

Nebojša Romčević

CAROLINE NEUBER

Nebojša Romčević was born in Belgrade in 1962. He graduated at Department of Dramaturgy and earned an M.A. degree at the Department of Theatrology, both at the Faculty of Dramatic Arts in Belgrade.

Plays: *Forces in the Air* (Award of Sterija's hometown Vršac for the best text of a contemporary comedy in 1989), *Grobljanska St, Easy Play, New York – an East Side Story, Carolina Neuber* (Sterija Award for the best play in 1999). Currently, he is an assistant teacher at the Faculty of dramatic arts in Belgrade, teaching the history of Yugoslav drama and theatre. Also he is an assistant teacher in graduate course at theatrology in the subjects dealing with modern theory of drama. From 1999 he was a Director of Drama in the National Theatre in Belgrade.

Belgrade May 2005

CAST

CAROLINE NEUBER, *born Weissenborn*

JOHANN NEUBER

JOHANN GOTTSCHED

MRS. GOTTSCHED

FATHER

SPIEGELBERG

MARGARET HOFFMAN

A CORPORAL

A MERCHANT

I PRSTITUTE

II PROSTITUTE

A PEASANT

The play takes place in German lands in the 18th century

1. HANSWURST

A fair in a small town. clamor, the shouts of vendors, bargaining... the light falls on the stage set up at the fair. Hanswurst is on the stage. Hanswurst is a peasant from Salzburg and his costume is always the same: his hair tied into a pony tail, an enormous ribbon about his neck, a broad red jacket, on his chest an enormous blue heart with the letters "H. W." red buttons and yellow trousers.

HANSWURST

I was returning to my beautiful Salzburg from Bavaria. I had sold three little goats at the fair and I wanted to have a good time, to eat my full, and to get some woman in the sack – if I could. So I saw, a beautiful mother and her beautiful daughter. Oh, my dear Hanswurst, how could I pass them up? I looked at the mother – she had breasts soooo big. I looked at the daughter, she had breasts sopooooo big! How could I pass them up? I asked my head – it couldn't answer. I asked him (*He grabs at his fly.*) and he said: "Hanswurst, you fool, why should you pass them up? Take them both!" Alright, I said, which one should I take first? I asked my head – it couldn't answer... I asked him, and he said "Hanswurst, you fool, take both of them, together!" How are we going to fuck both of them

together! I asked him "Hoanswurst, you fool, that's my problem, anyway!" Now I just stuff my head with food, but I listen to him. My grandfather thought with his dick, why should I do worse?

Caroline climbs onto the stage. Hanswurst looks at her in surprise.

CAROLINE

You should be ashamed of yourself, sir! Is there no limit to your profanity? *(To the audience.)* Is it only because you're humble and backward that you let this man here drag you through the mud? You only need to be enlightened, all you need is the truth!

2. THE FATHER

The Weissenborn home. The moonlight falls on the bed of Caroline Weissenborn (later Neuber). Caroline sits on the edge of the bed. The door opens with a thud. Her Father comes in. He is evidently drunk, but, even more evidently, he is beside himself with anger. He is in the costume of Hanswurst.

FATHER

That you should do such a thing to me! In front of all those people!... To insult me so! It is... It is... Now I'll ... Who do you think you are?

CAROLINE

I don't feel well.

FATHER

Oh heavens, do you hear! She doesn't feel well! And we are stinking cattle! Hanswurst is the one who feeds you. Look: Twenty marks. She doesn't feel well! But the people come to see me and not those boring, revolting plays that you whipper-snappers put on at people's homes. I don't care a rat's ass whose father killed whose father and so now their children can't get married! I don't care who is Cairos and who is caries! In any case, so what if we're repulsive to the fine Caroline! I, for instance, like that sort of thing. And, and, and... it's all healthy folk spirit; it's the vitalism of the simple folk and the honest peasants. You have a contempt for the people. And who are you to feel contempt for the people? The people are our audience! And the audience is money! Oh, oh, that you should do that to me in front of all those people. Now I can forget about the ball at the Tieschler's, the cabinet maker's. That's for sure – after this. You are... Do you know what you are? You're ... An artist! That's it! and what I've watched you doing, that is the most ordinary artistry to me. I am an honest man, and I don't stick out of the duke's ass like you and your "poets" who sing his praises in the morning and at night pander their wives to him for a crust of bread. That you should do this to me! I was respected in this ton. They would take their hats off to me and say: We bow to you, master Weissenborn!" No "good day" – "we bow to you"! And now... That you should do such a thing to me... Ziegler, the builder took ill, he was so offended (*He sits down on the chair, breathless. He starts to get undressed.*)

CAROLIN

Please, cover yourself up!

FATHER

And why should I? Little Caroline finds her father hideous?... The divine Caroline despises even her own father? Does she know how many nights this repulsive father carried the divine Caroline in his arms? Does she know how much he sacrificed himself for her sake, what the fine Caroline owes to her simple father?

CAROLINE

Get dressed.

FATHER

But your church warden doesn't repulse you? Does he?....

(He glares into her face.) Come on, tell me?

Caroline wants to leave the room.

FATHER

Where are you going? I'm your father? You must obey me. I have had enough of your disdain. Do you understand? Who are you to judge me? The future mistress of some married jackass, who will bear a bunch of bastards to some monkey. Both he, and those children, and the children of your children will be vulgar like I am, they will vomit in their beds and think how Hanswurst was... able to fuck both mother and daughter at the same time! Life is extremely simple: men fuck women; and I spit on all the rest. And I especially spit on the Last Judgment and on Saint Peter and the raising of the dead. But goes you go to see that church warden of yours, so that together you can gorge on the body of Christ and guzzle the

blood of Christ! I know well what you and that devil's servant are doing. I've heard you panting in the altar, like puppies. Yes, yes, you mate like jack rabbits. First you work up a sweat, and then you gorge on the body of Christ and guzzle the blood of Christ! You cannibals! Hannibals! You've been eating the body of Christ for a thousand and seven hundred years and you still haven't finished him. What is he? A lizard... so he can regenerate himself?... Ask that fellow of yours... And when you have gorged your full of Christ and guzzled your full of his blood, then he blesses what you have below your navel, but not with an incense burner. No, no, no not with an incense burner.

CAROLINE

Why are you talking to me like this?

FATHER

Because I enjoy shocking you... And to tell you that your father has just come from animal fornication. The girls were your age, though perhaps not as skilled as you are! There were three of them. They were crazy drunk. The youngest one cried... probably from happiness. *(Pause.)* You hate me? *(Pause)* No matter, go on and hate me. I don't care.

3. RUNNING AWAY FROM HOME

Darkness. Johann is asleep. There is only a bed and a candle by the bedside. Caroline comes in.

CAROLINE

Johann! Johann! Wake up!

JOHANN

What has happened?!

CAROLINE

I have run away from home. You'll take me for your wife, you'll leave your position, we'll leave this village and we'll start from the beginning. I'll bear you three children: Peter, Maria and Johann.

JOHANN

Fine.

CAROLINE

"Fine?" Is that all? Nothing more? You aren't interested in where, how, why?

JOHANN

You know why. That's enough for me.

CAROLINE

Johann, I have had enough... I have had enough of everything: of those drunken and crossed eyes, of those graying hairs on the chest... Let him be my father a thousand times over. I couldn't choose my father.. Do you think I'm right?

JOHANN

You have to decide for your self. He will find it hard without you.

CAROLINE

And so it should be... Let him suffer alone... Let him ask himself how I am. I simply can't stand him any more. In this town they are all like him: vulgar and drunk. And they call themselves "upright citizens". Let him enjoy his Hanswurst and similar performances by himself. Johann our people are terribly vulgar. vulgarity is an illness of the heart without dept and strength. It needs to be enlightened... to be taught to love.

JOHANN

That would please God. Only, I think that the people are vulgar always and forever. The people like most to curse the man who was crucified for their sake.

CAROLINE

You don't like the people?

JOHANN

I love you and God. From today – you, then God.

CAROLIN

I know that the world is wide, that it doesn't end over there, behind the mill. I want to see it. To see people who know how to say "please" and "thank you". Especially to say "please" I want to forget these peasant, dull faces and ma father.. for ever.

JOHANN

With me? But, I cannot...

CAROLINE

Yes you can!... Yes, we can!... You are to me – Atlas.

JOHANN

Me? Atlas?

CAROLINE

Don't make me angry, Johann. That's what you'll be – and that's the end of it! I say so.

JOHANN

All right.

Pause.

CAROLINE

Get dressed. We're leaving this town. For ever!

JOHANN

Do you have the strength to follow me?

Johann puts on his preacher's robe.

JOHANN

Just say were.

CAROLINE

Don't be afraid. Everything will be all right. And now I want you to put your arms around me and to swear to me that you will never... that you will never... Swear it.

Johann embraces her.

JOHANN

I swear.

(Stumbles on his robe.)

CAROLINE

Freedom.

The fall to the ground.

4. SPIEGELBERG

An inn. Spiegelberg is sitting at a table full of food and eating.

CAROLINE

(Fascinated): Johann... that is theatre! That is truth... "Let word of my death only reminded you that I was." That is love... Poor Antioch. Poor Berenice. What an actor! Goodness, we're watching a Spiegelberg eating. Think of it: this is also Horatio and Cato and Agrippa, Scipio...

JOHANN

And, to tell the truth, he is eating for four.

CAROLINE

That is the only great actor. He was also Caesar and Cyd...

JOHANN

Quite right, he's eating for six. The poor man.

CAROLINE

You don't like him?

JOHANN

I don't know. I don't believe him.

CAROLINE

You don't believe him? You do not believe a Racine?!

JOHANN

I think real love is... less evident. Words serve to supplement, not express emotions. What is really felt is left unspoken. That is what I think.

CAROLINE

Then you must truly love me, for your love is certainly not evident? But what are feelings for then? To wallow in them, like a pig? That is selfish! I love you, and I want you to know that I love you! And here: I love you, Johann!!!

JOHANN

You don't have to shout it. I know you do.

CAROLINE

If you don't love the theater, you don't love me either. Go back to your church.

JOHANN

You are my God, and where your church is there. The portal is the altar. I think this is worthy of Racine.

Pause. Johann approaches Spiegelberg. Johann is still in his priest's robe.

JOHANN

Sir, please let me introduce myself: I am Johann Neuber. I can find no words to express our delight that we can, so to say, breath the same air as you do...

SPIEGELBERG

Thank you, thank you..

JOHANN

Master Spiegelberg, let me express my deepest respect for your divine talent and let me bow to your Ganymede form.

SPIEGELBERG

Sir... now you exaggerate...

JOHAN

How so? I do not know how I could exaggerate? How to praise the sun for the day that it gives us? The sun exists of itself, and its is ours to be grateful for that. You are like Phaeton whose father gave him the task of charioting the sun across the skies.

SPIEGELBERG

But, I hope, with a better ending. No, I am not a god... still.

JOHANN

You are the closest thing to it.

CAROLINE

Johann, this is really impermissible. I apologize, sir. He is talking nonsense. You are talking nonsense.

JOHANN

Truly. I apologize. I have gotten so carried away that I have exceeded all the limits. Permit me, sir, to once again misuse your good nature and to present my wife to you. She is a worshipper of the cult of Thalia and with the greatest pleasure she would offer her gifts to the altar of your theater.

SPIEGELBERG

I don't understand anything of what you've said. The lady likes the theater?

JOHANN

Modesty is her only fault. But her ideas about the theater...

CAROLINE

Don't listen to anything he says. *(To Johann)* I'll never forgive you for this!

JOHANN

She thinks that the theater can improve people, if they are corrupt, and that...

CAROLINE

(In a whisper): Johann, don't you dare! Johann, I forbid you!

JOHANN

... and that good theater, true theater – educates people, teaches them beauty, and that a man who has come to know beauty cannot be evil.

SPIEGELBERG

Interesting.

CAROLINE

Johann, stop it...

JOHANN

And that the German people are unhappy because they are vulgar. The whole of Europe is laughing at their uncouthness! And why? Because of that damned Hanswurst, because of him the primitives are ruling the stage. Bad women, cunning servants, cuckold husbands, all grimacing and slurred speech...

SPIEGELBERG

That is true! By god, madam, you are right!

JOHANN

What evil can a man do when has seen how Cyd solves the conflict between the heart and duty.

SPIEGELBERG

None, madam!

JOHANN

But the, the crowds rush to watch Hanswurst. And what kind of example does he give them?

SPIEGELBERG

No kind. Truly no kind! That is what I always say! Correct!... Only, you should know, it is difficult to be Cyd and Horatio in life.

CAROLINE

But, when the German people transcend their vulgarity, when they come to know beauty... That is what the people need. The people have to be taught love, willy nilly. Corneill, Moliere, Racine!... They will bring about the end of Hanswurst. People will become noble and there will be no more murders, robberies, wars.

SPIEGELBERG

Yes! Yes...

CAROLINE

When our people begin distinguishing between Cairos and caries, they will set out on the paths of glory. But, not military glory, nor the glory of money, but on the path of glory of their inner grandeur. it is then that the German Voltaire, the German Helvetius will be born, and Hanswurst will be gone forever. When slurring, grimacing, blabbering will disappear from the stage, and the actor will preach the sermon of truth...

SPIEGELBERG

Madam is truly interested in acting?

CAROLINE

Oh, no. Not at all! I hate acting.

SPIEGELBERG

Interesting... Are you sure?

Johann sneaks off the stage.

5. THE STAGE

The stage is empty. Johann, Caroline. Caroline stands in the middle of the stage, as if in a trance.

CAROLINE

(Whispering in feverish excitement): Johann... a stage.. a real stage *(She touches the floor boards)*. This is where Cato, Mithridates were killed, this is where Phaedra poisoned herself, this is where Medea murdered her own children...

JOHANN

A real slaughterhouse, that is true...

CAROLINE

Yet, a person could say... ordinary boards. They could have become a bed, a chair, a wine barrel...

JOHANN

The boards couldn't have become a barrel. For barrels we use hard wood, this is softwood. Though they could have been used to make a dozen coffins for those many deceased...

CAROLINE

Think of it: a tree grows in the forest. The woodcutter chops it down, drags it to the lumber mill. In the mill they make boards. The boards are bought by a theater. They make a stage of them. Do you know why all of this has happened?

JOHANN

So that you could be standing here.

CAROLINE

(Screams with happiness): Look! My tray. At the end of the fifth act! I enter this way... I approach Margareta! This way! She takes a glass and drinks from it!

JOHANN

And?

CAROLINE

(Exhilarated): And then I leave! Think of it!... "Oh! My misery has come to an end! Give it to me! Convey to the king"...

Enter Margareta Hoffman, the "divine Margareta". She is a beautiful woman, some thirty years old, aware of her feminine charm. She speaks slowly in a sonorous voice.

MARGARETA

(Continues to speak her text): "...my words that never have his gifts been so dear and wanted by me." Only, my dear child... that is the way a village barmaid walks... The Roman court, my dear, has its own rules. Etiquette. That means that the actress... This is the way it goes: a moment of glory, the whole world is hers, they carry on their hands. He becomes a burden to her. She cheats on him. Her lover leaves her. All that remains is the theater, but it does not belong to anyone. She remains alone, forgotten by all. You walk, my dear, as if you have stolen the legs of a Swiss horseman and are finding it difficult to get used to them. You have to walk the stage, you can shuffle along in life. Do you see?

CAROLINE

But, no one walks like that...

MARGARETA

Of course. Just as they do not drink deadly nightshade for problems of the heart. You do not speak here as in reality, you do not walk here as in reality, you do not feel here as in reality, since there is – no reality here. Only essence, while in reality we see nothing to its very details... my dear child.

CAROLINE

I think...

JOHANN

Yes, I agree with you also... Madame Hoffman is right. In reality there is no essence, while in the theater is comes in bundles and sheaves, to express myself awkwardly. Madame Hoffman has correctly determined the very sense and essence of a phenomenon which I consider...

MARGARETA

Are you making fun of me?

JOHANN

I wouldn't allow myself something like that, madam.

Margareta goes over to him.

MARGARETA

Look into my eyes, you slave, not at my breasts nor at my legs.

JOHANN

I wasn't looking at your...

MARGARETA

Although you are only worthy of hatred, perhaps pity, although you are a speechless worm, who thinks lie a butterfly who, for his own satisfaction, is ready to suck on the dung heap...

CAROLINE

I forbid you!

MARGARETA

My heart cannot hide that it spreads before thee both reason and fear, which easily turns into dust all the disgust for thy person. It knows, what I do not want to know, that I and thee will become three. Act Three, Scene Two. That is the difference between essence and reality: in reality, he felt uncomfortable; in essence, he enjoyed it.

He stands her gaze, frightened, and finally lowers his eyes. Margareta goes out.

MARGARETA

Please, applaud. I can't leave the stage without applause.

Caroline and Johann applaud in surprise. Pause.

Caroline goes over to Johann.

CAROLINE

(Places her hand on his chest): How your heart is beating...

6. MARGARETA

Spiegelberg and Margareta. Spiegelberg is half dressed for the role of Mithridates.

MARGARETA

Should God himself be in the audience, I'm not going out on the stage!

SPIEGELBERG

But, Gottsched is close to that. At least, close to what I conceive as God.

MARGARETA

And her dressing table has to go out of here, or I'm not going out onto the stage!

SPIEGELBERG

Come, Margareta, for the love of God... I can't put her in the courtyard.

MARGARETA

I'm not interested... The dressing tables of dilettantes can't be put in the dressing room of Margareta Hoffman, no matter how clever they may be in fawning over Spiegelberg! Just two months ago she was bringing on the tray, and now she has already got the part of my companion. What is next? Will she be getting my part? Will she be playing Monima?

SPIEGELBERG

...Margareta... For the love of God!... What are you talking about!?! Listen, she simply adores you. It is almost a kind of religious adoration...

MARGARETA

I'm not interested! It's either her – or me!

SPEIGELBERG

Margareta...

MARGARETA

I'm leaving the company!

SPEIGELBERG

But, Margareta, you are the brightest jewel in the crown of our theater...

MARGARETA

You know that I can't abide fawning...

SPIEGELBERG

Margareta... I must tell you ...

MARGARETA

What?

SPIEGELBERG

I better not!

MARGARETA

But, do tell me.

SPIEGELBERG

It is too juicy. (*Whispers.*) Her husband is terribly in love with you. He has lost his head.

MARGARETA

Who are you talking about? Johann?

SPIEGELBERG

The little one is still naïve, and she does not notice anything...
Hm... Johann hides it cleverly...

MARGARETA

The priest...

SPIEGELBERG

Hides it... Last night he held me prisoner until dawn describing your charms.

MARGARETA

You exaggerate.

SPIEGELBERG

Oh, if only my good manners would allow me to reveal to you part of the day dreams of a priest, you would be stunned with... surprise.

MARGARETA

Quiet. I don't want to listen to you.

SPIEGELBERG

Is it then too much to ask of your heart, known far and wide for its kind nature, and which has not one, but two blind subjects, not counting myself who am notoriously crazy about you, to let her share your dressing room?

MARGARETA

Only for tonight!

SPIEGELBERG

Of course. Your dressing room will be like the temple of Apollo in which only you shall rule, like the blind Tiresias, that is, like the beautiful Iphigenia at Aulis.

Pause. Enter Caroline, who has witnessed this entire scene.

CAROLINE

(To Spiegelberg): Why did you lie?

SPIEGELBERG

Ah, my dear child, this is the theater, and Gottsched is coming to see...

CAROLINE

That a Spiegelberg should fall on his knees! And lie! Now, I'm leaving.

SPIEGELBERG

But, Caroline... My God, what is happening? Tonight Gottched is coming to see us!... Children, Gottsched will be watching us! Gottsched!!! Be reasonable... I am an old man! No! I am the one who is leaving the company! I am! I have had enough!

CAROLINE

This is far from the theater that you promised me, sir! Who are we going to improve? I'm leaving.

SPIEGELBERG

No, I am leaving.

MARGARETA

(To Caroline): Calm down, my dear... Only the leading actresses have the right to be capricious.

CAROLINE

Does that mean that I am not a leading actress?

SPIEGELBERG

Caroline, Margareta... For goodness' sake... Have pity on my gray hair! Gottsched is coming to see us... Do you know what that means! Oh, what kind of life is this...

CAROLINE

Gottsched, Gottsched, Gottsched!!! So what is he?... God himself? Come down from Parnassus?

MARGARETA

Yes, and still wet from the waters of the Helicon, he is still dripping, so to say...

Caroline and Margareta suddenly start to laugh hysterically.

SPIEGELBERG

Does that mean that everything is alright? *(He shouts to someone behind the scenes.)* The performance will go on. God, please help us now, and tomorrow you can forget us!

7. AFTER THE PERFORMANCE

Spiegelberg stands on a chair, in the costume of Mithidates, with a lifted glass. Present are Margareta, Caroline and Johann.

JOHANN

What a success that was! What applause!

SPIEGELBERG

Let us wait and see what Gottsched will say.

MARGARETA

I watched him all the time, and he seemed to be terribly bored. He yawned three times.

SPIEGELBERG

Three times??!

MARGARETA

At least.

SPIEGELBERG

Goodness! (*Pause.*) In any case, what do we care about Gottsched! (*Growing more subdued.*) What is important is that the audience liked it. In any case... we play for the audience, and not for the critics. In any case, to your health...

Pause.

CAROLINE

I knew it! I'm the one to blame... I am not good enough for Monima's companion. (*To Johann*) "You can do it! You are the best!" You're the one to blame!

JOHANN

I still think...

CAROLINE

I did not know my lines, nor where to come in, nor where to go, nor what to do... and you keep telling me that I'm the best. How can you say that I am the best!!!?

JOHANN

Caroline...

CAROLINE

I beg you, I plead with you, I don't want to talk about it any more. I simply have no talent, and have to come to terms with it!

MARGARETA

Perhaps you are right.

SPIEGELBERG

What are you saying?! Are the two of you in your right minds?

CAROLINE

That's what he wants!... That I should bear him live children and spend the whole day in the church! But that's not what I'll do. I'll give up acting, but to spite you I'll never bear children.

SPIEGELBERG

For the love of God! What is this foolishness! Johann has said nothing...

CAROLINE

Be quiet!!!

SPEGELBERG

I'm quiet... (*He sits down.*)

Enter Gottsched and Mrs. Gottsched. Gottsched is a handsome, large man, full of energy, red cheeked and of superior bearing. His wife is ugly, conceited just because she is his wife. Where and when Gottsched comes in there is a sense that life and positive energy shine.

GOTTSCHED

Good evening to all! Bravissimo!... Please let me express my delight with the performance.

SPIEGELBERG

Mr... mr... thank you... I... please sit down.

MRS GOTTSCHED

A nice little performance...

GOTTSCHED

(To Spiegelberg): You sir, truly have reasons to celebrate! In your company you have such an actress *(To Margareta)*, and you in the role of Mithridates as not that bad.

SPIEGELBERG

Ah, sir, you truly do not spare your compliments.

MRS. GOTTSCHED

Quiet a nice little Mithridates.

GOTTSCHED

(To Johann): But what this lady is doing, that is what I call modern acting. This is the way they will act in fifty years time!

Walking instead of parading, speaking instead of rhetoric. I cried, and my wife did as well.

CAROLINE

Are you speaking of me?

MRS GOTTSCHED

(To Johann): Quiet a nice little role.

GOTTSCHED

What you have shown us tonight is equal, according to my opinion, to the resurrection of Lazarus.

SPIEGELBERG

(To Johann): Boy, bring some wine!

MARGARETA

I will bring the wine for Mr. Gottsched.

GOTTSCHED

That would be a great honor for me.

JOHANN

No, no... you are tired from your leading role. I'll bring the wine.

CAROLINE

No, no... that would be too great an honor for Mr. Gottsched.

SPIEGELBERG

In any case, what do we need wine for.. when we are drunk with happiness.

CAROLINE

Sir, I have been told that you were yawning during the performance, and now you come to congratulate us.

GOTTSCHED

And who informed you that I was yawning?

CAROLINE

She did. (*Pointing to Margareta.*)

GOTTSCHED

That is correct, madam is right. In her scenes I found it hard to stay awake.

MARGARETA

I could tell you... I could tell you (*Leaves in tears.*)

JOHANN

Margareta... What sort of people are these... (*Goes after her.*)

MRS. GOTTSCHED

Yes, yes! Quite nice... trez charmant...

SPIEGELBERG

I raise this glass in honor of the future greatest German actress, Caroline Neuber and her husband Johann. Let God give you happiness, health and many children.

CAROLINE

Let him give us happiness and health!

MRS. GOTTSCHED

Ah, this is your husband? Love! Trez charmant!

8. JOHANN AND MARGARETA

Continuation of the previous scene.

JOHANN

Please don't drink any more.

MARGARETA

Why? So that I don't disgrace myself? My whole life has been a disgrace.

JOHANN

It is only theater.

MARGARETA

You, man really don't understand anything! You have been brought here by love, we others have been brought here by illness. The theater has been my life. And now I have only my life. What am I going to do now?

JOHANN

You should live it.

MARGARETA

Poor Johann. In the name of love you have given up love. Don't expect anything except endless and completely unnecessary sacrifice. We love only after the rehearsal, or when there is no performance.

JOHANN

I look at that in this way: God has given each man a talent. My talent is to be with her. That is...

MARGARETA

You don't understand anything, my poor Johann. The theater will sap all her energy, and the only remaining thing will be for you to comfort her after failure. She will share her triumphs with us.

Caroline comes in and finds them sitting on the edge of the stage, with a bottle between them. Pause. Margareta spots her. Johann gets up.

MARGARETA

Have no fear, I won't take him away from you. Caroline.

CAROLINE

I don't know, Mrs. Hoffman, that we are on a first name basis.

JOHANN

Caroline, don't go on like that, please.

CAROLINE

As always, you, Johann, understand nothing.

JOHANN

Margareta was feeling terrible, and there is nothing more natural than that I should be with her.

CAROLINE

Johann, I am feeling wonderful, and there is nothing more natural than that you should be with me. Let her find another shoulder to cry on. And while she is looking for a shoulder to cry on let her also find another place to put her dressing table, since I'm not going to share my dressing room with anyone.

Margareta begins to laugh.

JOHANN

For heaven's sake, don't you see that she is not well!

MARGARETA

(To Johann): With those same words I sent Magdalena Kreger off twelve years ago.

JOHANN

Who was Margareta Kreger?

MARGARETA

That's it, poor Johann! Just that: Who was Magdalena Kreger?!

9. HANSWURST – THE SERGEANT

HANSWURST – THE SERGEANT: Long ago he was small. Then he grew. Then he grew some more. When he was full grown, my good father asked me: "Hanswurst, now that you are full grown all over, what are you going to be in life?" I thought and thought, and then I said: "Daddy I want to be a drunkard and for everyone to pay my drinks." Then my good father put down his bottle, and he thought, and he thought and he thought, and the he said to me: "Hanswurst, son, then you should be a soldier." Brothers! Join the army today. Six gold pieces a year! Six gold pieces! Field exercises once a month, and those rare and far between. On Sunday afternoons to each man a bottle of brandy, and, often, on other days as well! Why shouldn't you live at the cost of the state? Your belly always warm, and your only duty is to say "Yes, sir" and to take care that the feet of the captain's wife are warm, when he is not a home. I was warming, warming, waaarming them. When, suddenly the captain appeared: "Hanswurst, you swine! You'll kill my wife with warming! "Join the army, you men folk!

10. THE REHEARSAL

Caroline, Johann, Gottsched. Caroline is finishing her monologue. Her acting is in the style of the period: pompous, rhetorical and static.

CAROLINE

"... And I feared that Nero had give me too much of a task to gain your liking... I feared of the hidden flame, but in vain, of my own love – I wished that I had never, alas, beheld you."

Pause.

CAROLINE

(Happily): I cannot do it better! *(To Johann)*

JOHANN

(Applauding): Bravo! Bravo! I think that she was exceptional.

Pause

GOTTSCHED

(Ignoring Johann): then we can stop making theater. This was poor, sad, trivial. Yu, girl, have no talent. I am sorry! I am very sorry.

CAROLINE

(Stuttering): If someone would just tell me what is wrong, I would perhaps...

GOTTSCHED

And why waste words?! Why?... It is terrible!!

JOHANN

I think that good manners require some explanation...

GOTTSCHED

Good manners?! This is the theater. Good manners!!! This is not a procession, nor a mass nor a liturgy! This is the theater! For the love of God!! Preach behind your pulpit! I am the bishop here! I am!!

CAROLINE

You don't have to shout at him..

GOTTSCEHED

I shout when I feel like shouting! I scream! I howl! I won't let untalented peasants silence me. Is that clear!!

Caroline begins to cry.

JOHANN

Any art must first and foremost be humane. And even that theater of yours. But you, sir are behaving in an inhumane manner. And above all impolitely.

GOTTSCHED

Art is, priest, both impolite and inhumane! Because it is the fruit of human truth, which is impolite and inhumane!

CAROLINE

"Inhumanity and impoliteness!" These are the phrases you use to charm young girls and cattle merchants at fairs! I demand that you tell me this instant what I have done wrong! This instant! He sits here all day, and keeps his mouth shut, and then he finally shouts insults at me! I have had my full of this esotherics. You won't leave until you tell me!

GOTTSCHED

That's it! Fume! Break things! Cry! Passions and not diction! Truths! Truths! That is the way Iphigenia speaks to her father! Passions! Feelings! Psychological pauses. She does not stand in one place! She rushes about the stage, she pleads for support, understanding! She wrings he hands, she tears at her dress in despair! She does not know what she will say, it comes out of her! That is the truth! Impoliteness, delicacy! Passions are essential, not diction! The rehearsal is over! For ever.

He leaves.

CAROLINE

The truth, Johann... the truth. He is right... I have understood...
(Laughs) I didn't believe that there were people like that! We will leave Spiegelberg and join Cottsched's company. That will be the end of Hanswurst – and the vulgarity of the Germans! God is our guide, Johann!

JOHANN

I hope that he is the one leading us.

11. SUCCESS

Gottsched, Johann, Mrs. Gottsched. Gottsched is looking out of the window, he is in a euphoria. Johann looks over his shoulder. Mrs. Gottsched counts the takings.

MRS. GOTTSCHED

They are really overdoing it! We are a serious theater. It's really impossible to understand audiences. Ten days haven't passed since they whistled at her for that role. One hundred and twenty-one, one hundred and twenty-two, one hundred and twenty-three, one hundred and twenty-four.

GOTTSCHED

They are carrying her across the square.

JOHNN

I hope that they do not drop her...

GOTTSCHED

Johann, my good fellow, she is a success. We have succeeded!

MRS. GOTTSCHED

One hundred and twenty-one, one hundred ad twenty-one, one hundred and twenty-two...

GOTTSCHED

She really wasn't bad tonight...

JOHANN

(Crossing himself): I didn't believe that I would be thanking God for this.

Pause. Looks at the euphoric Gottsched.

GOTTCHED

Truly, she wasn't bad tonight....

MRS. GOTTSCHED

(To Johann): It has been quite cold these last few days, hasn't it Mr. Neuber? One hundred and twenty-one, one hundred and twenty-two, one hundred and twenty three....

JOHANN

Yes, very unusual for this time of year.

Caroline's father comes in.

JOHANN

Mr. Weissenborn? Welcome (*The Father does not react.*) This is Mr. Gottsched...

FATHER

Gottsched, you are a knave, a thief and a hypocrite! Where is she?

JOHANN

What is the matter with you?

FATHER

And you stay our of my way, y phony priest, who steals daughters from their fathers!

GOTTSCHED

What is the matter with this man?

MRS. GOTTSCHED

Sir, I would like to remind you of your language!

FATHER

Kiss my ass, madam! I have been playing Hanswurst for fifty years. I have offended no one, I have killed no one, yet she and this scoundrel here have proclaimed me the anti-Christ, a satyr, a highway robber!! Last week they burned an effigy in front of the audience! And who did the doll resemble? Me, madam! That is a call to a lynching! I'm going to teach her a lesson now. Where is she?

GOTTSCHED

Come, come, sir... you are being paranoid! The performance was not an attack on your saintly character. It has general intentions against mistakes in the education of the audience... Sit down, have a drink with us. Right from the stage coach, are you?

FATHER

I'll drink only at you funeral, sir. You, as you are, want to re-educate the audience! Well, here's this to you!

Caroline comes in, her hair is disheveled and she is happy. When she spots her father, her face turns grim.

CAROLINE

What is this creature doing here?

FATHER

Caroline, it is me...

CAROLINE

How do you dare to appear before me, sir? And are you brazen enough to set your foot in my theater?!

GOTTSCHED

My, my... things are going bad for you.

FATHER

Caroline, my child...

CAROLINE

I have nothing to do with you, sir!

FATHER

You burnt an effigy resembling me in the street last week!
That's how things are going!

CAROLINE

I don't know who you are.

FATHER

Don't behave like that, Caroline! It's me! Your father!

CAROLINE

Get away from me, sir! You have done more harm to my people
than the Barbarians!

FATHER

Caroline... I am an honest man, I have nothing to be ashamed
of!

CAROLINE

With your grimacing you cater to the lowest, animals passions,
you stifle everything that is good and noble. You lie from the
stage, sir that women are whores, that husbands are cuckolds,
that servants are thieves, that lawyers are villains, that killing is
a nice invention, that gluttony and drink are the greatest
human achievement, that war is a metal shower and that the
world is rotten, and that there is no God!

FATHER

Are you speaking of me?! If the people had asked for Seneca, I
would have played Seneca. It is all the same to me.

CAROLINE

I'll grind you to dust! You and your vulgarity will disappear. That, that... damned cynicism toward everything will disappear. You call the vitalism of the people – it is a vitalism, but of evil and conniving, and I have put an end to it today. Thank heavens, man is not such a miserable creature.

FATHER

But, Caroline, my dear, I have three more children to support! You have three younger sisters...

CAROLINE

(Collecting herself): The destruction of your family is your own fault. Not everything is allowed, sir! Believe me that your destruction is my girlhood dream come true! *(She becomes enraged.)*

JOHANN

(To Caroline's father): Sit down, please.

CAROLINE

Let him stand! There is no mercy for him! Man was created by God, and not by a swine!

FATHER

Daughter, by this grimacing I was able to bring you up. I carried you in my arms. How can you?!

CAROLINE

It's very easy, sire! And it gives me great satisfaction!

FATHER

Is it possible that a woman can be so cruel! That a daughter can talk to her father in this way, after so many years...

GOTTSCHED

Come now, sir, these are just words.

CAROLINE

Those are not just words. I have managed to win over the audience. The truth has triumphed. And love has triumphed. This is the end for you, sir!

FATHER

Truth? Love? Oh, damn you! Damn all of you! I have spent my life on the stage, and only death will take me off it. You believe that only your kind of theater can make man good. You are the evil ones! Evil! And that's why you'll be destroyed. You hate me? Hate me then, for all I care. I curse you! With the curse of a father and actor!

He leaves. Johann heads after him.

CAROLINE

Johann, don't you dare move.

JOHANN

I won't stand this! There is no goal that justifies this behavior. So many years have passed.

CAROLINE

Years have nothing to do with it!

GOTTSCHED

We are all a bit excited this evening...

CAROLINE

That man is a criminal and I am sorry that we did not burn him instead of an effigy of him.

JOHANN

Caroline, what are you saying? What is the matter with all of you? This is only theater! That is your father! *(To Gottsched)* How can you watch this calmly?

GOTTSCHED

(Spreads his arms out helplessly.) What can I do? You see that she is angry.

CAROLINE

In any case, I won't waste any more words on him. I am the queen this evening! Me!

JOHANN

(Looking into her face): Caroline?

CAROLINE

(Completely misshaped with anger.) Why are you looking at me, priest?

12. THE WONDERFUL GOTTSCHED

Johann is asleep. Caroline barges in, tipsy and euphoric.

CAROLINE

(Tottering): Johann... Are you sleeping? You're always sleeping. Go on, sleep.

JOHANN

I'm not sleeping. Are you looking for wine?

CAROLINE

Yes. And so what?

JOHAN

It is over there.

CAROLINE

You've missed a lot by leaving early.

JOHANN

I was sleepy.

CAROLINE

How long are you going to continue withdrawing before everyone?! Other people fight for their place, but you keep withdrawing. You, only if you wanted to, could be the equal of even Gottsched. But no, you love being by the side. As if you were misshapen or stupid. *(Pause)* Why should I admire Mrs. Gottsced's husband, when my own husband can be equally witty, superior, educated and manly?

JOHANN

Perhaps I can't.

CAROLINE

You're withdrawing again! Why do you force me to be ashamed of you?! *(Pause)*. There, now you've heard me say it. *(Pause)* What is it now? *(Pause)*. I just simply can't stand that anyone else should be better than you. *(Pause)* You have to spoil it all for me! Everything! And now this jealousy of yours! But, you can't be all my world. I am an actress. I have to keep company with people. You have to believe in me. You know how much I love you. You are my whole world... You are the most wonderful man in the world. Gottsched is no match for you! If only you could show it... I want to bear you three children. Come let's make love. I want to give you Peter, Maria, Johann...

JOHANN

(Holds her to his chest): My poor little girl...

13. THE LOVE SCENE

Gottsched is sitting on the edge of a bed and dressing himself. Caroline is lying in the bed.

CAROLINE

My God, what have I done?... What have we done? I am going to tell Johann everything this very night!

GOTTSCHED

Don't speak about telling him! What kind of foolishness is that!? What are you going to achieve with that?

CAROLINE

I can't lie to him! He does not deserve it.

GOTTSCHED

He does not deserve to have you tell him that you have been unfaithful to him! This is life, and you are not Iphigenia. No one wants to know the truth!

CAROLINE

But, you are the one who talks about the truth all the time!

GOTTSCHED

About truth in the theater!

CAROLINE

You're no going to tell your wife anything?

GOTTSCHED

Where would it have led me if I had told her about each of my escapades?

CAROLINE

That means – that I am just an escapade?

GOTTSCHED

I didn't want to say that...

CAROLINE

And what about our theater! What about our plans?

GOTTSCHED

I smell of your perfume! Why did you have to put so much on? How am I going to get rid of it? I'm going to have to walk around for two hours in order to get rid of the scent.

CAROLINE

I can't be bothered how you're going to get rid of it!

GOTTSCHED

And what do you want? That I should leave my family, and that you should leave your husband – all for the sake of the theater? That's simply not done! That is indecent.

CAROLINE

The theater is indecent, is that what you want to say?

GOTTSCHED

The theater is the theater, and life is life.

CAROLINE

But I love you, you swine!

GOTTSCHED

You love the theater. (*He embraces her.*) It is too early for such radical measures. We have time. Slowly.

CAROLINE

(*Whimpering, with her head on his shoulder*): And we are going to have our theater? (*Buttoning his shirt scuffs behind her back.*)

GOTTSCHED

Of course.

CAROLIE

And we'll change..

GOTTSCHED

Of course (*He has finished dressing.*) I am going to start immediately on an adaptation of Voltaire's Zaira Oh, when I just think of how you will look on the stage!

CAROLINE

Go! Go and finish the play and bring it to me, even if you finish at dawn! Write clearly! Don't forget about the Second Act!

He kisses her and leaves. Pause. Johann comes in.

JOHANN

Aren't you feeling well?

Pause

CAROLINE

Johann, Johann...

JOHANN

Gottsched?

CAROLINE

Yes.

JOHANN

That's low! That's fitting of your Hanswurst.

CAROLINE

You don't understand. It's not a matter of physical pleasure...

JOHANN

The worse for it. I won't let you become his mistress. Has he told his wife?

CAROLINE

Of course. I believe that he has. He has, he has.

JOHANN

And, what do you intend to do now?

CAROLINE

We're going to create a new theater. We have enormous plans. He is at this moment translating Zaira for me. There is nothing dirty in it all, Johann. We truly have a goal...A

JOHANN

...which is unattainable for me! I know, I know!

CAROLINE

I am certain that as an honorable man and a gentleman he will come and explain everything to you. As an actress, I don't exist without him. As I person, I do not exist without your blessing.

JOHANN

And what about me? *(Pause. Caroline lowers her head.)* Alright, I... I will leave in the morning.

CAROLINE

Johann *(She embraces him and kisses him.)* Thank you.

JOHANN

I have to pack now.

CAROLINE

Yes, yes! *(Then adds quickly.)* Can I help you? You should have these shirts washed as soon as possible. You can throw these away. They are torn, here, do you see? *(She packs)* This is a beautiful shirt. Why don't you wear it? When we go... *(Then she falls silent.)* Do you want to take something of mine? I'll give you the pendant... Hm... I need that for Iphigenia. I'll give you the fan... I need that for Mithridates. I'll give you a braid of my hair...

JOHANN

You need that for Salome. Caroline you have my blessing. I hope I'm not right about Gottsched.

CAROLINE

You aren't, I'm sure I admit that it is all my fault. He is completely innocent, although he blames himself. Your opinion of him is completely wrong! Of course, you have every right to be angry, to challenge him to a duel, but – I want to confirm that he is an honorable man. Johann, he is a genius. You have no idea how he knows how to...

JOHANN

And I don't want to know.

CAROLINE

Yes. Yes.

14. JOHANN, MY FRIEND

COTTSCHEDE

Caroline, my dear, good morning! Johann, my friend! As I promised, first thing in the morning!... I solemnly declare that Mitzi has translated Alzira from the French like a master! Truly like a master~! The role seems to have been written for you. Hasn't it, Mitzi?

MRS. GOTTSCHED

Good morning, my dear. (*Kisses her on the cheek.*)

GOTTSCHEDE

I know what you're going to say: what kind of manners is it to come calling on someone so early in the morning, and

unannounced?! I agree, it isn't good manners. But, Caroline, my dear, Johann, my friend, this is truly a great and wonderful reason.

MRS. GOTTSCHED

Slowly, Johann. Let Caroline read it first.

GOTTSCHED

But, Mitzi, your translation is extraordinary. It is a true model of translation into our language. The subtlety of the French original has been retained and it has been enriched by the manly firmness of the German language.

MRS. GOTTSCHED

Perhaps Caroline will not like it.

GOTTSCHED

But, that is impossible. (*Turning around*) Johann, you are not the only one who has a genius for a wife. (*Embraces Mitzi*) I will be a triumph!

Caroline begins to cry.

MRS. GOTTSCHED

Caroline, my little dear! Has Gottsched done something? (*To Gottsched*) I told you that we should not barge in like this, like drunkards at a funeral... (*Caroline*) Nerves, nerves... The times, the times... (*To Johann*) Isn't it so?

JOHANN

(*Seriously to Gottsched*): Sit down, please, sir.

GOTTSCHED

Thank you, but I really... Here is the translation. It is exceptional. Some minor changes, perhaps... but you... when you have recovered... I will come back. I promise. A little later. The translation is... I will come back.

He sits down. A pause. Caroline is crying. Mitzi consoles her. Gottsched tries to avoid Johann's eyes.

On my god, it's all so unpleasant. I apologize. If I can help in any way... You know that you can always rely on... the two of us.

CAROLINE

Thank you very much, sir.

GOTTSCHED

I will come back... Let's go, Mitzi.

MRS GOTTSCHED

The best thing is mint tea.

Pause. Gottsched looks at Caroline, Johann looks at Gottsched, Mrs. Gottsched begins to comprehend the situation.

MRS. GOTTSCHED

It isn't possible!

GOTTSCHED

Mitzi, you have misunderstood it all...

MRS. GOTTSCHED

You swine, you freak! You, you... crocodile! Johann! (*She embraces Johann, weeping.*) My friend!

GOTTSCHED

She has been working all night, this has caused nervous tension and a cup of mint tea...

MRS. GOTTSCHED

(*To Gottsched*): We'll discuss this at home. Johann, my friend, good bye. (*She leaves.*)

GOTTSCHED

Mitzi! Caroline, I... Johann, my friend... Oh, my God...

Leaves. Johann unpacks his suitcases.

CAROLINE

I want to persuade you that he had no choice...

JOHANN

We will never talk about this again.

CAROLINE

Fine.

JOHANN

You are Caroline Neuber and you can do without Gottsched.

Pause.

CAROLINE

I'm going off to have a good cry.

She leaves.

15. FAILURE

The dressing room. Gottsched is sitting on a chair, like in the dock. Caroline walks round him. She is absolutely furious. She tears at her dress, she throws her wig down.

CAROLINE

Oh how I hate these people! How I hate these simple minded masses. Is that an audience!? Those monkey face, primitive, intoxicated masks! Why should I even try? Just let them have enough of swearing, vulgarity...

GOTTSCHED

The people need to be enlightened.

CAROLINE

What should I do? Tie those mongrels to the wheel and read Virgil to them until they breathe their last?! No, no... Quite simply, I have to reconcile myself to the fact that our people are a cursed and wild horde.

GOTTSCHED

We knew that it would be a difficult tack.

CAROLINE

Sir, I am the famous Caroline Neuber, and this evening I played to fifteen oxen who did not manage to cram in to see the stinking Muller and watch him grimacing! I think that someone should poison Muller for the sake of this people's future. This very night. Deadly nightshade, may dear sir? Mandragola!

GOTTSCHED

You're talking nonsense.

CAROLINE

And have I been unfaithful to my husband because of them? And what a man he is! And because of you!

GOTTSCHED

Please, I beg you...

CAROLINE

Don't beg me! I am fed up with your pleas. I am fed up with your empty words about the power of art. We are nothing, and Hanswurst is everything! It is Margareta – who has a speech impediment, who has two left feet, Margaret who doesn't know how to speak – it is her that the crowd is carrying like a heroine! I can't stand it! And to all of this you beg me to calm down!

GOTTSCHED

I beg you, I didn't make you rush to your husband and tell him about the two of us.

CAROLINE

Perhaps you can live your life with lies, I can't. And so, when your Mitzi appears, the moment that she crosses the doorstep of this dressing room, I am going to...

Mrs. Gottshed comes in. Caroline and Mrs. Gottsched clearly ignore each other.

GOTSCHED

Mitzi, did you see that?

GOTTSCHED

The small audience.

MRS. GOTTSCHED

Was there a small audience? Miller, as far as I can see is doing an excellent business.

GITTSCHED

Yes, they have all gone to see Hanswurst...

MRS GOTTSCHED

There are only twenty four marks here! I have told your Johann, that it would make no difference if the two of us played something of this. At least one performance. You know that I need the money for...

Caroline turns round, breathless with anger.

MRS. GOTTSCHED

(Defiantly): Yes, madam!

GOTTSCHED

Yes, please! I beg of you! I am tired...

The door opens and Margarita enters, dressed in glamorous, bright clothes. Pause.

MARGARETA

Good evening to you all! Bravissimo!... Allow me to express my delight with your performance! I didn't see it, truth to say, but I have been told that it is enchanting. *(To Gottsched)* You, sir, truly have reason to be glad! To have an actress like that in your company. *(To Caroline)* My dear! Finally someone powerful enough to re-educate this herd that we call an audience! Corneille, Racine, and I hear Voltaire as well! That is it! What courage! They say that what Caroline is doing is modern acting. I am so sorry that I didn't see the performance. But, some other time. There will be another time, won't there? For I believe that there is no better actress in the German nation. I really wonder at the people. Such a performance was being given here, while they were breaking down the gates for ours.

CAROLINE

Those people of yours come to see your legs.

MARGARETA

That's what I'm saying. I am completely confused. I simply can't believe that give a choice between the divine Racine, your modern acting and my legs, they chose – my legs. True, my legs are worth seeing, but in comparison with modern acting and the divine Racine... I really don't know. Look here, they tore my dress while they were carrying me across the square. But, no matter, I'll buy five new ones. And the duke came to our

performance. "My little bear", I said to him, "What is there in these legs?"

CAROLINE

We don't show our legs here, we don't show our thighs, we don't offer our cleavage.

MARGARETA

But what can you do, that is what the people want, and the people are always right. To the people, Racine's entire works are worth less than one, good, old authentic German swear word. True, this swear word was perfected by hundreds of generations over the centuries, it is the truth of a people.

CAROLINE

That's right. They thought for centuries and they invented – what? A swear word.

MARGARETA

Sometimes I think that the people do not want to be enlightened. Perhaps they want lies, conniving...

CAROLINE

And legs.

MARGARETA

Quick-witted as ever. And legs of course, my dear...

CAROLINE

I am an artist, not a dancing bear at the village fair. We show the essence here!

MARGARETA

And what is the essence? Racine?

CAROLINE

Yes, Racine, Yes, my dear...

MARGARETA

And where do people like that live? Who is concerned with their problems?

CAROLINE

Racine creates the ideal man, better than we are, but that is something that you and your audience will never understand...

MARGARETA

Ha, ha.. Racine... He for a start was worse than we are. He was a flatterer, a cad and a hypocrite!

CAROLINE

Racine a cad!?

MRS. GOTTSCHED

I think there is no need for so much emotion...

CAROLINE AND MARGARETA

You, Mitzi, don't interfere!

CAROLINE

It is better to die of hunger for one's ideals than to live like a pig, in shame!

MARGARETA

I used to faint fourteen times while I played Hecuba. I used to lose three kilos a night playing Electra. And what for? Nothing? Now I play Colombine and the duke adores my legs. This dress brings more respect than all the real roles...

MRS. GOTTSCHED

(To Margareta): That's what I was telling them.

CAROLINE

(To Gottsched): Why are you silent? Say something.

GOTTSCHED

You have before you a long and difficult journey...

CAROLINE

Is that all?

MRS. GOTTSCHED

I keep saying that the theater exists because of the audience.

GOTTSCHED

Shut up!!! Be quiet this instant... Man must sacrifice something for his ideals, for the love of God!

MRS. GOTTSCHED

But he can't sacrifice the happiness of his family! He would be just an egotistical swine!

CAROLINE

Who are you calling a swine?

GOTTSCHED

Caroline, she wasn't thinking of...

MRS. GOTTSCHED

I was, I was thinking! We have lost so many chances! Because of her you won't let us play what the people like. So what if she sacrifices herself to art! What's that got to do with me! I'm not asking you to be a hero, but to be rational. Let her husband be a hero for her.

CAROLINE

Let your husband play Alzira in your miserable, tragic, sweet, idiotic translation! I', not going to appear in that mess!

GOTTSCHED

Caroline, I think you're exaggerating. The translation is quite adequate.

CAROLINE

Excellent! Then we can also do Hanswurst if your Mitzi wants to!

MRS. GOTTSCHED

And you will!

CAROLINE

Sir, I solemnly declare that I will never, never, never speak any word translated by the creature you have the audacity to call your wife.

GOTTSCHED

Now, that's enough! put that translation on the repertory, and it will be played.

CAROLINE

(To Gottsched): Sir, you are a miserable man! A poor lover! And he is, madam! A poor one! Good bye!

MARGARETA

God heavens! I have come at the wrong moment. Has it come to this? God only knows how sorry I am for you.

16. A BAD DREAM

Caroline, Johann.

CAROLINE

(In a night dress): Johann. This is terrible! Thank god it was only a dream. *(Embraces him).* I dreamed that they had forced me onto the stage and that I didn't know what the play was, nor what I was playing, nor what I was supposed to say. The actors around me were playing something quite different... Truthfully, energetically, while I was slow, false, boring. And then, in the middle of the performance, an actress said to me, out loud: "Mrs. Neuber, don't you see you're a nuisance? Don't you see that you're finished?" and I jumped on her, and we began to fight in front of the audience, and I knew that she was right.

Think of it, what a dream! (*Pause*) What's the matter? (*Pause*)
What's the matter?!

JOHANN

Caroline... that's what happened last night. It wasn't a dream.

Pause.

CAROLINE

It wasn't a dream... What do you mean it wasn't a dream?

17. SPIEGELBERG – THE SECOND TIME

An inn. Spiegelberg is sitting at a table covered with food and eating shell fish, so that his slurping echoes in the quiet. Joann sits across from him and tries not to look at his full plates. A long, noisy pause.

SPIEGELBERG

It's all very awkward. I don't know, I don't know what to tell you.

JOHANN

Her father offered that she could act with him, but she will sooner die of hunger.

SPIEGELBERG

I heard of that unfortunate incident. Has she recovered?

JOHANN

She has not acted for a year. I would act. You would. Everybody would act. But not her. Sir, she is going to die!

SPIEGELBERG

My God... (*Spiegelberg continues to eat systematically and noisily.*)
Calm down...

JOHANN

You say that her acting is outdate, that she has been acting in the same way for years. Alright, but, sir, she was the person who reformed acting. She is Caroline Neuber! The idol of German actors. The people owe it to her!

SPIEGELBERG

D you know what can happen to her. What are you going to do then?

JOHANN

I beg you...

Pause.

SPIEGELBERG

What if they whistle at her? What if she fails? She is Caroline Neuber!

JOHANN

She won't. She can't.

SPIEGELBERG

“She won’t. She can’t... Who does she think she is! You place me in an impossible position! Isn’t it enough that you chose me to pull the stool under her feet?! I am not an executioner! That is impossible! Besides, she was quite happy to leave my company and to join Gottsched’s. She destroyed my repertory and never turned round to see what she had done.

JOHANN

At least you know how much she loved you. You discovered the theater to her, You put her on that stool.

SPIEGELBERG

I never put anyone up on a stool, sir. I made an actress of there, while Gottsched made her... what she is today. She left me, destroyed my repertory, and now you are asking me to...
(*Continues to eat.*)

JOHANN

(*Bursting with anger*): Will you stop gorging yourself!! You are humiliating me and enjoying it! But it is not me who is being humiliated, but you yourself! I am doing this for her sake, and you are doing it for your vanity’s sake. And your whole little, miserable world which you praise to the stars, feeds on its own vanity, swims in malice and hypocrisy. Nothing gives you more pleasure than another’s destruction. You hate each other and bite at each other like rabid dogs for the sake of the boards and the applause of the fickle audience, which you love only when it is praising you, and which you really despise from the depths of your heart, because you are afraid! Frightened and cruel children! I have been waiting all my life by her side to see, finally what will appear underneath it all, after all those tears and sweat! And what appears? Vanity, vanity and nothing but

vanity! And only one woman believed in those stories of yours about enlightening the people – Caroline Neuber. That's why she is the greatest, because she is suffering for her faith. And I won't let her! I won't let her, because I know that it's a lie!!

Pause.

SPIEGELBERG

Oh my God,. on my God... Help me this one more time, and tomorrow come what may!

JOHANN

Sir! (Tries to kiss his hand.)

SPIEGELBERG

Johann, don't humiliate yourself any more! I'm not God... yet. Ha, ha... Come, take this for her...

He wraps food in a napkin and hands it to Johann.

Pause. Johann takes it.

Darkness.

18. HANSWURST – THE LAND OF COCKAIGNE

HANSWURST

Listen here, people, to a tale miraculous and wonderful of how Hanswurts was a sailor and sailed to faraway India. There was a terrible storm, the ship skipped like a donkey with a thistle

under its tail. Our captain banged his head so hard against the wall that it went into his stomach. Then he climbed to the bow, took his pants off and peered through his ass hole where we were heading. They even stuffed a looking glass up his ass, so he could see better. Still, it was one shit of a voyage! And he who looks trough his ass hole can only see shit, so we hit some rocks and all the hands were drowned. I, however, was saved by the good Lord who led me to the strange island I want to tell you about. What an island, oh my brothers! As soon as I set foot on it full pans began to bark at me, pots and baking dishes, frying pans and stewing dishes, trays and plates. In one of them a roll with peas, as big as that, from another a side of beef looked at me, in a third sauerkraut giggled, over there mutton with potatoes. I shivered all over, my dear brothers, and scampered up a tree. When in the tree, instead of leaves, all mince meat patties and cutlets. The pots and pans below all barking at me and shouting. "Eat me! Eat me!" And they were throwing hot cakes at me and pretzels just to get me down. Some of them, seeing that I didn't want to eat them, ate themselves out of despair. What a land that was, my brothers! Spit roasted goats capered on the meadow, rivers of mild veal broth and others of hot fish soup. Like a nest of snakes, pancakes with fresh cheese, meat and greens hissed at me, from the well you drew beer, while wine showered from the sky. Everything was hot, my brothers, golden brown, crispy, savory, crunchy, well baked, fat, it all slid down your throat, it called to you, it enticed you, it waved at you, it cursed you, it spied on you, it begged you. In the air, instead of flies, full spoons buzzed around and as soon as you opened your mouth they'd head in. I was conversing with a carp in sour cream, when along comes a bowl full of dumplings and it said to me that I was being summed by their priest, the Big Cookie. Then I mounted a salami and it took me to the Ementhaler Hills,

where the Big Cookie proclaimed a Low for Men and I am going to pass it on to you here: Don't do any work! Just eat! Don't eat on an empty stomach and don't do any work! Don't eat sweets before savories, if you don't have to. And don't do any work. Don't mix red and white wine, and if you mix them, drink beer on the side. And don't do any work! Don't skip salads with roasts. And don't do any work! Let your piglet roast always be fat and abundant. And don't do any work! If you eat fish, don't forget the wine. That is a sin. And don't do any work. Don't crave meatless dishes. And don't do any work. And never, under any circumstances, do any work. And shit regularly, for the love of God! I spent wonderful years there. And when the time came for me to leave, I wanted to take some food for those actors who keep talking of great art, but are so hungry that they haven't got anything to shit. But the Big Cookie told me: Hanswurst, they eat air. "How is that? "That is why they fart so much, you can't breathe! They've eaten up all the air! I often remember my good friends: the Vegetable Stew, the stuffed cabbages, the leg roast with noodles (he was real devil), and tears come to my mouth. (*He wipes away his ''tears''*). Where are you, my unfaithful friends, in these hungry times? Think of me! Your loving Hanswurst!

19. THE INN

THE MERCHANT

I tell you, the performance is sensational. Please forgive me.

CAROLINE

I'm not malicious. I'm glad that the performance was a success even though I wasn't in it. I'm really glad.

I PROSTITUTE

He's lying, the cad. He's saying it just to torment you. The performance was terrible. It was boring.

CAROLINE

Ha! Let them now see who Caroline Neuber is! Let him now perform he wife's plays. Let him starve... *(She drinks while the others nudge each other)* I didn't like Gottsched. No, I didn't. God knows that I tried. Say that I loved him, then everything would have been more moral.

I PROSTITUTE

Ah, yes, then it would have been quite different. Wouldn't it?
(To the others.)

II PROSTITUTE

Absolutely *(They all snicker.)*

CAROLINE

Tell me that I lie, but I did it all for the sake of the theater...

I PROSTITUTE

Of course, sister, I also did it for the theater's sake.

II PROSTITUTE

Me too!

CAROLINE

And for my father's sake. He is so vulgar, the poor man. There are thousands like him...

I PROSTITUTE

I also did it for my father's sake. he is so vulgar, the poor man. There are thousands like him...

I PROSTITUTE

I also did it for my father's sake.

THE MERCHANT

Please show some respect. This was once the celebrated Caroline Neuber.

CAROLINE

I haven't been acting for a year. For a year!

I PROSTITUTE

Come, have a drink, sister.

CAROLINE

I won't (*She drinks*) The theater... (*Pause.*) Oh, my poor Johann.

II PROSTITUTE

Come, let's drink.

CAROLINE

I won't (*She drinks*) My life is over. I have sacrificed my unborn child to the theater, I have sacrificed ma husband to the theater, I have sacrificed my father to the theater, I have sacrificed my honor to the theater. I have sacrificed everything.

I PROSTITUTE

Let's have a drink. Honor, children and the other odds and ends don't interest us.

CAROLINE

I won't (*She drinks*) They carried me in their hands! In their hands!

I PROSTITUTE

Of course, my dear sister. Of course they did.

II PROSTITUTE

We believe you.

THE MERCHANT

Yes we do, we believe each other completely. I am, in fact, a duke, but I have masked myself. This is princess Zoraida. She really is.

CAROLIN

They did carry me on their hands! I used to be a great actress.

THE MERCHANT

And I used to be a duke!

General laughter.

CAROLINE

Iphigenia at Aulis! The mother discovers that her daughter will be sacrificed so that the ships can set sail. Look and see who the great Caroline Neuber is! (*She stumbles.*)

They all laugh.

CAROLINE

“Defend your darling, the one they call yours even though wrongly!

With a garland I took my daughter to you,
And now I follow her to slaughter!

By your heart, by your right arm, by your mother, Your name
has ruined me, let it be my salvation! I have no sacrificial
temple altar except for your knee!”

*Everyone else comments. The corporal sits motionless and looks at her
in awe. The other are shouting and applauding. She stands on a chair.
As in a trance.*

CAROLINE

Applause...

The corporal is almost senseless with alcohol.

THE CORPORAL

(Wiping his tears): Marry me!

They all roar.

THE CORPORAL

How can you laugh at a woman who is going through such a
tragedy! Are you human beings? She is sacrificing her
daughter, and what are you doing? You’re laughing!

The Merchant falls under the table.

THE CORPORAL

(To Caroline): Where is your daughter Iphigenia? Perhaps it isn't too late... *(He belches.)* I beg you pardon... I'll save her!

Caroline looks half crazed.

I PROSTITUTE

Haven't you heard, you blockhead, that she sacrificed her to the theater!?

II PROSTITUTE

Even before she was born!

THE MERCHANT

And even her father!

I PROSTITUTE

And even her husband!

THE CORPORAL

Not she! She would never do something like that! Isn't it so, Mrs. Clitemnestra?

CAROLINE

The theater is my Aulis! These people are the Greek ships! Yes, I did all that...

II PROSTITUTE

The people are ships! Long live the ships with their masts!

THE MERCHANT

Long live trawlers with broad lower decks!

THE CORPORAL

(Falls back onto his chair.): Iphigenia....

Johann comes in.

JOHANN

Caroline, you're going to play in Hamburg! *(A pause. Johann's face grows dim.)* Caroline, let's go.

I PROSTITUTE

And who is this?

II PROSTITUTE

The poor Johann!

THE MERCHANT

Poor Johann, this lady is betrothed to this gentleman, the corporal. In the meantime, the lady has sacrificed her daughter to the gods.

THE CORPORAL

Iphigenia...

Johann ignores him.

CAROLINE

Let me go! I want to drink! I want to act! Leave me alone!

THE MERCHANT

Wait, my poor Johann, this lady is the corporal's betrothed! She is perhaps already carrying his child! (*Roar of laughter.*) And she will sacrifice him as well for the Greek ships!

JOHANN

(*Excited, but somewhat commanding.*): Caroline, I beg you. Caroline climbs down.

CAROLINE

Johann, catch me, I'm falling.

The lights change. The inn disappears into darkness, Johann and Caroline are standing near the footlights.

CAROLINE

My God, Johann, what is happening to me? Tell me that I am still fourteen years old and that it's not too late.

JOHANN

It's not too late. The Hamburg theater...

CAROLINE

Kiss me on the forehead before I go to bed. Say to me "Sleep, little angel" and... tiptoe out of the room and be careful... that the door does not squeak.

JOHANN

Don't cry.

He kisses her on the forehead, on her cheeks, on her neck. Caroline looks absentmindedly at the dark sky with no stars, completely unaware of his kisses, even of Johann's presence.

Johann gently lowers her to the floor. He lifts her skirt and unbuttons his trousers. Caroline seems to wake up.

CAROLINE

Johann?

Johann, breathless and red in the face, stops what he is doing. Pause.

JOHANN

What? What! I'm a husband, a man. I love you. But, I have... I have the right to myself. In front of Spiegelberg I had to... I did not vow celibacy to the theater! When am I going to live!?

CAROLINE

Oh, Johann, I didn't know that you were suffering so much...

20. THE INN

Enter the Father, Margareta, Spiegelberg, Gottsched, Mrs. Gottsched... Everyone except Johann. They resemble something like an audience. They sit down near the footlights, close to the audience and their faces toward it. During the scene they address the audience directly. Caroline comes in. Pause.

MARGARETA

He's lying, the cad! The play is terrible. Boring.

HANSWURST

Quiet!!!... Quiet please... And respect! The great Caroline Neuber! ... Iphigenia in Aulis! The mother learns that her daughter will be sacrificed so that the ships can set sail...

CAROLINE

I haven't been acting for a year. For a year... I have given everything to the theater... I have sacrificed my unborn child to the theater, I have sacrificed my husband to the theater, I have sacrificed my father to the theater, I have sacrificed my honor to the theater. I have sacrificed everything.

MRS. GOTTSCHED

What is she saying? I can't hear...

GOTTSCHED

That she has sacrificed everything to the theater.

MARGARETA

Of course, sister, so have I. Since I have been sacrificing everything to the duke, I'm much better off.

HANSWURST

Quiieet! Shhhhhhhh!

CAROLINE

My father. He was so vulgar, the poor man. There are thousands like him...

Pause:

MRS. GOTTSCHED

What is she saying?

HANSWURST

She says she has thousands of fathers.

FATHER

Her mother was an honest woman! She says she did it all because of her father!

MARGARETA

Of course... I also did it because of my father. Absolutely. I believe you.

FATHER

We generally believe each other completely. I am, in fact, a duke, but today I have masked myself. This is princess Zoraida. She really is. How are you Zoraida? How is your Cairo? Does it still hurt?

Laughter from the "audience". Pause.

HANSWURST

Iphigenia at Aulis!

CAROLINE

(Starts to recite softly.) "Defend your darling, the one they call yours, even though wrongly!"

With a garland I took my daughter to you,
 And now I follow her to slaughter!
 By your heart, by your right arm, by your mother,
 Your name has ruined me, let it be my salvation!

I have no sacrificial temple altar except for your knee!"

Applause, laughter.

GOTTSCHED

How can you laugh at a woman who is going through such a tragedy! Are you human beings? She is sacrificing her daughter, and what are you doing? You're laughing!

HANSWURST-MULLER

(To Caroline): Where is your daughter Iphigenia? Perhaps it's not too late.. I beg you pardon... I'll save her!

Caroline looks at him from the table like a madwoman.

MARGARETA

Haven't you heard, you blockhead, she has sacrificed her to the theater!?

MRS TOTTCHEDE

Before she was born!

FATHER

And even her father!

GOTTSCHED

And even her husband!

HANSWURST-MULLER

Not she! She would never do something like that! Isn't it so, Mrs. Clitemnestra?

CAROLINE

The theater is my Aulis. These people are the Greek ships! Yes, I did it...

MRS. GOTTSCHED

Come drink something... Some mint tea!...

CAROLINE

I won't *(She drinks)* The theater... Oh, my poor Johann. *(Pause)*
They carried me on their hands. I was a great actress.

FATHER

And I used to be a duke.

General laughter.

HANSWURST-MULLER

(Wiping his tears): Marry me! *(Like a clown, he wipes his nose on an enormous white handkerchief with red polka dots.)*

MARGARETA

The people are the ships... Long live the ships with stiff and large masts!

GOTTSCHED

Long live the fishing trawlers with large and wet lower decks!

Johann comes in.

MARGARETA

Who is this?

GOTTSCHED

Poor Johann!

FATHER

Poor Johann, this lady is the betrothed of Mr. Muller. In the meantime, the lady was pleased to sacrifice her daughter to the gods.

HANSWURST-MIULLER

Iphigenia, my child... Johann goes over to Caroline.

JOHANN

Let us go. You will be acting in Hamburg. Spiegelberg is asking you to come back. I have promised on your behalf. Please forgive me, We dined together. He has sent you this... look..
(Shows her the food wrapped in a napkin.)

CAROLINE

Let me go! I want to drink! I want to act! Leave me alone!

FATHER

Wait, poor Johann, this lady is Muller's betrothed! Perhaps she is already carrying his child!... She will sacrifice it to the Greek ships as well!

The "audience" approves.

CAROLINE

Johann, catch me, I'm falling!

21. THE HAMBURG THEATER

Johann and Spiegelberg are sitting in the dressing room. They are listen tensely, as if bombers were flying over their heads. Spiegelberg is biting his nails.

SPIEGELBERG

Now comes the scene with the lover...

Johann nods his head. They continue to listen. A long, long pause.

SPIEGELBERG

I can't hear anything...

A whistle breaks out. Johann and Spiegelberg jump up.

SPIEGELBERG

I knew it!

They rush off the stage. A spotlight goes on to reveal Caroline Neuber. The whistling does not die down. She stands motionless.

CAROLINE

Why are you like that? Why are you so cruel? What have I done to you? What are you getting back at me for? In order to please you, I have rehearsed a single gesture of the hand for seven days. And you? You hate me and look for my mistakes. You rejoice when I stumble, you are delighted when I forget my lines. You exercise your mind thinking of where I have gone wrong. Each one of you discusses the theater, but when the

theater discusses you, you are offended. I am not your enemy. I want to help you. You are my children, you are my family and my ideal. Is your laughter, are your tears, more valuable than my life? And today you have come to bury me.

Whistles.

You want lies, you want light entertainment? Well, Caroline Neuber won't give them to you! I won't pander to you! You vile, primitive crowd! I don't need your love! I couldn't care less about your applause. I spit on your false tears! I spit on the theater in which you are the audience. Damn you!

Darkness. Whistling.

SPIEGELBERG

My dear audience, I apologize! I ask you forgiveness a hundred times over. A million times. Today we'll be performing the hilarious comedy *The Cuckold Husband*. You must come!

22. CAROLINE – JOHANN

The inn disappears into the darkness., Johann and Caroline are near the footlights.

CAROLINE

My God, Johann, what is happening to me? Tell me that I am still fourteen years old and that it's not too late.

JOHANN

It's not too late.

CAROLINE

Kiss me on the forehead before I go to bed. Say to me "Sleep, little angel" and... tiptoe out of the room and be careful... that the door does not squeak.

JOHANN

Don't cry.

He kisses her on the forehead, on her cheeks, on her neck. Caroline looks absentmindedly at the dark sky with no stars, completely unaware of his kisses, even of Johann's presence. Johann gently lowers her to the floor. He lifts her skirt and unbuttons his trousers. Caroline seems to wake up.

CAROLINE

Johann?

Johann, breathless, stops what he is doing. Pause.

JOHANN

What? What! I am a husband, a man. I love you. But, I have... I have a right... to you. I can't wait in vain any more. I want an ordinary life! Ordinary things!

CAROLINE

Oh, Johann, I didn't know that you were suffering so much...

23. HANSWURST (*Civilian and Soldier*)

HANSWURST

Then I become a sergeant and every fledgling soldier came to cry on my shoulder. I would stand like this and keep quiet. And he would stand like this and keep quiet. And he would go: "Sergeant, sir, my wife has just had a baby. I... can't go off to war. My mother is old..." And I would just say: Military shirt, sir. Military undershirt. Without looking at him. And he would take off his clothes, and slowly fold them on a chair. And I would say: The cap, the one that goes under it, gloves, helmet. And he would begin to whimper: "My child is only two months old. My wife has an infection. Oh God, what am I going to do now..." All the while he's taking his clothes off. I would then say strictly: The water bottle, sir. Bayonet, sack, back pack. Then he would begin to wail "I'm shortsighted. no one will have any use of me". Trousers, boots, long underwear. Then he would go again: "I have graduated from a conservatorium. I am more useful to the state as a civilian. Someone has to entertain the people." He would take off his trousers. and then the sweetest part: your underwear, sir. And he would go: "Can't I keep my own? I have sensitive skin." No, sir. Then he would begin to cry. He would cover up his privates and, start to put on the underwear. And he would dress himself in the uniform. I would give him a rifle: "This is your rifle. Congratulations, sir. He would be in despair. "Thank you..." and then I would screaming: Attention! Down! Up! He would look like this and his heart would be in his heels. "What is the matter with you!?" There is nothing for you to ask me!!! Is that clear!! Left turn! I am your god! Who is your God? – "But, sir.."

Who is your God, you monkey!? "You are." That's right. Now I am God. And that is how Hanswurst become God.

24. SEVEN AGAINST THEBES

Caroline, a Peasant. Caroline, all out of breath, pulls the Peasant onto the stage.

CAROLINE

Johann, Johann! We're beginning rehearsals.

Johann comes in. In this scene it is evident that he is ill.

PEASANT

My son has been conscripted into the army. I prayed to God for the war to stop and it didn't help. The lady says that the... muses can stop the war.

CAROLINE

That's right! The people will see the tragedy of Polyneices and Eteocles...

PEASANT

And I'm going to be this... Eteocles.

CAROLINE

Johann, why re you standing there?! Give him a text! We have to start rehearsing!

PEASANT

Hurry, please. The winter will be upon us soon and my blockhead doesn't know how to look after himself.

CAROLINE

People will understand how senseless war is. They will throw down their arms and rush to embrace each other! They will become brothers, they will shed tears of joy!

PEASANT

(Kissing Caroline's hands.): Madam, God bless you! Ask of me what you will! Oh, just make it stop!

JOHANN

Friend, do you really think that the war can be stopped?

PEASANT

The lady says that it is the greatest magic in the world. She says that the.. muses... with their wings... of truth... can bring my son back. *(He chokes).* On the wings of truth! I believe that, sir, for God is silent, and the saints are silent! And my blockhead is alone out there! I'll even beg the devil, sir, the tailed Lucifer!

Johann embraces him.

PEASANT

(Pushing away his arm): I won't! Don't sir! I beg you! Give me that text, sir! I'll be Eteocles, I'll be anything you say! Give me that text! For my son's sake – I would kill!

CAROLINE

Quickly, quickly! It's still no too late! (*She takes the text.*) Do you know how to read? It doesn't matter. Say: "And the beat of hoofs, the clanging of arms spreads over the field and draws near, the noise flies, echoes"...

PEASAN

(*He stutters without comprehension.*): "And the beat of hoofs, the clanging of arms spreads over the field and draws near, the noise flies, echoes"...

CAROLINE

(*Continues*): "...like raging waters when they split the rocks! Oh, gods, goddesses, defend us from evil!"

PEASANT

(*Repeats*): "Oh, gods, goddesses defend us from evil!"

They are both screaming. They are trying to overwhelm the sound of cannons heard in the distance. The cannons drown them out. Darkness.

25. ON THE DOORSTEP

Caroline, Johann. Caroline is pulling Johann on some two-wheeled cart. They are both in tatters, dirty and disheveled. To the left is what is left of the wall of Caroline's house.

JOHANN

This was where your house stood.

CAROLINE

The church stood here.

CAROLINE

No. The church was not red. Over there, where that pile of yellow bricks is.

JOHANN

The bakery used to stand over there.

CAROLINE

And over there, do you see that trench... that is where the rose garden was. And the park was behind it.

JOHANN

Do you remember?

CAROLINE

I remember.

JOHANN

And do you remember...?

CAROLINE

Of course. Do you remember?...

JOHANN

Yes, yes... why shouldn't I?! You do remember?

CAROLINE

Do you remember?...

JOHANN

I remember.

CAROLINE

I remember. *(Pause.)* As if it were yesterday. *(Pause.)* Is it possible that it is all over Strange. I was angry at my father for some reason. You were lying on the bed... I said: let's go. And you said: let us go. Not asking where, not asking why.

JOHANN

Caroline, don't let me die.

CROLINE

You have just caught a cold.

JOHANN

I am ill.

Pause.

CAROLINE

Oh, damn the people! They have destroyed everything! I have always said they were like animals! Animals! Bloodshed, killing and grimacing! They don't need theater, they need the Great Flood! A fire up to the skies! *(Out of breath, she sits down.)* Let them all go to the devil! I have been lying to myself long enough! It is important to live.

JOHANN

I am so ashamed, Caroline... for being afraid of death.

CAROLINE

What do you think, that I'm doing it for you?! I still need you. When I have taken all your goodness, all your strength, all your... then I'll let you die.

JOHANN

I'm no hero... Gottsched is.

CAROLINE

That was twenty years go.

JOHANN

Has it been so long? Do you remember...

Caroline is at the window, she nods her head.

JOHANN

You look... wonderful.

CAROLINE

Do you really think so?

CAROLINE

Listen, soldiers, what happened to me once! I was returning to my beautiful Salzburg from Bavaria. I had sold three little goats at the fair and I wanted to have a good time, to eat my fill, and to get some woman in the sack – if I could. So I saw, a beautiful mother and her beautiful daughter. Oh, my dear Hanswurst,

how could I pass them up?! I looked at the mother – she had breasts soooo big. I looked at the daughter, she had breasts soooo big!

THE END

Translated by *Vladislava Felbabov*