often sad. I am a  
sad man. It is a sad world.

C v F

No, I do not believe you.  
I am not sad, my friends are  
not sad.

Are you unhappy because you have  
no money?

GT

Cacilie, you should not know so  
much about people. But you are  
right.

C v F

Papa has more than enough for all  
of us.

GT

That is not the point.  
He is too good to me.

C v F

You are his friend. Of course we  
should be good to our friends.

GT

(gazes out at the snow and soot.  
inward thoughts -

"Had I ever been so certain as this  
little girl? So unencumbered by doubt?

I cannot tell her, what the stark facts of life will present her with at one time or another: that one can be unworthy of all respect or affection; and of guilt, that makes one squirm after accepting every proffered favour or gift; of sloth, that makes one keep accepting them regardless. And of despondency and despair that paralyse every movement. so that all one wants is to sit in a quiet place because the fear of others is even greater than the craving for their company. Oh for a clarity like Cacilie's to swamp me and burn away the darkness in my soul."

(the train comes into a station.  
GT takes out a travelling flask)

I will get you a hot drink

(he gets out onto the platform,  
into the café to get it filled.  
C v F sees him through the windows,  
nervous as the time ticks on.  
GT swigs from his hip flask,  
counts out just enough small coins  
to buy the drink. As he comes out  
the train doors are being slammed.  
He runs as the train starts to move,  
C leaning out of the window.  
The driving wheels slip. This is  
his despair, but he reaches a  
door and pulls himself on. He comes  
back to their compartment.)

I have brought you some hot chocolate.

#### SCENE 35

INT: a balcony of a large middle-  
Class house in the hills. Snow  
On the ground. GT sits in his overcoat  
Looking out over the countryside  
To the city. He is contented. He  
Has cigarettes and coffee. C v F  
Is also leaning on the balcony.

Enter L v F

Georg, look who's come to see  
Us!

(KBH enters)

GT

Karl!

KBH

My friend!, and Cassie, how you've  
Grown. Quite the lady now.

C v F

Hello Uncle Heinrich!

L v F

Your mother's wanting you, Cassie.  
Off you go, now.

C v F

But I want to stay with you

GT

Oh, Cassie, we'll be smoking and  
Drinking and doing all manner of  
Bad grown-up things. Do what  
Your father tells you.

C v F

I will see you later (exits)

KBH

(to L v F)

A lovely family. You must be  
Proud.

L v F

Yes, we are as happy as the Lords  
Allows anyone to be. I am glad to  
See you are looking better.

KBH

The mountain air is good up in  
Iglis. Your brother is as good a  
Host as are you.

GT

The von Fickers' generosity to waifs  
and strays is the best in the world.

(they laugh)

KBH

I've been off the drugs and the  
Drink for three months now.  
Being in the hills keeps me  
Away from temptation.

L v F

Good work. A long and happy  
Life to you.

GT

You don't miss the derangement  
Of the senses?

KBH

No. I couldn't keep doing  
That. I had to get straight.  
It has its own pleasures, you  
Know, sobriety.

GT

(laughs)

And caffeine-free coffee and  
Nicotine-free cigarettes!

L v F

You should take a leaf from  
Karl's book. I know how much  
You get through. You should cut  
It out too, or at least cut down.  
Cut down or die.

GT

Cut down or die! (laughs)  
Don't we all die when it's  
Time for us to die?

KBH

When you've done everything you  
Want to do, then think about  
Dying. Don't go too soon.

GT

Well, I wrestle always for the  
Perfect poem. And when I have  
Done it, I will die.

L v F

Don't say such things.

GT

The Brenner will have first option  
On it, of course. (they laugh)

(Enter a maid, with a letter on  
A salver)

Maid

A letter for the gentleman.  
(handing salver to GT, then exit  
Once GT has taken the letter)

GT

It is from Gretl.  
(turns it over in his hand)

L v F

So, read it.

GT

(frowning and looking shaken)  
Something is wrong.

L v F

What is it?

GT

She needs me there. I must go.  
(puts letter in pocket)

SCENE 36

EXT: GT stands outside his sister's apartment block in Berlin. He has his small case with him. He rings on the bell repeatedly. Eventually the door opens and a man steps out. They regard each other with mutual hostility.)

Man

Trakl?

(GT acknowledges with a nod)

Margarethe is upstairs. I will, of course, return when you leave.

(Exit)

GT

(watches him go then enters and goes up to the apartment)

Gretl! Gretl! Where are you!

Gretl

In here.

(GT enters the room. Gretl is sitting up in a big bed with a nightgown, looking pale and drawn. He puts down his case and goes to embrace her. They embrace and kiss far longer than a brother and sister usually would)

Oh, you're here. Thank God. I thought I'd never see you again. I'm sorry.

GT

(kissing her)

Hush hush. I'm here now.

(after holding her for a while)

I cannot say how much I have missed you.

Gretl

Nor I you.

GT

Let me make some coffee for us.

Gretl

Tea for me, please.

(later, GT comes in with a tray. Gretl lightens up a bit. He helps her get settled in bed. They drink, then)

I have to get to the bathroom. Can you help me.

(He helps her out of the bed. Her nightgown is quite diaphanous. The afternoon light shines through it to reveal her body. Her left breast is pressed against GT's arm. He is being attracted against his better judgement. They walk together through the apartment)

I'm so glad you're here. You're my lifesaver.

(Repeat on the way back. Revealing shot of her body as she gets into bed)

Can you run me a bath?

I haven't washed for days.

GT

Sure. Is the water hot?

Gretl

I hope so; check it.

GT

(runs a bath. Comes back into  
the bedroom)

It's ready now.

Gretl

Help me again.

(Same again into the bathroom)

I'll be ok now. Don't shut the  
door, though. Just in case I  
need you.

(GT potters about. After a couple of  
minutes)

Georg!

GT

(puts his head round door)

Are you ok?

Gretl

Yes. I just want someone to  
talk to while I soak. Come in.

(GT sits uncomfortably on a bathroom stool. Gretl sloshes herself, her hair tied back)

My hair needs doing. Maybe tomorrow. Did you speak to him?

GT

Who? Your husband? He said a few words to me that was all. I couldn't think of anything to say to him.

Gretl

I feel so stupid. Why did I do it?

GT

What?

Gretl.

Marry him. God, if I could turn back the clock.

GT

Regrets already? You've only been married a few months.

Gretl

Long enough to know it's a mistake.

GT

You've got a nice place here. What's the problem?

Gretl

The problem is him. He's miserable and mean and brutal.

GT

No-one has the chance to say they told you so.

Gretl

He's obsessed with sex. He went on and on until I confessed I hadn't been a virgin when we married. After that, he just became cold and violent.

GT

Do I want to know this?

Gretl

You're the closest I've got. I've got to tell someone. He started treating me like a whore. There was no love; he'd just push me down anywhere; on the bed, on the floor, and shove himself up me whether I was ready or not. And he had unnatural lusts as well. He simply forced me down and took me anywhere; no love, no affection. Is it possible for a man to rape his own wife? If it is, he did that, day after day. It was horrible.

(she shudders; washes herself)

I'm glad he's gone. I hope he stays away. I hope he dies.

You're so good to me; coming all this way when I've treated

you like I did.

GT

You're my sister. I love you.  
How could I not come?

(leans over the bath and kisses  
her on the lips. She responds a  
little)

Gretl

Thank God you did. I feel as  
though life is worth living again.  
You'll need to help me up,  
I think.

(she gets up out of the bath with  
his help. He covers her with a  
towel, holds her close and dries  
her off. They get her nightgown on)

I feel human again.

(he takes her back to bed; he is  
aroused by the nearness of her  
body. She gets into bed again. Her  
breasts are visible beneath the  
nightgown)

Sit with me awhile.

GT

May I smoke?

Gretl

Sure.

(they sit and she dozes. GT  
pulls the bed cover up to her  
shoulders, brushing her breasts as  
he does. He gazes on her, then leaves  
the room. Camera follows him into

the main room, lit by outside light. He drops his trousers; back view of him masturbating, both aroused and disgusted with himself. Voiceover of Gretl.. "he shoved himself up into me..unnatural lusts etc..." he takes out a handkerchief and comes into it; consumed with lust and desolation. Scene fades)

### SCENE 37

INT: Gretl's bedroom. Morning. GT has brought her tea. He is livid with anger.

GT

What are you saying? I should have killed him, on the doorstep! I had my razor in my bag. I should have cut his throat. I will kill him. How dare he give you such violence?

Gretl

Georg, Georg. Please calm yourself. It was done in the heat of the moment, not on purpose to cause me injury. I lashed out at him first.

GT

You try to excuse him? He beats you until you lose your baby, and you try to excuse him? Oh, Gretl, you are far too forgiving; far too good for this world.

Gretl

No, I often feel myself to be  
the unworthiest of women.

GT

Dearest sister, I will tell you  
something you must believe. This  
world is too base for someone of  
your goodness. Your feet are  
sullied when they touch the  
earth. There is no thing, nor  
person, that comes close to  
deserving of you.

Gretl

And so the poet speaks in  
hyperbole.

GT

When the poet speaks his poems,  
he speaks of you, Gretl. You have  
read them; you know my meaning  
just as you know my inmost  
thoughts.

Gretl

I often wonder how things would  
have turned out, how our lives  
would have been, if we were not  
brother and sister.

(GT looks away; wants to hear but  
at the same time doesn't)

I sometimes think that the only  
thing wrong with you, is that  
you're my brother.

GT

It is futile, to think of what

is not.

Gretl.

Perhaps. But interesting. Would we be attracted to each other, and be closer in some ways and less in others?

GT

Who can say? It is all speculation.

Gretl

I like to speculate. A lot of the problem between myself and Albert was always that he was jealous of you. Isn't that a strange thing, for a husband to be jealous of his wife's brother? just as if he was jealous of a lover.

GT

We all envy what other men have.

Gretl

Kiss me again.

(they kiss. Fade)

#### SCENE 37

INT: in the apartment at night.  
GT looks out of the window, in turmoil. He walks round the place, comes to a mirror which at first seems a picture of a demon, then resolving

to his own face in a silent scream.  
He is wiped out.

SCENE 38

INT: the apartment. Daytime

Gretl

(calls to GT from her room)

Georg! Could you check if any  
laundry needs to go? They do a  
pick-up at 10 o'clock today.

GT

Where? What needs to go?

Gretl

In the washroom. Towels,  
sheets, whatever's there.

(GT goes into a scullery off the kitchen,  
opens the door. It's a bit of a mess.  
He folds some towels up and puts them  
on a surface, then a sheet. Next sheet  
falls open as he lifts it. Huge  
amounts of dried blood and the just  
recognizable blob of a foetus. Still  
a bit sticky. He gets some on his  
hands and drops the sheet. He is  
transfixed with horror. Looks around.  
No consolation or comfort. Making  
noises, he goes round the flat. Tears.  
Transposition of his face with that  
which he saw in the mirror.)

GT

No. no. no .no.

SCENE 39

EXT: outside the hauptbahnhof in Innsbruck. GT, shaven and haggard, with a ragged coat and his little suitcase. A tram nearly knocks him down as he staggers around. The horn and bell wake him up a little. He collapses in the gutter.

Passer-by

Trakl! My god, you look like death!

GT

Christe, Eleison

Passer-by

What?

GT

Kyrie, Eleison

Passer-by

Come on, you can't lie here talking gibberish. You'll get locked up.

(he helps him up)

You're a friend of Max's, aren't you?

GT

Yes. Take me to the place.  
De profundis.

(they go off slowly)

SCENE 40

INT: a large artist's studio. GT sits in a chair, head against the wall. His eyes open and he looks around.

Max von Esterle

(a bearded man, leaning over GT)

Ah! Our man is awake. Georg!  
Georg! Can you hear me?  
Do you know where you are?

GT

(nods)

With Max von Esterle. Hoffnung  
Gasse 20.

M v E

Good, good. We will not bother  
with a doctor, I think. Dieter  
has gone to inform Herr von  
Ficker of your arrival. Can  
I get you anything?

GT

A new body and a new head.  
If you cannot manage these, a  
cigarette and a coffee will do.

(later, when having his cigarette)

And a canvas if you have one  
spare, please. A small one only.

M v E

Ok.

(GT sits down to paint. Music from someone playing piano in the corner. GT gets engrossed, painting his self-portrait, the demon face he saw in the mirror in Berlin. As he finishes, we see M v E and L v F behind his shoulders.)

GT

Herr von Ficker. I am always in your debt. I...I...

L v F

(pats him on shoulder)

It's alright.

GT

(said inwardly)  
Give me a few words of comfort.  
I don't know if I'm coming or going, only that the world has broken in two over my head. O God, what a judgment has been passed upon me. Tell me that I've still got the strength to carry on and find the truth. Tell me I'm not mad. A stony darkness has broken in on me. No words or poems can save me. I need God's storm, to save me or destroy me quite.

(aloud)

O my friend, how small and unhappy I have become.

L v F

It's alright.

M v E

(pointing at the portrait)

Just what is this?

L v F

It is a demon which never leaves him.

M v E

When your demon has dried a little we will have him sent up to you.

GT

(getting up and letting L v F help him with his coat)

Thank you. Thank you. I feel I would like to sleep now.

L v F

Come, we have your favourite room ready in Muhlau.

#### SCENE 41

EXT: Platform at the Hauptbahnhof in Innsbruck. GT is in army uniform with a pack. Station very busy with soldiers. L v F is with him, seeing him off. GT is vibrant and happy; laughs with L v F. Newspaper placards and posters announce war.

L v F

You seem excited.

GT

My uniform still fits (laughs)  
It feels good to be doing my  
duty for the fatherland.

L v F

You take care. Come back in  
one piece.

GT

I'm a medical orderly. I  
won't be in the way of the  
bullets!

L v F

Even so, the fortunes of war.  
Take care. Everyone's prayers  
go with you.

GT

Mmm.

(some silence between them. A  
station-master comes down the platform,  
waving and blowing. GT and L v F  
shake hands. No words to say. As  
GT gets on the train he presses a  
paper into L v F's hand. We see the  
train pull away with GT waving, then  
gone. On the rear foot plate two  
soldiers play fiddle and duddlesack.  
L v F reads the paper)

"what you feel in the moments  
of deathlike existence: all men  
deserve love. Waking, you feel the  
bitterness of the world; therein

is all your unresolved guilt;  
your poetry an imperfect  
atonement."

(L v F watches the train disappear,  
sighs, and leaves with the others  
who were seeing people off)

#### SCENE 42

EXT: (nightmare scene). GT is  
in an open barn. Bodies everywhere.  
screaming and groaning. GT is at  
his wit's end. One man pleads for  
morphine. He has none to offer. Man  
begs for GT's gun. He goes outside and  
is accosted by a shouting officer,  
who eventually puts his own revolver  
in his mouth. White wall behind him  
splatters red as he shoots.  
GT goes to him; shot of his skull  
and brains everywhere. Blood all over  
GT's hands.  
More soldiers drag up another man to  
hang him. He writhes around, hands at  
the noose. Sergeant tells private to  
get up and tie his hands properly.  
Private is kicked off some steps into  
the mud by man's kicking. Private  
starts beating man with a pole.  
GT pleads with them to stop.

INT: in a cell-like hospital room  
with another officer inmate and a  
batman, Matthias Roth.  
Noise of pole becomes noise of a  
dementing officer drumming his feet.  
GT awakes. Long shot of him staring  
at the camera; a look of knowledge and  
decision comes over his face.

GT

For God's sake, leave us be!

(officer stamps out)

(to Roth) I must sleep some more. Take a break.

MR

Can I get you anything sir?

GT

Not now. Just a black coffee in the morning, at six. Nothing else.

MR

Thank you sir. Until the morning.

(leaves)

GT

(fixes up and snorts a dozen lines of cocaine, smiles, lays back in bed. He unfolds a piece of paper, and reads his final draft of "Lament". He sighs)

My perfect poem

(and drifts off)

#### SCENE 43

INT: a hospital office. Peaceful. A bright autumn morning outside. An administrator writes in papers. A secretary enters, with a calling card in his hand, which he passes over)

Sec

A Herr Wittgenstein asks to see you. He has come from Berlin.

Ad

About what?

Sec

A patient.

Ad

(breaks off and looks at card)

Wittgenstein? Nice calling  
card.

Sec

Shall I send him in?

Ad

Yes, why not? Bring coffee  
also.

Sec

(at door to the waiting-room)

Herr Adler will see you now.  
Please.

(to Ad) Herr Wittgenstein

(W enters. He and A bow and  
shake hands)

Ad

Wittgenstein the philosopher?

(W accepts the sobriquet)

A difficult trade in wartime.

W

Just so.

Ad

And your business here?

W

I wish to call upon a  
patient here; Lieutenant  
Trakl.

Ad

Ah.

(a look of recognition comes  
on his face. He leafs through  
the papers on his desk)

I regret your journey has  
been in vain, Herr Wittgenstein.

W

He has been discharged?

Ad

Mm. only metaphorically.  
Discharged by his own hand.  
He died yesterday.

W

Oh!

(goes to the window and looks out)

I am always too late.

Ad

I am sorry. Are you friend  
or family?

W

No, neither. An admirer. Of  
his work, that is.

Ad

Work?

W

The Lieutenant is a poet.  
Was, a poet. And I am  
always too late.

Ad

I am sorry. It is a long  
way to come from Berlin.

W

That is nothing.

Now I will never understand.

Ad

This war is driving us all  
out of our understanding.

(silence as they finish coffee)

If you wish to pay your respects  
burials take place just before  
lunch-time.

W

Ah, yes. Please. I would. Yes.

Ad

(to Sec)

Show this gentleman to the morgue.  
He will attend the laying to  
rest; of Lieutenant Trakl.

SCENE 44

EXT: at the graveside. Everything is  
tawdry and muddy. The graves are not  
dug very deep. A small procession of  
A Catholic priest, W and MR walk  
behind a cart hauled by two men.  
3 coffins on the cart.  
They creak along through the puddles.  
Nothing is said. A cold east wind  
is blowing.  
MR helps the gravedigger fill in  
the dirt.

MR

His other friend came to see him  
as well, Sir.

W

Who was that?

MR

What was his name? a man with  
glasses; small hands.

Herr von Fackel, that was his name.

W

Von Ficker, perhaps?

MR

Yes, just so, von Ficker.

W

I know Herr von Ficker.

(MR kneels when he's finished, crosses himself and prays. The other three stand. The wind blows.)

#### SCENE 45

EXT: the graveside at Muhlau. 1926.  
Another bright autumn day.  
A handful of people at the internment.  
L v F, aged more than 12 years, is speaking.  
Fades in to his speech:

"Raised up here, our thoughts,  
Our memorial to you.  
And now, Georg, in this graveyard,  
Which you loved, by the spiritual  
Rushing of the mountain stream,  
Which you loved, under this  
Beautiful clear autumn sky, we  
Lay you into the earth of this  
Land which to you, as you wrote  
In your farewell, was more than a  
Homeland; - do not take this as  
A belated guilty tribute of  
Gratitude. No, take it as a  
Sign of the inexhaustible which  
Only finds its end in eternity.  
Immortal friend, take this as  
A true sign of love."

Afterwards, a silence as the grave is filled. Then they file away, couples and groups talking in gentle undertones. Long view from the grave as they all leave, then a view round and up to the mountain top.

Music of a piano nocturne fades, then

voiceover of Western Song. Up to the  
blue sky.

End