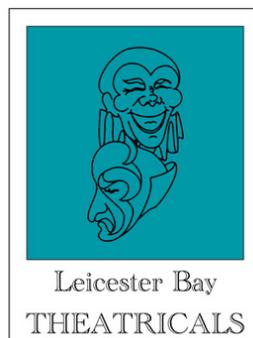


**PERUSAL SCRIPT**

# SIEGFRIED IDYLL

by  
**Thomas F. Rogers**



Salt Lake City

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## **SIEGFRIED IDYLL**

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## **CAST OF CHARACTERS**

(In the order in which they speak)

HILDE GOETTING (SHE)

HERR RÉGIN (HE)

SIEGFRIED VOLSUNG, in his twenties

FIRST POLICEMAN

SECOND POLICEMAN

THIRD POLICEMAN

OLD MAN

GÜNTHER NIEBELUNG, in his twenties

FRAU NIEBELUNG, the Mother

HAGEN NIEBELUNG, age 14

GUDRUN NIEBELUNG, age 16

## **SYNOPSIS OF SCENES**

### **ACT ONE --**

Scene 1 -- A street corner in Hannover, West Germany. Sunday evening, October 16, 1957. Shortly before 11 p.m.

Scene 2 -- The platform of a train station in East Berlin. The next evening around dusk.

### **ACT TWO --**

The main room of the Niblungen apartment, East Berlin. Later the same evening. And early the next morning.

### **ACT THREE**

Scene 1 -- The same as ACT ONE, Scene 2. Three months later. Early morning.

Scene 2 -- The same as ACT TWO. Early evening of the same day

**SIEGFRIED IDYL** by Thomas F. Rogers (suggested by the Ring of The Niebelung legend) 7M 2W 1Teenboy 1Teengirl Unit set that includes 2 exteriors and 1 interior. (*For performance by Professional, Community, and College/University groups.*) The classic stories of Siegfried and Brunhilde are reset to a time affected by the Second World War when Germany was split apart by the Allies in the name of peace and the Cold War settled upon us. Mother Niebelung and her two freedom-seeking sons are searching for riches and legitimacy in 1957. They find their hopes for their dreams in the person of Siegfried, whom, through political and legal coercion, they dupe into marrying their teenage daughter and sibling. The fates and other hidden powers are also working in the lives of Siegfried and his manipulative lover Brunhilde. Everything culminates in a web of murder and deceit, compulsion and duty, love and need.

**Thomas F. Rogers** -- A former director of the BYU Honors Program, Thomas F. Rogers is professor emeritus of Russian language and literature at Brigham Young University and the author of more than a score of plays, many on Mormon subjects. Four of these have been published in *God's Fools* (Signature Books, 1983), which also received the Association of Mormon Letters Drama Prize that same year: **HUEBENER** (the first literary treatment of its subject), **FIRE IN THE BONES** (again, the first literary treatment of its subject, the 1857 Mountain Meadows Massacre), **GOD'S FOOLS** (or **JOURNEY TO GOLGOTHA**) and **REUNION**. Other titles include: **The SECOND PRIEST**, **The ANOINTED** (an Old Testament narrative with music by C. Michael Perry) and **The SEAGULL** (translated and adapted from the Chekov play). In 1992, **GENTLE BARBARIAN**, **FRERE LAWRENCE** and **CHARADES** were published in a second anthology entitled *'Huebener' and Other Plays by Thomas F. Rogers*. Rogers has also penned stage adaptations of Dostoevsky's novels **CRIME AND PUNISHMENT** and **THE IDIOT**, an opera libretto based on Hawthorne's **THE SCARLET LETTER**, a translation of Georg Buechner's **WOYCZEK** (produced at BYU), and scripts based on novels by local authors, Phillip Flammer and Ben Parkinson. The first of these received a BYU production, directed by Tad Danielewski, in which Rogers played the role of Marmeladov.

In 1995–1996 **GOD'S FOOLS** was produced (in translation) by a professional repertory theatre in St. Petersburg, Russia, where Rogers was then serving as an LDS mission president. He also played the role of the American double spy Cooper in that production. During that mission he directed LDS Church members in a stage adaptation of Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* and a Russian language version of **HUEBENER**. The play has also since been produced in Finland in the Finnish language, while a German translation still awaits forthcoming performances in that language.

At BYU and in Provo, Utah, Rogers directed the premiere productions of Robert Vincek's *For the Lions to Win*, Thom Duncan's *Matters of the Heart* and Eric Samuselsen's *Accommodations* and in Bountiful, Utah, a production of **HUEBENER**. Besides numerous productions in both Russian and German for the BYU Department of Germanic and Slavic Languages, he has directed Chekhov's *The Three Sisters* (in German) for Deutsches Teater Salt Lake City, where he also performed as an actor, and Synge's *Playboy of the Western World*, Pirandello's *It Is So If You Think So* and Pinter's *The Caretaker* for the BYU Department of Theatre.

Cited by Eugene England as "undoubtedly the father of modern Mormon drama," Rogers received the Mormon Arts Festival's Distinguished Achievement Award in 1998 and in 2002 a Lifetime Service Award from the Association of Mormon Letters. His published stories have appeared in volume 2, no. 2 of *Sunstone*, the Summer 1991 and Winter 2001 issues of *Dialogue* (receiving an annual *Dialogue* fiction award) and in the collections *Christmas for the World* (SLC: Aspen Books, 1991) and *The Gifts of Christmas* (SLC: Deseret Book Co., 1999). Rogers has served as editor of *Encyclia*, journal of the Utah Academy, and authored two critical monographs: *'Superfluous Men' and the Post-Stalin'thaw'* (The Hague: Mouton, 1972) and *Myth and Symbol in Soviet Fiction* (San Francisco & New York: The Edwin Mellen Research University Press, 1992).

Rogers studied at the Yale School of Drama and holds degrees from the University of Utah, Yale, and Georgetown. He has also studied theatre in Poland and Russian at Moscow State University and taught at Howard University in Washington, D.C., and the University of Utah. He has intensively studied some ten languages and had extensive residences in Russia, Eastern Europe, Germany, Austria, Sweden, the Baltic states, Armenia, Ukraine, Bulgaria, India, China and the Middle East. He and his wife Merriam are the parents of seven children, thirty-eight grandchildren and, so far, three great grandchildren. They reside in Bountiful, Utah.

## ACT ONE

**SCENE ONE** -- *A street corner in a section of Hannover, West Germany, called "Linden" -- Sunday evening, October 16, 1957, shortly before 11 p.m. It is a humid, foggy black evening. DL, made visible by the light of a nearby street lamp, is the outline of a Bude or newspaper stall, which has been boarded up for the night. Above it are the overhanging branches of a linden tree from which every so often falls an occasional leaf or two.*

*The Bude is decorated with loud billboards that advertise tobacco and various "slick" magazines in the German language. A barely discernible level, running parallel across the stage and adjacent to the downstage side of the Bude, denotes the curb and street edge of a sidewalk, while a patch of street, DC, reflects in four clustered squares the light from an overhead window, which is not seen. The rest of the stage is blacked out during this scene. BEFORE THE CURTAIN -- A church bell begins to strike. AT CURTAIN -- It continues to strike until eleven gongs have been heard. Then the silent, empty stage remains in view for another interval before suddenly the window reflection disappears. Several seconds more lapse, during which the figure of a young WOMAN in skirt and sweater, appears from DR making her way along the street toward the Bude. Then suddenly a muffled scream is heard and, ever so slightly, the scuffling of feet and furniture from somewhere high up. Frightened by the noise, the young WOMAN rushes to the Bude and cowers against it for cover. Her expression, now revealed more clearly beneath the lamplight, is sensual, strong jawed and possessive. As she peers around the right-hand corner of the Bude, though disclosing herself as little as possible, she looks upstage to determine the source of the noise that frightened her. A thin, bent middle-aged MAN now appears from around the opposite corner of the Bude and almost touches her before she senses his presence and turns to face him.*

**SHE:** *Ouwah! Ouwah!*

**HE:** Keep *det* mouth shut, young lady. No noise, *bitte*. Not tonight anyway. What are you doing here, lovely one?

**SHE:** Who are you?

**HE:** I'm a young man—

**SHE:** Young? By your face you were born in the Middle Ages...

**HE:** I'm much younger than I look, *Liebchen*. Still young in spirit—and on a business venture.

*(Half to himself)*

The dividends are ready to fall into my hand—the right hand this time. And I intended to wait here until they do.

*(Sniffing the air and peering into the darkness)*

Besides, tonight is the best of nights for collecting them. But where are you heading, gracious *Fraeulein*? Have you lost your way in this weather? May I offer you directions?

**SHE:** *Danke*. I... I will wait here too...for a while.

**HE:** *Ach*, I would not consider that desirable...not in your position. Look at me closely, *Liebling*. For all the wealth I'll soon amass—I surely can't strike you as unattractive?

**SHE:** Stay away from me. I'm not waiting to be with you.

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**HE:** With whom then? No one else walks about this desolate street at night except the police patrol—shortly before midnight. I suggest you be on your way. You’ll find a safer clientele near the train terminal.

**SHE:** I don’t work nights, *mein Herr*. There is only one man in my life—the strongest, bravest man of all. And for *him*...only for *him* I am working

**HE:** *Nanu! Nanu!* All women tell themselves that. But what makes yours so special?

**SHE:** He will do anything for me. That is why. He will work at any job and even steal for me. What man will do that anymore for a woman he’s not even married to—especially since the British restored “law and order” with their stifling “Occupation”? He even walked through fire for me. He might have burned to death—

**HE:** And now you’ll tell me those flames were the fiery breath of a ferocious medieval Dragon. What’s your hero’s name, *Liebchen*?

**SHE:** Siegfried.

**HE:** Siegfried? *Nanu!*

**SHE:** But you don’t know him.

**HE:** No?

**SHE:** No. Siegfried has not lived in Hannover [pronounced “hah-No-fur”] very long. We both came here from Bavaria just a weeks ago—

**HE:** *Ach* so you are his mistress!

**SHE:** If you wish. I owe my life to him. We were both in Dresden [pronounced “Drays-den”] at War’s end during the—

**HE:** American bombing?

**SHE:** He was stationed there at the time. He was a soldier “for the *Führer*.”

**HE:** Weren’t we all? But tell me more. How did you finally meet this Hercules, this killer of Dragons you claim as your very own?

**SHE:** I was at a Folks-Farm with Hitler Youth—training to be a leader in the Young Women’s Civil Defense. That particular evening our barracks took a bus tour into the city. We’d visited factories and defense installations in the afternoon, and that evening we’d gone to the art museum for a lecture tour. A lot of soldiers were there with us—on holiday. He was there too, he told me later—he and a soldier friend. Well, we’d just reached the top gallery—about twenty of us. I turned from the others to take a look at the city from one of the windows. The sky suddenly grew dark as, blotting out the moonlight, a cloud of airplanes came over us. Then their *Bomben* fell—in every direction. Before we had time to descend the stairs, fire filled the entire horizon. We got onto the street, and looked for a shelter—though there weren’t many in Dresden.

**HE:** No. We never thought bombs would fall on cultured Dresden—

**SHE:** They had already reached our street, *die Bomben*. The air was hot and heavy. My lungs were seared with every breath. I started to run, blindly. Before long I noticed my feet sinking into the street. The asphalt was melting from the heat. And there, before me, at every intersection and in almost every building, was a wall of flames. I became faint. I was about to drop into that stream of running tar—

**HE:** Terrible! *Shrecklich!*

**SHE:** —And then, through the fire behind me, down the street I’d just come from, I saw him. He’d been following me. Singed and sooty he ran up to me. My clothes that had touched the asphalt and were

beginning to burn he tore from me. Then he took my hand, lifted me into his arms and carried me through that ring of fire. He kept carrying me until we reached the suburbs and the air no longer burned in my throat. Later, we fled the Russians and came to the West together.

**HE:** I see.

**SHE:** And from that day our eyes have only trained themselves on each other. I am all Siegfried's. And Siegfried is all mine!

**HE:** *Ja*, that was *unheimlich*—an unforgettable experience.

**SHE:** In all the years my father built bombs “for the *Führer*” —he was a munitions manufacturer in Leipzig—I never imagined they could produce so much horror.

**HE:** From Leipzig? A munitions manufacturer? Then that's your family business, too?

**SHE:** Was. After the Russians came, my father attempted to smuggle his assets out of the East Zone. I never learned what part of them was secured though—or who received them. The Russians tried my father for “capitalism” and “war mongering”... and hanged him. But I avoid thinking about it. I must live for myself like everyone else.

**HE:** *Ja*, just like those who made it possible for us to go to war and who controlled our destiny until recently. Now they are all dead—those gods of war—and I hope for ever! ...Oh, Please understand. I meant no personal reference to your father. My own gave me sufficient reason to talk that way. He, too, made *Bomben*.

**SHE:** So?

**HE:** Though his was only a subsidiary firm.

*(First extracting his pocket watch and noting the time, he moves DC and peers restlessly upstaged toward the unseen building, then returns to the lamplight by the Bude, DL, and the young WOMAN.)*

So you are still determined to find him here, are you?

**SHE:** He told me to meet him here at this very hour, on this very street.

**HE:** Mightn't you have misunderstood his instructions?

*(She shakes her head.)*

Surely he didn't mean to have you meet him here in Linden. And without an escort. It's so desolate in Linden. They so often find a body out here. And a woman's voice could never be heard from here calling for help. If I were you I wouldn't stay a moment longer ... Fearless, aren't you? Like the dragon slayer you sleep with. I'm curious, though. It makes me wonder that you—a once wealthy fabricant's daughter—could be content for the rest of your life with a boy like Siegfried who hasn't enough *Pfennigs* for his own next meal—and probably never will.

**SHE:** Siegie is still looking for work. Since we came to Hannover no one has hired new workers, especially refugees. Besides, what do you really know about him?

**HE:** Only that no young man of respectable means would ever arrange to meet his female friend in a section of town so desolate and shabby. Why don't you stand him up this once? And tell him the next time you see him to find a more decent street for your rendezvous.

**SHE:** I cannot say why Siegfried bade me come here. He must have a special reason, though. And I will stay until he comes for me. Why are you so concerned that I'm here just now? Why do you pretend to be so

familiar with Siegfried? What is *your* name, sir?

**HE:** My family name is Régin.

**SHE:** I thought so. Siegfried's told me about you.

**RÉGIN:** (*alarmed*) What has he told you?

**SHE:** That you've been providing him with our food and rent money since he got turned down in the employment lines. You were standing there just waiting for somebody to be turned down, he said.

**RÉGIN:** What else has he told you?

**SHE:** He told me your name is Régin. That was enough—

**RÉGIN:** Enough for what?

**SHE:** Enough for me to know, Herr Régin, that it was your father who acquired a sudden fortune in the East—munitions assets at the war's end, transferred to the West by men like my father but never claimed—all of course in East currency. You have my father to thank, Herr Régin, for your family's fortune.

**RÉGIN:** (*losing himself in a frenzy as his speech progresses*) My father and my brother maybe—but not I. My old man did not live very long after he got all that money. I was away at the time. “Oh, his death was not violent,” they told me. “His heart just gave out with age and weakening due to the postwar diet.” But I know otherwise. My brother manipulated him and got it all for himself. Then, suddenly—too suddenly—the old man died. And now that miserly snake—my brother—lies up there in his lair—

(*pointing upstage*)

—with his coils around it—afraid to let the bank know of his millions in smuggled cash and too proud to deal with the underground, who for a price could exchange it to legal tender. I know where I will take it, though. In Berlin [pronounced Ber-leen"] one can make his own arrangements in such matters—

**SHE:** you just told me you had no claim on your father's money—

**RÉGIN:** (*almost shouting*) But I should have, shouldn't I!!? And I shall—you will see!!! ...Ach, Forgive me. I got lost in my thoughts.

**SHE:** I think you've forgotten whose daughter you are addressing.

**RÉGIN:** How can you be so sure, *Fraeulein*, that it was father's money that came into our hands? There were many such farsighted men in the East who knew they would lose everything to the Russians and sent their money west in time. Didn't you tell me that you never learned who secured your father's holdings? Crafty girl!

**SHE:** I knew a little about my father's business—young as I was then. And I remember well the name of his agent here in Hannover: Régin, A. W. [pronounced “Ah Vay”] Régin.

**RÉGIN:** Then you are Odin Goetting's daughter? The Odin Goetting of Leipzig?

**SHE:** I am Odin Goetting's daughter. And you are the first person to know it since I came to west. Not even Siegfried knows who my father was. And now you know why I will try at all costs to find out what you are up to.

**RÉGIN:** As you wish, *Fraeulein*. As for the money, I am not very concerned. I doubt you have any papers, any identification issued here in the West. The courts would not listen to you—

(*Suddenly, the four squares of reflected light reappear on the street, then disappear again.*)

*Ach*, finally—the stairwell again! He'll be coming out now.

**SHE:** Who? Siegfried's already here, isn't he—in that building. What've you got him up to? What have you

bought him off to do for you?

*(RÉGAN is too concerned to answer. After several more seconds, a YOUNG MAN appears from the shadows, C, where he remains as he converses with the other two, seemingly reluctant to fully disclose himself to their view.)*

**YOUNG MAN:** Hilde!

**HILDE:** Siegfried—

**SIEGFRIED:** But you have spoiled it all. You are too early. You were not to come before thirty minutes past eleven.

**HILDE:** Spoiled? What is spoiled? I had to wait here a while, that is all, and talk with your employer, Herr Régin. Besides, it's already past that time.

**RÉGIN:** *(to SIEGFRIED)* Exactly. Why did you take so long? It is dangerous in these buildings at such a late hour. Especially when one is not invited.

**SIEGFRIED:** Your brother also realizes that by now.

**RÉGIN:** *(moving to SIEGFRIED in the shadows and speaking in a confidential tone which he hopes HILDE will not overhear)* Besides, if you had come out sooner, you'd be through with me and had your accomplice here, none the wiser, to celebrate with.

**SIEGFRIED:** What's the time right now?

**RÉGIN:** I'd judge that we have ten more minutes—safely.

**SIEGFRIED:** It's still not too late then, Régin. We can all be gone from here before the police patrol comes by.

**RÉGIN:** But my brother—what of him? His ring—have you got it?

**SIEGFRIED:** His ring?

**RÉGIN:** Yes, the gold band he wears on his little finger. You were to bring it with you. That would signify to me that you had dealt with him appropriately.

**SIEGFRIED:** you won't need his ring. I did not have to force it from him before I found it necessary to fight him, as you had hoped. The job is already accomplished.

**RÉGIN:** Is he conscious?

**SIEGFRIED:** No.

*(SIEGFRIED steps into the light for the first time, revealing bloodstains on his hands and shirt. RÉGIN nods knowingly.)*

Now I'll allow you to pay me.

**HILDE:** *(screaming)* Siegfried. Is that your blood? Are you wounded? Who tried to kill you?

*(SIEGFRIED rushes to her, covering her mouth to prevent further outcry. Both he and RÉGIN appear concerned about being overheard.)*

**SIEGFRIED:** No, *Liebchen*, it's not my blood.

*(He releases her.)*

**RÉGIN:** You fool. Why did you have her come here? Here, back into the shadows with me. No one must see us, especially with you looking that way. Fraeulein Goetting, please stay where you are. Keep watch for us on the street in case the police patrol comes along early.

*(to SIEGFRIED, now in the shadows, both of them standing he apart from HILDE, softly)*

Where is it?

**SIEGFRIED:** Behind the street door in a black leather valise.

*(RÉGIN runs, UC. HILDE watches him disappear, then leaving her post, hurries to SIEGFRIED's side.)*

**HILDE:** Siegie. Do you love me?

**SIEGFRIED:** Of course, I love you.

**HILDE:** Then listen to me now—before he returns. If you really love me, then believe what I tell you. This Herr Régin has gotten you to steal his brother's money. But his brother got it from their father. and their father stole it from mine! I told you that my father had been murdered by the Russians, but I didn't tell you he was a wealthy munitions maker. That was his money the Régins got their hands on. He sent it here in the old man's keeping. My father is dead now, and I'm the only one left. Siegie, that money belongs to me. Do you believe what I'm telling you, Siegie?

**SIEGFRIED:** *Ja.* I believe you, Hilde.

**HILDE:** *Gut!* Because I intend to have it all. Tonight!

**SIEGFRIED:** But how can we ever persuade Régin to—

**HILDE:** Don't try to persuade him, *Liebling.* Who is the strongest man in the world? You will take it from him. That's all.

**SIEGFRIED:** But if I cross him, he can testify that it was I who assaulted his brother and took their money. And when they check my fingerprints—I had no gloves, I didn't think I'd have to touch the man—they'll know it was I.

**HILDE:** Then you must do just one one thing.

**SIEGFRIED:** *Ja?*

**HILDE:** Kill this Regin too!

**SIEGFRIED:** Hilde! No!

**HILDE:** He's not the first. I heard your conversation. Kill him, Siegie. Give the little lizard what he deserves and restore the money to its real owner—its real owners, Siegfried. Or I shall leave you.

**SIEGFRIED:** No!

**HILDE:** Here he comes, Siegfried. You'd better decide—fast. And, remember, I mean what t said.

**RÉGIN:** *(returning to them)* Twenty million bills in East Marks!

**SIEGFRIED:** Now give me my share, Régin, so we can go—

**HILDE:** Tonight, Siegfried. Don't forget.

**RÉGIN:** *(whispering)* But the ring— I must have it, too. It will not only be a final proof that I've defeated him, but I must wear it as the successor to our fortune. It came to my father with the money. There's power in that ring. I must have it first. Then I'll reward you.

*(pulling out his watch)*

Quickly now. If you hurry, here's still enough time for you to go back for it.

**SIEGFRIED:** Alright. But come with me this time. I don't trust either of you with my share—not out of my presence.

**RÉGIN:** Alright. It will satisfy me to see the snake coiled in his own blood. But *schnell machen!* I think it best if you and I stay inside until after the clocks strike midnight and the patrol's gone by. And you keep out of sight, Fraeulein Goetting

*(Producing a flask from his coat pocket and offering it to SIEGFRIED, then moving off again toward UC)*

Here. Take a swig if you still need bucking up. It will help you face him again.

**HILDE:** Perhaps you'd better have some, Siegie. Remember what I told you. It must be tonight.

**SIEGFRIED:** *(emptying the flask, then handing it to her)* Hide yourself, Hilde, until we return!  
*(SIEGFRIED and REGIN depart into the shadows, HILDE stands in the lamplight and peers after them. After a short interval, the lighted patch of ground reappears. Simultaneously, the regular stamping of heavy boots is heard from off R. The window reflection instantly flicks off again. HILDE hurries to her former place of concealment in front of the Bude. Three West German POLICEMEN come from DR, halting before they reach the Bude and turning to survey the buildings in the background. Meanwhile, HILDE cowers to the left of the Bude, attempting to hear the ensuing conversation.)*

**1st POLICEMAN:** A bad night for vision.

**2nd POLICEMAN:** *Ja.* Things can happen in such a fog.

**3rd POLICEMAN:** Especially in Hannover-Linden.

**1st POLICEMAN:** Still, the rats here have it better than those poor wretches in the East Zone.

**3rd POLICEMAN:** *Ja,* my aunt, who runs a vegetable *Geschaef*t in Cottbus, has already saved up several thousand East Marks, but after their government's new swindle, they'll be worthless.

**2nd POLICEMAN:** That's right. A reliable source tells me that the Commies' sneaky currency reform will go into effect after midnight—giving the East Germans no time to exchange their D-Marks for Western ones..

**1st POLICEMAN:** While some folks here continue to speculate with their currency. They'll lose just as much.  
*(Church bells began to strike midnight. The POLICEMAN move on. As they cross before the Bude, HILDE again counters by disappearing behind it.)*

Well, it don't concern you and me, Jungen. With our police pay, we've had nothing extra to buy up other people's paper. If we find some and it's softer, maybe we can start using it instead of newspaper in the *Toilette!*

*(They laugh.)*

**3rd POLICEMAN:** One moment. Did I hear something?

*(He turns back toward the Bude, then stops.)*

Perhaps not.

*(He rejoined his companions and they disappear off L. HILDE emerges at the Bude's right, then comes stealthily DOWNSTAGE of it to determine if the POLICEMEN are out of sight. Almost immediately, the window reflection reappears, but again for only an instant. Then SIEGFRIED appears from the shadows as before, but with a heavy black valise in one hand and a bloodstained knife in the other. His clothes are clearly more blood soaked than earlier. He also now wears a plain gold ring on his little finger.)*

**HILDE:** Your shirt. It's freshly soaked! Where is Herr Régin?

**SIEGFRIED:** *(extending the valise to HILDE)* Here! You can keep all of it now. For you I have spilled the blood of two men tonight.

*(He falls to his knees, distraught. HILDE goes to him and cradled his head.)*

**HILDE:** *Ach*, How awful, how awful, Siegfried. And with your father’s knife!

**SIEGFRIED:** That my mother kept for me until I became a soldier. My only real inheritance has led me to a greater one, though someone else’s.

*(looking directly at her)*

I did not imagine this when I agreed to reclaim his father’s money. I thought I’d be swift and stealthy. But his brother blocked my way to the money and threatened to cry out. There was no time to think. So the hand reached into the pocket and felt the hard, sharp steel of my father’s knife and struck him!. . . I didn’t know I’d killed him until we returned. Then that Dragon’s brother—

**HILDE:** “Dragon’s brother”” That’s what he called himself—

**SIEGFRIED:** —himself a Dragon—turned on me and said he’d bear witness to my crime unless I left all of it —the entire inheritance—with him.

**HILDE:** You did what you had to, my faithful rescuer, my true love.

**SIEGFRIED:** *(ignoring her, but holds up his hand and showing her the gold ring)* Look closely, *Liebling*. Here, I’ll take it off. Read the inscription!

**HILDE:** *Ach*, is it...? My father’s ring! But where did you find it? Was it with the money?

**SIEGFRIED:** Régin’s brother was wearing it. When we went back, Regin removed it from his brother’s hand... but he never got to put it on....

*(She slips the ring once more on his finger.)*

It’s now yours to wear, and you’ve got your money back—all of it. We can take it to Berlin like Régin was going to and exchange somewhere where no one will see us. Now tell me I’ve made you happy, and perhaps I’ll have the strength to bear all that my hands at work this night.

**HILDE:** *(laughing, slightly hysterical)* Siegie, Siegie. You fool, Siegie —you’ve done all this just for me haven’t you?

**SIEGFRIED:** Of course!

**HILDE:** And you’d do it again, wouldn’t you, if I asked you,? If it made me happy? If it meant you would otherwise lose me? You told me before that, after all we’ve given one another, we must never part. “ I’m committed to you—and you to me,” you said. You love your Hilde too much to see her leave you, don’t you, Siegie?

**SIEGFRIED:** I... I don’t know.... I suppose you could still make me if you wanted.

**HILDE:** Then I do possess your love. I am such a lonely little bird without it. And I need you, Siegie,—now especially....Then it’s no longer important.

**SIEGFRIED:** What’s not important?

**HILDE:** That these Marks are completely worthless.

**SIEGFRIED:** What? What do you mean?

**HILDE:** We will marry anyway. We’ll find a way. The police patrol came by and I overheard them talking. The East Government staged a surprise currency reform—

**SIEGFRIED:** Currency reform? When?

**HILDE:** Just a few minutes ago. All the old East money has been replaced with new currency. That bag is now worthless, don’t you see? Even in Berlin they’ll no longer exchange it...

**SIEGFRIED:** *Ach...!!*

*(He sits against the Bude, burying his face in his arms and audibly weeping. HILDE embraces and attempts to comfort him.)*

**HILDE:** But, Siegfried, you have proven your love to me—

**SIEGFRIED:** *Ja!*

**HILDE:** —and, in my eyes, you’ve become even more beautiful, despite the blood you are bathed in and all the gore—

**SIEGFRIED:** Stop it!

**HILDE:** —than ever before. You have made me so happy—so secure. What you did tonight proves your strength to me. I don’t need my father’s money if I have a protector like you by my side. *(obsessively)*

This blood on you has cemented us together with the future. From the dragons’ evil has come great good.

*(Crazed with the thought, she compulsively rubs her hands in the gore on his shirt, then fondles his head and torso as though painting their surface with her fingers. As she does so, one of several occasionally falling linden leaves noticeably lights on SIEGFRIED’s back.)*

Here, I will completely smear you with the Dragons’ blood. You are now invulnerable to all future enemies as you were to both Régins and will live for ever—my protector. *(now cooing as to a baby)* But to keep you humble there’s just one unanointed spot where a leaf fell—so that when your back is turned, you will still need your Hilde and never think to leave her.

**SIEGFRIED:** *(taking her to him)* Ach, Hilde. My Hilde. What an insane passion our love is!

*(As they embrace, a bent OLD MAN appears from off L pushing ahead of him a small, shaky wooden cart beladen with a whetstone; rusty, dented cookware; and various knives and sharp instruments. Seeing the other two he leaves his cart before the Bude and moves to where they are sitting.)*

What do you want? Who are you?

**OLD MAN:** I collect Zeug — repair all kinds of junk. I also buy and sharpen knives.

**HILDE:** A Zigeuner — a gypsy!

**OLD MAN:** True, *meine Damme*, I travel about—a wanderer.

**SIEGFRIED:** Where have I seen you before, old man?

**OLD MAN:** You were eight years old when your father died. Your mother needed money to care for you.

**SIEGFRIED:** I remember now. Every spring you came to our village. You came, it seemed, when the forsythia first bloomed.

**OLD MAN:** Your mother sold me most of your father’s possessions—including his stick knife. She asked me to keep it so she could buy it back for you some day. It was presented to him years before by the nobility. He had wanted it to be passed on to you. And the spring you turned fifteen she bought it back from me.

**SIEGFRIED:** You remember all this? After so many years? But what are you doing in Hannover and here in Linden at this dead hour?

**OLD MAN:** Can’t you imagine?

**SIEGFRIED:** Go away, old man. Leave us alone. We don’t need your services.

**OLD MAN:** Then I have a request to make of you. Your father’s stick knife—there in your hand—give it to me now, and it will do you no more harm.

**SIEGFRIED:** Why do you so badly want my father’s knife back?

**OLD MAN:** Let us say that I represent your father's will. What would he tell you about its disposition—after this evening? Have you reason to keep it any longer?

**HILDE:** What do you mean by “this evening,” Gypsy?

**SIEGFRIED:** Shhh!... it's an heirloom. It's all he left me.

**HILDE:** Besides, Siegfried doesn't want to part with it...not just now.

**OLD MAN:** Has she spoken for you?

**SIEGFRIED:** *Ja.*

**OLD MAN:** *(moving to his cart)* Very well. I have time. We will see each other again another day....

*(He continues with his cart along the street and exits, DR.)*

**SIEGFRIED:** Damned! I'm damned! There someone who knows me—a witness.

**HILDE:** But he didn't see what you—

**SIEGFRIED:** He saw me at the scene of the crime, saw my bloody clothes and this knife in my hand, and he knows my name. That's enough to convict me. He also knows about my past and even more, I suspect, about our present.

**HILDE:** *Ach*, Siegfried. What can we do? Where can we go?

**SIEGFRIED:** We must flee. Flee the country. But we must not go together are they will be sure to suspect us.

**HILDE:** But they'll recognize you if you apply for a visa.

**SIEGFRIED:** What then? And without money! Must I rob and kill again tonight in order to escape this world's injustice?

**HILDE:** Siegie...

**SIEGFRIED:** *Ja?*

**HILDE:** I have twenty D-marks. It's all I have. But I know where it could take one of us—where he'd be safe. And not need a visa.

**SIEGFRIED:** Where?

**HILDE:** Only...

**SIEGFRIED:** Only what?

**HILDE:** Only promise to send for me as soon as you are able.

**SIEGFRIED:** Of course.

**HILDE:** Within six weeks? No later?

**SIEGFRIED:** As soon as I can earn your fare with my first wages.

**HILDE:** *(fishing from her bosom several bills in West German currency)* Then take it—and go to East Berlin. Or from their into “the Zone.”

**SIEGFRIED:** *Ja*, in Berlin I can cross between sectors and lose myself among the Commies.

**HILDE:** Have you any friends there, any connections?

**SIEGFRIED:** Let me think. Yes, fortunately, yes. The family of my dearest army comrade lives there.

**HILDE:** The *Kerl* who was with you that night in the museum and who, we later learned, got shrapnel in his head and lost an eye?

**SIEGFRIED:** *Ja.* That one.

**HILDE:** Günther. Wasn't that his name?

**SIEGFRIED:** *Ja.* Günther Niebelung. We cut wrists and ran our blood together on the front, Helped each other

out of many a tough fight. His family will shelter me, I know. And help us find work.

**HILDE:** He was tall then and very handsome, wasn't he? I recall him from the picture in your wallet. But I thought you told me he was from Frankfurt am Main?

**SIEGFRIED:** He was, but his family resettled in the East in a small village just a year before war's end. Another industrialist, Günther's father feared the threat of Allied bombing in the West more than he reckoned with any invasion by the Russians, Left his holdings in Frankfurt. But I think the Russians killed him anyway—for capitalist collaboration with the West. Then his family, big city people, moved to Berlin after the War.

**HILDE:** Is their mother still alive?

**SIEGFRIED:** *Ja.* She's a domineering sort. There's also a younger son and daughter. Günther used to sen his little sister dolls back then. But I never met his family—any of them.

**HILDE:** Siegie.

**SIEGFRIED:** *Ja?*

**HILDE:** When will you... be going there?

**SIEGFRIED:** I'll take the next train—as soon as I've changed out of these bloody rags.

*(He picks up the valise and carries it back into the shadows, C, then returns into the semi-light near the Bude.)*

I put the worthless money inside a doorway. They won't find it before morning. You'd best leave in another direction and not show yourself until I'm gone. Stay indoors as much as you can until I send for you. The neighbors will feed you.

**HILDE:** Alright.

*(They begin to part, he toward DR, she DL.)*

But, Siegfried, it won't be long will it? You'll send for me soon, won't you?

**SIEGFRIED:** Of course, Hilde.

**HILDE:** Siegfried?

**SIEGFRIED:** *Ja?*

**HILDE:** Can you give me something—just some assurance that your love for me is all that you have said it is—that you'll be faithful and not forget...?

*(They come to each other, C.)*

**SIEGFRIED:** Here. This ring.

*(He removes it.)*

By rights it belongs to you anyway. But accepted from me now, *meines Liebchen.* It will remind you that we will soon cut our cake and be to all the world man and *Frau*....

*(He places the ring on the third finger of her right hand in the European mode of engagement.)*

Let the unbroken band affirm our faith and devotion.

**HILDE:** *Ach,* Siegfried, there will never be another man for me. You are the strongest and bravest....

*(They embrace and kiss.)*

**SIEGFRIED:** *Auf Wiedersehen, Liebchen.*

**HILDE:** *Auf Wiedersehen, mein Liebling.*

*(The LIGHTS briefly fade.)*

**SCENE TWO** -- Platform of a train terminal in East Berlin. The next evening around dusk. This scene is played on the DR portion of the stage. The central focus, as with Scene 1, is another newsstand or Bude, this one placed at the opposite wing of the stage. Instead of commercial billboards and colorful illustrations, this Bude displays political slogans such as: “Einheit unter der DDR bedeutet deutscher Friede” - “Befreie Europa -- Kaempfe gegen das kapitalistische Tier des Westens” - “Arbeitsloehne -- fuer alle mit 60 Ueberstunden monatlich!” - “Weg mit der Armee der USA in Europa! Weg mit ihren Atom-Waffen fuer ewig.” This Bude should appear shabbier and more decrepit than the former one. Immediately to its left and facing front is an antique wooden bench in need of paint and repair. The light is diffuse, appearing to come from high overhead.

Before the LIGHTS, a train whistles in the darkness. At rise of LIGHTS, a tall MAN is seen standing before the Bude, his back to the audience and reading a newspaper. SOUNDS of braking and the slow deceleration of train wheels. After several seconds, the MAN slowly turns about, exposing his face, which is horribly disfigured with skull indentations and several deep scars, one eye covered by a dark patch. He peers directly in front of him, then immediately left and right, as though at the edge of the stage are tracks on which a newly arrived train now stands. Not finding what he seeks, he turns his back again and resumes his reading. Shortly after, SIEGFRIED appears from off left and crosses the stage. He wears travel togs - jeans and a heavy wool sweater - and, while looking suspiciously about, fails to notice that the MAN with the newspaper has been eyeing him. Just as SIEGFRIED passes the Bude, the other lurches and grasps his arm.

**MAN:** Siegfried. Is it you?

**SIEGFRIED:** *Ouwah! Ouwah!* What?

**MAN:** It's me, Siegfried.

**SIEGFRIED:** Günther...? You got my telegram?

**GÜNTHER:** Yes, but it took some thinking before I understood that you were “the cot below yours, Dresdcner Division.” Why the secrecy? Are you hiding from someone?

**SIEGFRIED:** Why no, I... just trying to be playful.

**GÜNTHER:** Didn't you come in on this last train?

**SIEGFRIED:** No, I got off at Bahnhof-Zoo and took a subway across the sectors. Less bother that way -- no visa inspection and less chance of being controlled. But, Guenther, how are you? How have you been since—

**GÜNTHER:** I was hospitalized? That's right, we haven't seen each other since that eventful night when you found you a lovely *Fraulein* and I was robbed of the means to ever attract one again.

**SIEGFRIED:** *Ach*, Guenther, surely that's not true.

**GÜNTHER:** Why else do you think I hide behind a newspaper when I'm in public? If a woman ever comes within two meters of me, she's likely to faint away or hysterically dart into the street and be run over. More than once irate parents have brought me before the People's Court because their child saw me on the street and rushed home whimpering in a fit of fear. My mother suffers more than I -- remembering how I used to be and yearning for the grandchild I might have given her...

**SIEGFRIED:** Have you thought of...plastic surgery?

**GÜNTHER:** *Thought* about it, yes. It might help a little, but it could never take these dents out or fill this crater of an eye socket. There's also little chance I'd find a reliable surgeon, even if I could afford him.

**SIEGFRIED:** But your father's industries - his fortune?

**GÜNTHER:** He's dead. You knew that?

**SIEGFRIED:** *Ja*, I'd heard as much.

**GÜNTHER:** And no one has a fortune under this government. That you surely understand.

**SIEGFRIED:** Of course. But your father's holdings weren't destroyed,—that they're still in Frankfurt.

**GÜNTHER:** True. He left sizable assets in a West German bank.

**SIEGFRIED:** Surely he willed them to you.

**GÜNTHER:** He did. To the family -- to any of his heirs. But there is one difficulty - we are no longer citizens of the right Germany. The West Government won't transfer a *Pfennig* to our economy.

**SIEGFRIED:** You could flee to the West - all of you - and change your citizenship.

**GÜNTHER:** We've already tried. But the bank anticipated us and used its influence on a few key people who process refugees. We were denied entrance and any prospect of citizenship because, as they told us, we are "sympathetic to the Commie regime" and a bad risk. *Pshaw!*

*(He spits.)*

So here we sit -- as poor as all the rest of these egalitarian rodents. The only hope we have of ever seeing my father's fortune is for one of his children to marry a Westerner and produce an heir who can claim dual citizenship by the fact of his birth.

**SIEGFRIED:** I see.

**GÜNTHER:** I am not up to the task. And this upsets Mother all the more... But what of you? You wrote that you wanted "refuge,"—"a place to stay."

**SIEGFRIED:** Yes, a place to stay. I did not say "Refuge."

**GÜNTHER:** As you wish, my friend. But your motive confounds me: why would you want to come here of all places...? Well, I'm happy to assure you that there is a spot beneath our roof, a cot in Mother's kitchen that you can occupy.

**SIEGFRIED:** *(embracing GÜNTHER)* *Ach*, Günther. I knew you had not forgotten our blood bond and the pact we made that day in the forest in the *Tschekoslowakei*--

**GÜNTHER:** --with artillery fire and shells popping all around us--

**SIEGFRIED:** --to be brothers eternally and sacrifice our all to aid the other. I think that's how we came out of that fight still alive.

**GÜNTHER:** *(deeply moved)* You just touched me, Siegfried. This is the first time anyone has wanted to touch me -- man or woman - since that night in Dresden.

**SIEGFRIED:** Because we're still brothers, Günther, don't you see? And I'm very grateful. Terribly indebted both to you and to your family.

**GÜNTHER:** It's good you feel that way, Siegfried. Because you will have to make certain concessions.

**SIEGFRIED:** I understand. I'll repay you as soon as I am able.

**GÜNTHER:** I ask for nothing in payment. But others may. And my mother...will.

**SIEGFRIED:** She should. I intend to be fair, to acknowledge my debts. But shouldn't we go now? How do we get there?

**GÜNTHER:** We will go there shortly. As soon as she comes.

**SIEGFRIED:** She?

**GÜNTHER:** Mother. With my brother Hagen. They went shopping this afternoon -- picking up scraps of cloth at a *H.O.* [Pronounced “Hah Oh”] store not far from here. Since I was coming here to meet you about the same hour, we decided to return home together. They can get to know you and you with them along the way. But, Siegfried, are you sure you want to stay with us? Wouldn't you rather be somewhere else?

**SIEGFRIED:** I know no one else in East Berlin -- in the whole East-Zone for that matter -- and I'm penniless to travel somewhere else. Besides, that's a fine way to receive your guest.

**GÜNTHER:** It's because you are my blood brother that I speak this way...and warn you.

**SIEGFRIED:** Warn?

**GÜNTHER:** When Mother comes she will...make demands.

**SIEGFRIED:** I told you already, Gunther, I'm prepared to pay for my keep.

**GÜNTHER:** Perhaps more than your “keep?”

**SIEGFRIED:** I can bargain as well as any of you.

**GÜNTHER:** We shall see. Just do not forget that I warned you.

**SIEGFRIED:** Warned me about what... ?

**GÜNTHER:** There they are now! I'm sorry, Siegfried, if I couldn't tell you.

*(From off DR appears a large, buxom middle-aged WOMAN with the stature of those who traditionally sing Wagnerian opera. She wears a plumed hat and dark but ostentatious, once-fine clothing Following several paces behind her is an adolescent BOY who appears extremely short, even stunted, for his age, though he sports a heavy moustache and several days' accumulated growth of beard that all the more contrast with his immature height. He carries a number of large packages wrapped in coarse brown paper.)*

**MOTHER:** So we found you both after all.

**GÜNTHER:** Mother, this is--

**MOTHER:** Siegfried, of course. I can tell that from the snapshots Günther sent us during the War. A little older, but otherwise just as handsome.

**SIEGFRIED:** *Danke schoen*, Frau Niblung. And this is...?

**MOTHER:** Hagen, our youngest.

**SIEGFRIED:** *Guten Tag*, Hagen.

*(HAGEN nods in mute recognition, his appraising eyes steadfastly trained on SIEGFRIED as they have been since the former's entrance.)*

**MOTHER:** Let us sit down, Siegfried, you and I.

**SIEGFRIED:** Very well.

*(The two seat themselves on the station bench, slightly apart from GÜNTHER and HAGEN, but not so far that they cannot hear or converse with them)*

**MOTHER:** Now tell me of your trip. Any difficulties? You weren't apprehended?

**SIEGFRIED:** Apprehended? Why should I be?

**MOTHER:** Now, Siegfried, we do have some access to West German news. In fact, our press likes to play upon bizarre happenings there, particularly criminal ... *and especially murders!*

**HAGEN:** *Double murders especially...!!*

*(Pause)*

**SIEGFRIED:** Why...do you speak to me of these things?

**MOTHER:** Now, Siegfried, don't let us alarm you. But in this morning's late edition -- well, here I have it in my purse....

*(producing a carefully clipped news article and reading aloud.)*

“The murderer's identity has still not been determined. However, a bundle of blood-soaked clothing was found early this morning in one of Hannover's public parks -- the Eilenriede -- fronting Hohenzollernstrasse.”—You wrote Günther a post card after you moved to Hannover. Isn't that your street, Siegfried?—“The stains on the clothing prove to match the blood types of the stabbing victims. The apparel would fit a medium-sized man and is in the style worn today by younger adults, offering another clue to last night's double murder amid the distraught capitalist society of one of the Western satellite's most significant industrial centers.”—It goes on to say the unfortunate victims were brothers -- sons of the late A. W. Regin, prosperous munitions agent for the Odin Goettirig Co. of Leipzig. In addition, a sizable sum of East D-Marks - a very sizable sum, though of course worthless since last midnight, was found at the murder site, believed to be former Goetting funds currently in the brothers' possession....

*(Pause)*

Didn't you write Günther after you left Dresden that you'd attached yourself to a Fraeulein whom you rescued on the evening you both went to the art museum -- that horrible, ruinous evening?! And didn't you also write him that she was from -- where, Günther?

**GÜNTHER:** Leipzig.

**MOTHER:** *Ja*, Leipzig--and that her name, her family name was-- what, Günther? Goetting, wasn't it?

**GÜNTHER:** *Ja*, Mother.

**MOTHER:** So, you see, Siegfried, we are not as uncertain as the police; we need not guess why you came to East Berlin. Let that be understood, first off.

**SIEGFRIED:** What then will you do with me? Hand me over and claim a reward?

**MOTHER:** Do you think we could?

**SIEGFRIED:** There's usually a reward for solving such crimes. My case should be no exception.

**HAGEN:** Ha. Ha. You' were right, *Mutti*. And you tricked him!

**SIEGFRIED:** What?

**MOTHER:** *(To HAGEN)* Shut up! *Mund zu, Schweinehund!*

**SIEGFRIED:** So you weren't so certain.

**MOTHER:** Not till this very moment. But, Siegfried dear, please understand me. I am your friend -- as much as this son of mine who has sworn it with his blood. We are all your friends and benefactors. We don't want to report you or claim a reward. And we certainly won't do so if you only...

**SIEGFRIED:** If I...?

**MOTHER:** I'm normally a woman of few words. But I don't mind stating a proposition when I know it must be accepted. As you may know, Günther has a sister...

**SIEGFRIED:** Yes. He used to send dolls to her...

**MOTHER:** Her name is Gudrun. She's sixteen now -- two years older than Hagen.

**SIEGFRIED:** *Ja?*

**MOTHER:** Sixteen. And marriageable... We badly need to have her marry a West German. But your government won't allow her into the West.

**SIEGFRIED:** So I was told. And therefore -- because you cannot send your daughter to the West -- you're bringing a Westerner to her. And I'm the goat!

**HAGEN:** The guinea pig!

**GÜNTHER:** *Mund zu, Hagen!*

**SIEGFRIED:** Aren't you assuming a great deal though, Frau Niblung? What if I don't cooperate? What if I refuse to marry the daughter of the Niebelungen?

**MOTHER:** I have apparently not spoken clearly enough. Yes, you have a choice -- a choice of sorts. But one man's choices are often conditioned by the choices others are more at liberty to make. Either you have no alternative ... or we don't either. As you wish.

**SIEGFRIED:** And your daughter? Has she no reservations about marrying a stranger... and murderer?

**MOTHER:** Our little *Fraeulein* is young and anxious to fall in love -- for love's own sake. She has little discernment. And we can spare her some of the details—at least until after the ceremony. Besides, like her brothers, she is entirely within her mother's control. She has never opposed me. The Niebelungen, you see, are an old aristocratic family -- a dynasty. To survive -- and I intend that we survive, even under this stifling political order -- we must be united. We must have means -- a source of wealth that will preserve our customary influence and keep us above the crowd. The House of the Niebelungen will never fall before it falls with it whoever is near enough and standing in its way.

**SIEGFRIED:** Would you shelter me tonight, Frau Niebelung ... and accept my answer in the morning?

**MOTHER:** That is fitting, don't you think, Günther? After all, Siegfried has not met Gudrun. He is not yet aware of her charms. I suggest we return home immediately. Gudrun will pour you some of my home-brewed *H.O. Holunbeéren* wine, Siegfried. You will enjoy it. And it too will persuade you, I think. You really must join the Niebelungen. We will be such assets to each other. After all, not everyone is a successful "fortune hunter." And that seems to be your specialty.

*(SIEGFRIED stands, visibly shaken. The MOTHER and GÜNTHER each take an arm and lead him across the state L.)*

**MOTHER:** Come, Hagen.

**HAGEN:** *Ja, Mutti.*

**(CURTAIN)**

## ACT TWO

**SCENE** —The main room of the Niebelungen apartment, East Berlin. Later the same evening. The CENTER and UP stages are utilized in this scene, for the first time. By contrast; the DOWNSTAGE strips RIGHT and LEFT remain unlighted, permitting the two Budes to remain on stage but unseen. Apart from its obvious deterioration during and since the War, this is the high-ceilinged living room of a typical upper-story middle class European flat. At RC is the apartment entrance, which connects with a hall and stairs that are not seen. UR is another doorway that leads to the bedrooms, etc. At U is the entryway from the kitchen. DC, suggesting a closed unit of its own, without obstructing the stage's "fourth wall" view of the larger room behind it, is the outline of French doors leading to a grilled railing that delineates on three sides an outdoor porch or veranda, raised perhaps a step above the stage floor. This is the only set addition since the beginning of the play -- the rest of the set having been there all along but hidden until now in the unlighted UPSTAGE and side CENTER areas. The apartment's furnishings are old and worn but were thirty years ago expensive and luxurious. Upstage are a mantle, a dining table, and other furniture -- all in heavy, dark mahogany—and at UL a smaller table for serving. On the dining table is an enormous, ornate, antique fish bowl that contains, among other objects, the porcelain forms of Rhein Maidens primping or at play. The set's whole atmosphere is one of shadows and mustiness, the cessation of life -- almost funereal in its reflection of past dreams and earlier well-being.

At CURTAIN: SIEGFRIED is discovered in a chair before the table, C. To his right are the MOTHER and HAGEN -- he busily uncorking several wine bottles and she filling glasses. To SIEGFRIED'S left kneels a young, plain-faced GIRL in braids, about sixteen-years-old. She holds a large photo album and attempts with its aid to arrest his distraught attention. Standing apart from the others on the veranda, DC, and facing DOWNSTAGE is GUNTHER. The French doors behind him are open, allowing him to hear conversation from the main room.

**MOTHER:** Now that the dishes are cleared we must pour some wine for our guest.

**THE GIRL:** And this was Günther on Confirmation Day...

**MOTHER:** (Handing SIEGFRIED a glass) Bitte, Siegfried. Gudrun, dear, you mustn't bore our guest with too much family history. Instead, why don't you fetch your watercolors or show him some of your lovely needlepoint?

**GUDRUN:** (Rising and running off to the bedroom, UR) Ja, Mutti.

**MOTHER:** You'll doubtless find her a bit young, Siegfried, but she's spry enough, quick witted ... and fast to learn, if you understand me correctly.

(HAGEN snickers.)

Shut up, you! You know far too much for your age, you lecherous scamp.

(To SIEGFRIED)

He's the only one whose conduct has ever been a trial to me. Günther is so sensitive and modest, and he's always had such a good conscience -- even before the bombing and his ... dreadful mutilation.

(At this, GÜNTHER noticeably winces.)

Since then, of course, he's become touchy at times. He's still terribly self-conscious about his ... disfigurement, and rather resentful. But so is his mother -- just as much as he. Such a pity -- that wasted manhood. No, I've never really had to worry about Günther. And Gudrun - well, she's our little angel... Günther, won't you have a drink with us?

*(GÜNTHER ignores the offer.)*

Well, I'll just place your glass on the table here for whenever you're ready to join us again and be sociable.  
*(HAGEN reaches for the glass intended for GÜNTHER. Meanwhile, GUDRUN returns to the room and takes her former position by SIEGFRIED'S chair. She has with her several samples of embroidery.)*

Hagen, put that glass back. Now! Right now! Mind when your mother speaks to you. You may have a *Sprudel* later, but nothing stronger.

*(to SIEGFRIED)*

I don't believe a little wine hurts anyone -- especially my own home-brewed *Holunbeéren*. But Hagen's an exception. We have to insist that he avoid all drink. He loses complete control of himself when he's had just a glass or two of the mildest beverage. It's a disease with him. Sometimes the neighborhood boys will buy him *Schnaps* to amuse themselves. But I don't hold him accountable for what happens on those occasions. It's the other boys, who know better and provoke his cruel deeds -- it's they who should be prosecuted.

**GUDRUN:** *(obviously changing the subject)* I couldn't find my art work, Mother. And only a few plain pieces of embroidery--

*(She shows them to SIEGFRIED.)*

**SIEGFRIED:** Ah, yes. Very pretty, Gudrun. *(draining his glass)* Hagen's not the only one who has to watch his wine, Frau Niblung. Liquors have a bad effect on me as well. I too must be careful--

**MOTHER:** *(refilling his glass)* Never fear. You'll find my creation exceedingly mild -- and quite healthful.

**SIEGFRIED:** It does have a nice flavor. Quite compelling.

**MOTHER:** Ah, yes... Gudrun, show Siegfried the fish bowl, why don't you. He'd be interested in its story, I think.

**GUDRUN:** Come here, Siegfried.

*(He indifferently follows her to behind the table. They stand to either side of the fish bowl.*

*HAGEN and the MOTHER counter RC.)*

We don't have fish in it anymore. After just a few days, for some reason, they'd always die. *(laughing good-naturedly)* When I was younger it upset me so, and I would accuse my brother Hagen. But that was very wrong of me now, wasn't it? I had no particular reason--

*(After sipping his wine a time or two more, SIEGFRIED places his glass on the table. At the the MOTHER's gestured bidding, HAGEN retrieves it -- unobserved.)*

**MOTHER:** *(whispering)* Quickly, Hagen. Give it here.

*(From her bosom she produces a vial of white powder, which she proceeds to pour into SIEGFRIED's glass.)*

**HAGEN:** What have you there, *Mutti*?

*(Meanwhile GÜNTHER has left the veranda and returned through the French doors to the room proper, catching sight of HAGEN'S and the MOTHER's secretive pantomime.)*

**MOTHER:** Hush, Hagen. Keep your voice down. And do as I tell you.

**HAGEN:** But, *Mutti*. When can I have my *Sprudel*?

**MOTHER:** Behave yourself. If you do everything I tell you tonight, *Mutti* will even give you a cupful of her *Holunbeéren*.

**GUDRUN:** (*still to SIEGFRIED*) Do you see those immodest porcelain ladies down there at the bottom? I'll bet you couldn't guess who they are? They're the Rhein Maidens. Aren't they good? I wonder if the real ones -- the ones in the legend -- wore those same expressions on their faces? They seem so all-wise and all-knowing -- even at play. I used to watch them for hours at a time and think about all the secrets they know and all the wicked men's treasure they watch over down there to keep it from doing the world any more harm  
(*giggling*)

When we had so much trouble with the fish, Günther used to tell me that the Rhein Maidens had eaten them.  
(*The MOTHER has meanwhile refilled SIEGFRIED'S glass. She crosses to him and places it in his hand.*)

**MOTHER:** Siegfried. Don't be hesitant to accept our hospitality. There's plenty more.

**SIEGFRIED:** Thank you, Frau Niebelung.

**MOTHER:** Keep his glass filled now, won't you, Gudrun?

**GUDRUN:** *Ja, Mutti.*

(*After another moment's hesitation, GUNTHER -- who has intently watched his MOTHER during the preceding action -- moves toward the door, RC.*)

They're lovely to look at, don't you think? We've had them in the family for many years now. I take special pride in them because they came to us through my father's mother. She said she mostly intended them for a granddaughter. Of course, that was long before I was born -- before the War and all the Hitler trouble we've been studying about in school.

**MOTHER:** Günther. Where are you going, my son?

**GÜNTHER:** I'm going to do some drinking, Mother. But not here. None of your damn potions. I'm going to the alehouse.

(*He leaves, slamming the door behind him.*)

**MOTHER:** What's come over the boy? Why such a rare mood? He's never talked that way to his mother before. Well, perhaps it's just as well that he did not stay -- if he cannot show our guest some graciousness, eh Hagen?

**HAGEN:** (*giggling*) *Ja, Mutti.*

**SIEGFRIED:** (*holding his glass to GUDRUN*) Would you mind, Gudrun ... ? Just one more?

**MOTHER:** (*To HAGEN*) Ah! It's already working.

**GUDRUN:** Of course.

(*She refills his glass*)

**SIEGFRIED:** I can't understand why I'm suddenly so thirsty. Awfully good wine -- your *Holunbeéren*, Frau Niebelung. Such a different flavor. Escapes definition. It tempts my tongue.

**MOTHER:** We're pleased you like what we have to offer. We can't afford to buy much Folk's wine at the state *H.O.* So I'm forced to make my own in a small distillery in the basement. It's a source of income for us -- what with Günther being disabled. I've built up quite a clientele for it among the neighbors -- those we can

trust with it... But now as for you and Gudrun, Siegfried--

**SIEGFRIED:** Frau Niebelung, please don't mention that again tonight. I must tell you soon enough that it won't work, that I could never -- Besides, there's Hilde. What of her?

**MOTHER:** Oh, we shan't forget your Hilde. We'll make good use of Hilde. But I just now intended no reference to our earlier conversation, Siegfried. I was only wondering what you two might find to busy yourselves with. Let's only think of this evening's pleasures.

**SIEGFRIED:** You speak so kindly now. It's all so different here from the impression I had at the station. Here, Gudrun. Just one more, please.

*(She fills his glass again. He is obviously sinking)*

**MOTHER:** But I will remind you of what we said about "alternatives." That still holds true and bears your thinking over...

*(SIEGFRIED involuntarily moans, closes his eyes and slumps forward in his chair)*

**GUDRUN:** Why, *Mutti*, he's almost passed out!

*(HAGEN titters.)*

**MOTHER:** Then you can do little else to entertain him, child. Now go to your bed.

**GUDRUN:** But, *Mutti*. Tonight is so special with a guest in the house. You always let me stay up with the rest of you. And what of Hagen?

**MOTHER:** Mind your mother and don't be so inquisitive. Just do as I say. Hagen has work to do. He'll go to his room shortly. Now go undress for bed. And don't bother with your nighty. It's a warm night.

**GUDRUN:** But, *Mutti* --

**MOTHER:** Did you hear?

*(GUDRUN goes to the bedroom.)*

Now, Hagen, lift his lids.

*(HAGEN bends over SIEGFRIED and opens wide the latter's eyes)*

We shall see if he is yet with us. What do you think?

*(HAGEN giggles)*

**MOTHER:** *Ja*, he is already far away.

**HAGEN:** Have I done my job now, *Mutti*? May I have my *Holunbeéren*'?

**MOTHER:** No. We're not quite through. But here--

*(She fetches a glass and a bottle, then pours him a swallow-full.)*

--a drop or two will give you strength for what comes next.

*(calling)*

Gudrun, dear, are you in bed yet?

**GUDRUN'S VOICE:** I'm not quite ready, Mother.

**MOTHER:** Well hurry, child. Come, Hagen. You've had enough now. Show me a little action, and you'll have some more. Here -- lift his arms, Now onto your back. I'll take his feet....

*(They lug SIEGFRIED out of his chair and move with him toward the bedroom.)*

Gudrun, you'd best be in your bed and covered up. We're coming in now. And our guest is with us. Best turn out the lights.

**GUDRUN'S VOICE:** But, *Mutti*...!

*(The SEMI-LIGHT beyond the doorway suddenly blacks out.)*

**MOTHER:** *(To HAGEN)* We will bring him to the bedside, then stand him upright. I'll support him, and you -- when I give the signal -- will throw off her covers. Then we'll let him fall onto her -- very naturally -- and cover them both up again. When he awakens, he'll have no way of knowing how he got there and have to believe what we tell him.

*(HAGEN snickers. They disappear into the bedroom, with SIEGFRIED between them. A long interval elapses while only a grunt or two and the shuffling of feet can be heard. Then a young girl's shrill SCREAM -- whereupon, breathless, the MOTHER and HAGEN return to the living room, then turn to witness the commotion within.)*

**GUDRUN'S VOICE:** *(Still screaming)* Mutti! Mutti!

**MOTHER:** *(calling back)* Do I hear you calling, dear Gudrun? What is it, darling? Why, Hagen, do you see what I see? You are a witness, Hagen. Hold on to him, Gudrun. Hold him tightly. Do not fear him. He is your lover -- come to claim you. He wants to be your man, but you will lose him if you let him go. Allow him to be there with you. Give in to his will -- all that he demands. He brings you his strength -- and a new joy.

*(whispering to HAGEN, who is by now hysterical with laughter)*

Hush, Hagen. Stop it. This is not for your amusement. Now come with *Mutti* to the kitchen. I'll pour you a full cup of *Holunbeéren*... She seems resigned at last. I think she'll stay with him until he wakes.

*(They move off to the kitchen, UL)*

And remember you're a witness to all that you saw, Hagen. If Gunther should ask - or anyone else - remember how he savagely attacked your sister.

**HAGEN:** Is *gut*, *Mutti*. He's no friend of mine anyway.

*(The LIGHTS dim low on the empty stage, then rise again -- faint but with a vibrant pastel glow -- to indicate the passage of several hours and that it is now early morning. Another interval elapses. Then from the bedroom...)*

**GUDRUN'S VOICE:** *(Crying softly)* Mein Mann! Mein Mann!

*(Several seconds later, SIEGFRIED appears in the bedroom doorway -- his shirt undone, hair and clothes in disarray. He staggers from the doorway through the French doors and onto the veranda where his arms drop heavily on the DOWNSTAGE railing, looking straight ahead of him. Then GUDRUN appears, in a shabby robe, her hair mussed, her feet bare. She looks about the room, then, noticing SIEGFRIED through the French doors, rushes onto the veranda and clasps herself to him.)*

**GUDRUN:** *Ach*, my lover. My lover. Come back with me. How wonderful it was last night... See my Rhein Maidens -- how the sun strikes them. They've turned to gold, as though they were ornamented with all their rich treasure. And see -- see, they are smiling at us. They approve of us as lovers--

**SIEGFRIED:** *(freeing himself from her embrace)* Don't! Don't speak another word to me about last night.

**GUDRUN:** Why...what do you mean?

**SIEGFRIED:** Listen, Gudrun -- before the others find us -- there is something you must know. I'm not in love with you. I wasn't conscious last night when I came to your bed ... and I don't know what I may or may not have done to you. But it's enough for your mother to require that I marry you. And she will. You know why

she's forcing us on each other, don't you? She's only interested in having an heir -- spawned by a West German daddy. She doesn't care who he is either -- whether you know him or approve of him. And there's something more you should know about me. I'm homicidal. I've already killed two men.

**GUDRUN:** In the war...as a soldier. You were just following orders, mien Liebling. I understand.

**SIEGFRIED:** No you don't Gudrun. It was just the other day. I killed them in cold blood -- to rob them of their money...

*(At this point, GUDRUN, who has become visually worked up during SIEGFRIED's speech, turns from him and violently shudders -- too shocked and overcome to make a sound.)*

Besides, I already have a woman, Gudrun. You should know that too. Her name is Hilde. And I've sworn my love to her -- forever.

*(Still crying, GUDRUN nods knowingly.)*

She and I will marry some day, too. Oh, I am aware that what comes next -- my marrying you -- is unavoidable. But there's one thing we *can* avoid -- from now anyway. And that will keep our marriage from binding us to one another after - whenever it comes -- we both have the freedom to act on our own. You know what I mean, don't you? We can fool your mother. We don't need to consummate, do we?

*(She turns to him.)*

Are you willing?

*(She nods assent.)*

## **CURTAIN**

18 more pages make up Act Three of this 3-act play.

But remember it is based on the Ring Cycle, so you probably know how it ends.