

(Walli, formally dressed, comes and sits at a table and drums her fingers. Enter Schiele, well dressed in a suit and joins her. Enter Klimt wearing a richly embroidered gown. He could have a gilt covered throne at the side of the stage.)

Klimt Ladies and gentlemen, I beg to introduce to you Egon Schiele, the fiery Austrian painter, genius seen here with Valerie Neusil, known as Walli, his model and muse. I'm Gustav Klimt; who? Egon's mentor. Think Klimt, think mile upon mile of braided erotic reverie, golden sensuality, animal sensibility injected through the eye straight into the marrow of the viewer's soul. I am part of everywhere, now; discounted background radiation in art's Big Bang. But if I were still alive, how filthy rich I'd be! Franchised design throughout the seven continents, on any number of accessories from handbags to shower curtains, found at fire sales in Houston and boutiques in Heraklion. There will be Klimt calendars in many of your tasteful residences, pen sets and Klimt-inspired jewellery too, with enough gold leaf on it to make your balls ache. That's enough about me. First scene, Vienna's famous railway station, May 1915.

(Klimt cracks his whip, and the lights change. Schiele presents an envelope to Walli. She passes it back.)

Walli I told you already, I would not agree to that.

Schiele You're being unreasonable. This is documentary proof that I still love you. I'm making myself available to you for at least seven weeks of every year. We can go on holiday together in the country alone, together. That's a promise.

Walli After three years together, I'm not going

to be your semi-prostitute, Egon.

Schiele My fiancée Edith, and I, thought it was good that we had this meeting, so I could formally present this proposal to you.

Walli She's got you by the short and curlies.

Schiele Edith's never seen my.....

Walli She's still a virgin then.

Schiele Yes. But I don't want you to go, that's what this meeting is about.

Walli But it's over, Egon, we're finished. I've signed up and I'm leaving. I didn't realise how easy it would be. They're crying out for nurses.

Schiele You're leaving Vienna?

Walli I didn't agree to meet you at the station just because you were fond of trains. There's a scarlet fever epidemic in Split. If I don't go, soldiers will die.

Schiele Why risk your life for a lot of uncultured working class Serbs?

Walli They may be Serbs, but they're our Serbs.

Schiele You're making me feel guilty now.

Walli That feeling doesn't last long with you, does it? I'll also save Croats, if called on.

Schiele You are ridiculous.

Walli I'm not ridiculous; the war's ridiculous. People were giving out flags in the streets round the nursing centre where I signed up. Have you had your medical results?

Schiele No, but I'm hopeful. I smoked ten

cigarettes before I went in, so my lungs sounded like a squeezebox and my heart was pit-a-patting all over the place.

Walli I have to say, I can't see you volunteering to bayonet anyone. You might get blood on your clothes.

Schiele Mother says there's a little tap somewhere, if we knew it, where someone could turn off hostilities.

Walli Your mother must be over the moon that you're marrying Edith, going respectable. A great career move. Think of all those civic commissions you'll get now.

Schiele I'm on the edge of something new, Walli. I can feel it. Something truly great. And that does need a veneer nowadays.

Walli Suppose you're *not* recognised as the artist of the century? Ever.

Schiele I can't afford doubt.

Walli Klimt doubts himself. But then he is more generous than you.

Schiele He can afford to be generous. He's established. You know how much money he makes from his café ?

Walli You're twenty five. He is fifty five. Have a good war, Egon. Paint brilliantly. I know you can. (Exiting)

Schiele Walli—? (Walli turns)

Walli What?

(A moment of reconciliation looms. Egon almost manages it.)

Egon I..... (Pause)

(Klimt puts on a station master's hat)

Klimt (announcing) The train on platform Twelve is the hospital train for the lovely medieval Adriatic resort of Split! Patriotic nurses with your travel warrants, please close those doors, as this train is about to depart.

Walli Too late.

(Klimt blows whistle and waves a green flag.)

(Walli exits, Egon exits. Klimt puts on a judge's wig proudly)

Klimt (To audience) And so sadly ends a love story which had begun just before Egon Schiele had been arrested and charged with abduction and rape three years earlier. Genius comes at a price. The court records have been lost, but a recreation here will allow you to decide if Egon should have gone to prison then for corrupting a minor, rather than living on to treat the loyal Ms Neusil like a heel!

There's not too many of you for a jury. Two and a half thousand years ago hundreds of jurors heard Socrates' final speech, accused like Schiele of the corruption of youth. Hundreds of coloured voting pebbles were cast that day, for and against, after the defence's water-clock ran dry. Socrates was condemned by a small majority.

Imagine yourselves as the guardians of conscience and justice, the Athenian minority who, although drooping in the sun's gaze from the burning blue, did not mislay their consciences at Socrates' trial. Now the evening comes on, righteous ones, and you are spending your three obols jury attendance fee on an entertainment set a mind-boggling two and a half thousand years in the future: Anakronos, a wealthy Athenian keen to

win public favour, has paid for the staging, though who knows if the earth is even going to be still in the heavens, after such an unimaginable stretch of time?

The sun sets, the lamps are lit, and the olive sellers retire. The chorus leader strikes the ground with his staff three times, and you hear the ancient customary invocation as the libation is poured. (Pours libation) "Dionysus, Lord, we greet you, and dedicate our entertainment to you, placing it under your protection. Amen!" (Retires)

(Tatiana and Schiele in Austrian army uniform.

Tatiana is wearing a Weiner Werkstätte gown; extremely a life-size wooden painter's 'mannikin' with ball-joints and flexible limbs, standing in for Klimt's corpse.)

Tatiana Gustav was worried how you would take his death, Egon.

Schiele I'm fine about his death. Where is he?

Tatiana This way please.

Schiele Is the body moveable?

Tatiana I was holding his hand only an hour ago. It still felt soft. Gus's hands seemed so big and muscular, it was always surprising to find how soft they were, like paws on a big animal. A bear. Do you need anything? I mean, to eat and drink.

Schiele Just a coffee. I work fast.

Tatiana He didn't.

Schiele Everybody's different.

Tatiana He believed that living, ideally should be comfortable, always... sensuous.

Schiele He had the money to practice what he preached.

Tatiana Life flows on. (She kisses the mannikin)
Bodies are not ...dangerous. The infection is spread in the breath. There is some chocolate cake. An admirer sent it- I should be tempted to join you even though Gustav used to say, the fat from chocolate jumps straight onto a woman's thighs.

(Schiele settles down to professionally examine the mannikin, ignoring Tatiana.)

Tatiana What were your first thoughts, when you heard the news?

Schiele He's fifty eight: he's secured his reputation. "A giant has fallen."

Tatiana (Teasing) A giant has fallen, do you really think he is unrivalled?

Schiele Right now, I am drawing, not....talking.

Tatiana I wish I knew what I'm going to do now without him.

Schiele I'm hoping you're going to learn how to shut up.

Tatiana It helps if you talk about personal loss.

Schiele It's not helping me.

Tatiana My family won't listen to me. They bar the door. I can't go to a priest: I'm not that stupid any more. There is no god.

Schiele 'There is no god'. Absolutely. Everyone in Vienna knows. So nobody's watching us. No one. We're in the void. I'm all alone. You can stay but your chatter is putting the handcuffs on my talent.

Tatiana Forgive me. Have I said something inappropriate, something wrong? The fact

is I'm terrified of what is to come. I can see nothing ahead of me . My whole being and vocation was as his muse, now the future is a blank. What am I? Who am I? Who is observing me now? Nobody. How do I live my life? How can I make certain that my cries for help are heard, that my plea for intimacy is not spurned?

Schiele There, the first one's done.

(Klimt inspects drawing; Schiele moves on to another position)

Klimt The boy carried on making his record of one of Vienna's greatest painters.

Tatiana You must have known him very well to draw him that quickly.

Schiele I always work quickly.

Tatiana Was he better than you?

Schiele He saw I was the future.

Tatiana He really wanted you to come. He couldn't speak any more. His lungs were filling up. "Call Egon", he wrote.

Schiele The old boy didn't want anyone else doing him, when he went.

Tatiana (Pause) So many dead. The mortuaries are overflowing. They say if it carries on, there will be more dead than were killed in the war. You didn't see any action, did you?

Schiele The aspirations of Germany mean nothing to me. Germans piss on Austrian artists. Before the war started, I had something resembling a career. Now it all has to begin again. But there's a definite way for my style to evolve now. And there are plenty of collectors in Vienna who know I have talent. Jews, mostly. I don't know

why the rest should be so slow.

Tatiana Who knows? Long live the jews!

Klimt (To audience) The jews and the
Palestinians, too, bless 'em! Love your
enemy, and don't make him drink dirty
water, don't chain him and grind his face
in the dust.

(Klimt puts a Hitler moustache on the mannikin, and
removes its wooden penis, gives it a Hitler salute)

Klimt Three weeks before Schiele was accepted
for the School of Applied Arts in Vienna,
one A. Hitler, an exact contemporary,
living in Vienna, also applied to art
school. Young Adolf was turned down, not
for anti-semitism, but for poor figure
drawing. The margin of failure was not
great. The dictator might have become a
harmless vegetarian painter with the same
wretched indigestion, standing at the
easel in a field all day out-farting the
cows, the execution of third rate brush-
strokes a lightning rod for demonic power:
the humblest exercise of art may heal
the artist, too. (To one side, sits)

Tatiana Do you remember me now? Not at all? It
was before the war..... I was going to be
your muse, your inspiration. That was my
plan, anyhow. I threw myself on your
mercy, and it ended badly. Ask Walli if
she remembers me.

Schiele Walli's dead.

Tatiana I'm so sorry.

Schiele Three years now.

Tatiana She didn't let me get away with anything.
Slapped me down. I really liked her. Your
tormentor died last month, you'll be glad
to hear. My father. He had you thrown in
prison, remember? His last words to me

were, "Painter's whores like you all go to hell."

Klimt I never did any self-portraits because I always thought as a person I was comparatively uninteresting. Egon on the other hand was the opposite. He first introduced himself to me with self-portraits including a reddened erection in the foreground that would have done credit to a rutting stallion. Masturbation, Athenians, was an act forbidden, by law in Vienna so this was cutting-edge art. Noit that he was the first. I drew women; — deliciously drowsy hands-in-legs -apart naked ladies predating Egon's selfportraits by some years. But Egon drew better than me. When you take Schiele's self-portraits and my own earlier clitoral glides, and consider them, side by side, you have to admit, once again—When you're immortal, sadly, you end up repeating yourself—Egon drew better than me. *Chapeau!*

(Reclines to death position . Schiele is drawing.)

Tatiana I'm Tatiana Massig. (Pause) My father was Captain Massig. He had you arrested.

Schiele Christ! You're Tatiana!

Tatiana My father's dead now.

Schiele He was mad.

Tatiana I know.

Schiele The charges were ridiculous.

Tatiana I was underage though.

Schiele Underage for what? I never laid a finger on you and I was in jail for weeks.

Tatiana —I know—

Schiele —Without artists' materials!

Tatiana —I know—

Schiele —Treated like a common criminal, for a trumped up charge of abduction and rape of a minor!

Tatiana I know.

Schiele Are you aware of the psychological damage you caused me?

Tatiana I'm sorry.

Schiele My entire career was almost ruined by you.

Tatiana Klimt said he warned you about the dangers of taking in underage children and getting them to take their clothes off.

SchieleYou weren't a street kid, when you came to me, Tatiana.

Tatiana You let me see the other drawings. I had never seen anything like them. I suppose they're all sold now, for lots of money.

Schiele Not that much.

Tatiana What do you think of them now?

Schiele My position has not altered since I outlined it with extreme clarity when I found myself in jail six years ago because of you. People think pictures of underage children who are becoming aware of their sexuality are innately corrupting. But there is nothing innate in what goes on in the viewer's mind.

Tatiana You've been successful a while now. Married to a bourgeois.

Schiele What of it?

Tatiana Isn't that rather boring compared to

drawing twelve year olds who seem to know rather more about their bodies than they should?

Schiele The pictures will live.

Tatiana So what are you doing for inspiration, tonight? I'm not that unsuitably young girl any more, Egon. You don't need anyone's permission to touch me now.

(She kisses him provocatively)

Klimt (To audience) Having as you can see become immortal shortly before Egon, I discovered earlier than he did, dying is no big deal. The great conjuror takes and folds up the soul —Ein! Zwei! Drei! —and then it *seems* to disappear but it always pops up somewhere else. The Creator might like to scare everyone about non-existence, but the daft old bugger's forgotten how torch his own canvases.

Schiele I'm married now, Tatiana.

Klimt (To audience) Death is a conjuring trick, like perspective.

Tatiana I heard she was a virgin!

Schiele Everyone's a virgin at some time.

Klimt (To audience) I suppose you think parallel lines meet at infinity.

Tatiana How could an artist and free spirit like you marry?

Schiele With a wedding licence, same as everyone else.

Klimt (To audience) When you lot go to infinity, you will find the lines are as far apart as they ever were. (Retires)

Tatiana Gustav said your interpretation of

marriage licence included picking the cherry of your wife's sister.

Schiele I don't recall him as being outstandingly monogamous.

Tatiana So it's true, then.

Schiele It's possible, as an artist, to be involved with more than one person.

Tatiana My goodness, where have I heard that before?

Schiele I am here to draw Gustav; not to play games. He is going quite a lot darker than he was—and fast. Look.

(Klimt comes forward to address the audience)

Klimt (to audience) Fellow Athenians! When you died of this particular influenza, the oxygen starved blood turned all white skin black. Mother nature, reminding us that from Africa man came, and in death, we return. So imagine my skintones transmuting to ebony in minutes, a sudden majestic negritude. A by-product of this in Vienna, was that in the postwar epidemic, half the bodies were unclaimed by edgy relatives; no one wanted to be the coffin bearer, let alone the blood relative of a born-again *Schwartz*.

We move the action, back in time to 1912, before the great war, to Neulenbach outside Vienna where amid the cherry blossom, Egon Schiele's house has become a target for repeated police raids.

Schiele, making extravagant poses at himself in a mirror with Walli, as themselves)

Schiele I don't know about you but the police interrogation was the most humiliating experience of my life.

- Walli Egon, I told them I lived here. I thought it was simpler.
- Schiele Why not? You do.
- Walli It's just that I am registered as living at Klimt's place.
- Schiele That was in the past. You've moved. Nothing wrong in that.
- Walli I'm just telling you because they seem to want to delve into the past looking for things where we could contradict each other, looking for incrimination. This time they said the parents of Heidi and Marlene had become 'worried'. I told them the children haven't even been playing in the house for a while, they're back at school.
- Schiele There's a policy behind these continual visits. They want me in prison.
- Walli Why did they say they might be coming back this time?
- Schiele I stupidly fell into their trap. They let slip they were looking for pictures of children. 'Dirty' pictures. I showed them the watercolour, you know, the one thumb tacked to the bedroom wall.
- Walli That's a painting without figures. It has nothing even they could find incriminating about it.
- Schiele I know. But they had to do something so they announced they were confiscating it as 'suspicious'.
- Walli A landscape!?
- Schiele They were provoking me. So I fell for it. I told the two stinking bumpkins that my last exhibition in Prague had a thousand times more erotic content than that.

Walli Oh, god, you told them about Prague?

Schiele I told them the truth!

Walli You are such a fool. You tell them you had an exhibition which was raided by police, in a big city where anything goes! They're never going to leave us alone now!

Schiele Then one of the goons asked what had happened to the pictures that had been seized.

Walli Did you.....oblige?They asked to see the Prague pictures and you.....*showed* them? I can see it now. Whatever came over you?

Schiele I am an artist, Walli. It's what I do. I paint. I told them I was innocent. I'm not ashamed of showing what I do to anyone.

(Klimt as Sergeant followed by Tatiana as constable insinuate themselves into the scene which becomes a reconstruction.)

Klimt Lets 'ave a gander at these spicy drawings, then.

Walli I would like you to remember exactly what they took. Because if they have the one you drew of me last week we may both go to jail. Did they? Yes or no?

Schiele It's hard to say because.....When they started their interrogations my soul became eclipsed. I went practically out of my body, Walli, off the planet. I stood beside myself. Honestly.

Walli You gave them the pictures of me.

Schiele Not willingly. I could see they were accomplices to evil. But I was in such a state of shock, I gave them what they asked for, these two clumsy oafs in great

boots with voices like scratched gramophone records issuing from the top of a row of shiny buttons. Fingers like sausages, faces masks of greed and spite, maliciously peering out through little slitty eyes, without the slightest resonance of human sympathy. Creatures of the abyss!

Klimt (as Sergeant) What are the paintings you do worth, then?

Schiele A living wage! The artist needs food and clothes, and a roof over his head if he is to devote himself to developing the skills that will sustain him through his career.

Klimt (as Sergeant, to Schiele) You made disclosure earlier, Herr Schiele of some lewd drawings exhibited at Prague, which were seized by the city police and released on appeal from you. Are you withholding any of this material and if so where is it?

Schiele There were quite a few which went astray while in police custody. If they sold them in Prague, they had better luck there than I did.

Klimt (as Sergeant) Are you aware that many of these drawings could be taken as highly indecent?

Schiele They are intended to be erotic, and no erotic work of art is indecent if it is artistically significant.

Klimt (as Sergeant) Come on, you know what we're talking about. What age are these girls: twelve, thirteen?

Schiele Maybe. Adults aren't the only ones to lie about their age. Sometimes I didn't ask. Often street kids won't tell you even if they know their age.

Klimt (as Sergeant) I'm going to retain these as evidence.

Schiele Evidence of what?

Klimt (as Sergeant) Evidence that the sitters may have been corrupted.

Schiele I know there are children who are 'corrupted'. And I have painted them. I assure you that none of those pictures falls into that category. And what does it mean anyhow, 'corrupted'? Adults can try to falsify history, by denying, when they were themselves children, how frightfully burned and tormented they were by sexual feelings, but I have not forgotten! The artist remembers, and captures the ghosts of yearning.

Klimt (as Sergeant) Regard that knowing look on that young face. Something's not right.

Schiele It is a recording of the selfdiscovery of a sexual being. How dare you object to its psychological accuracy! Any exploration which goes beneath the skin is bound to distress because, and I don't know if your police training includes this, the state of being alive is one of confronting catastrophe!

Klimt (as Sergeant) Try telling that to the judge. (to Schiele) Ok, sunshine, let's be having yer.

Tatiana (As constable, handcuffs him) Do we have to read this filth his rights?

(Klimt stands away. To audience)

Klimt The authorities had a prisoner, but still nothing that might stand up in court, until a stroke of luck played into their hands, when an old idiot wandered into Neulenbach district police station. Egon will now play Tatiana's father. (To

Schiele) Time to become your own oppressor. The debate over what constitutes pornography has passed over your head because the captain is mentally disabled with syphilis, like your own father. Commander Massig has seized on the idea that when his missing runaway daughter spent the night at Egon Schiele's house, she would naturally have been raped by the human beast.

(Schiele is freed of his handcuffs, and gets a gold encrusted naval officer's uniform. Schiele shuffles towards Klimt who becomes the police captain, seated, with a cushion tied round his waist and cap at a jaunty angle.)

Schiele (As Massig) My name is Von Massig, retired Commander, halfpay, of his Imperial Archduke's navy. These are my decorations. Look.

Klimt I'm doing my expenses. Constable Schicklegrüber, can you deal with this one?

Tatiana (As constable) Oh no. It's him again! He's always in here with barmy allegations.

Schiele (As Massig) My daughter is not yet fourteen. She was stolen away, and forced. I now have found out who by. The fellow is a worthless creature, who lured her to his house for his pleasure. She denies it but I can tell when she is lying.

Tatiana Would you like to bring her in here, so she can tell us what sort of experience she had, herself?

Schiele (As Massig) I am her father. Has the law in Austria come to nothing when it comes to honour? The violater's name is Schiele. A so-called art student who has come here to infect everyone in the town with his attitudes.

Klimt (as Sergeant, interested) Just a moment, sir. You have a complaint against Egon Schiele?

Schiele (As Massig) He has abducted a minor. He will be easy to find, always drawing attention to himself. With his whore on his arm, he spends money before he has it. He boasts of his atheism. He promenades in the town, wearing English trousers.

Klimt (to Schiele) I think there's quite enough circumstantial, to press charges! Make out an arrest warrant, constable. Egon Schiele. Rape and abduction.

(Tatiana mimes putting in paper, and typing, making noises loudly to imitate striking keys.)

Schiele (As Massig) Thank you gentlemen. I shall look forward to the time shortly when this country is purified, with this evil behind bars and no longer a threat to the community!

(Salutes, wobbly, and exits.)

Klimt (As sergeant) We're throwing the book at Schiele. We turn up at his house and put him back inside if he's out on bail from the first arrest.

Tatiana We can't make an arrest without talking to the daughter first, surely!

Klimt (As sergeant) We got to move on this one. Egon's uncle's has had it up to here with his horny little arse-bark of a nephew.

(Klimt as Sergeant knocks on an imaginary door.)

Klimt (as Sergeant) Is this Herr Schiele's residence?

Walli He's not here.

Klimt (as Sergeant) Is your boyfriend in the

nick still?

Walli Yes, but I don't understand why. He hasn't been charged. The first time police came, ten days ago, they did not know what they wanted. Then they came back and took everything; it was all so stupid.

Klimt (As Sergeant) The war on pornography might look stupid to you, lassie. But we have a duty.

Walli What is going on here, really? I heard Tatiana's father was behind this. But I was here all the time and nothing took place.

Klimt (as Sergeant) Don't imagine Egon is going to fly out of court with you as witness. Do yourself a favour. Stay far away. Seriously. I'd get out before the sky falls, darling. If you stay, he could go down for even longer.

Walli I'm not hiding.

Klimt (as Sergeant) You're not registered at this address.
Who are you, anyway?

Walli I'm Egon's model.

Klimt Anything to do with complaints from the neighbours both sides about someone frolicking naked in the garden?

Walli I shall be dressed for the court, don't worry.

Klimt (as Sergeant) Look at it from over 'ere. Don't matter what you say, you'll be fingered in court as the artist's whore, because half these beaver pix 'ave your boatrace on them!

Walli I am standing by him, and his art.

Klimt (As Sergeant) It won't do him a bit of good. I've been around the court in session here long enough to write the script of how they'll see to you.

(Klimt and Tatiana get rid of their police ID.
Klimt takes up a lawyer's wig and puts it on.)

Klimt The prosecution will say, (as Barrister)
"Fraulein Neusil, this is no doubt a picture of extreme depravity. I will not offend propriety by describing the central object, suffice it to say it is an intimate female body part. This picture shows your face, connected in a contorted fashion with the object. my first question, Fraulein Neusil, is, are you insane?"

Walli Mad enough to be certain that Schiele is a genius.

Klimt (as barrister) Would you answer my question for the court please, are you mad to do this, yes or no?

Walli I do think when he draws so quickly that there is a clock ticking somewhere, that he knows that there is so little time. But do any of us know how long we are going to live? Not even geniuses, probably. If we have a gift, to the world, we live most fully if we give it in the moment. It might look mad I know.

Klimt (as Barrister) Fraulein Neusil, are you mad? Yes or no?

Walli How can I answer truthfully? I'm not stupid. If I say yes I am lying to myself. If I say no, then the court will use it against me.

Klimt (as Barrister) Very well, we will leave that question. Fraulein Neusil, we are also investigating whether sexual infractions have taken place between the

accused and a child. Are you protecting a guilty party?

Walli (pause) He would never do such a thing. I know this because I love him.

Schiele Objection! You are not allowed to say those words! Score that from the court records! In private or public, you have agreed you will not say you love me!

Walli I did not imagine, when you made me say that, I would ever be in court trying to stop you going to jail. (To Klimt) Your honour, I stand outside the prison every day and I feel his imprisonment just as much as he does! Worse, probably, because I'm not the kind of artist he is.

Klimt (as Barrister) What kind of artist is he?

Walli The kind that does those kind of paintings. They are brilliant.

Klimt (as Barrister) Fraulein Neusil, why do you subject yourself to these indignities from such a dubious character? Does he have a hold over you?

Walli When he draws me, completely, which is hard for people to accept, something happens to us both which does have —I'm sorry, Egon— the quality of —love. What is better than setting out with a loved one on a jointly created endeavour which is also a record of that love?

Klimt (as Barrister) I have to applaud the 'tart with a heart of gold' performance, Fraulein Neusil. But you aim too high; The jury will conclude that no one in your profession can afford these fine feelings.

Walli I don't know if it is it is fine feeling to say there are no boundaries between people in love. I understand what art is about, I can't do it but I can serve artists. People

will be looking at his paintings in a thousand years time, the same as we look at Greek statues, or murals in Pompeii. His paintings will teach people about us when we are all dust.

Klimt (as Barrister) What, pray, do these paintings say, that is so interesting and vitally important?

Walli I don't know. Well I do, but I'm not falling into some clever trap of yours.

Klimt (as Barrister) Would the world be poorer if they were destroyed?

Walli I was proud to sell them to clients.

Klimt (as Barrister) Peddling these smutty drawings of you, round Vienna is hardly different from prostitution, is it?

Walli I don't know. You'd need to ask somebody who's tried them both. He makes people look at life anew, and of course that is shocking and of course there may be hell to pay, because so few people can understand it, yet. When I am with him, the world is sort of Egon-shaped. It's very strange. I can't describe it well either. Where his world stops and I start, I don't know. He is a genius.

Klimt (as Barrister) This is the trial of a rapist, a pedophile and a pornographer, not a budding genius! I draw the jury's attention to a sample of wares: the painting which the court usher is now unveiling, for identification purposes. Miss Neusil, the accused has already confessed to making this lewd and corrupting drawing. Would you confirm to the jury that that is your....face, as well as the rest of you.

Walli It is a drawing of my face.

Klimt (as Barrister) Thank you Miss Neusil. That will be all. The prosecution now summons the prisoner, Egon Schiele, to the witness stand.

Walli (A mantra, gathering speed) As of today, I swear that I Valerie Neusil am not in love with Egon Schiele, or anyone. As of today, I swear that I Valerie Neusil am not in love with Egon Schiele, or anyone. As of today, I swear that I Valerie Neusil am not in love with Egon Schiele, or —

(Walli weeps, loudly, as Schiele embraces her)

Klimt (as Barrister) Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, if obscenities such as you have seen are freely available, civilisation will fall! The process of decay is speedy. If decency is held in contempt, morality will cease to exist. The state, the state is in danger! The prosecution rests.

(Schiele breaks from comforting Walli. Klimt drops his legal persona and is himself.)

Klimt (To audience) Which politician and near contemporary of Egon Schiele used the warning, 'The state, the state is in danger?' Some clues, but no prizes. He had a toothbrush moustache. He painted Czechoslovakia, he painted Austria, Poland, France and he even painted Russia. The Russians didn't like how he painted them at all.

(Klimt resumes barrister persona)

Klimt (As Barrister) M'ud, may I request on behalf of the prosecution that the prisoner is brought up? (Schiele forward, held by Tatiana) Will you confirm your name is Egon Schiele. (Schiele nods) And you are twenty one years old, a recent graduate of the School of Applied Arts in Vienna. Who would you say your strongest

influences were, Herr Schiele? In your life?

Schiele Vincent Van Gogh.

Klimt (As Barrister) The mad Dutch ear-chopper the greatest influence in your life? A religiously obsessed barbarian pigmentologist who first set himself up against the copying of nature, and then shot himself, your greatest influence? Mad, then dead at thirty seven. Doesn't augur well for a very long career, does it?

Schiele I only ever saw a few canvases. The subjects were not obviously heroic. A chair. The artist's own bedroom. I felt the world change as I beheld them.

Klimt (As Barrister) What other influences do you think has resulted in you producing your perverted and rancid pictures?

Schiele Gustav Klimt is my other mentor.

Klimt (As Barrister) Klimt! He hardly has a salubrious personal reputation either, has he? What sort of teaching would this pasha and his fleshpots pass on to young and impressionable minds?

Schiele The Beethoven frieze has considerably more than sensuality to recommend it. It frees the wings of understanding.

Klimt (As Barrister) No, really? How does it do that? (To audience) A piece of ephemera, why he painted it on cardboard!

Schiele It takes the influences of gothic romanticism and redefines them in the light of a clear modern intelligence. Later generations may well have a devil of a job of holding it together. It's his most sublime creation. But I will go beyond the frieze. I will surpass Klimt.

(pause)

Klimt (as barrister) Indeed! The State has reviewed the charges of rape and abduction of a minor and ruled there is insufficient evidence to prosecute. However the judicial process has brought to light several obscene drawings.

Schiele They are my property.

(Klimt lights a match)

Schiele Stop!

Klimt (as barrister) You can have the ashes back, certainly.

Schiele Don't burn my drawings! By whose authority do you do these acts?

Klimt (as barrister) The Archduke Ferdinand's, who rules from Vienna over Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Venice, Herzegovinia, and indeed, even small slices of Turkey. Officials in his realm have powers in twenty eight official languages to destroy lewd representations.

Schiele Suppose I said to you I had created this picture of the artist's parents, at the moment of their first act of sacred love, would you then not see that a portrayal of this act is not exclusively terrible?

Klimt (as barrister) The thing with paper, it burns. And then, when it's gone, it's gone forever, and the righteous are cleansed, which is even more elevated, than just being plain clean.

Walli Can't you see it is beautiful?

(Walli snatches painting away from Klimt, who removes his wig and turns to audience, and shrugs)

Klimt (As himself) The burning of this priceless painting in front of its agonised author is a moment which has rightly gone down in eternity, and we shall recreate for you later. Egon's suffering both before and after was so great that when he was released from jail, he drew himself pierced like Saint Sebastian, with a dozen arrows. But I should give you Athenians some background on what gave rise to the charges, the inciting incident. That's what I understand "screenwriters", the modern daedaluses of film narrative will call the thing that drives the plot, though to go forward, we naturally have to flashback; To that night in spring 1911 when Tatiana Massig, lissome, provocatively uninhibited, underdressed and underage would come to the painter at Neulendorf.

(Schiele and Walli embrace, then part. She picks at her dress, Schiele consults his posture in a mirror.)

Klimt See the stage become a night-nest of buttercup-yellow lamplight, in the midst of which, behold our lovebirds, beak to beak, as they preen their feathered souls. Around them in the village in the dark, envious barbed tongues are busy grafting troubles to the tree of life, but a determined slim thirteen year old girl slips unseen through these invisible thorn barriers of malice. Tatiana approaches the dimly glowing residence as if magnetised, yet seemingly hesitant; seen from afar, she becomes a wet white moth, flitting and stopping through black vertical tree trunks, before she approaches and takes on her woman-child form, sidling towards the light.

(Transformation Egon, dressing in voluptuous painter's smock with soft velvet beret, perhaps a change for Walli Tatiana approaches Schiele)

Tatiana has come from Vienna, where every street reeks of the hopelessness of winter. Her clothes smell damply of horsemanure and half-burnt coal. Her hands are cold as she walks through the dark bittersweet smelling woods, toward her beacon, the yellow light. Down drifts softly-spoken rain, tiny droplets recently condensed and therefore of mixed parentage, crisp-scented from their mizzling descent through coppices of Austrian pine. Egon, beware!

(Tatiana is right up to them as they preen)

Walli Take it off.

Egon Why?

Walli You can't go out in the village square like that, even after dark. You will get stones thrown at you, for certain.

Egon It is time the rabble in Neulenbach learned to embrace its artist.

Walli The rabble is more likely to tar and feather you, if you go out looking like that.

Egon You were there when I was offered the town hall, for a showing, by the chief clerk.

Walli Your uncle would have the town hall burnt down first, before he allowed that to happen. Wake up! You will never get a showing in this town. Never. Paris or New York one day, but Neulenbach, *Jamais. Niemals. Comprene?*

Egon You don't understand these people. I grew up near here. They know me.

Walli Who throws gravel at the bedroom windows at night? Your old friends. They hate me too, but you specially.

Egon I like it here. Even the seasons are behind.

Walli It's dead.

(Tatiana animates: waiflike, predatory.)

Tatiana Egon....Egon....

Walli Christ, it's that girl again.

Schiele Which girl?

Walli The bad news girl. The one from Vienna. The naval officer's daughter.

Schiele What's she doing here?

Tatiana Egon.....Please.

Egon Have we got enough to send her back?

Walli Not a bean.

Egon What's the matter with the world? God knows I'm knocking them out fast enough.

Tatiana It's me, again.....I'm cold.

Egon We could ask her in on condition she keeps her clothes on.

Walli Absolutely not. No drawing sessions tonight. She's not coming in. Just being in the same room as her ribcage gives me the creeps.

Tatiana Egon.. Walli.....It's Tatiana...Egon...? It's dark and I'm frightened. (Sobbing) I thought there was a bogey man following me.

Walli We have to get rid of her, now, don't let her in.

Egon What do you suggest we do?

Walli Put a paper bag over your head. Hide under the bed. I'll say you've gone away.

Schiele She's seen me already.

Walli We could refuse to let her in because we were having sex.

Schiele We're not.

Walli We could start now.

Schiele Then she'd never leave.

Walli Keep your voice down.

Schiele (Calls) Go Away! There's no one here!

Tatiana (Enters) Oh yes there is. You were joking, weren't you? Remember me? Tatiana Massig. I'm cold. I've come such a long way. The weather's taken a turn for the worse, hasn't it? My dress is so.....wet. I'll be glad to get out of it, and put my body next to something warm.

(Tatiana removes her dress.)

Walli Close your eyes, Egon. (He does so)

Tatiana Is this a game I can play?

Walli There will be no games tonight. There are things that men should not see, particularly this one.

Tatiana Are there things that women should not see, too?

Schiele Oh yes.

Tatiana What happens when they see them?

Schiele If their appetites are thwarted, their madness boils forth like molten tar, in acts of insane violence;

Walli Like what?

Schiele Like the women who ripped Orpheus limb from limb.

Tatiana Who is Orpheus?

Schiele The first musician, and the first poet. Groves of oak and cypress, laurel and smooth fir mark where he sang as the trees drew close to listen.

Tatiana Why did the women tear Orpheus apart?

Schiele When his wife died he confined all his attentions to boys.

Walli You mean they killed Orpheus for being a homo?

Tatiana What is it that homos do that is so bad?

Walli Come on girl, we'll give you a bath.

Tatiana I had a bath at home, this morning. I'd rather stand in front of the stove, like this. (Posing) My nips have shrunk to nothing, you're not missing anything Egon, I can tell you.

(Walli leads Tatiana off)

Walli Come this way, Tatiana.

(Exit Walli and Tatiana.)

Tatiana (Off, shouting) My nips are teeny, shrivelled as raisins! And my fanny is frozen, weeny with cold too!

(Reenter Tatiana, now wearing black stockings and not much else. Egon removes bag from head, takes crayon and paper and immediately starts to draw her with ferocious concentration. Music;

Klimt steps forward holding a lecturers baton. Schiele draws Tatiana then Walli, who is clothed in

Weiner Werkstätter gown. Music.)

Klimt (To audience) What is this? Like the birth of a mighty purple emperor butterfly, a chrysalis of the mind is splitting open with a glorious new conception, hatching and spreading, expanding above its humble progenitors, the medieval woodcut dance of death. (To Schiele) Sir! In one bite-sized quote, can you tell an ancient Athenian coach tour, what marvellous modern spiritual beliefs your radical artistic programme embraces?

Schiele The job of the true artist doesn't change much. What I am doing is what I have done and what I will do, all through my working life. Trying so that things appear newly forged, and the dust of everyday life lifts from the soul.

Klimt I don't doubt these noble aspirations, but the life's work may not be as long as you might like!

Schiele The only thing that is going to stop me is a bullet, and I don't intend to be in the way of one.

Klimt There's a shiftylooking fellow in the cosmic salesrooms, who says there's not much more of your stuff to come. You must have seen him. Around five foot ten, permanent tan, two-tone shoes, luminous socks, blue suit, ponytail and shades. His card says, "Gallery of Eternity. 100% commission. No refunds. No time-wasters." According to him, your turps bottle is going stoppered for good shortly.

Schiele All I know is at this point in time, I'm on the edge of a breakthrough. Something really good.

Klimt I'm sure the Athenians don't want to spoil your concentration. Sorry for the intrusion, sir. We won't keep you from

your work.

(Goes to side. Music ends)

Schiele I don't know why, but you always expect a girl's bush and quim to bear some relation to the face. It's such a shock when it doesn't. But that's what art is meant to be, isn't it? Shocking.

Tatiana I thought you were still in Vienna and it would be easy...Round the corner. You know. But then it turned into a pilgrimage. In a way I quite liked that. At least it showed I cared. I can show you where my father whipped me on the legs.

Walli He never. You lying little cow.

Tatiana Not lying! Also, look, on my bottom.

Schiele Why did he do that?

Tatiana No reason. Whenever he got the chance. Yesterday, most recently. I was playing with myself. Do you know what I mean? Shall I show you so you can draw me doing it?

Walli We don't need a demonstration. How did you find us?

Tatiana Egon said he was planning to move. I thought I was welcome, as children normally are.

Walli During the day, maybe. But not now.

Tatiana I won't cause trouble. I'll do anything you like. I will be obedient to your every wish....fully submissive, if that is what you require. All my life I have felt I was born into the wrong family. Really I am a bohemian. I aspire to live a fulfilled life as an artist's model.

Walli The post is already filled, here.

Tatiana Alright, I'll stand in when there are other things you have to do for him, like shopping. I know he likes them young. I like the way he makes me look. Although I'm young, I understand what he is trying to do.

Walli Then you are advanced.

Tatiana The dangerous beauty of what lies beneath....

Walli There are very few adults who understand what Egon is doing.

Schiele And absolutely none of them live in Germany.

(Egon stops drawing)

Walli Get dressed, Tatiana.

Tatiana This is how I feel most myself. Sky-clad is powerful, or else why would witches dance naked in a ring?

Walli We are going to the station, where you will get on a magic train to Vienna.

Tatiana There are no more trains till tomorrow.

Walli There's a ten o'clock.

Tatiana Not so! The trunk of a rotten old tree crashed onto the line, the result of a maiden's prayer. Tonight I elect to be sacrificed, for art. I'm offering Egon everything, on the altar of his art, if I can stay.

Walli You're trouble.

Tatiana You should protect me!

Egon It's late. Tomorrow, morning at first light, we're taking you home. You go and

sleep with Walli. I'll stop here.

Tatiana I don't want to sleep with Walli. I'm not a lezzie. She's a girl.

Walli (Points off) We'll sleep in there. What will you do, Egon?

Egon I'll be fine on the couch.

Tatiana I want to sleep on the couch.

Walli I don't think I should let her out of my sight.

Tatiana Why don't you two take the big bed, and do it? I promise not to listen.

Walli We are not performing any acts tonight for you or anyone, young madam. This way.

(Exit Tatiana and Walli. Egon starts to scribble)

Klimt Observe Egon drawing what he saw, now Tatiana's safely tucked up in bed; possessed of an uncanny ability to store, digest and reinvent a pose from memory. Hush! Genius at work!

Schiele Nothing happened that night, as you know.

Klimt Of course we know! My dear fellow, there's not an Athenian present does not believe in your innocence. You were simply careless, that's all. Just a moment, You're writing! What's this; a new departure for your talents? A semi-autobiographical best seller, perhaps, featuring the unjustly imprisoned one who triumphs?

Schiele It's my speech from the dock .

Klimt You must be mid-trial. I know. Why not try out your speech extempore on some Athenians? Look at 'em! They're dying to acquit. They've done it once today

already. Alright, not them. I'll fix you up with a really sympathetic audience from far, far into the future where your dilemma will be even better understood. Here they come! Look! (Points)

Schiele I see swirling carpets, in the shape of a cupped hands, as if they were holding something precious, empty but decorated with an unmistakable Klimtian inlay.

Klimt I admit the tilt control unit design of the juries' anti-gravity armchairs owes something to me. But look at the jurors, as they materialise. The keen lines, the androgeny, the mixture of anguish and swaggering self-regard; a blazing individuation which could only come from one pen. Who do you think inspired their outward forms? And look now! Blatant self-abuse from every jury member.

Schiele A vote for acquittal before I've even opened my mouth.

Klimt The thing that worries me about this trial, Egon is if the prosecution discover your father died of syphilis, and you took your twelve year old sister on honeymoon, they'll have a field day. You might just as well plead guilty now, and throw yourself on the court's mercy. Assuming it has any, after seeing the artistic drawings as evidence.

(Klimt puts a lawyer's wig on. We're in court. Lighting change. Schiele nervous but determined.)

Klimt (as Barrister) When these very young children pose for you, Herr Schiele, what do you think is going on in their minds?

Schiele I'm perfectly aware that there are any number of children who are, have been corrupted by adult contact. You have to think what corruption means. For some the age of innocence cannot exist. My mother

was twelve when she met my father. Do I condemn his feelings now, when he first saw her, the same feelings of desire that brought me about?

Tatiana Buzz of excitement!

Klimt (as Barrister) Order in the court! Herr Schiele, on a point of information, would you like to tell the jury of what you once did in celebration of your parents' marriage?

Schiele I recreated it.

Klimt (as Barrister) You recreated it with whom?

Schiele My sister.

Klimt (as Barrister) Would you care to explain how?

Schiele It was a celebration of life and love.

Klimt (as Barrister) What exactly did you do with your sister?

Schiele We spent the night in the same hotel where my parents had taken their honeymoon.

Klimt (as Barrister) In the same bed?

Schiele I tried to obtain the same bed. But I am not sure if it was. It was certainly the same room. My mother had kept the hotel receipt.

Klimt (as Barrister) The same room and quite possibly the same feelings. Feelings outside the law on any number of counts, if acted out. For you were aged sixteen, were you not, accompanied by your young sister aged twelve?

Schiele Yes.

- Klimt (as Barrister) Can you tell the court, how complete this physical reenactment became, this ceremony of your parent's wedding night when you climbed into bed with your twelve year old sister?
- Schiele My sister is a virgin. She will be a virgin till she is married. She has given me her word.
- Klimt (as Barrister) How exactly did you inveigle your sister into taking this dubious expedition with you? Did you bribe her with candy floss, toffee apples? Or more sophisticated inducements; opiates, say? Did you drug your sister before you made her lie with you?
- Schiele No I did not drug her. When we got to the hotel, I told Gertie she was the same age as when my mother met my father, and she should do exactly as I said if she ever wanted to pose for me again. And she did.
- Klimt (as Barrister) Had she posed naked or clothed, for you, before that time?
- Schiele Both. And she did again, when I took her to Livorno.
- Klimt (as Barrister) How did you get your sister to Livorno?
- Schiele Express train.
- Klimt (as Barrister) So you were both riding along, swaying on the silver rails behind the panting iron horse, but you had told your sister nothing about your intentions. Your innocent twelve year old sister.
- (Tatiana in a bridal gown far too large for her, which makes her look childlike, with an absurdly long train, comes and sits beside Schiele. They hold hands.)

Tatiana (as Gertie) This is nice, Egon. D'you remember when we used to make up rhymes about names? You were Egon, the bee-gon, the rick-stick-steegon The bee-why-bee-why boxing Feegon.

Schiele I'm Egon Schiele, now, little sister. Nothing else.

Tatiana (as Gertie) Why do you put a box round your signature when you finish a drawing?

Schiele Because the letters would run all over the page and eat up the picture, if I didn't fence them in. Like this, Gertie.
(Tickles Tatiana)

(Tatiana laughs, long and loud, delighting in her brother. Schiele abruptly stops the game.)

Tatiana (as Gertie) You haven't told me where we're going yet, Egon.

Schiele It's the parents' wedding anniversary. Where d'you think we're going?

Tatiana (as Gertie) I dunno. All you said was 'Wear a bridal gown' That's not a geography lesson, is it?

Schiele We're doing this in honour of mother and of father's memory, they're the people who made us!

Tatiana (as Gertie) Oh, alright. This is the right train, isn't it?

Schiele Of course it's the right train.

(Klimt puts on a ticket collector's hat, arrives by Schiele)

Klimt (Ticket collector) Tickets, please!

Tatiana Does this go to Livorno?

Klimt (Ticket collector) That's right, young

miss.

Tatiana How exciting!

Klimt (Ticket collector) So what are you going to do there, then?

(Schiele finally finds a pass, and Klimt looks at it.)

Klimt (Ticket collector) This pass is valid for children of Alfred Schiele. But it's two years out of date.

Schiele So sorry, My father the station master must have handed me the wrong pass by mistake. She's Gertrude, I'm Egon Schiele.

Klimt (Ticket collector) Gertie and Egon! Egon and Gertie! What a pair!

Tatiana (as Gertie) Egon! Suppose he finds out father's been dead for two years!!? We could go to prison!!

Schiele Just keep your mouth shut!

Klimt (Ticket collector) (Hands pass back) That's alright then! Just tell your dad next time, to be more careful. Have a pleasant journey. Going to a wedding, are we?

Schiele This is our honeymoon.

Klimt (Ticket collector) Married your sister did you, you young scamp! Whatever next? But she's certainly pretty enough! You behave yourselves.

(Klimt walks away)

Tatiana (as Gertie) Egon! Are we 'married', then? When did that happen?

Schiele It was earlier in the day, after school.

Tatiana (as Gertie) I don't remember!

Schiele You don't remember how old you were when Father went mad.

Tatiana It's true. It's too upsetting.

Schiele I know. But you have to be brave about these things and not bury them. I was twelve, you were eight.

Tatiana Eight. I'll remember now. (Giggling) I remember when he wouldn't pick up the telephone receiver because he thought it was a lobster, and it would bite him.

Schiele Mother should have boiled the whole telephone, and served it to him for supper.

(Tatiana laughs and laughs, louder and louder, almost hysterical, then stops.)

Tatiana (as Gertie) I've pissed myself.

(Schiele draws her to him, suddenly tender and kisses her)

Schiele Don't worry little sister. We're almost there.

Tatiana (as Gertie) Did you tell mother where we were going?

Schiele No. She is better off like that. To remind her of what it was like when she got together with our father would only hurt her.

(Klimt is back into wig, legal persona)

Klimt (as barrister) "It would only hurt mother", the accused remarks to his sister, as if he cared. Egon Schiele has no regard for any feelings but his own. He claims the privilege of art, remember. In fact, he stands unmasked here, a manipulative monster of his sister's trust whose

paintings indicate the extent of his ruthless sexual appetite. Consider if young Schiele's behaviour has ever been consistent with observing his mother's feelings on other occasions. Was the accused thinking of his mother, when he painted lurid selfportraits of his own self abuse? Was the accused thinking of his mother, when he embarked on the shocking depiction of his commonlaw wife that is exhibit one? When the accused lured Captain Massig's thirteen year old daughter to his house, for rape and buggery, was he thinking of his mother then??!!

(Walli as Mother sits knitting in grey wig. Tatiana as Gertie leaves, then runs back in as Gertie, somewhat older.)

Tatiana (As Gertie, to Walli) Mum-Egon's been arrested.

Walli (as Mother) I'm not surprised it's caught up with him! If he'd paid proper attention, with the amount he earns, he could give me a respectable amount to live on, but no, he's always spent what he earned, it seems before he can put his hand in his pocket so it'll be bankruptcy for him and the pauper's grave for me.

Tatiana (as Gertie) He hasn't been arrested for debt, it'sRape.

Walli (as Mother) Rape?

Tatiana (as Gertie) He'd never do a thing like that! I swear. They must have got the wrong man.

Walli (as Mother) No one will buy his pictures now. I'm not surprised when you look at some of them.

Tatiana (as Gertie) But they're not letting anyone see him. He will be going crazy!

Walli (as Mother) You're only his sister, Gertie, there is a part of men that is unknown to women, foul with mischief, bad faith and betrayal; dark and diseased. He'll come to nothing, like his father. I wish I were dead. Jesus and Mary forgive me, I wish I were dead before this disgrace happened to me. I wish the earth would swallow everyone up. I wish I we were all dead.

(Exit Tatiana and Walli. Klimt dons convict forage hat, and walks round in a circle with Egon doing the same.)

Schiele How long do we stay out here?

Klimt (as Prisoner) Till the bell. You never get the full hour. The story is, you brought in some cardboard stiffies with you? Russians, with the tube. Cardboard stiffies. Whiffs. (Explains) Snout.

Schiele My girlfriend brought me some cigarettes but they're gone.

Klimt (as Prisoner) Don't forget to share, next time.

Schiele I'm sorry, I didn't understand what you said.

Klimt You'll be spouting the lingo for sure, at the end of your sporting stretch, if you've been banged up for noncing. That's life. What blokes in here can't take out on the system, they take out on the men who ruin the lives of little girls. Animals that destroy and pollute little girls. Little innocents what you can see haven't had a sexual feeling in the whole of their snowy little lives. How old was she, then?

Schiele I did not rape a thirteen year old. It is the most disgusting crime I can think of. I did not commit it. I am not a pedophile or a rapist.

Klimt (as Prisoner) Did she say she liked it?

Schiele Nothing happened. There was no event. I did not touch her. I am an artist.

Klimt (as Prisoner) Artist, are you? You need looking after. Do me ten saucy pictures for tomorrow's exercise period, and I'll watch your back for you.

Schiele I will not draw pornography in exchange for protection!

Klimt (as Prisoner) No? Then look out for the bloke from cell 3 with red hair. Don't refuse to pick up the soap for him, when you're in the shower together. If you don't fancy being pals, 'e carries this sharpened spoon. (Evil laugh)

(Walli rings handbell. Schiele and Klimt stop their circular walk. Klimt discards his prison persona)

Klimt (To audience) The year of Egon Schiele's remand was 1912; near yet far. Before the watershed of conflict, and yet so modern. Man's attention was turning inward to himself, and at the same time, outward. Schiele was discovering the human form as shocking. Einstein had discovered relativity. Marconi was picking up radio signals from majestic galaxies, which appeared like self lit pearls, strung on some great and previously unsuspected design. But all of this was not enough to prevent the human race ignoring the sanctity of life and disgracing itself yet again, in armed conflict—

(Schiele thrusts Walli, who has come to meet him, to one side)

Schiele (to audience, interrupting) —I am an artist!! I am being mistreated and threatened from all sides for CRIMES I DID NOT COMMIT!

(Walli leads Schiele gently off, sobbing softly.
Blackout here for optional act break)

Klimt (To audience) Athenians! It is 1907. The retreat of time continues under my enchantment. I first met Egon then, when he was sixteen. The anarchists who were to assassinate the Archduke were still spotty schoolboys learning to smoke. I was in my shaded garden, surrounded by the cream of the city's loveliest women. It would have been apparent to my young visitor that I lived in style, a ram with a large and docile flock. A number of women were present who he would have heard, found it impossible to keep their clothes on in the course of a modelling session. Egon was always striking. When his shock of hair appeared round the entrance pillar that evening, every one of those women's heads turned towards him. Including Walli's.

(Lighting change: Walli appears in a Weiner Werkstatte gown and fabulously large hat: a cartoon exaggerated recall. She is childishly vampish, dancing to a scratchy wax disc of Alexander's Ragtime Band, tipsy. Schiele steps up to her.)

Schiele Do you like American music?

Walli Not like, adore. I love it. Forget Strauss and Wagner. It makes me feel like dancing!

Schiele That's good.

Walli Why is it good?

Schiele Because I'm wearing American shoes.

Walli Do they know the steps to this tune?

Schiele I have not asked them.

Walli Are you a friend of Gustav's?

Schiele I hope so. We've only just met.

Walli He's a genius.

Schiele I suppose so. My name's Egon Schiele.

Walli (Puts out her hand) Walli. Nice to meet you, anyway.

Klimt The Egon-Walli affair was slow to germinate. Egon was just about to start art school. I thought, what can I give this boy? I felt as if Fate had presented me with a fully formed son, who would take over the family business, in due course. Walli was even younger than he was. Schoolteacher father but she never finished school. Like an animal, she existed in the moment. I'd invite Egon to drop by when Walli was modelling for me, and each time they would pretend they had never met.

(Egon approaches Walli and shakes hands.)

Schiele Egon Schiele.

Walli Valerie Neusil, pleased to meet you. What do you do?

Schiele I'm in my second year of art school.

Walli Is art what you want to do?

Schiele Oh yes. I'm going to be unforgettable.

Klimt After Egon graduated, he moved out to the country. I had been sending money. Now he needed a muse, as well. It was time to send Walli to him. I had sown, now he could reap. (Calls) Walli! I've been up working for four hours. When are you going to get that bone-idle butt of yours out of bed and get down to the country like you agreed last night?

- Walli Where?
- Klimt Take some goddam money to Egon Schiele.
Get him off my back like you promised.
- Walli I never promised you anything. I don't
know why you should be bothered about
him.
- Klimt He's writing twice a day!
- Walli Why are you trying to get rid of me,
sending me to some strange man.....
- Klimt You have met Egon Schiele here five times
by my reckoning. Slim, dark sticking out
hair, a genius.
- Walli So what?
- Klimt So, the stars in their courses all command
you, "Go!" Do rivers run backwards? Can
destiny stay unfulfilled?
- Walli What did you say?
- Klimt I said, "How can I pay all these bills?"
Have a heart Walli! He's picked up a leech,
a male admirer who is buying him canvas,
hoping to obtain base favours. He needs
rescuing! Outstrip Pegasus in your mercy
mission, glorious one, or Egon will be
lost to sodomites. Or worse, hag-ridden by
his mercenary petit-bourgeoise mother to
wed some fishy little piece of fluff who
snuffs out the blaze of his talent between
her dim and blinkered thighs. Awake, and
slough off all shame; sport those
magnificent thews, YOU WERE BORN TO BE
THE COMPANION AND CHANNEL OF GENIUS! Does
a girl like you never look beyond this
taciturn old man? Later, you may discover
you were made for each other. But you
didn't hear that, did you?
- Walli Do you have a fever? I've never heard you
speak so many words in six months. Don't

shout and I'll do it.

Klimt (Kisses her) Go and accept his love!

(Walli journeys to Schiele; train effects.)

Walli You must be Egon Schiele.

Schiele I never deny it when we meet.

Walli I'm Valerie Neusil. People call me Walli.

Schiele I know, I know.

Walli I've come from Vienna.

Schiele A filthy place. That's why I moved out here.

Walli Gustav Klimt sends his —love, probably.

Schiele I write all the time, begging him to come here to the country. You'd think we were in a different galaxy here. What's the matter with him?

Walli I don't know. He was talking and I caught one word in ten.

Schiele The last time, you were modelling for him, I drew you.

Walli When?

Schiele I came by. In fifty seconds flat. Your legs. They're here, somewhere. Very nice.

(Walli inspects her legs)

Schiele I can't always afford models. He can.

Walli The fastest pencil in the west. That's what Gustav calls you.

Schiele What else does he say?

Walli Not much. He gets more bearish every day. Gets up, goes to paint. It's as if he's actually trying to be boring.

Schiele I wish I could have studied with him, and not with the idiots in the academy.

Walli What did you learn there?

Schiele Nothing. Actually that's a lie. I learnt how to swallow insults. (Sneering) "The Devil must have shat you into my class, Schiele!" "Please, Herr Schiele, do not ever confess that you were taught by me." Did Gustav send anything?

(Walli produces a packet and passes it to Schiele)

Walli A hundred kroner. Aren't you going to count it?

Schiele I'm not a shopkeeper.

Walli When he got your letter I ...volunteered. To come.

Schiele Tell him, thanks. Otherwise, tomorrow I would be having to either grease my arse, or paint on cheap cardboard!

Walli Gustav was aware of this problem. That was why...

Schiele There are limits, to artistic sacrifice.

Walli I know, I know. Absolutely. And since Gustav thinks so much of you, I said I would be your protectress, for whatever; as long as it takes for this invert to go away.

Schiele Is that why you came?

Walli (Pause) You're 'important', aren't you; that's the term Gustav uses; not about anyone else living. You don't look like

other artists. Not a speck of paint on you.

Schiele Do you like the country?

Walli I'm fond of birdsong.

Schiele Nightingales don't do their magic during the day.

Walli Maybe a stay in the country would clear my head.

Schiele Be my guest. Stay as long as you like. I should warn you there's not much of an artistic community here so far. I'm trying to make a start, talking with the town clerk about exhibitions and so forth.

Walli How many bedrooms are there?

Schiele One. Well, two, but one's my studio. It's all I can afford. I thought I was going to clean up with an exhibition in Germany, but it was a washout as usual.

Walli Why was that?

Schiele There's a conspiracy over there to make Vienna passé. So there were no reviews till after the police arrived.

Walli The police came to your show?

Schiele And took all the pictures away.

(Klimt knocks with his staff)

Walli Visitors!

Schiele We're not in.

Walli What was the first thing that you drew a likeness of?

Schiele Trains. We lived above the station.

(Klimt knocks with his staff)

Schiele Don't move; it's nobody.

Walli It's making a lot of noise, for nobody.

Schiele Nobody important.

Klimt (To audience) But every time they didn't answer the door, a day magically passed!

Walli Gustav warned me not to become your mistress.

Schiele Why?

Walli He wanted me to think it was my idea.

Schiele Perhaps it's mine too. Do you love me, Walli?

Walli Right now I am not in love with anyone.
(They kiss) But I could change, over time.

(They kiss. She pulls away.)

Schiele What do you see when you look at people?

Walli Animals. Sometimes more than one.

Schiele What's my animal?

Walli A silver fox.

Schiele That's good, untameable.

Walli Their bite is also worse than their bark.

Schiele What are you?

Walli A swan, because I can be killed and cooked.

Schiele But they never sing, till they are about to die.

Walli This is my song. (Sings) *"C'mon and hear,*

c'mon and hear, Alexander's ragtime band."

Schiele I have to tell you Walli, I've got a sister prettier than you.

Walli I might as well give up now. I hear she's younger too. (They kiss) I don't have any relatives any more. I mean I have, but they cross the street so as not to be tainted by association. It doesn't matter, they were all narrow people, not artistic. What is the most unjust thing that has ever happened to you?

Schiele My father once beat me for drawing rather than doing my latin homework. My mother had to lay an extra place for supper. Napoleon was arriving on the seven fifteen from Austerlitz.

(Wally poses and Schiele starts to draw her as he talks.)

Schiele I knew he was going crazy because there was no such train. We had to watch him fall apart. We had been quite well off till father set fire to the family savings. Paper money, share certificates, stock bonds up in smoke. My mother never forgave him. My father then tried to jump off a roof in the town, to leave her at least with the life insurance. He messed that up too. He finally died when I was fourteen.

Walli I left home when I was fourteen.

Schiele It was over Christmas and we all had to pretend he had been still alive until New Year's day. My mother had worked it out as a scam with the doctor, to increase her widow's pension. The smell as the old year died was pretty terrible.

Walli Why did you leave Vienna?

Schiele I couldn't take it any more. Each one of

its million inhabitants screaming unheard by anyone else, as if they were in their own padded cell, screaming themselves to death. Are you afraid of death?

Walli I don't know. I don't think so. What about you?

Schiele Death's just a piece of clockwork, really, with its own windup agenda. A chimera .

Walli What's a chimera?

Schiele You know, like a sphinx, or a gorgon with snakes for hair. A creature made up of bits and pieces of other creatures.

Walli They don't exist, really do they? So how can death be like something that doesn't exist?

Schiele Fuck knows. (Pause) I'd like to to draw us one day, making love.

Walli At the same time? You'll need another pair of hands.

Schiele It only takes a mirror.

Walli Why not get a camera?

Schiele I'd have to go to Vienna. Unless you go first class, the train is filthy.

(Knocking from Klimt)

Klimt (As Postman) Postman!

Walli I'll answer it.

Schiele No, no, I'll go.

Klimt (As Postman) Cash delivery from G Klimt!

(Schiele goes to meet Klimt, takes packet and stares past him.)

- Klimt (As postman) I hear you do spicy stuff. Is it like, Leda and the swan?
- Schiele No no. Classical bestiality doesn't interest me.
- Klimt (As postman) You must be a modern artist, then. Pressing ahead with your cutting edge technique in the face of indifference and even discouragement!! Take heart. A little bird told me, one day, Austria will be proud of you. And not just Austria. The whole world!
(Klimt retires.)
- Schiele It looks so still out there. Deliciously menacing.
- Walli Are you going to paint it then?
- Schiele I don't feel ready to start a landscape. Can we do the love portrait now?
- Walli I just don't get how you are going to do it. The English always say a gentleman rests on his elbows, right? Well you're not going to be able to do that. I'm not sure how sincere it would be.
- Schiele I am sincere!
- Walli I don't *feel* like making love with you when I don't feel like it. I'm having to trust you here. It's difficult, new and dangerous for me. You're clever, you can talk cleverly about many things. Your words amaze me. Where do they come from? Gustav managed on about ten words a day. Alright, I'll do it. (Pause) What's the matter now ?
- Schiele I think I am sickening for something. I don't want to do anything today, suddenly. I have a headache.
- Walli That's alright; you have already done more than I can carry tomorrow, to sell in

Vienna.

Schiele Where am I going, Walli? Why does nobody recognise that I need help?

Walli You get a lot of help.

Schiele The shrinks say the unconscious lies out of reach beneath the ego. Mine feels like a constipated dragon. What lies beneath is still troubled. (Schiele goes to the mirror.)

Walli Why do you need to check yourself out in the mirror every time you walk in a room?

Schiele I don't look at myself. I look at *him*. I have a painful longing for my dark twin, so strong as to be almost indescribable.

Walli Your sister must have been so relieved to see you fall for yourself.

Schiele It's not narcissistic because unlike Narcissus, I *am aware* that he is me.

Walli No, really? I thought he was the one you blamed for you masturbating. Let's get some air. Put your American shoes on. (Knocking) What's that?

Schiele It's either the locals, saluting the usual hour of our lovemaking with a shower of stones... Or it is the unconscious.

Walli Has anyone ever explained what the unconscious is?

Schiele Simple. It's what lies beneath. It has sniffed us out because of our unusual condition.

Walli I want to go, anyway. Are you coming or not?

Schiele I wouldn't advise it. I won't speak for myself, but you're radiating love. You're

giving off raw swatches of the stuff. What-lies-beneath has something between a nose and an eye, for these vibratory emissions. It has probably been stalking you on its seven legs since you first arrived. (Kisses her) What-lies-beneath will be coming after you because it can see-smell you; (Kisses her) just being alive is as good as sending it a little love-note.

Walli Where is this stupid thing, this idea meant to come from originally?

Schiele Itself, of course. It has crept here unseen, past little schlosses in the piny woods, past clumps of goitred peasants weeping in the wind. The *ünter-ich* is a shapeshifter which can borrow a ride on a sneeze, or make itself flat as a sheet of paper and glide in under the front door. (knocking)

Walli If it wasn't dark, I'd go and wring the necks of those kids, throwing stones.

Schiele It's the grownups who put them up to it.

Walli You're right. In the bread shop, today there was talk of a petition to your uncle.

Schiele A petition?? What about?

Walli Everything from kids coming into the house and seeing dirty pictures to me naked in the garden.

Schiele Klimt says you have to not give a brass monkey's about what people say about you.

Walli I dreamed of him last night.

Schiele What was he doing?

Walli Sometimes my dreams go on so long I can't be fagged to pay attention. You were both

arguing about when something happened.

(Enter Klimt)

Klimt Wake up and back me up Egon. I've got a load of money riding on this. When you came to me with a drawing at my house, that first time, was Walli there—?

Schiele That wasn't the first time we met. We first met at the Cafe Museum, remember?

Klimt Liar.

Schiele I met Walli later, at a party at your house. You had invited me, which was why I had brought the drawings, but you had forgotten you'd asked me.

Klimt Bollocks. Please say we first met here at my house. Please.

Schiele Walli and I talked for twenty seconds about American jazz, but I really wanted to hear what you were saying. You were in the middle of this panoramic epiphany to something-or-other.

Klimt You're right! I was tight as a tick. You were with Walli, and then you came over and said—

(Reenactment)

Schiele I didn't say anything at first. You were in full flow and my tongue was glued to the roof of my mouth with embarrassment.

Klimt You said something completely ridiculous, particularly as we'd already met by your account—

Schiele I could see you were pissed and wouldn't remember, that's why. "Excuse me, sir, do I have the honour of addressing...." And you said,

- Klimt “—Bin that effort, and start on a fresh piece of paper. Who d’ja think you’re trying to wipe the arse of? Jupiter enthroned? We’re not too proud here, you know.”
- Schiele And I said, “Talking of Jupiter, I liked your picture of the Danae, very much”, and you said,
- Klimt “Are you sure you are not a newfangled psychoanalyst who goes apeshit over flecks of brown in Jupiter’s shower of gold? ”
(Pause. Helpful) Then it was your turn. You laid it on with a trowel, as I recall. (To invisible visitors) “ Hello darling. Come and have several drinks, before you behave indiscreetly. That is the most stunning cleavage I have ever seen. Are those Weiner Werkstätte shoes? There’s a big bowl with money by the door. Short of a cabfare, feel free to take a handful of shit, when you go. ”
- Schiele I produced some drawings.
- Klimt (Klimt reacts) “I’m so sorry! I forgot. They said someone very special was coming. Don’t tell me. You are the art student Egon Schiele!
- Schiele —My turn. “What an honour it is to be in the great man’s studio who I so admire, have admired, am quite determined to surpass.”
- Klimt Pardon?
- Schiele I’m sorry, that just slipped out, I can’t control my tongue tonight. But I am so afraid of rejection! You are, if not the greatest painter in the world then the greatest one in my world. Your turn.
- Klimt “How old are you?”
- Schiele “Eighteen.” Then you said, (Pause)

Klimt "Eighteen! I'm fortyeight."

Schiele "I know. You're a legend. A colossus."

Klimt "Shall I tell you my secret? Get rid of your ridiculously tight clothes and wear a robe. Loose undergarments permit a flow of air, and stimulate a renaissance of the natural man. If your *cojones* had been meant to be warm, they would not have been slung where they are."

Schiele No no no. That was a later conversation and I replied, "I'll free my balls as soon as I get home" though I never did. Back to the salon. In the first conversation.

Klimt My brain hurts to try and think of it. More wine, here!

Schiele You asked me if I liked your paintings, in this absurdly modest way: as if you were a Sunday painter.

Klimt I was trying not to show I was by now as nervous as you. I said, "Are you sure you like my paintings?" You knew I meant, "Are you not damning me with a secret judgement. 'Erotic facade: department store window art. Pretty pretty. Preoccupation with surfaces' "

Schiele "You are eternal. The Beethoven frieze is about the salvation of weak mankind through art and love, isn't it? "

Klimt "If you say so. Immortal theme; painting falling apart. Sad we can't arrest the ravages of time. "

Schiele If you abolish time, you might find space gone, and then separation of identity would be impossible. I would be you and you would be me. Then we really would have trouble working out who said what.

Klimt I say bollocks to all that linear stuff. You're the newest new thing, the young dog of the day, I can see. What can I do for you? How can I smooth your path to glory?

Schiele "Tell me what you think of the paintings I brought."

(Hands Klimt an imaginary picture. which Klimt views)

Klimt Bare forked youth, his engorgement all to hand. Redbreasted shame, ill-finished hips and crutch—I'll show you my juicy ladies, if you're not careful.

Schiele Do I have talent?

Klimt Yes, perhaps too much.....Colour is not so important to you as line; not afraid of ugliness yet able to rise above it. Desire and repulsion rooted in the same clay. Fair enough. I'll buy it off you, or lend you money on it, till someone else sees its importance.

Schiele Thank you.

Klimt Is this really your expression at that moment?

Schiele It's as accurate as I can make it.

Klimt How economical, to do it all oneself. (Of painting) But I see you have been able to afford some models, for other work.

Schiele That's my sister.

Klimt Your sister.

Schiele She was twelve, then.

Klimt 'Wedding picture' It is good. Brilliant, actually. You're so talented. I have terrible trouble drawing hands and feet. Maybe it's because I'm a dreamperson.

Schiele Enlighten me. Dreamperson.

Klimt You know the poem of Rilke where he talks about how dreams and death are more important than life? A dream-person is someone who exists in the dimensions of a dream world. And I never can look as hard at hands as you, because I am afraid I will wake, as you do in dreams when you stare at your hands. Tell me, where did you get those fancy shoes?

Schiele They're.....American. I had no money but....I sent off for them, anyway.

Klimt Don't look at them, now, whatever you do.

Schiele Why not?

Klimt Too late! When you stand with a dreamperson, you start to see things their way. Glance at your feet or hands standing with me, and the world crumbles and you awake in a cell in cold Krumau jail, with your coat for a blanket. A cold grey dawn is meanly poking its way through the grating over the door.

Schiele At least, the end of another frightful night alone. I now understand why prisoners on remand fall prey to hopeless feelings and kill themselves.

Klimt But you are not completely alone. During the day, Walli has managed to throw an apple to you over the wall at exercise hour. Loving testament hidden in a twist of paper in the hollowed out apple core.

(Walli throws an apple to Schiele; he discovers a message.)

Schiele "Don't worry darling. I'm sure everything will be alright. At the end of this difficult time we will be together again,

and our love will be even stronger.
Thinking of you always. Love Walli”

Klimt Dear faithful Walli keeping you sane. Her warm affection, warming the cold stones of the prison wall.

Schiele I have tried painting with spittle on the walls but the outline disappears as if being magically taken away from me. Do they expect me to make masterpieces out of come, and do line drawings with my own excrements? That is the prospect I would be facing, except for the fact I haven't passed a rabbit pellet of shit, since I arrived. Now I know how Martin Luther felt. My whole body is in shock, in sympathy with my soul. I think if I cut myself now my veins would refuse to surrender their own blood. Not far from me, in fact so near he would hear my voice if I were to shout, there sits in his magistrates' office a judge, or whatever he is. A man that is, who believes he is something special, who has visited churches, museums, theatres, concerts and who knows, maybe even art exhibitions. An educated man, who is aware that artists have lives. And this man with all his culture can still feel righteousness will come, all from locking me in a cage!

(Klimt puts on judges wig. Tatiana as usher. Klimt sits, and examines picture given him by Tatiana. We are back at the picture-burning episode. This time, Klimt lights gas lighter with long flame, threatening)

Tatiana The prisoner wishes to ask a question, your honour about his status.

Schiele Why is it still necessary to imprison me?

Klimt (as Judge) You might run away.

(Klimt Lights drawing)

Schiele Now just a minute. I have now been incarcerated for a total of twentyfour days. The proceedings concerning the alleged rape and abduction have long since been set aside as unsound.

(Klimt lights another drawing)

Schiele You are so stupid. What are you planning to do? Castrate me? For my drawing you don't like? You can't castrate art, you know. What is happening here is evil and unjust. I have been unjustly held for five hundred and seventy six hours; an eternity! I have miserably borne unspeakable things, I am punished without any punishment having been issued. There is no case to answer and yet paintings have been stolen from my house. By what right do you burn my art? By what right do you hold them? By what right do you look at them? I have not made them public or encouraged you in any way! This has worse than the middle ages. It's like Savonarola, except that Michaelangelo was able to choose which painting he gave up to be burned. I have not chosen. It is such hypocrisy! Why don't you go to the museums now and cut up the greatest works of art into little pieces if they have the least sex in them? You are filth. He who denies sex has become a degraded automaton who smears thoughtlessly the act of love by his own parents when they created him!

Klimt (As judge) We will consider whether destruction of the remainder is in the public interest, during the recess.

Tatiana (As usher) Court will rise. All stand!

(Exit Klimt and Tatiana. Exit Schiele. Walli sits at a table like at the beginning of the play. Tatiana comes to her as a waitress.)

Walli Waitress, I arranged to meet someone here, but I don't know when, or if...

they're going to turn up.

Tatiana (As Waitress) You can stop here as long as you like. I see it every day the court's in session. Girlfriends sitting there, grey with fear, trying to stop their stomachs churning. The ones who are pregnant wondering if it's too late to get rid of it if the father goes down.

(Klimt enters kisses Walli and ruffles her hair affectionately.)

Tatiana (As Waitress) Is that him? The boyfriend.

Klimt (To Tatiana)Not any more. Rustle me up a beer, darling. (Tatiana leaves.) I was expecting all the local women to have great slab arses, like the back of Crumau jail. She's got a nice arse.

Walli Nicer than yours.

Klimt I can't believe this town. You know the fairystory when Rumpelstiltskin discovers he's been asleep for a hundred years: it's like that, here. Except this time, everyone has gone backwards in time a hundred years. I can't believe they can convict. Judgement in one hour, they say.

Walli They were saying that this morning. And yesterday. They don't know what to do with him. It's as if he's fallen from the moon.

Klimt Falling from the moon is probably a castratable offence, in these parts.

Walli Someone called Heinrich Benesch came down to collect Egon's things. He said he'd talked it through with you.

Klimt Oh, don't you know him? Benesch is a civil servant; not rich but with a miraculous eye, so he's picked up an unrivalled collection of Cezannesand Schieles.

Walli It was like he and his son owned Egon, the way they packed everything up.

Klimt He's frightfully proprietorial, true, but then he's earned his place. He's bailed Egon out a number of times.

Walli He says he's now found us an apartment in Vienna.

Klimt I expect you'll be glad to get out of this hellhole.

Walli At least I won't have to catch the early train again, to flog pictures.

Klimt Is that what you've been doing?

Walli I get better offers than the drawings, when I sell them door to door.

Klimt Oh no! You can't do that and get proper prices for the work. He needs to be shown in a regular gallery. The Bohemian rhapsody is over in Vienna. Buyers today are conservative. They want portraits of their wives and children, but with their clothes on.

Walli Any other essential tips I can pass on to Egon for up and coming painters?

Klimt There's big money in the conservative end of the market. If Egon wants to sell to the industrialists, he's going to need to clean up his act, and Egon should get a wife, the sort of wife his mother would approve of.

Walli Egon will never marry a woman his mother approves of .

Klimt What does she think of you?

Walli She can't stand me.

Klimt That's what I thought.

Walli Anyhow, I don't want to get married. I'm not the marrying kind.

Klimt Then you have it all worked out: very modern. If either of you lose your heart elsewhere, no matter.

Walli He once made me write out that I was not in love with him. I did, but then I spoilt it by adding, 'today'. He was furious.
(Schiele enters.)

Klimt Free!

(Walli stands. He embraces her.)

Schiele Minus some pictures. Savonarola set fire to them, in front of me.

Walli The bastards!

Schiele Shameless. Insane.

Klimt Dear boy! We can go now.

Schiele I'm thinking, Gustav. Nothing like this has happened to mark the path of any comparable contemporary artist. What happened here is significant.

Klimt Not remotely. Forget it, Egon. Put it all behind you, On to glory in Vienna.

Schiele Oh no. No one is going to be allowed to forget this. It's part of my history. I own it. They didn't break me. I'm walking tall. Any artist who has not suffered as I have, how ashamed they will have to feel before me now!!

(Exits with Walli)

Klimt (To audience) Schiele was free, dangerous and famous. The cream of Viennese high society now wanted to pose for him. Twenty

three year old Frederika Bier was one of the many who went to the artist's apartment, to be immortalised.

(Tatiana appears to pose in a Weiner Werkstätte full-length dress. Schiele draws her furiously)

Schiele This isn't right yet. Try lying down.

(Tatiana lies down)

Tatiana (as Frederika) This is so strange. I won't dare look at what you've done. Mind you, I've never had my picture painted before. It's exciting. Why is your girlfriend always out when I sit, I mean, lie for you?

Schiele It's not a large enough apartment. Walli's seen the sketches. She loves your dress.

Tatiana (as Frederika) Tell her thank you, and that I love the pictures of her that you've painted. You obviously are a perfect couple.

Schiele Not rich though. Not yet.

Tatiana If you have money, you only spend it on nonsense. Look at me. Everything I own, down to carpets and furniture in my new apartment is made by Weiner Werkstätte. It's crazy, isn't it? When I go out now, I feel slightly ashamed, people must think I'm being paid to advertise them. It's all just so irresistible. At least when you've finished the painting I'll own something that no one else has on their wall. But it's midday. I expect you've got someone else coming in a minute.

Schiele I usually take a break myself now. Shall I walk you to the tramstop, Fraulein Beer?

Tatiana (as Frederika) Yes please. (Puts her shoes on.) But call me Frederike, please—Egon.

Klimt (to audience) In the street outside was a ragged young man, with brown straggly hair and a walrus moustache, who had lost his father early, like Egon. The young man noticed with envy the attractive glow of confidence from the couple who had emerged together from one hundred and one Heitzinger Hauptstrasse. They swept past, the woman's rich gown passing so close by young Hitler he could smell its velvety Weiner Werkstätte newness. Hitler was fascinated in spite of himself, and started to follow them. Having outgrown his state orphan's pension, Hitler was unemployed and unemployable; sleeping in doss-houses, selling postcards occasionally, taking charity from Jews.

(Klimt takes the wooden mannikin and positions it.)

Tatiana (as Frederika) You've no idea how many of my friends saw us and commented on your appearance last week, when you accompanied me. "That fantastic head of hair! Who was your friend? He looked spectacular! Almost operatic!"

Schiele Shall I burst into song now?
(Sings) "*C'mon and hear, c'mon and hear,
Alexander's ragtime band,
C'mon and hear, c'mon and hear,
It's the best band in the land*"

(Tatiana laughs and laughs)

Tatiana (As Frederika) Don't stop, go on!

Egon I don't know the rest of the words.

Klimt (To audience) Hitler was appalled that the well-dressed Viennese Bohemian in front of him had burst into American "nigger music". He felt sick to his stomach. When he came to power there'd be no displays like that.

Tatiana (as Frederika) My friends said also—"How

can he be so successful and yet so young?" How old are you?

Schiele Twenty three.

Tatiana (as Frederika) It's so strange to think that it is one's unavoidable destiny to get old. I plan to stop aging officially in seven years time. It's nice to think that in your picture, I'll always be the same age. Are you religious?

Schiele No, not really. And you?

Tatiana (as Frederika) I'm an arts and crafts hedonist atheist. I'm certainly not a virgin. That's so quaint. Old fashioned really, too. Virginity's the sort of thing a girl ought to lose as soon as possible, don't you think?

Klimt (To audience) Adolf Hitler, despised virgin, heard the woman say,

Tatiana (as Frederika) Would you like to come next week to the opera?

Klimt The opera! Hitler hadn't had the price of an opera ticket for months.

Tatiana (as Frederika) How about The Flying Dutchman? Me and you and Walli?

Klimt The next day, Hitler saw the same dapper young man who had sung the nigger songs in the park with two innocent young Austrian girls.

(Tatiana peels off her Weiner dress and hands it to Walli, leaves. Walli holds it.)

Schiele I've finished the picture. Frederika wanted you to have this.

Walli That's nice of her, considering we've never met.

Schiele She can afford it. She says you're both the same size.

Walli Where've you been?

Schiele Around and about. I bumped into those young kids from over the way.

Walli Which ones?

Schiele The railwayman's daughters. One is our age, one three years younger.

Walli What's so special about that?

Schiele I'm quite curious about them. Get this. Edith, the oldest, wants to become a nun.

Walli I don't know any nuns.

(Tatiana puts on glove puppets on each hand of Edith and Adele. Schiele comes close to the girls and makes a suggestive gesture with guttural facetious babble.)

Klimt (to audience) Hitler was shocked to the core when the man in the park made a number of loud suggestions as to what he would like to do with both girls at once, all uttered in the lowest Viennese dialect. The girls fled.

(He pursues 'them' and Tatiana takes them offstage)

Schiele (Normal voice, straightens) Don't go! Edith, Adele...It was a joke!! Honestly! Just a joke....

(Schiele turns to Walli)

Schiele I was trying to make them laugh by talking common. I'm afraid I may have shocked them. Would you take a note to them from me?

Walli Why not just let it go?

Schiele I don't want to let it go. Apology, with invite to the movies, if they don't grass me to their mother.

Walli What's going to be suitable for them, at the movies?

Schiele There's a good one on at the Park-kino, I hear. 'Launen einer Weltdame'

Walli 'Whims of a Woman of the World'! Isn't that too *risqué* for the future nun?

Schiele Oh come on. What is it going to contain that is shocking? Get four tickets.

Walli Why four? Is their mother coming too?

Schiele You're going to be chaperone.

(Exit Walli, Schiele)

Klimt Edith and Adele eagerly accepted Egon's invitation. Previously they had kept but not replied to letters he had written over the course of the year. At the young girl's request, knowledge of the chaperoned visit to the cinema was kept from the girls' mother.

The twenty eighth of June 1914 was a lucky lucky day for a group of dedicated anarchists. The Austrian Emperor's official Daimler Benz, coming under attack, detoured from its well guarded motorcade and became trapped in Sarajevo's narrow side streets. The Archduke Ferdinand was assassinated as the chauffeur struggled to find reverse gear. The twentieth century had begun. But not everyone was as keen to get into uniform as Corporal Hitler.

(Klimt puts a military hat on the mannekin.
Schiele and Walli, spied on by the puppets through a window)

Schiele Whether or not I get crucified in field grey, this war has driven a shitty spike through any chances of a gallery show this year.

Walli But you have plenty of commissions.

Schiele They're all private: if they don't agree to loan them no one ever sees this work again.

Walli How did your medical examination go?

Schiele Completely insane. Idiotic. A modern Dante's Inferno. Queues of people spending the entire morning with thermometers up their behinds.

Walli Have you been accepted as fit?

Schiele I have to take further tests. I suspect acceptance depends on how quickly the people in front of me are annihilated. But there are people falsifying their records, saying they don't have epilepsy or they've never been in jail, just in order to join the army and get killed. Meanwhile the Italian futurists are all having political orgasms.

Walli The war will do nothing for Italy. Why do the Futurists want war so much?

Schiele Their manifesto says faster equals progress. They all started clapping their hands when the Archduke was killed. Bravo the anarchists! Here comes the future! Sleeker submarines! Bigger howitzers! Deadlier machineguns!

Walli I'm not happy, Egon, at the way things are going, in our life. I think you are in danger of becoming everything that you used to detest. Sucking up to all these rich women who then patronise you with gifts.

Schiele Alright, don't take the dress! As an artist you're either on the way up or on the way down. If I don't get the recognition, Walli, I'm finished. We might just as well go back and live in Neulenbach.

Walli I wouldn't come with you if you went. I don't want the dress. We're finished, aren't we?

Schiele I don't think so. What makes you say that?

Walli The girls from over the way came round today.

Schiele How are Edith and Adele?

Walli Excited. It's like someone's pressed a switch in both their lives and they're starting to glow. They couldn't wait to see you. What's this all about?

Schiele I don't know. What did you talk about with them? You were there; I was having a rectal probe from a Hungarian doctor with halitosis.

Walli We dissected the moral failings of the leading lady of that film we all saw together. They both said that she had gone far, far too far, and too fast. She was not ladylike. Then we discussed their english lessons their french lessons, their cookery lessons, and oh, their piano lessons. Then we ran out of conversation. I pity them. There's a man involved.

Schiele Did they say who?

Walli They've got no more idea about what's going to happen than cattle. I reckon Edith will get him.

Schiele Yes she will.

Walli I take it then, it is you.

- Schiele Yes. I have proposed to Edith and been accepted.
- Walli So when I asked you were we finished and you said no, just now what did you mean?
- Schiele You and I Walli, the old relationship we had, the commitment and the love, it's not real any more, look at the pictures. The futurists are right about one thing: the world is changing faster than we can imagine.
- Walli What exactly is so attractive about them, apart from the fact that their father worked on the railways?
- Schiele It is not all bad for us. You still have a piece of my heart. Edith has asked that I break our relation off, so our marriage can begin in mutual trust and purity. Her words, not mine. But I have insisted on your inclusion in any future relationship.
- Walli I don't want to see you again.
- Schiele Please don't say that. I will solemnly obligate myself to a summer vacation lasting not less than seven weeks which I will take exclusively with you.
- Walli A summer holiday? I don't think so. When I finally realised you were after the little girls, I signed up as an emergency nurse. When is your marriage to her going to be?
- Schiele On my parent's wedding anniversary.
- (Walli starts to laugh helplessly. Schiele uncomfortable)
- Schiele I'll bring you an agreement in writing, and you can look it over. You can also stay in the apartment for as long as you like.

- Walli Don't worry about me hanging round here. Hey! Thanks to a bunch of anarchists, I'm a valued member of society. Suddenly it doesn't matter that I never finished school. They're so desperate for nursing staff they're not too fussy about qualifications. I can start using the rest of my brain right now. Have a wonderful war, Egon. If you are sent to me for repair, I'll make sure you were fighting fit again as soon as possible, so there's a better chance of you getting a bullet in the balls, which is about the only way you are ever going to come to your senses.
- Schiele I've no intention of going in the front line, thank you. It's a stupid place to be.
- Walli Of course it is. As stupid as marriage. With the exception of your parents of course, whose marriage was so wonderful it came up with you.
- Schiele Everyone whose opinion counts knows I have supreme, enormous talent.
- Walli I know it too. Everyone also knows you are an amoral shit. Your talent is outstanding. You have the gift! Except in your case the gift seems to have you.
- Schiele My life is given meaning because I choose to paint. If I don't do that, I barely exist. But you're right, the artist stands outside society.
- Walli This one doesn't. He's diving straight back in. Within a year you'll have had her sister too.
- Schiele Why do you say that?
- Walli Because I know you. Just to keep up, the virgin nun'll offer you her cherry on a plate. And then you'll get bored.

Schiele You seem to know a helluva lot about my future.

Walli Edith is part of your future. I remember before the verdict, Gustav did say that straight portraits should be the future, and now this involves you cleaning up your domestic act.

Schiele He didn't exactly take his own advice there.

Walli He was too famous to have to bother! He did not have a small mind, small aspirations!

Schiele I swear I'm not marrying Edith to improve my standing in some theoretical community. I don't care what the lumpen bourgeoisie think of any arrangements I make. It's their problem.

Walli You're not in love with her. What's going to be left when her virginity's gone?

Schiele I don't want to lose you. We've had extraordinary times together.

Walli I know!

Schiele It's possible, as an artist, to be involved with more than one person.

Walli But I am not applying to be wife number one, two or three. I gave you everything I had in this existence, Egon. What you are doing is a betrayal not just of me, but of your own self. The unique one I loved.

Schiele I'm still working to make it come out right. Please, give us just one last chance.

Walli You can come and wave me goodbye, if you like.

Schiele You can always change your mind.

Walli I think not. Life is not a painting, Egon. We're people. Sometimes we can't stretch the way you try to draw us.

(Walli exits. Schiele resumes the position he had at the beginning, drawing the dead Klimt.)

Schiele Don't go, Walli. It's really stupid to walk away from something that was working and break a loving link. Since you and I can't have a marriage—you always said you wouldn't want it—what I propose for the new life is a workable timetable to address a very real problem. To make a space for my love for you which is still there. It's worth it in the end, a small sacrifice to receive in return something worthwhile, something that is eternal....You know I have a godlike talent, Walli, and it's only minds sullied by the mundane that misunderstand me, minds that fail to comprehend the miracle of existence... It's like you accusing me of wanting to fuck Adele; Gustav didn't feel he had to be a hypocrite. It's such a crude way of putting it, when it's a high and holy act, perhaps the only one, a sacrament of insight, of feeling, delight, creation. I don't want to be alone, and I never will be because I care about the feeling of the women round me..... My feelings for Gertie have always been intensely protective. In your case, while it can't be for more than the seven weeks a year, it will be in the summer, I swear. You'll see it my way tomorrow..... This picture is getting away from me.... (Calls) Tatiana! Gustav is going quite a lot darker than he was—and fast. Can you get a move on? I need lamps, here right away. Tatiana!Maybe because he's dead meat... hardly the bundle of combustible appetites he used to be made of.

(Enter Tatiana, as Nemesis, masked and crowned enthroned, flanked by winged griffons. Effects, gouts of fire etc.)

Schiele Tatiana? What is happening ?

Tatiana (As Nemesis) Tatiana was no more than a mirage, of me, mortal. The goddess Nemesis, who rules necessity from this her throne, and is never scorned is now before you, to irrevocably terminate your existence.

Schiele Should I kneel?

Tatiana It will make no difference. I instructed the Fates to cut Klimt's thread of life. And now I shall tell them to sever yours. Then shall I cast your two reputations into the abyss together.

Schiele Why should what we did be forgotten?

Tatiana (As Nemesis) There is no 'why'. It is I who gave you your skills and bestowed the kiss of genius on your brow. Your names shall now fall into that dust that shaped Adam's form, and be lost.

Schiele But everything I have done till now, feels merely a prologue....Nemesis, implacable goddess, hear my plea. If you must, destroy me now and everything I have done. But let one reputation between us survive! Klimt came first. I built on what he did. Gustav Klimt is my father. Save my father, Klimt!

Tatiana (As Nemesis) That was cunningly argued, mortal. By offering yourself as the sacrifice you have redeemed both names from oblivion, though your own life is still forfeit. And fear not the loneliness of the afterlife. Nemesis will send your newly wed wife and child before you, to keep you company, in the eternal shades.

(Nemesis exits. Effects.)

Klimt (To audience) Wily old Death overheard the edict of his mistress , and added Edith and a nameless foetus to his endless executioners' list. Death was exhausted after years of unremitting slaughter, so grateful to wait a few months till Edith's belly started to swell. When on the third month of pregnancy, the child within acquired a little bird-like soul, Death in his high-prowed black gondola set out and glided invisible, above the city streets, till he saw Edith playing the piano through an open window, below him. Death's gondola barely slowed as in a business-like way, he tossed his spreading nets of foetid air over the side, snaring mother and unborn child together, at one throw. Her lungs filled, on her death bed, Edith took the pencil Schiele had been using to sketch her , and only had time to scrawl, "I love you unendingly and more boundlessly..... your Edith", before she died, and the child within her. Egon had already contracted the fatal 'flu nursing her. As Edith's funeral cortege passed the house, Egon himself began to slip away, on gentle waves of morphine.

(Effects. A strange, large chimerical monster is pushed on, by Walli and Tatiana. At first I saw it composed of penises strapped together, with a mighty saddle, with a high Asiaticpommel; an elephantine camel. Latterly it has become more nominal, a high seat on wheels which Schiele can be borne off on. Anyhow, a kind of funeral Car.)

Klimt We're almost done. It was Armistice day, 1918 and church bells rang all over the world. But before those tears fall which must.....our hero shall ride in triumph.

(Klimt escorts Egon and helps him into the saddle of the cumbrous beast. Egon complies, trancelike.)

Klimt Egon Schiele! In your honour there is wrought a unique creature. Never glimpsed before long enough to be pictured in fevered line, the mighty seven-legged multi-headed chimera of What Lies Beneath has come to bear you away, to your immortality. We who have been your pallbearers must watch you mount now. Your life work has been weighed and deemed complete. Heroic struggle, won. Though you perish and are gone, the light you shone on life, and lust's licentiousness, lives on! Let the dead march sound and go, with slackened rein!

Schiele One moment; Orpheus must be playing, near because the trees are gathering, listen! Their leaves are whispering now of what I'll draw tomorrow; fragments of divine proportion, the golden mean....Oh no. (Protesting) They're telling me now the war is over, and I should go now, Mama.

Klimt *"Quickly now, away,
To some unknowable dark caravanserai!"*
(To chimera) Giddy up, me old scumbler!
Faster, Vite! Mush! Mush, Unterich! Ein!
Zwei! Drei!

(The chimera starts to lumber off slowly. It brays, loudly. Klimt cracks his whip. Blackout.)

End play