Pandora's Box
Frank Wedekind
CHARACTERS

Lulu.
Alva Schön, writer.
Schigolch.
Rodrigo Quast, acrobat.
Alfred Hugenberg, escaped from a reform-school.
Countess Geschwitz.
Bianetta.
Ludmilla Steinherz.
Magelone.
Kadidia, her daughter.
Count Casti Piani.
In Act II:
Puntschu, a banker.
Heilmann, a journalist.
Bob, a groom.
A Detective.
Mr. Hunidei.
Kungu Poti, imperial prince of Uahubee.

In Act III:
Dr. Hilti, tutor.
Jack.
Act I

The hall of EARTH-SPRIT, Act IV, feebly lighted by an oil lamp on the centre table. Even this is dimmed by a heavy shade. Lulu’s picture is gone from the easel, which still stands by the foot of the stairs. The fire-screen and the chair by the ottoman are gone too. Down left is a small tea-table, with a coffee-pot and a cup of black coffee on it, and an arm-chair next it.

In this chair, deep in cushions, with a plaid shawl over her knees, sits Countess Geschwitz in a tight black dress. Rodrigo, clad as a servant, sits on the ottoman. At the rear, Alva Schön is walking up and down before the entrance door.

RODRIGO. He lets people wait for him as if he were a concert conductor!

GESCHWITZ. I beg of you, don't speak!

RODRIGO. Hold my tongue, with a head as full of thoughts as mine is!—I absolutely can’t believe she's changed so awfully much to her advantage there!

GESCHWITZ. She is more glorious to look at than I have ever seen her!

RODRIGO. God preserve me from founding my life-happiness on your taste and judgment! If the sickness has hit her as it has you, I'm smashed and thru! You're leaving the contagious ward like an acrobat-lady who's had an accident after giving herself up to art. You can scarcely blow your nose any more. First you need a quarter-hour to sort your fingers, and then you have to be mighty careful not to break off the tip.

GESCHWITZ. What puts us under the ground gives her health and strength again.

RODRIGO. That's all right and fine enough. But I don't think I'll be travelling off with her this evening.

GESCHWITZ. You will let your bride journey all alone, after all?

RODRIGO. In the first place, the old fellow's going with her to protect her in case anything serious—. My escort could only be suspicious. And secondly, I must wait here till my costumes are ready. I'll get across the frontier soon enough alright,—and I hope in the meantime she'll put on a little embonpoint, too. Then we'll get married, provided I can present her before a respectable public. I love the practical in a woman: what theories they make up for themselves are all the same to me. Aren't they to you too, doctor?

ALVA. I haven't heard what you were saying.
RODRIGO. I'd never have got my person mixed up in this plot if she hadn't kept tickling my bare pate, before her sentence. If only she doesn't start doing too much as soon as she's out of Germany! I'd like best to take her to London for six months, and let her fill up on plum-cakes. In London one expands just from the sea air. And then, too, in London one doesn't feel with every swallow of beer as if the hand of fate were at one's throat.

ALVA. I've been asking myself for a week whether a person who'd been sentenced to prison could still be made to go as the chief figure in a modern drama.

GESCHWITZ. If the man would only come, now!

RODRIGO. I've still got to redeem my properties out of the pawn-shop here, too. Six hundred kilos of the best iron. The baggage-rate on 'em is always three times as much as my own ticket, so that the whole junket isn't worth a trouser's button. When I went into the pawn-shop with 'em, dripping with sweat, they asked me if the things were genuine!—I'd have really done better to have had the costumes made abroad. In Paris, for instance, they see at the first glance where one's best points are, and bravely lay them bare. But you can't learn that with bow-legs; it's got to be studied on classically shaped people. In this country they're as scared of naked skin as they are abroad of dynamite bombs. A couple of years ago I was fined fifty marks at the Alhambra Theater, because people could see I had a few hairs on my chest, not enough to make a respectable tooth-brush! But the Fine Arts Minister opined that the little school-girls might lose their joy in knitting stockings because of it; and since then I have myself shaved once a month.

ALVA. If I didn't need every bit of my creative power now for the “World-conqueror,” I might like to test the problem and see what could be done with it. That's the curse of our young literature: we're so much too literary. We know only such questions and problems as come up among writers and cultured people. We cannot see beyond the limits of our own professional interests. In order to get back on the trail of a great and powerful art we must move as much as possible among men who've never read a book in their lives, whom the simplest animal instincts direct in all they do. I've tried already, with all my might, to work according to those principles—in my “Earth-spirit.” The woman who was my model for the chief figure in that, breathes to-day—and has for a year—behind barred windows; and on that account for some incomprehensible reason the play was only brought to performance by the Society
for Free Literature. As long as my father was alive, all the stages of Germany stood open to my creations. That has been vastly changed.

RODRIGO. I've had a pair of tights made of the tenderest blue-green. If they don't make a success abroad, I'll sell mouse-traps! The trunks are so delicate I can't sit on the edge of a table in 'em. The only thing that will disturb the good impression is my awful bald head, which I owe to my active participation in this great conspiracy. To lie in the hospital in perfect health for three months would make a fat pig of the most run-down old hobo. Since coming out I've fed on nothing but Karlsbad pills. Day and night I have orchestra rehearsals in my intestines. I'll be so washed out before I get across the frontier that I won't be able to lift a bottle-cork.

GESCHWITZ. How the attendants in the hospital got out of her way yesterday! That was a refreshing sight. The garden was still as the grave: in the loveliest noon sunlight the convalescents didn't venture out of doors. Away back by the contagious ward she stepped out under the mulberry trees and swayed on her ankles on the gravel. The door-keeper had recognized me, and a young doctor who met me in the corridor shrunk up as tho a revolver shot had struck him. The Sisters vanished into the big rooms or stayed stuck against the walls. When I came back there was not a soul to be seen in the garden or at the gate. No better chance could have been found, if we had had the cursed passports. And now the fellow says he isn't going with her!

RODRIGO. I understand the poor hospital-brothers. One has a bad foot and another has a swollen cheek, and there appears in the midst of them the incarnate death-insurance-agentess! In the Hall of the Knights, as the blessed division was called from which I organized my spying, when the news got around there that Sister Theophila had departed this life, not one of the fellows could be kept in bed. They scrambled up to the window-bars, if they had to drag their pains along with them by the hundred-weight. I never heard such swearing in my life!

ALVA. Allow me, Fräulein von Geschwitz, to come back to my proposition once more. Tho my father was shot in this room, still I can see in the murder, as in the punishment, nothing but a horrible misfortune that has befallen her; nor do I think that my father, if he had come through alive, would have withdrawn his support from her entirely. Whether your plan for freeing her will succeed still seems to me very doubtful, tho I wouldn't like to discourage you; but I can find no words to express the admiration with which your self-sacrifice, your energy, your superhuman scorn of death, inspires me. I don't believe any man ever risked so much for a woman, let alone for a friend. I am not aware, Fräulein von
Geschwitz, how rich you are, but the expenses for what you have accomplished must have exhausted your fortune. May I venture to offer you a loan of 20,000 marks—which I should have no trouble raising for you in cash?

GESCHWITZ. How we did rejoice when Sister Theophila was really dead! From that day on we were free from custody. We changed our beds as we liked. I had done my hair like hers, and copied every tone of her voice. When the professor came he called her “gnädiges Fräulein” and said to me, “It's better living here than in prison!”... When the Sister suddenly was missing, we looked at each other in suspense: we had both been sick five days: now was the deciding moment. Next morning came the assistant.—“How is Sister Theophila?”—“Dead!”—We communicated behind his back, and when he had gone we sank in each other’s arms: “God be thanked! God be thanked!”—What pains it cost me to keep my darling from betraying how well she already was! “You have nine years of prison before you,” I cried to her early and late. Now they probably won’t let her stay in the contagious ward three days more!

RODRIGO. I lay in the hospital full three months to spy out the ground, after toilfully peddling together the qualities necessary for such a long stay. Now I act the valet here with you, Dr. Schön, so that no strange servants may come into the house. Where is the bridegroom who’s ever done so much for his bride? My fortune has also been destroyed.

ALVA. When you succeed in developing her into a respectable artiste you will have put the world in debt to you. With the temperament and the beauty that she has to give out of the depths of her nature she can make the most blasé public hold its breath. And then, too, she will be protected by acting passion from a second time becoming a criminal in reality.

RODRIGO. I'll soon drive her kiddishness out of her!

GESCHWITZ. There he comes! (Steps louden in the gallery. Then the curtains part at the head of the stairs and Schigolch in a long black coat with a white sun-shade in his right hand comes down. Thruout the play his speech is interrupted with frequent yawns.)

SCHIGOLCH. Confound the darkness! Out-doors the sun burns your eyes out.

GESCHWITZ. (Wearily unwrapping herself:) I'm coming!

RODRIGO. Her ladyship has seen no daylight for three days. We live here like in a snuff-box.
SCHIGOLCH. Since nine o'clock this morning I've been round to all the old-clothes-men. Three brand new trunks stuffed full of old trowsers I've expressed to Buenos Ayres via Bremerhaven. My legs are dangling on me like the tongue of a bell. That's the new life it's going to be from now on!

RODRIGO. Where are you going to get off to-morrow morning?
SCHIGOLCH. I hope not straight into Ox-butter Hotel again!
RODRIGO. I can tell you a fine hotel. I lived there with a lady lio-ntamer. The people were born in Berlin.
GESCHWITZ. (Upright in the arm-chair.) Come and help me!
RODRIGO. (Hurries to her and supports her.) And you'll be safer from the police there than on a high tightrope!
GESCHWITZ. He means to let you go with her alone this afternoon.
SCHIGOLCH. Maybe he's still suffering from his chillblains!
RODRIGO. Do you want me to start my new engagement in bathrobe and slippers?
SCHIGOLCH. Hm—Sister Theophila wouldn't have gone to heaven so promptly either, if she hadn't felt so affectionate towards our patient.
RODRIGO.. She'll have a different value when one must serve thru a honeymoon with her. Anyway, it can't hurt her if she gets a little fresh air beforehand.

ALVA. (A pocketbook in his hand, to Geschwitz who is leaning on a chair-back by the centre table.) This holds 10,000 marks.
GESCHWITZ. Thank you, no.
ALVA. Please take it.
GESCHWITZ. (To Schigolch.) Come along, at last!
SCHIGOLCH. Patience, Fräulein. It's only a stone's throw across Hospital Street. I'll be here with her in five minutes.
ALVA. You're bringing her here?
SCHIGOLCH. I'm bringing her here. Or do you fear for your health?
ALVA. You see that I fear nothing.
RODRIGO. According to the latest wire, the doctor is on his way to Constantinople to have his “Earth-spirit” produced before the Sultan by harem-ladies and eunuchs.
ALVA. (Opening the centre door under the gallery.) It's shorter for you thru here. (Exeunt Schigolch and Countess Geschwitz. Alva locks the door.)
RODRIGO. You were going to give more money to the crazy skyrocket!
ALVA. What has that to do with you?
RODRIGO. I get paid like a lamp-lighter, tho I had to demoralize all
the Sisters in the hospital. Then came the assistants’ and the doctors’
turn, and then—
ALVA. Will you seriously inform me that the medical professors let
themselves be influenced by you?
RODRIGO. With the money those gentlemen cost me I could become
President of the United States!
ALVA. But Fräulein von Geschwitz has reimbursed you for every
penny that you spent. So far as I know you're getting a monthly salary of
five hundred marks from her besides. It is often pretty hard to believe in
your love for the unhappy murderess. When I asked Fräulein von
Geschwitz just now to accept my help, it certainly was not to incite your
insatiable avarice. The admiration which I have learnt to have for
Fräulein von Geschwitz in this affair, I am far from feeling towards you.
It is not at all clear to me what claims of any kind you can make upon
me. That you chanced to be present at the murder of my father has not
yet created the slightest bond of relationship between you and me. On
the contrary, I am firmly convinced that if the heroic undertaking of
Countess Geschwitz had not come your way you would be lying
somewhere to-day without a penny, drunken in the gutter.
RODRIGO. And do you know what would have become of you if you
hadn't sold for two millions the tuppeny paper your father ran? You'd
have hitched up with the stringiest sort of ballet-girl and been to-day a
stable-boy in the Humpelmeier Circus. What work do you do? You've
written a drama of horrors in which my bride's calves are the two chief
figures and which no high-class theater will produce. You walking paja-
mas! You fresh rag-bag you! Two years ago I balanced two saddled
cavalry-horses on this chest. How that'll go now, after this (clasping his
bald head), is a question sure enough. The foreign girls will get a fine idea
of German art when they see the sweat come beading thru my tights at
every fresh kilo-weight! I shall make the whole auditorium stink with
my exhalations!
ALVA. You're weak as a dish-clout!
RODRIGO. Would to God you were right! or did you perhaps intend
to insult me? If so, I'll set the tip of my toe to your jaw so that your
tongue'll crawl along the carpet over there!
ALVA. Try it! (Steps and voices outside.) Who is that... ?
RODRIGO. You can thank God that I have no public here before me!
ALVA. Who can that be!
RODRIGO. That is my beloved. It's a full year now since we've seen each other.

ALVA. But how should they be back already! Who can be coming there? I expect no one.

RODRIGO. Oh the devil, unlock it!

ALVA. Hide yourself!

RODRIGO. I'll get behind the portières. I've stood there once before, a year ago. (Disappears, right. Alva opens the rear door, whereupon Alfred Hugenberg enters, hat in hand.)

ALVA. With whom have I—…. You? Aren't you—?

HUGENBERG. Alfred Hugenberg.

ALVA. What can I do for you?

HUGENBERG. I've come from Münsterburg. I ran away this morning.

ALVA. My eyes are bad. I am forced to keep the blinds closed.

HUGENBERG. I need your help. You will not refuse me. I've got a plan ready. Can anyone hear us?

ALVA. What do you mean? What sort of a plan?

HUGENBERG. Are you alone?

ALVA. Yes. What do you want to impart to me?

HUGENBERG. I've had two plans already that I let drop. What I shall tell you now has been worked out to the last possible chance. If I had money I should not confide it to you; I thought about that a long time before coming,… . Will you not permit me to set forth to you my design?

ALVA. Will you kindly tell me just what you are talking about?

HUGENBERG. She cannot possibly be so indifferent to you that I must tell you that. The evidence you gave the coroner helped her more than everything the defending counsel said.

ALVA. I beg to decline the supposition.

HUGENBERG. You would say that; I understand that, of course. But all the same you were her best witness.

ALVA. You were! You said my father was about to force her to shoot herself.

HUGENBERG. He was, too. But they didn't believe me. I wasn't put on my oath.

ALVA. Where have you come from now?

HUGENBERG. From a reform-school I broke out of this morning.

ALVA. And what do you have in view?

HUGENBERG. I'm trying to get into the confidence of a turnkey.

ALVA. What do you mean to live on?

HUGENBERG. I'm living with a girl who's had a child by my father.
ALVA. Who is your father?

HUGENBERG. He's a police captain. I know the prison without ever having been inside it; and nobody in it will recognize me as I am now. But I don't count on that at all. I know an iron ladder by which one can get from the first court to the roof and thru an opening there into the attic. There's no way up to it from inside. But in all five wings boards and laths and great heaps of shavings are lying under the roofs, and I'll drag them all together in the middle and set fire to them. My pockets are full of matches and all the things used to make fires.

ALVA. But then you'll burn up there!

HUGENBERG. Of course, if I'm not rescued. But to get into the first court I must have the turnkey in my power, and for that I need money. Not that I mean to bribe him; that wouldn't go. I must lend him money to send his three children to the country, and then at four o'clock in the morning when the prisoners of respected families are discharged, I'll slip in the door. He'll lock-up behind me and ask me what I'm after, and I'll ask him to let me out again in the evening. And before it gets light, I'm up in the attic.

ALVA. How did you escape from the reform-school?

HUGENBERG. Jumped out the window. I need two hundred marks for the rascal to send his family to the country.

RODRIGO. (Stepping out of the portières, right.) Will the Herr Baron have coffee in the music-room or on the veranda?

HUGENBERG. Where does that man come from? Out of the same door! He jumped out of the same door!

ALVA. I've taken him into my service. He is dependable.

HUGENBERG. (Grasping his temples.) Fool that I am! Oh, fool!

RODRIGO. Oh, yah, we've seen each other here before! Cut away now to your vice-mamma. Your kid brother might like to uncle his brothers and sisters. Make your sir-papa the grandfather of his children! You're the only thing we've missed. If you once get into my sight in the next two weeks, I'll beat your bean up for porridge.

ALVA. Be quiet, you!

HUGENBERG. I'm a fool!

RODRIGO. What do you want to do with your fire? Don't you know the lady's been dead three weeks?

HUGENBERG. Did they cut off her head?

RODRIGO. No, she's got that still. She was mashed by the cholera.

HUGENBERG. That is not true!
RODRIGO. What do you know about it! There, read it: here! (Taking out a paper and pointing to the place.) “The murderess of Dr. Schön... .” (Gives Hugenberg the paper. He reads:)

HUGENBERG. “The murderess of Dr. Schön has in some incomprehensible way fallen ill of the cholera in prison.” It doesn't say that she's dead.

RODRIGO. Well, what else do you suppose she is? She's been lying in the churchyard three weeks. Back in the left-hand corner behind the rubbish-heap where the little crosses are with no names on them, there she lies under the first one. You'll know the spot because the grass hasn't grown on it. Hang a tin wreath there, and then get back to your nursery-school or I'll denounce you to the police. I know the female that beguiles her leisure hours with you!

HUGENBERG. (To Alva.) Is it true that she's dead?

ALVA. Thank God, yes!—Please, do not keep me here any longer. My doctor has forbidden me to receive visitors.

HUGENBERG. My future is worth so little now! I would gladly have given the last scrap of what life is worth to me for her happiness. Heigh-ho! One way or another I'll sure go to the devil now!

RODRIGO. If you dare in any way to approach me or the doctor here or my honorable friend Schigolch too near, I'll inform on you for intended arson. You need three good years, to learn where not to stick your fingers in! Now get out!

HUGENBERG. Fool!

RODRIGO. Get out!! (Throws him out the door. Coming down.) I wonder you didn't put your purse at that rogue's disposal, too!

ALVA. I won't stand your damned jabbering! The boy's little finger is worth more than all you!

RODRIGO. I've had enough of this Geschwitz's company! If my bride is to become a corporation with limited liability, somebody else can go in ahead of me. I propose to make a magnificent trapeze-artist out of her, and willingly risk my life to do it. But then I'll be master of the house, and will myself indicate what cavaliers she is to receive!

ALVA. The boy has what our age lacks: a hero-nature; therefore, of course, he is going to ruin. Do you remember how before sentence was passed he jumped out of the witness-box and yelled at the justice: “How do you know what would have become of you if you'd had to run around the cafés barefoot every night when you were ten years old?!”
RODRIGO. If I could only have given him one in the jaw for that right away! Thank God, there are jails where scum like that gets some respect for the law pounded into them.

ALVA. One like him might have been my model for my “World-conqueror.” For twenty years literature has presented nothing but demim-en: men who can beget no children and women who can bear none. That's called “The Modern Problem.”

RODRIGO. I've ordered a hippopotamus-whip two inches thick. If that has no success with her, you can fill my cranium with potato-soup. Be it love or be it whipping, female flesh never inquires. Only give it some amusement, and it stays firm and fresh. She is now in her twentieth year, has been married three times and has satisfied a gigantic horde of lovers, and her heart's desires are at last pretty plain. But the man's got to have the seven deadly sins on his forehead, or she honors him not. If he looks as if a dog-catcher had spat him out on the street, then, with such women-folks, he needn't be afraid of a prince! I'll rent a garage fifty feet high and break her in there; and when she's learnt the first diving-leap without breaking her neck I'll pull on a black coat and not stir a finger the rest of my life. When she's educated practically it doesn't cost a woman half as much trouble to support her husband as the other way round, if only the man takes care of the mental labor for her, and doesn't let the sense of the family go to wreck.

ALVA. I have learnt to rule humanity and drive it in harness before me like a well-broken four-in-hand,—but that boy sticks in my head. Really, I can still take private lessons in the scorn of the world from that school-boy!

RODRIGO. She'll just comfortably let her hide be papered with thousand-mark bills! I'll extract salaries out of the directors with a centrifugal pump. I know their kind. When they don't need a man, let him shine their shoes for them; but when they must have an artiste they cut her down from the very gallows with their own hands and with the most entangling compliments.

ALVA. In my situation there's nothing more in the world to fear—but death. In the realm of sensation I am the poorest beggar. But I can no longer scrape up the moral courage to exchange my established position for the excitements of the wild, adventurous life!

RODRIGO. She had sent Papa Schigolch and me together in chase of some strong antidote for sleeplessness. We each got a twenty-mark piece for expenses. There we see the youngster sitting in the Night-light Café. He was sitting like a criminal on the prisoner's bench. Schigolch sniffed
at him from all sides, and remarked, “He is still virgin.” *(Up in the gallery, dragging steps are heard.)* There she is! The future magnificent trapeze-artist of the present age!

*(The curtains part at the stair-head, and Lulu, supported by Schigolch, and in a black dress, slowly and wearily descends.)*

SCHIGOLCH. Hui, old mold! We’ve still to get over the frontier today.

RODRIGO. *(Glaring stupidly at Lulu.)* Thunder of heaven! Death!

LULU. *(Speaks, to the end of the act, in the gayest tones.)* Slowly! You’re pinching my arm!

RODRIGO. How did you ever get the shamelessness to break out of prison with such a wolf’s face?!

SCHIGOLCH. Stop your snout!

RODRIGO. I’ll run for the police! I’ll give information! This scarecrow let herself be seen in tights?! The padding alone would cost two months’ salary!—You’re the most perfidious swindler that ever had lodging in Ox-butter Hotel!

ALVA. Kindly refrain from insulting the lady!

RODRIGO. Insulting you call that?! For this gnawed bone’s sake I’ve worn myself away! I can’t earn my own living! I’ll be a clown if I can still stand firm under a broom-stick! But let the lightning strike me on the spot if I don’t worm ten thousand marks a year for life out of your tricks and frauds! I can tell you that! A pleasant trip! I’m going for the police! *(Exit.)*

SCHIGOLCH. Run, run!

LULU. He’ll take good care of himself!

SCHIGOLCH. We’re rid of him!—And now some black coffee for the lady!

ALVA. *(At the table left.)* Here is coffee, ready to pour.

SCHIGOLCH. I must look after the sleeping-car tickets.

LULU. *(Brightly.)* Oh, freedom! Thank God for freedom!

SCHIGOLCH. I’ll be back for you in half an hour. We’ll celebrate our departure in the station-restaurant. I’ll order a supper that’ll keep us going till to-morrow.—Good morning, doctor.

ALVA. Good evening.

SCHIGOLCH. Pleasant rest!—Thanks, I know every door-handle here. So long! Have a good time! *(Exit.)*

LULU. I haven’t seen a room for a year and a half. Curtains, chairs, pictures…. .

ALVA. Won’t you drink it?
LULU. I’ve swallowed enough black coffee these five days. Have you any brandy?
ALVA. I’ve got some elixir de Spaa.
LULU. That reminds one of old times. *(Looks round the hall while Alva fills two glasses.)* Where’s my picture gone?
ALVA. I’ve got it in my room, so no one shall see it here.
LULU. Bring it down here now.
ALVA. Didn’t you even lose your vanity in prison?
LULU. How anxious at heart one gets when one hasn’t seen herself for months! One day I got a brand-new dust-pan. When I swept up at seven in the morning I held the back of it up before my face. Tin doesn’t flatter, but I took pleasure in it all the same.—Bring the picture down from your room. Shall I come too?
ALVA. No, Heaven’s sake! You must spare yourself!
LULU. I’ve been sparing myself long enough now! *(Alva goes out, right, to get the picture.)* He has heart-trouble; but to have to plague one’s self with imagination fourteen months!... He kisses with the fear of death on him, and his two knees shake like a frozen vagabond’s. In God’s name...
. In this room—if only I had not shot his father in the back!
ALVA. *(Returns with the picture of Lulu in the Pierrot-dress.)* It’s covered with dust. I had leant it against the fire-place, face to the wall.
LULU. You didn’t look at it all the time I was away?
ALVA. I had so much business to attend to, with the sale of our paper and everything. Countess Geschwitz would have liked to have hung it up in her house, but she had to be prepared for search-warrants. *(He puts the picture on the easel.)*
LULU. *(Merrily.)* Now the poor monster is learning the joys of life in Hotel Ox-butter by her own experience.
ALVA. Even now I don’t understand how events hang together.
LULU. Oh, Geschwitz arranged it all very cleverly. I must admire her inventiveness. But the cholera must have raged fearfully in Hamburg this summer; and on that she founded her plan for freeing me. She took a course in hospital nursing here, and when she had the necessary documents she journeyed to Hamburg with them and nursed the cholera patients. At the first opportunity that offered she put on the underclothes in which a sick woman had just died and which really ought to have been burnt. The same morning she traveled back here and came to see me in prison. In my cell, while the wardress was outside, we, as quick as we could, exchanged underclothes.
ALVA. So that was the reason why the Countess and you fell sick of the cholera the same day!

LULU. Exactly, that was it! Geschwitz of course was instantly brought from her house to the contagious ward in the hospital. But with me, too, they couldn't think of any other place to take me. So there we lay in one room in the contagious ward behind the hospital, and from the first day Geschwitz put forth all her art to make our two faces as like each other as possible. Day before yesterday she was let out as cured. Just now she came back and said she'd forgotten her watch. I put on her clothes, she slipped into my prison frock, and then I came away. (With pleasure.) Now she's lying over there as the murderess of Dr. Schön.

ALVA. So far as outward appearance goes you can still agree with the picture as much as ever.

LULU. I'm a little peaked in the face, but otherwise I've lost nothing. Only one gets incredibly nervous in prison.

ALVA. You looked horribly sick when you came in.

LULU. I had to, to get our necks out of the noose.—And you? What have you done in this year and a half?

ALVA. I've had a succès d'estime in literary circles with a play I wrote about you.

LULU. Who's your sweetheart now?

ALVA. An actress I've rented a house for in Karl Street.

LULU. Does she love you?

ALVA. How should I know that? I haven't seen the woman for six weeks.

LULU. Can you stand that?

ALVA. You will never understand that. With me there's the closest alternation between my sensuality and mental creativeness. So towards you, for example, I have only the choice of regarding you artistically or of loving you.

LULU. (In a fairy-story tone.) I used to dream every other night that I'd fallen into the hands of a sadic… . Come, give me a kiss!

ALVA. It's shining in your eyes like the water in a deep well one has just thrown a stone into.

LULU. Come!

ALVA. (Kisses her.) Your lips have got pretty thin, anyway.

LULU. Come! (Pushes him into a chair and seats herself on his knee.) Do you shudder at me?—In Hotel Ox-butter we all got a luke-warm bath every four weeks. The wardresses took that opportunity to search our pockets as soon as we were in the water. (She knocks him passionately.)
ALVA. Oh, oh!
LULU. You're afraid that when I'm away you couldn't write any more poems about me?
ALVA. On the contrary, I shall write a dithyramb upon thy glory.
LULU. I'm only sore about the hideous shoes I'm wearing.
ALVA. They do not encroach upon your charms. Let us be thankful for the favor of this moment.
LULU. I don't feel at all like that to-day.—Do you remember the costume ball where I was dressed like a knight's squire? How those wine-full women ran after me that time? Geschwitz crawled round, round my feet, and begged me to step on her face with my cloth shoes.
ALVA. Come, dear heart!
LULU. (In the tone with which one quiets a restless child.) Quietly! I shot your father.
ALVA. I do not love thee less for that. One kiss!
LULU. Bend your head back. (She kisses him with deliberation.)
ALVA. You hold back the fire of my soul with the most dexterous art. And your breast breathes so virginly too. Yet if it weren't for your two great, dark, childish eyes, I must needs have thought you the cunningest whore that ever hurled a man to destruction.
LULU. (In high spirits.) Would God I were! Come over the border with us to-day! Then we can see each other as often as we will, and we'll get more pleasure from each other than now.
ALVA. Through this dress I feel your body like a symphony. These slender ankles, this cantabile. This rapturous crescendo. And these knees, this capriccio. And the powerful andante of lust!—How peacefully these two slim rivals press against each other in the consciousness that neither equals the other in beauty—till their capricious mistress wakes up and the rival lovers separate like the two hostile poles. I shall sing your praises so that your senses shall whirl!
LULU. (Merrily.) Meanwhile I'll bury my hands in your hair. (She does so.) But here we'll be disturbed.
ALVA. You have robbed me of my reason!
LULU. Aren't you coming with me to-day?
ALVA. But the old fellow's going with you!
LULU. He won't turn up again.—Is not that the divan on which your father bled to death?
ALVA. Be still. Be still… .

CURTAIN.