

The Problem of ALMA  
on key  
3 HAND or  
disc?

THE PROBLEM OF ALMA

A Play for Two

by

MAURICE ROWDON

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OPA INTERNATIONAL  
125 Crescent Road  
San Anselmo  
CA 94960  
USA

CHARACTERS

MAHLER/KOKOSCHKA

ALMA MAHLER

## 1.

This is a various-purpose set. There is an arch at the top of three or four steps upstage right, from the actor's point of view. Lilac-colored curtains are drawn across it, meeting in the middle. These can be operated both manually and automatically.

Downstage of this arch is a chaiselongue, set at a sharp angle from down right toward up centre, with its head downstage. A knee-height coffee table is set before it, toward centre.

Left and upstage stands a desk with an upright chair or two. Behind it is the back wall which is set at a slight angle, up the rake, disappearing behind the center side of the raised archway. There is a window more or less behind the desk. Under this window a pile of canvases lean against the wall, and there is a painter's easel.

On the wall right of the window is a telephone of the earliest hook-up type.

A doorway or narrow arch leads off left, that is to the left of the table. There are two other entrances---one the gap upstage centre between the wall and raised archway, the other downstage right between the right side of the archway and the proscenium arch.

There is a pile of women's clothes on a chair by the desk.

The scene is dimly lit.

OSKAR KOKOSCHKA is seated stage left, facing what appears to be ALMA MAHLER. She is sprawled on the chaiselongue.

He has tight cavalry trousers on with black shoes and a black coat, and a dark tie. He is fairly tall, blond, thin, the hair cut short and the head held rather high. The deep blue of his eyes is, in the words of a friend, 'unbelievable'. He is given to brief loud outbursts of anger or enthusiasm. He continually springs surprises of tone, phrasing, movement.

Silence.

KOKOSCHKA (quietly, watching her) Ko-ko-ko-ko-ko (in imitation of the cock).

No response or movement from ALMA.

KOKOSCHKA (cont.) Ko-ko-ko.

He chuckles.

He rises slowly and goes toward her. He stands looking down at her but doesn't touch her.

KOKOSCHKA (cont.) Come (holding his hands out). Come.

She doesn't move. He goes up to the arch and draws the curtains, revealing a double bed with canopy.

KOKOSCHKA (cont.) You wish to be carried?

Instead he goes left and starts rummaging about among the canvases. He pulls one out and puts it on the easel. In the dimness we can hardly make out more than that it involves two lying figures.

KOKOSCHKA (cont., dusting off his hands) There!

He sits down again, turning to gaze at the picture.

With a sharp movement he flings out his legs in the manner of the ex-cavalry man.

KOKOSCHKA (cont.) Alma, there's something I've been dying to tell you. About the happiest moment of my life. When I was being murdered. With the blood oozing out of my nose. Russian front, 1915. In fact I think I might even have died. I mean how would I know? I was lying on the ground wounded with the rest of my troop and the Russians decided to finish us off. What they did was twist their bayonets round in your lungs. I could see him doing it to the others. They were screaming. I told myself not to resist. I felt the point go in and suddenly I was happier than I'll ever be again---the blood spilling out of my mouth--and I started laughing with joy, I actually looked up at him, he dropped his gun and with the bayonet still in me---he ran for his life! Death's so easy---like turning on your side and smiling at a friend. All you have to do is go limp.

Silence.

KOKOSCHKA (cont.) Ko-ko-ko-ko-ko. (Turning to the picture again) Should I cut down on the red do you think?--the color of how we gorged ourselves on each other, ate and drank with our kisses! (Rising and putting his hand on her leg, then her hip). The rump soft yet resistant (he seems giddy and about to fall).

He lifts her up and we see now that it is A LIFESIZE DOLL of ALMA.

KOKOSCHKA (cont.) Come my lady!

He holds her carefully, with an arm round her waist. Her head lolls on his shoulder.

KOKOSCHKA (cont., gazing into the doll's face) What a personality---ruling by divine right (as they walk to the double bed), the divine right of ever-open legs, beautifully formed asses. Even your farts are a blow to democracy!

The phone rings.

He lets THE DOLL drop to the ground and rushes to answer.

KOKOSCHKA (cont., bubbling over) Reserl my sweetheart what a wonderful hour to call---it's nearly four in the morning!

He leaves the phone abruptly, letting the earpiece hang on its cord, in order to pick the doll up. While he is doing so we hear a female voice over the wire--'Oskar! Oskar!', and then laughter.

KOKOSCHKA (cont., at the phone again, only holding the doll now) She's here Reserl. What would you like to say to your mistress? Yes? Shall I tell her? (To the doll) Reserl wishes to massage it for you. To give it new life after so much exposure to architects, musicians, poets! What? (Bending his head to listen to THE DOLL, then to the phone) I'll have to take her to bed! The woman's completely beyond control!

He hangs up the phone and bears THE DOLL to bed, mumbling excitedly to himself. Then, with her on the bed, he pulls the curtains of the arch sharply closed.

KOKOSCHKA (cont., off) Up with your legs---there! (Slapping pillows) Damn---asleep again!

Silence.

KOKOSCHKA (cont., quietly, off) Not the world for women, eh? This fact provokes you to cruelty, yes?

He yawns, off.

We hear him take off his shoes and change, humming now.

KOKOSCHKA (cont., suddenly raising his voice, off) You slut! You ransacked my studio didn't you---on the day they announced me killed in action! (Furious, seeming to shake THE DOLL) You did didn't you? Took all your things away in case Vienna said she loves Kokoschka as she loved no other man---that was the shameful thing, wasn't it?

He chuckles. Sounds of movement

from the bed.

KOKOSCHKA (cont., off) Ah! (Suddenly furious again) It's too hard! I told that woman firm and textured but not like a rock! (Chuckling again) Ah, you like that! (Spits something out of his mouth) What a silky tongue you have! Is it a mixture of powder and fruit juice and gold dust and wax, according to my orders?

This time KOKOSCHKA's laughter is joined by ALMA's. They giggle together as the movement of the bed increases.

KOKOSCHKA (cont., off) And what's this?

A delighted gasp comes from ALMA, off.

KOKOSCHKA (cont., off) Silk too! And cavernous!

Another gasp from ALMA, deeper.

KOKOSCHKA (cont., off) A pocket---a pouch---

There are continued love-cries, with much rhythmic movement on the bed, then the climax.

ALMA (off) Oskar! Oskar!

Silence.

We hear a cock crowing in the distance. The light grows on the scene, and the picture on the easel can now be identified as KOKOSCHKA's The Tempest in its first stage, before he changed the red to hard blue.

The silence is broken by the sound of water being poured into a bowl behind the curtains. Someone is washing, softly.

The arch-curtains open slightly and ALMA emerges, rather tussled and in a lilac petticoat. She closes the curtains carefully behind her and tiptoes across to the desk area.

ALMA MAHLER is a striking woman in her early thirties at this moment, surer of herself than we shall see her in later, younger scenes. She too is blonde, with a remarkable combination of the sweet, wild and arrogant in her features. She stands gazing at the canvas for a moment. Then she begins dressing from the pile of clothes on the chair. She puts on a bracelet, a necklace of pearls and two rings, gazing at the rings with pleasure for a moment.

She sits and combs out and dresses her hair.

She goes off left and in a few moments returns with a tray on which are two coffee cups, a thermos flask, a bowl of sugar and a small jug of cream.

She pours steaming coffee from the flask into the two cups, adds cream and sugar.

She returns to the arch and pulls the curtains aside. KOKOSCHKA is lying in an enormously disordered pile of brightly colored cushions---red, green, yellow, blue, his first favourite colors. He appears asleep.

She wakes him gently---a hand on his shoulder.

ALMA (softly) Ko-ko.

He raises himself, blinking. He rubs his face while she stands holding his coffee. He stretches his arms, yawns, taking his time. Finally he takes the cup without a word and begins sipping rather like a child, cupping his hands round it. He is a younger man now.

ALMA returns to the desk area and

sits down to sip her own coffee.  
She glances at her watch (on a  
gold chain).

ALMA (putting the cap back on the thermos flask) What an idea!

KOKOSCHKA: What idea is that?

ALMA: Coffee made the previous day! Why do you camp out  
like a student? How old are you?

KOKOSCHKA (with a trace of irritation) Twenty-six.

ALMA: I was only teasing!

KOKOSCHKA; Twenty-six and I'm going to marry you and have your  
child.

ALMA (taking up her bag) And I'm going back to Semmering.  
Where I shall have a bath. And a change of  
clothes. And fresh coffee waiting for me with the  
morning letters.

KOKOSCHKA (still immersed in his coffee) Very funny.

ALMA (preparing to leave) I'll pick you up at the art-school  
Friday evening.

She goes to the door, left.

KOKOSCHKA: Alma.

ALMA stops.

KOKOSCHKA (cont.) We go to Semmering for the weekend?

ALMA: Yes.

KOKOSCHKA: You don't kiss me goodbye any more---you go for an  
eternity of three days and don't even kiss me!

ALMA (delighted, running back to him) What a baby you are!

They embrace, kiss, laugh together.

KOKOSCHKA: You know what a student said to me yesterday---he  
said your name Kokoschka reminds me of ko-ko-ko-ko-  
ko! (he tickles her simultaneously as he makes his  
cock-sound).

They roll on the bed and he begins  
piling bedclothes on top of her.

She throws cushions at him and he stands up in the bed, pulling one of the blankets with him and leaping about, dancing and crying 'Ko-ko-ko-ko!'

He subsides. Silence. He lowers himself to the bed, sighing, out of breath.

He rummages about in the bed. THE DOLL is there in place of ALMA, who has gone. He pulls it out of the piled bedclothes roughly and throws himself on it in a wild embrace. As he does so light grows on the downstage scene.

KOKOSCHKA (cont.) Alma! (Making love desperately) Alma!

Suddenly he stops. He gets off the bed, leaving the doll on its back.

He shades his eyes from the light, peering round. He is once more an older man---that is, the first world war has intervened between his affair with ALMA and now. Apart from being older, he has escaped death narrowly many times, and lain many weeks in hospital. He is now given to losing his balance easily, because of a bullet wound in the head.

He goes to the desk and is just about to drink the coffee ALMA left behind when the phone rings.

KOKOSCHKA (cont., answering it) Ah, doctor...A hint of bronchitis...But it's the balance more than anything...I'm scared to walk in the street...You can go to hell, I'm not carrying a bloody stick for anybody!

While talking he dabs at his canvas, using his fingers and knuckles, not a brush. He then picks up a brush and uses the handle, to make quick strokes.

KOKOSCHKA (cont.) ....I'm not going to bed early because of a hole in my head either! That's got to adjust to me! Did you know we all have other lives?...How do you know you don't just because you're unconscious of them? It just means you're unconscious, that's all!

His eye caught by something on the canvas, he drops the phone abruptly, letting it hang by the cord, and places himself better to work, seated, using knuckles and fingertips and brush-end as before.

There is the sound of an old-fashioned doorbell.

He jumps up, flings his brush down, rushes to the arch-curtains and closes them.

A younger man again, he flies about the place. He takes the coffee cups and thermos flask etc and rushes them off left. We hear a door open.

We hear ALMA's laughter off.

ALMA (off) Get up you fool! Up!

KOKOSCHKA enters backwards on his knees, drawing ALMA with him by the hands, clasping them and kissing them continually.

She is in a travelling coat.

KOKOSCHKA (referring to his canvas) Look at it Alma and tell me why they say such horrible things about me. Here! (Rushing to the desk and pulling out a whole drawer and crashing it down on the desktop) Listen to this! (Picking out a scrap of newspaper) 'This Oskar Kokoschka, using his ko-ko rays on people who have the misfortune to fall under his brush, is qualified to decorate brothels with harrowing pictures of syphilitics and paralytics. These paintings are disgusting plague sores and puddles that emit a foul stench.' And this---'He boils up his paints from lethally poisonous putridity, from juices that have been fermented out of diseases! Here are shimmering gall-yellows, fever-greens,

frostbite-blues, hysteria-reds, and the chemicals binding them all together seem to be iodide of formyl, carbolic and asafoetida!' Do you hear that? Asafoetida---a horrible stink again! 'When he smears them on they set like scars. Perhaps this gauche portrayal of sick bodies in states of disgusting uncleanness, spongy, porous, leathery, flabby, dotted and spotted'---are you listening?

ALMA has throughout this speech been quietly taking off her coat and settling down.

ALMA (sitting) Of course.

KOKOSCHKA: The archduke Franz Ferdinand stood in front of my pictures and said this man ought to have every bone in his body broken! We'll go and live in Prague.

ALMA: What's this phone doing off the hook? (replacing it).

KOKOSCHKA: I was talking to Adolf Loos. We're no longer friends.

ALMA: Why?

KOKOSCHKA: He wants me to leave you. Before that my mother called. She said I've become very short-tempered since I met you---also very reserved. Of course she's scared of you.

ALMA: Rubbish. She thinks I'm too old for you---too important.

KOKOSCHKA: Yes.

ALMA (taking up some of the printed reviews) Why do you take this so seriously? Don't you see they're paying you compliments? You never wanted to paint pretty pictures like the French---so you have to take the rap!

KOKOSCHKA (staring at her hard) Is it true you lost your virginity to Gustav Klimt, the pope of Viennese art and the most lascivious bastard in the city?

ALMA (roused) He fell in love with me!

KOKOSCHKA: I didn't ask you that. I can't imagine a man like Klimt not getting his way---Gustav Mahler did after

two days flat, I believe.

ALMA (jumping up in a flash) I won't have you talk like that!  
I'm not staying anyway! I only came to tell you  
that!

KOKOSCHKA (aghast, flattened) What?

ALMA: I promised my child. And my mother too. They've  
a right to see me alone sometimes.

KOKOSCHKA (finding difficulty in speech) But you leave them  
all the time!

ALMA: All the more reason to stay with them now!

KOKOSCHKA (savagely) It's that damned biologist Kammerer---he's  
got his water tanks and toads all over your house---  
copulating toads!

ALMA: Don't be stupid. He has a wife!

KOKOSCHKA: But she says it too! Everybody says it! It's  
your reputation---flirting and assignations---

ALMA (gathering up her bag and coat) I won't hear any more of  
it!

KOKOSCHKA (visibly trembling) You slept with me after a couple  
of days---Mahler you married in a month with his  
child inside you---you've been hanging round that  
Viennese organ-grinder Franz Schreker---and how  
many others?

ALMA (putting on her coat with his trembling help) You always  
make a mess of it, don't you?

KOKOSCHKA: Alma, please. (Half to himself) Even when we  
travel together you take a separate room.

ALMA: I'm Mrs Mahler---Mrs Gustav Mahler!---and I always  
will be!

KOKOSCHKA (grabbing her) That's a lie!

ALMA: Ever since his death-mask came to the house you've  
behaved like a fool!

KOKOSCHKA: I forbid you to think of him alive or dead! He was  
foreign to you---he robbed you of your body!

She tries to fight him off, making

frightened gasping cries. She manages to tear herself away but he grabs her again. In this scuffling situation they move off, left. For a moment they are out of sight.

KOKOSCHKA (cont., shrieking, as they struggle) Mrs Kammerer---  
Mrs Schreker---Mrs Klimt---Mrs Zemlinsky---Mrs  
Gabrilovitch!

He returns but now he is scuffling with THE DOLL.

KOKOSCHKA (cont., smacking the doll round the face) Mrs Klimt--  
Mrs Schreker---Mrs Kammerer---Mrs Zemlinsky---

He throws THE DOLL savagely down on the chaiselongue and then leaps on top of it, the older man again.

Suddenly a harsh light comes up behind the curtains of the arch and, simultaneously, the sound of a tuning orchestra from close quarters.

He stops at once, his mouth open with astonishment, and stares at the arch.

He jumps up, completely cowed. He takes the doll carefully in his arms and draws it into the standing position, with frightened glances at the arch.

KOKOSCHKA (cont., quietly) Come, my darling, let's go for a  
swim.

Still staring at the arch he slinks away with the doll, left, and disappears.

The tuning orchestra dies as the arch-curtains part automatically and reveal ALMA sitting under a dryer in a New York hairdressing salon. She is an old woman. A plastic cape covers her. Some equally plastic music comes over the speakers.

She has her right hand in a

manicure's bowl. There is a bottle of Benedictine and a small glass by the bowl.

She pours herself a drink. After she has drunk she begins talking in the easy grand manner of a distinguished lady reminiscing. She seems to believe that there is someone listening, though in fact her hairdresser has left her for a while. Being under a dryer she raises her voice somewhat.

ALMA: The Gibson girl I think she was called, stank of money--no brains at all but very beautiful, if that's possible--the whole of New York was talking about her. She asked me in her limousine one day, I think it was on Fifth Avenue, what made a beautiful young woman like you marry that hideous and impossible old man? It was a year before he died. I sat in the car and talked and talked---I tried to say all of his music, as my reason for marrying him. But of course it didn't mean a thing to her. And he wasn't old. Hardly fifty-one. (Drinking again) He went to see Sigmund Freud I remember. He was worried I might be yearning for a younger man. Freud said rubbish, she's so much in love with her father she'll never leave you.

She examines her fingernails, musing.

ALMA (cont.) I think we had many more obligations in those days and yet we were much freer. In ourselves. I mean if---or rather when---I conceived a child out of wedlock I felt the most awful remorse. On the other hand I never in all my life wore panties.

The sound of a tuning orchestra returns, drowning out everything else. She listens, half rises, remembers the dryer, slumps back.

GUSTAV MAHLER enters briskly center, between the back wall and the raised arch. He is dressed for a concert, apart from his tails, which he is carrying. He holds some scores and puts them down on the table. He is in his middle age---small, rather pale and slight, with a longish face

and an unusually steep forehead. His hair is intensely black, his eyes sharply aware and penetrating behind their gold spectacles. He has an irregular way of walking, tending to stamp his feet, to stop suddenly and then rush forward headlong; something is always pulling or halting him, it seems. His shoulders are rather hunched.

The tuning dies away as MAHLER begins to study a score.

MAHLER (looking round) Alma! Alma!

ALMA seems to hear this. She tries impotently to leave her seat again, this time almost grabbing the arch-curtains but they slowly close and she disappears from view as the tuning orchestra is heard again.

MAHLER continues to read his score, while getting into his tails. He makes a few light conducting movements. To concentrate more deeply he puts two fingers of his right hand on his cheek and his left hand on his hip, while he curls the left leg behind the right, standing on one foot. This was one of MAHLER's characteristic positions.

ALMA, a young woman now (she was twenty-two when she married him) enters left.

ALMA: Did you call?

He abruptly leaves his position.

MAHLER: Ah Alma! I wanted to know if you'd mind if I don't get you a wedding ring.

A pause of bewilderment.

ALMA: No!

He quickly finishes his dressing and walks vigorously up the steps to the arch, carrying his baton.

MAHLER (cont.) After all it's only a stone.

ALMA (with quiet defiance) I adore rings as a matter of fact.

MAHLER (stopping) What?

ALMA: I said I adore rings. Like I adore Christmas trees and Easter eggs and birthdays and you don't!---why can't I have these little satisfactions?

MAHLER: Because of the big satisfactions! Because we're not getting married for show! If I went in there and conducted for show like any damned little kappelmeister do you think they wouldn't clap just the same? They'd clap even more! But you wouldn't love me!

ALMA: So because of a little ring I'm suddenly one of the crowd!

MAHLER (successfully raising his voice above the orchestra) Have all the rings in the world, go to parties night and day---lobster and champagne for breakfast---but for god's sake don't marry me! Do you realise how we're going to live? I shall enter the house by the back, sleep in another room, I may not see you for days on end apart from meal-times! I'm a slave to music not to women!

The sound of tuning has petered out, replaced by audience noises.

ALMA: They're getting impatient.

MAHLER: And then I shall want you pretty and clean. I can't stand a slovenly woman.

There is sporadic clapping, off.

ALMA: Quickly (shooing him off)!

After a surprised glance at the arch he leaps up the steps and simultaneously the curtains are pulled back from behind. He passes through them and the curtains are at once drawn closed again. There is a loud storm of applause. Then it fades and we hear the rap of a baton on the conductor's desk.

The first bars of Mahler's Second symphony are heard loud and strong from beyond the arch.

ALMA runs to the chaiselongue and looks for something underneath. Failing to find it she pulls the chaiselongue round in such a way that it is parallel with the proscenium arch. She is on all fours. She at last finds the bottle of Benedictine and small glass that she is looking for. She moves the coffee table so that it is now at the side of the chaiselongue, toward center. She puts the bottle and glass on it and sits down with relief.

She pours herself a drink and is just about to put the glass to her lips when the music is suddenly drowned by the clattering sounds of a railway station, and there is a change of lights. She stares all round her and quickly hides the bottle and the glass under the chaiselongue once more.

She hurries off left as if late for an appointment.

A mellow light grows over the chaiselongue area as the other lights dim.

MAHLER bustles on from down right in a travelling coat, snow on his hat and shoulders. He stamps the snow from his overboots.

The chaiselongue area has become a railway compartment. He sits down puffing, tired. He opens his overcoat, takes off his hat, cleans his spectacles. He takes out a small book, looks at it, sniffs, glances round.

ALMA, still a young girl, also in travelling clothes and equally covered in snow, comes staggering

on, down right, her arms full of hand luggage.

MAHLER (briefly looking up) Ah, there you are.

He returns to his book. She settles the hand luggage. He puts the book down, sighs with pleasure. She takes off her travelling coat. Suddenly they seem to see each other for the first time. They hug each other and kiss. They can't stop laughing.

With a great sigh ALMA unclips her skirt, and the corset underneath.

ALMA: There! I needn't play the virgin any more!

MAHLER: You played it very well.

ALMA: Do you think mummy suspected?

MAHLER: Of course. Mummies always do.

ALMA (touching her tummy) He feels happy to be going to St Petersburg.

MAHLER (also touching her tummy) And his mama---what about her?

ALMA: Oh! You tell me! Look in my eyes!

MAHLER: I read a certain---well, it could be pleasure!

They hug again.

ALMA: People outside are looking.

MAHLER: And you love it. I saw you laughing when I fell up the altar steps.

ALMA: It was funny! Even the priest laughed!

MAHLER (gazing out of the compartment window) Do you think all those people are going to St Petersburg?

ALMA (busy with the hand luggage again) I don't know. All I know is that we three are!

MAHLER: Perhaps they're all going to my concert.

ALMA takes out bread and salami, a

thermos flask of coffee, lace napkins etc.

MAHLER (cont.) I didn't know you brought all that stuff.

ALMA: You talked to me while I was packing it. You poured the coffee yourself.

MAHLER: Good god.

ALMA offers him some food.

MAHLER (cont.) You haven't got an apple have you?

ALMA (pouring his coffee) I absolutely refuse to give way to your apple obsession.

MAHLER: We're off!

ALMA (handing him the coffee) Here!

MAHLER: Ah!

ALMA: 'Ah'! Well I'm going to eat.

MAHLER: It's so hot in here.

ALMA eats ravenously.

ALMA: Mm!

MAHLER: They overheat these compartments (taking off his overcoat).

ALMA: I hope you don't start one of your throat infections.

The whistle goes and the train pulls out with a steady nineteenth-century boom and clatter.

ALMA (cont.) Wouldn't it have been nice if somebody had waved us goodbye? Mummy for instance? or Karl Moll?

MAHLER: To hell with Karl Moll! I see him every day.

ALMA: He happens to be my stepfather.

MAHLER: I'm sick to death of them all! I have them every day---orchestras of them, choruses of them. And I'll have them again as soon as I step off that platform at St Petersburg.

ALMA (her mouth full) You're a demon!

MAHLER (chuckling, and pinching her) You have a certain interest in demons eh? You're right! How else could I manage those singing chicken-farms?

A phrase from the Seventh symphony comes over. His mouth is open, he is gazing before him, conducting slightly with his right hand.

ALMA looks at him, a piece of bread poised.

ALMA (cont.) Are you composing?

He surfaces suddenly and the music fades.

MAHLER: It'll be years before I write anything like that.

ALMA: Anything like what?

MAHLER: It's in the tragic mood---it's for later---later in life.

ALMA: Tragic? Is the future going to be tragic?  
(Staring at him)

He simply gazes before him. She finishes eating and settles deeper into her seat. She leans her head on his shoulder, closes her eyes.

Again the phrase from the Seventh steals over, softer now. His right hand comes up almost imperceptibly again, twitching. He shakes his head to the music, beguiled.

MAHLER (his voice waking her with a start) For fifteen years I put my music in a drawer and nobody looked at it! I sent my songs to Liszt and he returned them with the remark that they were quite pretty in parts! And Brahms---called my music 'conductor's music'! So even the great are deaf! Even you are deaf! You don't like my First and you don't like my Fourth---you said it at dinner with Siegfried Lipiner there and you made an enemy of all my closest friends---they hate you because they love the First and the Fourth, and until you understand my work you daren't

call yourself a musician, much less a composer!

ALMA (throwing herself apart from him) That Siegfried Lipiner put you against me! He told you I flirted with the president of the Society of the Friends of Music all through your Fourth symphony didn't he? (Shaking him) Didn't he?

MAHLER: Why do you hate Lipiner?

ALMA: I admire him tremendously!

MAHLER: He doesn't think so.

ALMA: He never thinks. Nietzsche does it for him. He gets all his talk out of books.

MAHLER: It's marvellous talk though, the best in Vienna!

ALMA: I flirt with everybody, not just the president. It's a habit I have. Do you remember Dr Adler from your young vegetarian days---well, I flirted with him at the opera the day you proposed to me! Also a few seats down on the other side there was a young man who'd sworn a few hours before to commit suicide if I didn't marry him. And the truth was that I didn't love any of them including you---I loved one man and that was---

MAHLER (mimicking her---he is a devastating mimic) Alexander Zemlinsky my music teacher! He shared my musical aspirations and encouraged my songs!

ALMA (furious) And I still love him!

MAHLER (with immense force) I don't care who you love! I've had all the top sopranos in the Austro-Hungarian empire---do you think I give a damn about your flirtations? Its your dynamism I won't stand for. There's only room for mine in this family and you'd better get that straight---settle down and have your baby and remember you've hooked the most desirable man in Vienna---my singers may call me 'that Jewish monkey' but there's nobody in the world they sing better for. Even the emperor stopped in the street the other day to have a look at me---did you know that?

ALMA (ironically) Of course! And schoolboys become popular with each other just by telling each other how they caught a glimpse of you in a cafe. (Turning on him suddenly) Your disgusting friends have started a

campaign against me!

MAHLER (with a laugh) So you won't even let me have my friends, you who brought me Christ, who gave me light!

ALMA: You told me I was an atheist last week!

MAHLER: You are. So are all Christians. Look at Carl Moll and Max Burkhard and Pfitzner and all that insipid crowd---they're proud of it---it helps their cardboard personalities!

ALMA: I still don't like your First or your Fourth, and your Third isn't all that much better! Your music has to win me over---not plough me over!

MAHLER: You don't even like Verdi. Anybody who claims to have an ear and doesn't like Giuseppe Verdi has to have his ear examined! All this stuff about 'German' music! You're just like Cosima Wagner! Won't have me near Bayreuth because I'm a Jew---she won't even look at my production of Tristan and Isolde! Another Christian!

ALMA (through grinding teeth) I hope you never get to Bayreuth.

A disturbing passage from the second movement of the Second symphony comes crashing through, melting in with the screeching of the brakes.

The train comes to a violent halt. They are both flung forward by it and then as quickly thrown back. They stare before them with astonishment. There are the bright lights and sounds of a station, larger than life, seemingly the climax of the music.

MAHLER clutches at his throat and tears his collar open, then dashes right, out of the compartment. She jumps up, calling after him. The music comes to a climax, with all the station noises.

ALMA (shrieking) Gustav! Gustav! It's freezing outside--- Gustl!----come back!

The lights come up behind the arch and the station noises die into the

tuning of an orchestra. The conductor's desk is rapped. Silence. ALMA gapes, as if waking from a dream, staring about her.

Frantically she gathers the hand luggage together, puts his hat on top of hers, throws both his and her overcoats on. She staggers across the scene under the load, toward left.

ALMA (cont., stopping suddenly) Look, the Neva's frozen over! There are tramlines across it! Gustav!

The Liebestod steals over. The light over the scene glitters. She stands enchanted in a sea of luggage.

The arch-curtains are pulled open briskly and MAHLER appears behind them in his rehearsal clothes. The area behind the arch is bare.

MAHLER (hoarse) Listen to that! Wagner fits in everywhere doesn't he---even raw Russia!

ALMA: Oh Gustl! How ever are you going to get through three concerts with a throat like that?

She stumbles up the steps of the arch toward him with all the luggage etc as he talks.

MAHLER: Do you realise these Russians look down their noses when you mention Dostoevsky?

ALMA (slumping down) What a lot of stairs!

MAHLER: Oh you're young!

ALMA: I'm expecting!

They sit together on the steps surrounded by the luggage.

MAHLER: Such a funny little cow that archduchess from Moscow wasn't she? But they're nicer than our aristocracy. She asked me to tell her what death was like.

ALMA: What is it like?

MAHLER: The same as life!

ALMA: What? All these disappointments and grudges and things going wrong? That's hell!

MAHLER: Disappointments aren't life. They're your interpretation of it!

ALMA: I am an atheist really---though a sort of believing one.

MAHLER: The trouble is you look for God in the distance. You must look for him here (touching her cheek), here (touching the steps).

ALMA: What do you mean? You who notice nothing! You don't even see I'm wearing a wedding ring---and you hate wedding rings (showing it)!

They share the joke and hug.

The light mellows and the Liebestod fades. They gaze round.

MAHLER: Alma, why did they stare at us when we were driving through the streets of St Petersburg in an open troika?

ALMA: Because it was thirty degrees below zero and open troikas aren't for that kind of weather. And secondly we look funny. People always stare at us.

MAHLER: Do you remember Crefeld? where I did my Third symphony? You had one of those reform dresses on and children called after us in the street---and we had to pour water on their heads from the hotel balcony.

ALMA: And what about when your hands were sticky and you washed them over a balcony right onto a group of women underneath and one of them looked up and said 'It's all right, it's only Mahler!' (Tickling him) It's only silly Mahler!

MAHLER (rising) I'll go ahead and see that everything's all right.

He leaves via the arch.

ALMA: Gustav!

MAHLER (returning) Yes?

ALMA: Please take these bags.

MAHLER (taking them) Ah yes.

ALMA: 'Ah yes'.

He goes through the arch with some hand luggage.

ALMA (cont., calling him) Gustav!

GUSTAV (off) Yes?

ALMA: Why do you look shabby in the most expensive clothes?

MAHLER (off, with a laugh) I'm too busy being in love my darling---with you---with Mozart---the Rhine Maidens!

She continues gazing after him.

ALMA (to herself) 'Love'! You're just like Dostoevsky with his 'love'! A bloody egotist!

She grabs the rest of the luggage and follows him, still wearing two greatcoats, and with his hat on top of hers.

There are no longer canvasses or easel.

A gramophone suddenly screeches out the popular song of the time, Ach du lieber Augustin. The record is scratched and worn.

MAHLER dashes in from the left.

MAHLER: Stop! (Frantic) Take that record off! Take it off!

He addresses this to the air, turning this way and that in panic.

ALMA dashes in from the other side.

ALMA: What's going on?

MAHLER: It's that blasted captain---the one who shares the flat!

ALMA (shrieking) Captain?

MAHLER: He's got a room at the end of the corridor!

ALMA: A woman?

MAHLER: A room, a room!

ALMA: And why this noise?

MAHLER: Because he hates me! He knows I'm a composer and I can't stand noise! So he puts it on when I come in!

ALMA: Oh he does does he?

She storms across the stage and exits up right, between the archway and the wall.

The noise continues. This seems to inflict dire bodily distress on MAHLER. He almost doubles up, plugs his ears with his fingers.

Then it abruptly ceases.

MAHLER (straightening up) Good lord. She's killed him.  
(Appreciating the silence) Ah!

ALMA strolls back.

ALMA: He's out.

MAHLER: Out? Who?

ALMA: The captain. It's his batman puts the record on. He has orders to start it up whenever you come in.

MAHLER: I know. I told you that myself.

ALMA: No you didn't. You said the captain put it on. Anyway I guaranteed him a little income and he'll only put it on when the captain comes home.

MAHLER: It's always been like that. I told Dr Freud about it. Every time I have a deep experience something banal happens. I was sitting in my room thinking about Mozart and you, and how wonderful it is to be living with you at last, then this infernal noise breaks out. I told Freud I thought it was a childhood pattern. My mother and father were having a fearful row one day and I ran out into the street. A barrel organ was playing right outside. And that's why the tragic and commonplace are always mixed in my music.

She is seated on the chaiselongue by now, listening to him with attention.

MAHLER (cont.) And do you know what that barrel organ was playing when I escaped from the house?

ALMA: No?

MAHLER: Ach du lieber Augustin! You don't find a key to life there? Jan Sibelius told me once that a symphony must be logical. I said, no, it must be all of life. Nothing less will do! (Gazing round him) How different the flat looks. You've let the sunshine in.

ALMA:           When our house on the lake's ready we'll go there,  
                  won't we, all the summer, and be alone, and you'll  
                  compose, and I'll orchestrate your scores, and---!

                  The awful cracked record blares out  
                  again.

MAHLER (shouting)   I thought you'd stopped him!

ALMA:           The captain's come back!

                  She storms out again.

                  MAHLER makes frantic movements as if  
                  these will exorcise the sound.

                  Suddenly the record ceases.

MAHLER:         Ah!   (Going to his desk)   And now she'll find out  
                  how charming the captain is.

                  He opens a score, stands reading it.  
                  He soon moves into his  
                  characteristic pose--two fingers of  
                  his right hand on his cheek, the  
                  other hand on his hip, one leg  
                  curled behind the other.

                  A passage from the last movement of  
                  the Sixth symphony comes over  
                  swiftly and relentlessly.

MAHLER (cont., suddenly, two feet back on the ground)   There!  
                  One, two, three (following the drum-beats)!   The  
                  three blows of fate!   And---zucch!---the hero  
                  falls!

                  He stands listening to the music as  
                  it comes to full volume.

                  The music ceases.   He stands gazing  
                  before him.

MAHLER (cont.)     First, dismissal from the opera.   Then---  
                  (screwing up his eyes as if to see better) a loss.  
                  And then...?

                  He sits and returns to his score.

                  ALMA laughs, off.   We hear children  
                  playing, and a cock crows in the

distance.

As a warm summer light grows on the scene we hear other country noises-- the bark of a dog, hammering, birds, hens.

ALMA (off) Gustav!

MAHLER (shaken out of his concentration) Yes?

ALMA (off) You shouldn't swim so far out! Mummy says so too.

He nods to himself.

ALMA (cont., off) Did you hear me?

He nods again, composing.

Softly, hardly audible at first, the Hanna-Danilo waltz from Act 11 of The Merry Widow steals over the speakers and begins to oust his own music. He wonders where it comes from, so far away. He listens, looks out of the window. He peers off, left, goes to the right and looks toward the arch.

MAHLER: Alma! It's lunch time!

ALMA (off) I'm playing with my tribe! In the woods! They're touching me all over (screaming with laughter)!

She makes howling noises, little screeches of pleasure.

MAHLER (dashing off, right) Where are you? (Off) Alma!

He returns once more. He peers round the room, looks behind his desk, the curtains of the arch.

MAHLER (cont., with a delighted chuckle) You minx!

He suddenly darts to the chaiselongue and pulls it out.

MAHLER: There!

But he finds something else. He slowly retrieves the bottle of

Benedictine and the glass. He stands there holding them.

Then he walks to his desk with a rather sad gait and hides them away.

Gradually the music becomes louder. The lights go dim and he looks round with perplexity. Taking their place a rather glaring and lurid light comes up behind the arch so that he is now silhouetted.

MAHLER: Alma! (Going towards the arch) Alma!

He pulls the arch-curtains aside. The area beyond is empty, strangely illuminated. ALMA is glimpsed dancing but disappears at once. He runs after her, and also disappears.

She again appears alone, this time entering downstage right, below the archway, whirling.

MAHLER appears in the archway dressed now in evening clothes. He waits for her and they begin dancing the waltz together in a dreamlike fashion. The music now comes up loud and strong.

Their dance should be choreographed with care. They disappear behind the arch and reappear downstage right, whirling between the furniture and up to the top of the steps again and for a time on the steps themselves. It is almost a ballet, with the strange glaring light from beyond the arch silhouetting them.

When the music ceases they come to a halt centre, happily out of breath. The glaring light dies. A soft evening light comes over the scene.

MAHLER begins singing as Danilo in the last act of the opera, and ALMA answers him as Hanna. This ends with Danilo's 'A woman's too much

for a man!'

This singing exchange also should be carefully prepared, since ALMA too was an excellent musician, better able to improvise at the piano even than MAHLER.

MAHLER (interrupting) We got that bit wrong.

ALMA: Which bit?

MAHLER: The da-di-da-da-tum-ti-di-da-ra-ra!

ALMA: Look it up.

MAHLER: What? You don't imagine I've any Franz Lehar in the house do you?

ALMA (putting her arms round him and half-dancing again) Did you enjoy it Gustl?

MAHLER: Every minute! Every second-rate singer, every cardboard tree!

ALMA: Our one night out in five years! It ought to be chronicled somewhere. And the Merry Widow, not Lohengrin or Parsifal!

MAHLER: I tell you what, we can go to Doblinger's tomorrow and I'll ask about the sales of my music and while I'm doing that you can thumb through the Merry Widow and we'll play it in the evening.

She closes the arch-curtains as if they were over a window.

ALMA: When we were dancing I had the impression we floated---you held me up---you---!

A child's cry---disturbed sleep---in the distance.

MAHLER stares at her.

Silence.

ALMA: Gustav! Don't look like that!

MAHLER: Who is it for god's sake?

ALMA: The baby scalded her fingers this morning.

MAHLER: It's more than that!

She leaves, left, while he watches her.

A savage phrase from the Kindertotenlieder comes over.

He continues to stand there, waiting tensely. The music dies.

ALMA reappears.

ALMA: She has a slight fever. Mummy's looking after her.

MAHLER: And little Putzerl?

ALMA: Asleep.

MAHLER: She isn't flushed?

ALMA: No.

MAHLER: Come and sit down Almschili.

She does so, with a concerned glance at him.

MAHLER (cont.) The Lord Chamberlain called me into his office today.

ALMA: Yes?

MAHLER: Someone stole my appointments book and took it to him. It showed three concerts in Rome. He said box office receipts fall off when I'm away. I told him this wasn't true. They want me out. It has nothing to do with receipts.

ALMA: It's because you stood by Alfred Roller.

MAHLER: He's the finest designer in Europe!

ALMA: Yes but making the Rhine Maidens sing from hanging baskets!

MAHLER (with a shrug) It's only because they're so fat---they're afraid the ropes'll break.

The child's cry again.

ALMA:           Gustav!    Stop worrying.

MAHLER (making an effort)       What an evening it was!    Do you know, I think Richard Strauss has evening after evening like that!    Everything's so smooth with him!    Do you notice that?    (Wandering about distractedly)    Just two rehearsals and he gets a marvellous performance.    Healthy relatives bustling round him!    And the happy way he worries over his accounts, so many deutschmarks from this production, so many Austrian schillings from that.    And then look at me---in a fearful sweat all the time, the orchestras hating me, tears and calamities and upsets!    Born in a family of thirteen kids---witnessing all those deaths---looking after the ones who survived!    Sending them money and---!

A bell rings.

ALMA (rising)       It's the doctor.    Mummy called him.    (Stopping on her way out)    I wish you wouldn't worry!

MAHLER:           You're hiding something!

ALMA (frantically)    Why don't you go and see for yourself?

MAHLER:           Tell me the truth damn you!

ALMA:           Putzerl has a fever too.

MAHLER:           It's diptheria!

ALMA:           Yes.

MAHLER:           And she must have a tracheotomy!

ALMA:           Yes.

The bell sounds again, urgently.

She rushes off.

The savage passage from the Kindertotenlieder comes over once more, then quickly dies.

He stands trembling.

ALMA screams, off.

ALMA (off)       Gustav!    Gustav!

He runs---but in the opposite direction.

ALMA comes in from the left, distraught, crying. She looks for him.

There is a great burst of applause and lights come up behind the arch.

She turns towards the arch with surprise. The conductor's desk is rapped three times.

MAHLER (off) Let's take it from your entrance Isolde please!

But instead of an aria from Tristan and Isolde there is a soprano singing Ach du liebe Augustin in the Wagnerian manner.

She turns with astonishment as KOKOSCHKA enters from the left with a tray of coffee things. The music abruptly cuts off.

KOKOSCHKA (indicating the desk as he puts the tray down) You leave his scores everywhere---your little babies! (Pouring her coffee) If you could only come alive---kill yourself and come alive---!

She stares at him, tears still in her eyes.

He takes her coffee to her and then notices her state.

KOKOSCHKA (putting her cup down on the small table by the chaiselongue) You came to tell me! It's true isn't it?

He draws her to the chaiselongue and as she sits down kneels before her.

KOKOSCHKA (cont.) Is everything OK?

ALMA: Yes.

KOKOSCHKA: You saw the doctor?

ALMA: Yes.

KOKOSCHKA: We'll marry at once.

She again simply looks at him.

KOKOSCHKA (cont.) I never dreamed of being a father! I can feel the freshness of the baby-skin---smell it!

She places a hand softly over his mouth.

ALMA: I'm tired and not quite healthy, Koko. The doctor noticed that. I don't know how I can face a child!

Silence.

KOKOSCHKA draws back.

ALMA (cont.) A connection like ours---it's too powerful! It drives people apart. Much more often than you think. When it's so very deep---deeper than anything you've ever thought possible---the woman becomes afraid.

KOKOSCHKA (quite apart now, staring at her) Of what?

ALMA: Stagnation.

KOKOSCHKA: It's barely human what you say!

ALMA (looking away) Perhaps I don't mean it.

KOKOSCHKA: I almost hope you love someone else---rather than say such barbarous things!

ALMA: Perhaps men love more than we do--it provokes you to wonderful work---nourishes you, makes you great--but the woman may feel diminished.

KOKOSCHKA: So, feeling diminished, she must look for another man to undiminish her and so it goes on and on!

ALMA (rising briskly) I won't hear that discussion any more!

KOKOSCHKA: All your friends are telling you to leave me! It's because Mrs Gustav Mahler can't be seen with a man who lacks poise!

She walks, right.

KOKOSCHKA (cont., feebly) You're going the wrong way.

ALMA: I left the car at the back.

KOKOSCHKA (afflicted with difficulty of speech) T-to conceal  
your visit. (Quietly) Yet you allow Hans  
Pfiztner in your apartment. For the night!  
(Seizing her hands) Alma, he got into your cells--  
-you say it yourself---everything for his music,  
music, music, never you! You say it yourself!  
And you're trying to bring yourself back to life  
with all these other men---but only I can do that,  
you know it!

ALMA (quietly) If Gustav Mahler killed me, is my body dead---  
does it feel dead to you?

KOKOSCHKA: No.

ALMA: I don't make love like someone dead?

KOKOSCHKA: No.

ALMA: So how did Gustav Mahler kill me? And who brought  
me to life?---if I was already the woman you see  
before you when we met?

KOKOSCHKA (humbled) B-but he wore you out---!

ALMA: He burned me alive---he fed the flame that I gave to  
you!

KOKOSCHKA: You n-never said that. You say it now. I had to  
hold you like a corpse, you were cold, I could feel  
the life come back to you!

She walks away from him, right.

KOKOSCHKA (cont., almost in a whisper) I feel him with you all  
the time. In your clothes. He watches us.

ALMA (still very quiet) What's wrong with death watching over  
us?

ALMA hums the waltz she and MAHLER  
danced, from The Merry Widow.

ALMA: Do you hear it?

KOKOSCHKA (screaming at her) No I don't hear it!

She laughs as she goes, quickly now.  
He rushes after her.

KOKOSCHKA (continuing to scream) It was you killed him! You killed Gustav Mahler!

They both disappear.

We hear his voice echoing down the well of the back stairs.

KOKOSCHKA (cont.) You killed Gustav Mahler!

Suddenly the bell rings---the one we heard before, when the doctor came.

MAHLER (off, right) Where are all the servants?

The bell sounds again.

MAHLER crosses the empty scene in an irritated manner.

MAHLER (cont., brusquely indicating the coffee things left lying about) And clear these things for god's sake!

We hear children playing in the distance. splashing, the bark of a dog.

MAHLER (cont., off) Thank you.

He returns breaking open a letter in a feverish way. He reads it.

MAHLER (cont., calling) Alma! Alma!

ALMA comes in centre-stage hurriedly.

MAHLER (cont.) Look!

He holds the letter out to her with trembling hands.

MAHLER (cont.) It's from that architect---Walter Gropius. He says he fell in love with you. At the Tobelbad sanatorium. When you were ill. I said at the time you were hiding something---look, he's addressed it to me! He wants to marry you! my wife! What can I say? He wants to come here and talk it over!

ALMA (suddenly much alive, laughing) He must be mad!

She snatches the letter.

MAHLER (gazing at her grimly) You laugh. So it's serious!

ALMA: I was tired and he sympathised.

MAHLER: Sympathised with the fact that you're married to me!

ALMA (turning on him with surprising vehemence) Do you remember you told me once that spring couldn't last for ever, our spring? It was the Fifth and the Sixth and the Seventh and now it's the Eighth---the Song of the Earth---the song of children---dead children---before it happened! You wake me in the middle of the night to make love! And I must always look nice---but never have new clothes! Do you wonder I needed a bit of warming sunshine?

After staring at her with shock and astonishment MAHLER stumbles off right.

She reads the letter with excitement and kisses it and whirls round with joy.

She sees the coffee cup on the small table with mock horror and does a little burlesque act gathering it up and running with it to the desk where the rest of the coffee things are.

ALMA (cont., imitating MAHLER) 'For god's sake clear these things away!'

She whirls round and round with the tray, the letter now between her teeth, and goes off left as if trembling with fear, so that the cups etc clatter together.

'A woman's too much for man', sung by MAHLER, comes over the speakers.

The telephone rings, interrupting the music.

Silence. It rings again.

THE DOLL puts its head between the arch-curtains, looking in the direction of the phone.

KOKOSCHKA (off, behind the curtain, imitating ALMA) Answer it like an angel Ko-Ko!

THE DOLL is abruptly pulled back and KOKOSCHKA now appears between the curtains.

KOKOSCHKA (cont., his normal voice) Yes darling.

He limps down the steps after drawing the arch-curtains closed. He answers the phone.

KOKOSCHKA (cont.,) Hulloo...Yes doctor! The wound won't let any air in...Well I know it's not supposed to, it's only a figure of speech...What's that? Alcohol? (Tearing open a drawer of the desk and pulling out a bottle of Benedictine and a glass) Well of course not (pouring himself a glass)! Absolutely not (drinking it in one go)!...What's that? An effigy of a woman, what are you talking about? Yes but you don't want to take too much notice of what people say...Well I like her company of course! .....Listen, if people find it funny to see me with her at the theatre that's their lookout isn't it?...Alma Schindler... Yes...No not Alma Mahler, she's dead...I mean, he's dead...No, not Alma, Gustav...No, I haven't seen her since 1915, when was that, about three years ago, men were killing each other on the Russian front you remember and she thought it an excellent occasion to get rid of me by demonstrating patriotism for the first and last time in her life...But you don't understand! She was and always will be like a thousand mothers for me, or a thousand sisters or angels! Our love was an offence against nature, it broke all laws! There's been nothing like it since the middle ages...Find my balance doctor? But don't you see she is my balance! It has nothing to do with the war---were she here I'd recover like a shot. You see I chose the cavalry because I thought she might prefer me on a horse. Women prefer to think of their lovers on horseback on the whole don't they? Do you remember that painting of Alma and me called The Tempest---yes that's Alma and me--- well, I sold it in the spring of 1914 and bought a horse with the money. To join the cavalry in those days you had to have your own horse....What? Oh do get off that subject, it's only a totem after all...I said a (pronouncing it in a burlesque manner) to-tem....I carry it round as a to-tem and if people think I'm

mad because I have a hole in my head I can assure them that western civilisation has a hole in its head far bigger than mine!

ALMA screams, off.

He drops the phone and stares at the arch.

Silence.

KOKOSCHKA (cont., rushing to the arch and throwing the curtains back) Alma! Alma!

THE DOLL is lying on the bed. He rushes to it and promptly lifts the skirt up and tries to bend the knees. As ALMA never wore panties there is no evidence of panties on the doll. He looks round in a panic-stricken way.

KOKOSCHKA (in a very soft, rushed voice) Don't worry! Just push darling! Push!

He dashes back to the hanging phone.

KOKOSCHKA (cont.) Doctor, doctor, it's a delivery---it's happened, come at once!

He replaces the phone and dashes here and there in his panic. He makes a scream as if it were ALMA's. At last he finds what he's looking for. He pulls two small blank canvases from the pile under the window and rushes with them to the bed. He uses them as supports for the doll's legs, so that they are bent and raised in the manner of stirruped legs during delivery. He puts cushions under the feet, and we are now staring into the doll's procreative area, which is simulated with remarkable accuracy.

KOKOSCHKA (cont.) Calmly my angel, calmly! Grip the bed--- here! (Rushing to pull back her arms so that she can hold onto the head of the bed while pushing) There! Push! (He screams in imitation of ALMA's scream and at once grabs THE DOLL's hand to comfort her) Only a moment more---a moment! (Putting his

head between her legs) I can see the head! The head Alma! Only a little more! A little more and dawn will come, the skies will sing with echoing choruses and aeons of joy will be inaugurated!

A ring at the bell. He looks completely shamefaced and bewildered for a moment, then jumps away from the bed. He pulls the curtains together smartly and rushes left to open the door.

He returns at once and looks about him in bewildered fashion. Who rang the bell?

ALMA (off, behind the curtains) I'm ready.

He is astonished to hear her voice.

He stands uncertainly, trying to make sense of events, looking this way and that.

ALMA (cont., off) I'm ready Ko-Ko.

KOKOSCHKA (galvanized into action) Yes!

He dashes off, again left, and reappears with his easel. He sets up his paints and a canvas with feverish haste.

He goes to the arch and, after a moment's renewed hesitation, pulls the curtains aside. The canopy bed is now tidy, and ALMA is seated on a corner of it, facing centre, a laurel wreath round her head.

KOKOSCHKA (cont., gazing at her) Splendid! (Stepping back)  
Splendid!

The following dialogue takes place while KOKOSCHKA rushes off left to fetch a ladder, climbs it and turns on and adjusts a spotlight so that it spots ALMA. He returns the ladder to its place left, off.

ALMA (laughing at his nervousness) What's the matter? What

were you doing?

KOKOSCHKA: I thought I heard a bell. I---forgot you were here!

ALMA: Forgot?\_\_\_

KOKOSCHKA (hurriedly going back to the easel) My head spins sometimes! I feel I'm somewhere else!

ALMA: Does it frighten you?

KOKOSCHKA: It excites me. You remember when we were out walking round the Prater and I told you that a boy at one of the stalls would murder his father one day and he did a week later?

ALMA (calmly) Yes Ko-Ko.

KOKOSCHKA: Well, that excited me.

He sits and begins painting and gradually recovers his calm, making bold strokes with his brush.

KOKOSCHKA (cont.) They deny I have god's eyes but I have. That's why they call my portraits horrific. The moment I set eyes on that Ludwig von Janikowsky I knew he was round the bend.

A regimental band passes below the window, accompanied by the sound of horses' hoofs and marching feet.

ALMA: Or is it the war that frightens you?

KOKOSCHKA: Declarations don't scare me. The actual fighting might.

They listen to the band, and the sounds gradually fade.

ALMA: I was twenty minutes behind this curtain before you came to. Where do you go?

KOKOSCHKA: All over the universe as a matter of fact.

ALMA: Will you take me with you?

KOKOSCHKA: They wouldn't recognise your social position, they don't speak Viennese.

ALMA; Who's they?

KOKOSCHKA: All those beings that are playing within you and me and all around us.

ALMA: If they're beings in that sense they should speak every language.

KOKOSCHKA: Let's put it this way---they could but they don't want to waste their time. I mean what would they want to hear Max Burkhart talking balls for?

They laugh together.

ALMA: Is that why there should always be something missing?

KOKOSCHKA: I don't understand.

ALMA: I think Gustav fell in love with me when I no longer needed him.

KOKOSCHKA: Wanted him.

ALMA: When it was missing it became heaven for him.

KOKOSCHKA: And what about me?

ALMA: What about you?

KOKOSCHKA: Were you always missing for me? I mean I always loved you. Are you missing when you're in my arms?

ALMA: We want more and more of each other, it seems we can't make love enough, so something must be missing for us to keep on wanting it.

KOKOSCHKA: Do you know what you're really saying? That you're already missing from me too. All this Mahler and Kokoschka stuff is nonsense in the end. It's all to do with you---what you feel inside. Don't you see---we all invented each other? Being poorly educated you can't break through the shoddy ideas that rattled about in the brains of the fashionable men who hung about your house in your childhood years. You can't see that my thoughts and yearnings could have been prepared in Mahler's brain!---and that you chose me because you knew me already, because he'd been forming me in his brain, forming my desires for you---yes and forming yours for me! Your silly world is composed of distinct individuals, so you can never see the truth about

anything, and unless you marry me and stay with me your whole life is going to be a bloody shambles!

ALMA (with a smile) Well, at least I know where I stand, which not many women in their early thirties could say.

He in turn smiles. There is silence between them as he paints on.

ALMA (cont.) When we lost our little one I saw her many times afterwards, in New York. She helped us through a difficult period. Gustav had just been to the doctor in Maiernigg and been given a sentence of death---a throat full of streptococchi. He had everybody intriguing against him in New York---including Toscanini---can you believe it? Toscanini actually wanted to do a version of Tristan and Isolde a few weeks after Mahler's, which was the best ever heard. It really was an insult!

KOKOSCHKA: The streptococchi came from falling in love with you---from knowing you were missing.

ALMA (without resentment) Yes, I'm aware that's what you think.

KOKOSCHKA: But you won't kill me. I have a plan.

He paints on.

KOKOSCHKA (cont.) Not that you're a femme fatale. A femme fatale never gives herself.

She hums the waltz.

ALMA: He said he breathed for me, at the end. You're right---he got sick for me---he actually said it. He said it's because you're no longer with me. Those were his words.

KOKOSCHKA: Don't start crying for christ's sake, I've got a difficult bit here.

ALMA: Not at all. I realise perfectly well that if he'd been in love with me all those years he'd never have done those symphonies. I couldn't have supported him you see.

KOKOSCHKA (intrigued, so that he stops painting for a moment) How---support?

ALMA: I saw all his needs. Something was missing---in

him, for me---and he filled it with music.

KOKOSCHKA (entranced by this idea, quietly) You damned realist!

She laughs.

KOKOSCHKA (cont.) What you don't say is that he was missing for you too.

ALMA: But he wasn't. He was everyone for me---father, family, Vienna.

KOKOSCHKA: And what am I?

ALMA: I simply---love you.

He gazes at her for some time.

KOKOSCHKA: And yet---if I'm not everything for you---I'm one of many, perhaps the first---of many---!

ALMA: I see you with Mahler inside me and you don't like that. He was all I knew---I was twenty when I met him---how do you expect me to have held my own against the most famous man in Vienna?

KOKOSCHKA: Vienna's most famous man with Vienna's most beautiful woman. It ought to have been a thoroughly idiotic match oughtn't it?---but somehow wasn't.

ALMA: Isn't that a little to my credit?

KOKOSCHKA: A lot to your credit.

He goes on painting.

KOKOSCHKA (cont.) This easel used to belong to Lotte Franzos. Remember her?

ALMA: No.

KOKOSCHKA: You threw her out of my studio. You walked through my door, a complete stranger, you watched her painting at her easel for a moment, then you strode across the room and packed up her things and told her to leave, and we---Lotte and I---were too astonished to speak. This is something I'm trying to catch---the haughty, the unyielding, the sensuous, the spurning, the tempting, the enquiring, the delighted, the ravishing---all the beings that play within your face! I was in love

with Lotte Franzos. That's why I painted her so tenderly.

ALMA: Is this one tender?

KOKOSCHKA: It seems mad to be painting at all. I was at the station today. I heard a woman say to her husband with a laugh 'Don't kill too many Serbians!'. He was drunk. He told her quietly to go, he couldn't stand to say goodbye. These are the fiercest partings of the human race aren't they Alma---the war ones?

ALMA: I don't know.

KOKOSCHKA: He looked frightened as he walked to the train. Not of death but separation. What are you thinking?

ALMA: Nothing.

He sits back, puts his brush aside.

KOKOSCHKA: I'm not pleased with myself.

ALMA: I know.

KOKOSCHKA: All I ever thought about was enjoying myself. I can't stand to see all this tragedy and just flit around it, I mean my old life can't go on anyway.

ALMA (furtively) Do you want to go?

KOKOSCHKA: Do you want me to go?

ALMA: I want what you want.

KOKOSCHA: I'll join the cavalry.

She watches him.

ALMA: People say it'll be over by 1915. Russia's not strong enough for us.

KOKOSCHKA: There are forces at work they know nothing about.

He now watches her too.

He begins glaring at her wildly. Suddenly he kicks the easel and the canvas on it clean over.

ALMA (jumping up, terrorised) What's the matter?

KOKOSCHKA (also standing, or rather throwing himself into the air) You aborted my child! You damned she-devil!  
 (advancing on her) Why don't you fight on the Russian front---they need baby-killers!

She jumps up terrified, tearing off her laurel wreath. She flees behind the bed and he dashes up the steps after her. She is nowhere to be found. He even looks under the bed, where she sat. He finds something else---the Benedictine bottle and glass. He takes them to the desk with a gait reminiscent of MAHLER's when he made a similar discovery.

Instead of putting them on the desk he carries them off, left.

We hear him smashing the bottle to pieces.

The smashing continues---long after that of one bottle would justify.

ALMA steals onto the scene from behind the bed, staring toward the kitchen area, approaching it in a state of fascinated horror as she watches KOKOSCHKA destroy all his plateware, off.

She becomes more and more frightened as the sounds of fury increase. She wants to go into the kitchen and stop him and nearly does but as the fury increases she begins withdrawing.

Silently and slidingly MAHLER appears centre, to one side of the archway. She has her back to him, and is still retreating from the kitchen.

MAHLER is frail, hunched, pale. He sits on the arch-steps softly and slowly, perfectly collected, remote, as she retreats towards him. He

appears not to hear, or at least not to be in the smallest manner troubled by the sounds of fury.

Suddenly she walks into him, turns and, seeing him, begins screaming. She runs to the chaiselongue as if to hide behind it.

The smashing sounds cease abruptly.

MAHLER (hushed) Don't be afraid. Sit down.

Staring at him, she sits on the chaiselongue.

ALMA (almost inaudible) Gustl, I'm so frightened!

MAHLER: You have help.

ALMA: Where?

MAHLER: In the architect.

ALMA: I only want you!

MAHLER (without emotion) You slept with him on the night of my Eighth, in Munich. You slept with him again on your way to join me in Paris for our trip to America, when I was dying.

ALMA: You knew!

MAHLER: No.

ALMA: You think I'm selfish and stupid.

MAHLER: First you'll want his child. Then you'll want to marry him.

ALMA: No!

MAHLER: He'll be away many months, fighting in the war. It'll last four years.

ALMA: Four years! That's impossible! How can people fight about anything for four years? Will we all die?

MAHLER: Your husband won't. But by the time the war ends you won't much care whether he's dead or limbless. In all you'll live with him for a fortnight.

ALMA: Then I shan't marry him. Help me resist!

MAHLER: You see, our architect has both feet on the ground, poor man. And he's a German aristocrat, which adds to his appeal. Oh, by the way, an interim matter-- your stepfather will be inviting a young painter to dinner. Tonight. Sit for him. Take him to the piano after dinner and sing something that mixes death and love. He flinches at nothing. Thanatos and Eros are the twin poles of his life. And he'll give you your body back, so it's no mean bargain.

ALMA: That's happened already.

MAHLER: Has it? I always get my dates wrong. Then you followed directions?

ALMA: I sang the Liebestod.

MAHLER: Ah! The Liebestod! Then you followed directions well!

He closes his eyes and begins conducting with his fingers, hardly moving, as if conjuring the music up.

The music steals over and they begin singing together from Act 11, Scene 2 (the quality of the voices here is less important than the style).

MAHLER (as TRISTAN) 'Must I awaken?'

ALMA (as ISOLDE) 'I shall not wake!'

MAHLER: 'Must the dawn awaken Tristan?'

ALMA: 'Let the day be given to death!'

MAHLER: 'Can daylight's menaces be met so lightly?'

ALMA: 'If only we could fly from its lies!'

MAHLER: 'Then the glimmer of morning would frighten us no more!'

ALMA: 'If only night were for ever!'

The music fades. He continues conducting in the silence.

ALMA (cont.) Gustl, a little question. How will the world see his art?

MAHLER (surfacing gently) Whose?

ALMA: The painter's.

MAHLER (after a pause) Well, they have to acknowledge the great somehow---even they.

ALMA: Great, you say!

MAHLER: But he'll never have a social position. It's the one thing he's dead set against. At the age of sixty he'll own no more than the painting under his arm. (Gazing at her as she goes through a complexity of feelings) It's difficult isn't it?

ALMA: I feel so isolated Gustl! (As MAHLER continues to gaze at her---rather ironically) But it's true---!

MAHLER: Did I say it wasn't?

ALMA: I can't get into life. He isolates me Gustl!

MAHLER: Which one? Not the architect, for god's sake, with all his forbears and retainers!

ALMA: No---the painter!

MAHLER: With armies of musicians round me and receptions and opening nights and hectic rehearsals, contracts, appointments, with all Vienna watching you you were isolated my child!

ALMA: Yes! You isolated me too! Who was I compared to the great Mahler? I simply got his meals on time!

MAHLER: And the painter? He's a nobody! Vienna fails to watch him, except to scorn him! He too isolates you!

ALMA: Yes!

MAHLER: When you've finished with the architect you'll look for the painter again---mark my words!---he's your body, your life!

ALMA (urgently) Will I find him?

MAHLER: I hope so! I trust so!

ALMA: Oh Gustl put a good spell on me---let me get right inside life and perform this role I feel waiting for me, if only I knew what it was! Show me who I am!

MAHLER rises and is about to go.

MAHLER: Do things in their proper order. Go to your architect.

ALMA: But I don't want to Gustl! He's an ordinary man, bless him, a wonderful, ordinary man and you know I can't stand ordinary men!

MAHLER: They don't exist if you did but know.

ALMA: Oh Gustl I want art to come true, I ached for your music to draw me into its life and change everything, and this young man's paintings are the same, his hands color me as they do canvasses, they touch me into life and I wish to be changed, I don't want the smell of coffee in the morning and the sound of carriages outside, all the ordinary things---

MAHLER (with scorn) You mean the miracles! You don't want the daily miracles!

He begins walking off.

ALMA: Tell me Gustl! You believe in the painter? But are we talking about the same one? I meet a dozen a week! What's his name? I want to check on his name!

MAHLER (leaving) Ko-ko-ko-ko-ko.

She tries to follow him but he is gone. She stands thinking about the encounter.

She walks slowly left, off into the kitchen. We hear her treading through the smashed glass and crockery. A door closes. Silence.

The scene is still dim. The easel is still there, upright again.

ALMA is pacing up and down in her outdoor clothes, carrying an umbrella. She goes and peeps behind the arch curtains. Then she resumes her pacing. At last her impatience gets the better of her and she deliberately knocks a box of paints off the desk. It makes an enormous clatter.

KOKOSCHKA suddenly puts an alarmed head between the curtains. He emerges from the archway with tussled hair and in pyjamas.

KOKOSCHKA (seeing ALMA) Alma! Why didn't you tell me you were here?

ALMA (with heavy irony) I didn't wish to disturb the cavalry officer so early!

KOKOSCHKA (running to her and taking her hands) You got my telegram?

ALMA: You shouldn't have done it!

He makes no reply and she begins pummelling his chest with her fists.

ALMA (cont.) You shouldn't have done it! You might be away for years!

The light grows from the window. He draws her to the chaisdelongue where they sit side by side. He leans back and yawns.

KOKOSCHKA: What's done's done.

ALMA: You take your revenges in the cruellest manner.

KOKOSCHKA: I didn't start the war---!

ALMA: But you're using it!

KOKOSCHKA: Yes I am!

ALMA: It's like a comic opera! I saw your sword and spurs in there (indicating the bedroom). And I'm supposed to cry and worry about you while you're away and I won't stand for it! Do you think for a moment that Mahler would have opted to be a murderer---in whatever cause?

KOKOSCHKA: They wouldn't have had him. Not with a throat like that. (Kissing her hands) I have no intention of killing anyone. But I promise to get killed.

ALMA (after gazing at him in silence) You think that's what I want.

KOKOSCHKA: That's what you've procured.

ALMA: How?

KOKOSCHKA: Do you think I missed the meaning of what you did to my child? You think the murder of the father wasn't also signified? It was emblazened across the sky---LET HIM DIE TOO!

ALMA (close to tears) The doctor said I must do it---I was worn out with grief, with ten years of serving Mahler!

KOKOSCHKA: I'm going to the Russian front purely as a sacrifice---partly to show you what sacrifice means. I shall be thinking of you always---in danger, death---whatever it is.

ALMA: I can't bear all this rhetoric! From you---an artist!

KOKOSCHKA (half-lying in the chaiselongue) I must rouse myself. My horse is champing at the turf---or is it the bit? (Rising) I don't believe in your sorrow Mrs Mahler!

ALMA: If I ask you to take me with you will you believe me?

KOKOSCHKA: To the front? It's a novel idea. And officers' wives are sometimes allowed! (Throwing himself down in front of her) Would you marry me? We could do it tomorrow---at the regimental hall! Alma!

ALMA: Marry a corpse? a murderer? I want the artist!

KOKOSCHKA: You damned impostor! There's somebody else isn't there?

ALMA (furious) I won't let you say that!

KOKOSCHKA walks away calmly. He mounts the steps of the archway.

KOKOSCHKA (calmly) Leave me alone Alma.

ALMA: How dare you say there's somebody else!

KOKOSCHKA (whirling round) Marry me then! MARRY ME!

She is silent.

He continues to walk away. She jumps up and rushes after him.

ALMA (flinging her arms round him) I won't let you go! We can be soldiers together---!

They laugh together and collapse on to the bed.

ALMA (cont.) Show me how you wear your sword!

The sound of a passing regimental band comes through the window. He stops.

KOKOSCHKA: I must dress.

ALMA (clinging to him) No!

He walks behind the bed with her hanging on to him. They disappear.

The sound of the band dies away.

There is dead silence.

This is prolonged.

We hear horses' hoofs and the rumble of a cart from the street below, then the sound of a car. And again there is silence. The light grows.

KOKOSCHKA shuffles on from the left bearing a tray of coffee things. He has a dressing gown over his pyjamas.

He stops, staring at the open curtains of the archway and the bedroom area beyond.

KOKOSCHKA: Good god---(setting the tray on the desk) aren't you up yet? Very well!---(striding across the scene) no coffee! I was very clear about wanting an early sitting!

He drags THE DOLL out from under the bedclothes by the arm.

KOKOSCHKA (cont.) Look at you! Limp as a rag doll!

He sits her against the frame of the arch with her legs down the steps. He walks back to study this. He then goes out left and returns with his ladder. He climbs the ladder and begins setting the portrait-spot on THE DOLL as he did on ALMA in the former portrait-scene.

KOKOSCHKA (cont., as he descends the ladder) Let's try something burlesque. A straight vaudeville act! How about that?

He goes across to THE DOLL and, raising her, stands at her side under the spot, holding her as a ventriloquist holds a dummy, his left hand at the back of the head, in order to move it, his right under her bent legs.

Gazing into the spotlight as if facing an audience he adopts a quizzical expression, again in the manner of a ventriloquist, and begins firing questions at her.

KOKOSCHKA (cont.) Well are you having a good time these days Almschili?

ALMA's voice answers from behind the scene, restricted in the manner of a dummy's, while KOKOSCHKA works THE

DOLL's head and makes those barely perceptible but still perceptible movements of mouth and throat which a ventriloquist makes while throwing his voice.

- ALMA (off) As good as anybody could expect with a second world war coming up!
- KOKOSCHKA: You say there's going to be a second world war (amused eyes at the audience)?
- ALMA (off) As true as I'm sitting on your arm old pal!
- KOKOSCHKA: And what makes you so sure we're going to have a second world war so soon after the first one?
- ALMA (off) Because my husband says so and he's no dummy! (Sotto voce) Not like some sons of bitches I'm acquainted with!
- KOKOSCHKA: Well Almschili you've certainly been picking up some American expressions!
- ALMA (off) Seeing I'm living in LA that figures!
- KOKOSCHKA: So you're living in LA are you Almschili?
- ALMA (off) I sure am!
- KOKOSCHKA: And is life treating you well in LA Almschili?
- ALMA (off) I hate to make you sick but yes!
- KOKOSCHKA: And have you married again Almschili?
- ALMA (off) I hate to make you even sicker but yes I have.
- KOKOSCHKA: And how's life been with the architect?
- ALMA (off) I divorced him nearly eighteen years back!
- KOKOSCHKA: You did?
- ALMA (off) Man, are you looking sick! I'm talking about my third husband, goonhead!
- KOKOSCHKA: Your third husband? And who was the lucky man this time Almschili?
- ALMA (off) A poet!

KOKOSCHKA: A poet?

ALMA (off) That's what I said!

KOKOSCHKA (a sickly wink at the audience) And what would you be doing with a poet Almschili?---they're usually as poor as church mice!

ALMA (off) This one isn't---wise guy!

KOKOSCHKA: Oh he inherited a fortune?

ALMA (off) He made it. With a little guidance from me.

KOKOSCHKA (amused glitter again) And how did he make it Almschili?

ALMA (off) He wrote a novel---this is going to make you so sick!

KOKOSCHKA: Could we have the name of the novel Almschili?

ALMA (off) The Song of Bernadette two-timer!

KOKOSCHKA: The Song of Bernadette! Yes, I think I've heard of that!

ALMA (off) You bet you've heard of it! It made millions, which is why we're in Hollywood!

KOKOSCHKA: So you're in Hollywood are you Almschili? And what are you doing there?

ALMA (off) Making more millions you slouch!

KOKOSCHKA: And you're still going strong with your new husband?

ALMA (off) Stronger than ever greencheeks!

KOKOSCHKA: No sign of divorce on the horizon? No arguments--anguish---flirtations?

ALMA (off) Flirtations galore!

KOKOSCHKA (cheese on his face) And what about---what about the old Ko-ko-ko-ko-ko?

ALMA (off) I feel ko-ko-ko-ko-ko-kompletely ko-ko-ko-ko-ko-kold towards him!

KOKOSCHKA (screaming with rage and throwing THE DOLL to the floor) It isn't true! It isn't true!

Sobbing he flings THE DOLL into the air. It falls onto its head, so that its feet are splayed out, upwards, across the arch-steps.

There is something about this pose that interests him and he steps back to appraise it.

It seems to satisfy him and he goes to the easel and begins working, which makes him calmer.

KOKOSCHKA (cont.) I shouldn't allow your devilries to anger me. As always, I suppose the reason is you want some amusement? (Laying down his brush with a sigh) Very well then. What about the dress rehearsal of The Land of Smiles? ..... Yes?

He goes to THE DOLL and takes it up again. Supporting it round the waist he escorts it up the steps.

KOKOSCHKA (cont.) Ever the socialite!

Once through the arch, he draws the curtains. The scene is empty.

KOKOSCHKA (cont., off) No, not that lace thing dammit! The lilac!

The portrait-spotlight fades and the scene dims considerably. We hear a snatch of the Hanna-Danilo waltz again.

In the distance there is anti-aircraft gunfire. There are slight flashes in the sky beyond the window, and faint searchlights. Then we hear an air-raid siren. It is London in 1942. This drowns out the music. The gunfire becomes louder, and we hear the hum of bombers.

In the darkness ALMA enters from the right. She is dressed for outdoors in the style of WW2. As we shall see later, her colours are lilac. She is leaning on a stick and

carries a large handbag of American Indian weave. She is an old lady. She sits down on the chaiselongue with an exhausted sigh.

In the dimness we see a shaky flashlight coming from the left. It is KOKOSCHKA, older by at least thirty years but as nimble as ever. He also is dressed in the style of the Forties, with a cap now.

He shines his torch on the easel. He begins clearing up the paints that ALMA knocked down in a previous scene.

Hearing a movement, he searches round the room with his flashlight until he finds ALMA.

KOKOSCHKA (mildly) Who are you?

ALMA: You don't recognise me?

KOKOSCHKA (peering at her, his torch still trained on her) Have you been bombed out? Are you from the Dorchester? (Approaching her with the flashlight still trained on her) My wife and I can put you up. It's dangerous here.

He stands close to her.

KOKOSCHKA: How did you get in? By the roof?

ALMA: Not even my voice do you recognise!

KOKOSCHKA (recognising her at last) Good god! What made you come here?

ALMA: They told me this was where you lived.

KOKOSCHKA: Wrong. I only paint here. But what are you doing in London for god's sake? You're not the type to risk your life!

ALMA: A quick, secret visit.

KOKOSCHKA: To see me? That's impossible!

ALMA: You know, at my age, one may as well be an enigma--- it's a way of creating interest.

KOKOSCHKA (going to the window) I'll fix the blackout.

ALMA: And when there's light I'll ask you not to look too closely.

KOKOSCHKA: Are you so hideous?

ALMA: Age is. It could give you a shock to think that---

KOKOSCHKA: I see inside.

ALMA: Oh don't do that---it's even worse! (As KOKOSCHKA works at the curtains) What were you doing grovelling about on the floor?

KOKOSCHKA: Picking my paints up. It happens all the time. Last week the windows blew in. We'll give you some dinner by the way. My wife loves legends. Any news of Vienna?

ALMA: None. I close my ears to it.

KOKOSCHKA: Karl Kraus always said the Viennese would never take to Nazism, I told him they'd take to it like leaches.

The blackout has been fixed and he switches the lights on. She lowers her face.

KOKOSCHKA (sitting at his easel) Weren't you a Nazi too, under the influence of that priest you fell in love with?

ALMA: He's in a concentration camp. Also I was more of a fascist. I had long idealist discussions with Mussolini's mistress.

KOKOSCHKA: While your husband dreamt about world bolshevism.

ALMA: That's right.

KOKOSCHKA: A darling man, though.

ALMA: Who---Mussolini?

KOKOSCHKA: No, your husband.

She makes no reply.

KOKOSCHKA (cont.) You don't mean to say you've left him as

well!

ALMA: I happen to love him. That's another thing one is obliged to do at my age.

KOKOSCHKA: And California?

ALMA: I've applied for citizenship.

KOKOSCHKA: Good lord!

ALMA: Why good lord?

KOKOSCHKA: Surely they require more than two words of English?

ALMA: Apparently not.

KOKOSCHKA (nodding to himself) I understand your linguistic difficulties. It's hard to be scandalous in a foreign language.

A bomb falls in the distance and shakes the building.

KOKOSCHKA (cont.) All my life's been war. I was really fighting for you on that dear horse of mine. While you were screwing Gropius.

ALMA: While my young self was screwing him.

KOKOSCHKA: Oh do get off your age.

They sit in silence. There is sporadic gunfire.

KOKOSCHKA (cont.) Now we have the holy trinity of Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin. Would you tell me how a good world could grow out of that trio? Roosevelt and Churchill need an interpreter between them even more than they do with Stalin.

ALMA: They think they're fighting the devil.

KOKOSCHKA: You can't beat the devil. I'm a catholic, not a Christian, so I know about the devil.

ALMA: It figures. You used to be one.

She is rummaging in her bag.

KOKOSCHKA (cont., watching her) Shall I get you something to drink?

ALMA: I've brought my own.

She pulls a bottle of Benedictine and a glass out of the bag and sets them on the coffee table.

KOKOSCHKA: How can you bear that sickly stuff?

ALMA (pouring herself a glass) I think it must be the colour.

She drinks with satisfaction.

KOKOSCHKA (cont.) Talking of Benedictine, there's a Benedictine monk called Macnab who lives round the corner. He goes wherever a bomb falls and he comforts the people and always has a kindly peaceful smile. These Londoners adore him. I learned the other day he's dying of cancer of the tongue. So he can't eat---starving to death.

She drinks again.

KOKOSCHKA (cont.) Thanks for sending the food parcel to my brother by the way.

ALMA: Is he alright?

KOKOSCHKA: He's not in Hitler's army, anyway. (With a sudden sharp look at her) Do they haunt you? your dead?

ALMA (shaking her head mildly) Death's highly contagious, so I keep off the subject. (Drinking) I never went to their funerals, you know---not to Mahler's or any of the children's.

KOKOSCHKA: You lost two?

ALMA: Three.

KOKOSCHKA: When we met by accident in Venice in 1926 I told myself your figure had gone and that helped me a lot.

ALMA: Everybody in Hollywood's asking why don't you come to the States instead of this doomed country? They'll be finished even if they win.

KOKOSCHKA: If the Germans go down or the English---what's the difference? I could easily have gone to New York and got rich. But I came here where nobody's heard

of me.

ALMA: But Koko these people exhibited some of your finest oils in 1928 and they didn't sell a single one--- you told me so yourself!

KOKOSCHKA: I came here with half a painting under my arm and ten pounds sterling in my pocket and above all my beloved wife. Socrates said 'integrity of mind is all that counts'. I haven't turned my back on the Germans either. I did well in Germany. They were the first to recognise me. They were starved and degraded and humiliated after the first war more than any people should be, and the inevitable result was that goose-stepping clown---a Viennese one at that!

ALMA is watching KOKOSCHKA with interest.

ALMA: I remember your mother threatened to kill me if I didn't give you up---she got hold of a revolver---do you remember how frightened I was?

KOKOSCHKA: I think she was the more frightened.

ALMA: Rubbish. She thought I was corrupting you.

KOKOSCHKA: So you were.

They laugh together.

KOKOSCHA: Do you know I think we shall live to see the collapse of human personality? People as well as art are going to become abstract.

ALMA: How do you keep your youthful look? When we met in Venice that time you looked like a boy, and you were forty. I thought who's he sweating out his vices onto now?

KOKOSCHKA: Alma---do you remember the sound of horses' hooves on the cobbles---and footsteps in courtyards---and snatches of conversation, how they echoed between windows if you were standing below, so leisurely and light, melting into the air, and the wells with their ropes and buckets and the rolling swaying carriages, the way the drinking water used to come to the house in great barrels on carts drawn by huge Pinzgauers, and the muslin across the window against insects, the horsedung you could smell from inside the cafes?

ALMA: We were happy in Semmering. So much harmony. Do you remember the fresco you did over the fireplace? But you horrified us with your behavior over Gustav's death mask. The moment it came in the house you were the devil incarnate. You said Gustav was 'foreign' to me and all that silliness.

KOKOSCHKA: Do you expect good sense from a lover?

ALMA: I hope you learned something.

KOKOSCHKA: I did.

ALMA: What?

KOKOSCHKA: That a modern woman won't fight for the man of her life if the going gets hard.

The all-clear siren sounds.

KOKOSCHKA (cont.) I'll get you some tea. You drink it?

ALMA: I think I did once.

KOKOSCHKA (going left to the kitchen) My wife's expecting me for dinner. I'll take you along in a few minutes. (Stopping) He won't live long.

ALMA: Who?

KOKOSCHKA (leaving) Your husband.

She looks down, about to burst into tears.

ALMA: He's very sick.

KOKOSCHKA (off) Weak as Mahler was! Do you notice a theme?

ALMA (handkerchief to eyes, hardly audible) Oh do be quiet!

We hear KOKOSCHKA moving about in the kitchen, getting cups and saucers, putting the kettle on etc.

ALMA looks round her, drinks.

ALMA (cont.) You never went in for studios did you Ko-ko? None of that rubbish about the northern light and a room upstairs to fornicate in.

KOKOSCHKA (off) I call it the library.

She gets up and walks a little, using her stick. She gazes out of the window.

ALMA: You're right, people are ashamed to paint the human figure nowadays. (Turning towards the kitchen to address him) You used to make love like you paint (with a satisfied little laugh)---such close attention to the human figure! (To herself, in a disgruntled manner) Not that any of them were good lovers.

KOKOSCHKA (off) Do you like it weak or strong?

She doesn't answer at once, her mind concentrated on something else.

ALMA (surfacing) I'm used to American coffee now, so rather weak!

KOKOSCHKA (off) This is tea!

ALMA: Oh!

KOKOSCHKA (off) You aren't getting gaga already are you?

She makes no reply, again thinking of other things.

ALMA: I burned all the letters I ever wrote---to Gropius, Mahler, you, Werfel.

KOKOSCHKA (off) You did?

ALMA: Far too incriminating for a woman! I wasn't prepared either to expose myself or pass on my secrets, if you see what I mean.

KOKOSCHKA (off, laughing, moving about) You sound just like a dowager!

ALMA: Did you know I went to Berlin while I was still married to the second one---looked for you everywhere and couldn't find you? Yet you were there. Do you remember how you used to sign yourself 'Alma Oskar Kokoschka' when you wrote to me? (Chuckling) What a fool!

She walks about restlessly.

ALMA (cont.) People say I have diabetes. But I always remind them that it's a Jewish disease so it's out of the question. (Holding up her glass) I wonder if it's the name that attracts me? Perhaps I should have married a monk. That priest you mentioned didn't turn out very well. He left the priesthood and started a family---after telling me I was the first and last woman of his life. I seem to have started a taste in him, don't I?

She sits again, sighs and closes her eyes.

ALMA (cont.) Do you remember that telegram you sent me saying we would always be together in that picture of yours? A little uncomfortable, I thought (chuckling to herself)!

MAHLER puts his head between the arch-curtains, behind her.

MAHLER (quietly, a little apologetically) Alma.

ALMA looks round and gazes at him for some time.

ALMA (also quietly) Gustl, it's amazing---can you believe it? I've just been talking to the Prince Rudolph--you remember Prince Rudolph?---and he wants a child by me.

MAHLER (still largely behind the curtains) And what did you say?

ALMA: I said that's asking a lot at the age of eighty-five isn't it?

MAHLER (walking softly down the steps) I don't agree. Not at all.

ALMA rises to greet him. She is trembling violently.

ALMA (almost in tears) Gustav!

MAHLER (taking her hand gently) Courage.

She quietens with his touch. They both look out right, waiting, she with great anguish.

She gasps and tries to withdraw as a

trolley slides from the right with THE DOLL on it, its head appearing first.

He holds ALMA firmly.

They gaze down at THE DOLL, standing close together.

MAHLER (cont.) It was diabetes by the way.

The sound of flames licking into the air comes from the right, simultaneously with a burst of bright red and yellow light. It is a roaring furnace and ALMA, but not MAHLER, is inclined to turn away from the brightness.

MAHLER (cont., gazing at THE DOLL) Do you remember that photo when she was a child---with her mother and sister---she had to bend over sideways and peer into the lens and spoil the picture didn't she? Had to investigate everything! Perhaps these will help her now.

He takes off his glasses and puts them on THE DOLL's face. The trolley slides noiselessly off right into the flames.

The flames die. Silence.

MAHLER (cont.) Shall we go?

ALMA: Go?

He leads her to the steps. At the foot of the steps she stops.

ALMA (cont.) Gustav---where's Oskar Kokoschka?

MAHLER (quietly, with a smile, as he leads her up the steps) Alma Mahler-Kokoschka would have sounded quite dramatic wouldn't it? But---(with a shrug)!

He stops again.

MAHLER (cont.) And what a funnt coincidence that Mahler should mean painter.

He pulls the arch-curtains briskly

aside.

The bed has gone. Instead there is a banner overhead, colorfully designed, with the words LIBERTE EGALITE FRATRICIDE in bold block capitals across it, with bright red flames round it in the KOKOSCHKA manner.

She stops when she sees it.

ALMA: What's that?

MAHLER: It's Koko's description of modern society.

ALMA: When will he die?

MAHLER: 1980. He'll be ninety-six. It's his smoking you see. Otherwise he'd live his full span.

They chuckle together and, holding each other close, pass slowly on under the banner. The Hanna-Danilo waltz comes up.

The lights dim and the banner is the last piece of scenery to be illuminated: LIBERTE, EGALITE, FRATRICIDE.