EYES FORWARD

By Philip Gerson
THE PLAY takes place in Hamburg, Germany, now and in 1938.

CHARACTERS, in order of appearance:

SAMUEL RUPRECHT, American, 30's - 40's
WILDA GERDES, German, 30's - 40's
OTTO RUPRECHT, Samuel's father, born in Germany, 80's
LISBETH RUPRECHT, Otto's mother, German, 30's
ALBERT BRANDT, German, 30's
SCENE ONE

WILDA’S APARTMENT

(An old-world apartment that hasn’t changed in decades, piled high with stacks of papers and files.)

(WILDA, in tight t-shirt and jeans, has just opened the door. SAMUEL stands outside, in a suit.)

SAMUEL

Ich bin Samuel Ruprecht.

(Wilda doesn’t respond.)

SAMUEL

From America. The painting? Das bild?

(Wilda keeps her hand on the doorknob.)

SAMUEL

Wilda Gerdes? This is apartment two, right? Appartement nummer zwei?

WILDA

You should have called.

SAMUEL

I did.

WILDA

You should have left a message.

I did.

SAMUEL

I did not receive it.

WILDA

Is your machine working? Germany, you’d think they’d be perfect -- can I come in?

(He walks in past her, not waiting for permission:)}
WILDA
You must contact the lawyer --

SAMUEL
We just arrived, my father and me, I left him at the hotel --

WILDA
I am late for work --

SAMUEL
We need to talk about the painting --

WILDA
I work through the weekend --

SAMUEL
I need to get back to my job too so let’s just solve the problem --

WILDA
There is no problem, my lawyer told your lawyer that I will give your father the painting if it belongs to him --

SAMUEL
Great terrific, when can we pick it up?

WILDA
You have not provided proof --

SAMUEL
Did you get the photo?

WILDA
It is a photograph of the painting --

SAMUEL
A portrait of my grandmother --

WILDA
-- on a wall, in a house --

SAMUEL
Her house --

WILDA
-- that no longer exists.

SAMUEL
Because it was bombed --
WILDA -- by the Americans.

Yeah exactly.

WILDA The Nazis were despicable of course, I have already conceded that your family once owned the painting, of this there is no doubt --

Yes thanks but --

WILDA There is also no doubt that your grandfather sold the painting to my grandfather, I have a bill of sale --

An enforced sale, a ridiculously low price --

This is what the lawyers discuss --

(She starts putting stuff in her purse to leave.)

But they’re not --

“Enforced sale” has a very legal specific meaning --

How can they discuss it when --

-- and you have not established --

Excuse me how can they discuss anything when your lawyers won’t respond? Letters, e-mails, faxes, we haven’t heard back since we sent you the appraisal --

These things take time --

The appraisal from 1939, right after your grandfather took the painting --
After he bought it --

The appraisal that confirms it was worth more than eight times what he paid for it.

My grandfather never sold it, this proves nothing --

But he could’ve, my family couldn’t --

Exactly, he helped them --

By paying them one-eighth of what it was worth --

He was taking a risk --

What risk, he was a member of the Nazi party --

He wasn’t a Nazi! He was a bureaucrat, a businessman --

He was a member of the party --

Everyone had to become a member --

Everyone who wanted to do business with the Nazis.

(He gets her coat:)

He paid them more than they would have received from anybody else --

The exact amount they needed to escape, isn’t that a coincidence, the exact amount for bribes, documents --

It is awful what happened -- awful is not the word, there are no words. Probably you think people of my generation, me, we do not care, this is what you think, yes?
(He doesn’t answer, meaning yes.)

WILDA
My grandfather, he made me care. He helped the Jews, your family and others, he bought things from them when nobody else would, this gave them money, money they needed, yes to escape.

SAMUEL
He cheated terrified people into fire-sale prices --

WILDA
Then why did he not sell the painting?

SAMUEL
So he kept a painting he liked, so what, you say he bought others, probably sold them for profit --

WILDA
He was not like this, he loved art, he respected artists --

SAMUEL
Just not the Jews he stole from.

WILDA
You did not know him!

SAMUEL
Look I understand you loved him, I love my father, just because you love somebody doesn’t mean everything they do is right.

WILDA
The lawyers, they must discuss this.

(She goes to the door, holds it open for him.)

SAMUEL
But they won’t! your lawyer won’t return their calls --

WILDA
I want to do the right thing but you must prove that this was an enforced sale --

SAMUEL
Everything Jews sold was an enforced sale! get everything off them for as little as possible, bleed them dry before you let them leave, that was the idea --
WILDA
Then why not just take the painting? Why buy it?

SAMUEL
They wanted to make it look legal, that’s what your bill of sale is, something to make theft look legal. How did your grandfather know the exact amount they needed?

WILDA
Your grandparents must have told him --

SAMUEL
Or someone else, someone who knew exactly what they would need, some other Nazi who --

WILDA
You have a persecution complex.

SAMUEL
We’ll never know will we now that he’s dead.

WILDA
I must leave for work.

SAMUEL
I’m sorry I shouldn’t’ve -- that was terrible. It’s just so frustrating, my father, he’s not well and --

WILDA
I am sorry --

SAMUEL
You want to do the right thing? You can: my father, he remembered the painting from the photo, if he could see it in person, maybe he’ll remember more, maybe something that could tell us what happened.

WILDA
I do not have it.

SAMUEL
Where is it?

WILDA
Where are you staying? I will try to arrange for your father to see it --

SAMUEL
“Try to arrange”? You own it!
WILDA
With my brother, together, you know this, you are in contact with him, it is probably him who gave you my address, yes? Er ist so ein wichser.

SAMUEL
... “wichser?”

WILDA
He is such a penis. He wants to be in politics so he wants to give you the painting publicly, very publicly, I will not allow this, I will not allow him to make a spectacle, to make of my grandfather a villain. It was his favorite painting, he never moved it, it was always there, right there, always, everything else he moved around but this painting was always in the same place right...

SAMUEL
So you’ve hidden it from your brother and you don’t trust me.

(She shrugs yes.)

SAMUEL
Because I am also a penis.

(He hands her a card:)

SAMUEL
That’s my cellphone. You’ll call?

(She nods.)

SAMUEL
I appreciate it. I know we can work this out, I know it isn’t easy for you. You’ll call.

(She nods. He leaves.)

(She waits a moment, listens as he goes down the stairs.)

(Then she goes to a pantry closet, opens it. Takes out a painting. Looks at it.)

SCENE TWO

A GARDEN IN THE PRESENT, and A HOUSE IN 1938.
(Samuel holds old blueprints. Otto, his father, stands beside him.)

SAMUEL
So that’s the original garage?

(Otto doesn’t speak. He apparently has some form of dementia. He’s physically fine and alert, but not engaged. Samuel is ever hopeful:)

SAMUEL
It survived the bombs, incredible huh? And here, this is where your house was, right? Otto? The house you grew up in, remember? All garden now -- must’ve been beautiful -- that brown brick against the green. Where was the front door?

(He shows Otto the blueprints. Otto doesn’t look at them, instead gazes around the garden.)

SAMUEL
Looks like it was here, that seem right? You came in here, living room here, windows here out to the garden -- god all that open space -- or were there other houses? They get bombed too? Okay, dining room here, that’s where the painting was, right? the painting of your mother? You remember which wall it was on? Otto? I know this must be hard for you, but it’s important. The painting --

(holds up the photo of the painting)

This painting of your mother, it’s over a buffet in the dining room, you remember which wall it was on?

(Otto looks around.)

SAMUEL
Your parents sold the painting to Herr Gerdes. Remember?

(Samuel’s phone rings. He checks the number, answers, moving away from Otto:)

SAMUEL
Hi ... Yeah sorry I didn’t get back to you, I was on a plane ... That’s right, we’re in Hamburg ... No, he’s still not talking ... Two weeks now, since my mother died ... Let me worry about my father and you take care of the legal stuff, okay? ...
Well I don’t see the harm of trying to convince her in person ... Look I’m not stupid, I’m not going to grab the painting and make a run for it ... (moving further away from Otto)

We don’t have an infinite amount of time, I mean he’s physically healthy, he could live a long time and if he is getting, well worse mentally it’s going to get expensive --

(otto sees lisbeth and albert appear in 1938, in the “living room” of his childhood house, in his memory. Albert is painting Lisbeth, who sits for him.)

(otto, mesmerized, moves toward them, into the “living room”, surprising them:)

lisbeth
Otto! Why aren’t you in school?

(while Otto sees Lisbeth and Albert in the past, they relate to him as if he is in their day, and 15 years old.)

(otto speaks to them in his own old voice, but with the words he used when 15.)

Albert
What happened Otto, they kick you out?

(albert laughs. Otto and Lisbeth don’t. Albert realizes why:)

Albert
God I’m awful, forgive me --

Otto
Aren’t you done with that painting yet?

Albert
Your mother is not the best sitter.

Otto
Maybe you’re not the best painter.

Lisbeth
Otto! Apologize to Albert --
ALBERT
No I’m the one who should apologize -- but really you can’t take any of this nonsense seriously. Did you read the review of Bruno Walter conducting Beethoven’s Fifth? “The Jew Walter” -- that’s how it reads -- “The Jew Walter is guilty of cultural Bolshevism for conducting the orchestra slower than Maestro Furtwangler, musical hero of the Third Reich.” Well the audience last night were standing on their seats, throwing flowers at “The Jew Walter” --

LISBETH
You were there?

ALBERT
I learned how to sneak into that theatre when I was sixteen.

LISBETH
But isn’t that dangerous?

ALBERT
Not as dangerous as being kicked out of Vier Jahreszeiten for drawing on a tablecloth.

LISBETH
You’re terrible!

ALBERT
Your mother’s right Otto, never draw on a tablecloth...

LISBETH
That’s better --

ALBERT
... before you finish the meal, that way you get to eat before they kick you out.

LISBETH
Albert!

ALBERT
They got to keep the tablecloth! Worth more than that meal -- eventually.

LISBETH
You shouldn’t do these things, you’re not a boy any more, you’re a respected artist --

ALBERT
Who can’t get this portrait right. I’ll never get you on canvas, I don’t know why I try ...
OTTO
Because my father paid you to.

LISBETH
Otto! So you know better than museum directors?

ALBERT
No he’s right -- you have no idea, Lisbeth, no idea -- to see something, to feel it, to know what you want to achieve --

LISBETH
What does he know, he’s fifteen --

ALBERT
-- and not be able to get it...

LISBETH
(whispering to Otto)
Say something, you know what this can lead to.

OTTO
Come on Albert, what do I know about art?

LISBETH
He’s just a boy.

ALBERT
(rallying)
A boy who’s going to go to Hamburg University and become a rich engineer like his father, I better stay in your good graces.

LISBETH
He won’t get in if he keeps getting into fights --

(She inspects Otto’s cheek.)

OTTO
I didn’t get into a fight --

LISBETH
I suppose you fell down again? Interesting how you only “fall down” at school.

(She kisses Otto’s bruise.)

ALBERT
Sit Lisbeth, the light is moving past that window --
LISBETH
And you, you’ve ripped your jacket again -- take it off, I’ll mend it --

(She takes Albert’s jacket off him, to his annoyance:)

ALBERT
Any minute now the pink will go out of your cheeks...

LISBETH
Shouldn’t you be working on your commission for Herr Thyssen?

ALBERT
Sit.

LISBETH
Oh no, what happened.

ALBERT
It’s off that’s all, sit.

LISBETH
Off? Why?

ALBERT
This way I have more time for your husband’s commission.

LISBETH
But why did they cancel it?

ALBERT
Doesn’t matter, eyes forward.

LISBETH
These Boards of Directors, they don’t understand art --

OTTO
Stop it! His dealer’s Jewish, you know that, and you know why I get into fights.

LISBETH
... But you’re not Jewish, Albert.

ALBERT
It seems that I’m the “minion and accomplice” of my Jewish dealer -- no no Lisbeth your eyes are getting too dark.

LISBETH
Did you already get paid for the commission?
ALBERT
This gives me more time to paint you, which I’m going to need if you won’t sit still --

LISBETH
You should be able to paint me from memory after all these years -- oh my god the cake!

(She runs out.)

ALBERT
So what’s the cake going to be today? Burnt or under-cooked?

OTTO
They taste good anyway.

ALBERT
Anything made with love turns out well. Except this disaster.

OTTO
God don’t start whining again, what a baby.

How about some chess?

OTTO
No.

ALBERT
Afraid I’ll win?

OTTO
That’ll be the day.

ALBERT
I’ve been holding back.

OTTO
No you’ve been mesmerized by the pattern of grey light through cream lace curtains on the sage cloth.

ALBERT
Who told you?

OTTO
(sarcastic)

Ha ha.

ALBERT
Here, draw that vase.
OTTO

No.

ALBERT
Your mother’s already paid for your lessons.

OTTO
So you can buy clothes.

ALBERT
True. But she does want you to learn.

OTTO
I’ve got too much homework.

ALBERT
How old are you now?

OTTO
God! Fifteen. Don’t worry, I know I’m not your son.

(Albert laughs.)

OTTO
Not meant to be funny.

ALBERT
That’s always the funniest.

(He looks at his painting with disgust, packs up his supplies.)

OTTO
Is your art “decadent”?

ALBERT
You’ve been reading the newspapers.

OTTO
What makes a painting decadent?

ALBERT
(if)
If the Nazis don’t like it.

OTTO
Never mind.
ALBERT  
(seeing Otto is serious)  
Anything that isn’t prettified realism -- and it has to be idealistic -- “visible cause for pride”, that’s what the Chamber of Culture says we’re supposed to create. Naked muscular men with swords, that sort of shit -- or that dreadful Hans Zeigler, “Master of the Pubic Hair”. And of course anything modern is forbidden.

OTTO  
What’s so bad about modern?

ALBERT  
Haven’t you heard? It’s a virus that attacks the racial substance of the German people.

OTTO  
Great, now I’m a virus.

ALBERT  
The Nazis are spent, this is just an episode.

OTTO  
So your work isn’t decadent?

ALBERT  
I wish. You ever see Kandinsky’s paintings or Kirchner’s? Amazing, thrilling, that whole group in Berlin --

OTTO  
Why don’t you go?

ALBERT  
I could never leave Hamburg.

OTTO  
Why not?

(They both know why not, and look at Lisbeth as she comes in, distressed.)

ALBERT  
Cake burnt?

LISBETH  
Burnt? Why should it be burnt, does it smell burnt?

ALBERT  
Needs a few more minutes then?
LISBETH
What’re you talking about? Where do you get these ideas?
Otto, go upstairs and say hello to your father.

(Otto moves away from them, but stands “around the corner”,
eavesdropping and watching them, unseen by them:)

ALBERT
Tomorrow I’m coming first thing, the light in here is better
in the morning this time of year.

LISBETH
It’s the eggs, I can’t get enough eggs.

ALBERT
There are eggs all over this city.

LISBETH
First they have to let you in the shop.

ALBERT
I’ll get you eggs.

LISBETH
No no, I’m terrible, there are people with no money for food
and I get upset about cake.

ALBERT
This will blow over --

LISBETH
The looks! Sometimes I can’t make myself go into shops even
if I’m allowed -- “Allowed”!

ALBERT
They’re idiots, scared little rats.

LISBETH

ALBERT
The Nazis will overstep and people will vote them out.

LISBETH
You should’ve left your dealer months ago.

ALBERT
He’s a good man.
He should’ve demanded payment for the commission before you started --

ALBERT
My students bring in enough filthy lucre.

Albert...

ALBERT
I wish I could paint you every second of every day.

Your hand would get cramped.

Your face, it changes all the time.

It gets older.

Yes, more beautiful lines.

And I think we’re done for today.

But there’s still some of that pink! Why can’t I ever get that pink!

Because it’s only in your imagination.

Pink cheeks! You were the only girl with pink cheeks in the middle of Hamburg winter. I tried to find the color in the crayons in kindergarten --

That teacher was mean.

She said you drew a very nice house.

It was a cow!
ALBERT
Well you got it eventually -- after I put my hand over yours to help you.

LISBETH
I’ll get you some dinner to take home...

ALBERT
No Lisbeth no, don’t worry about me, painting gives me all the nutrition I require.

You’re impossible.

ALBERT
How’s Manfred?

LISBETH
Better.

ALBERT
Lisbeth...

LISBETH
Don’t, don’t please, I’ll...

(Albert takes her hand. She crumples:)

LISBETH
If he doesn’t improve soon, the doctors say he -- that he may not get better.

ALBERT
Doctors, what do they know?

LISBETH
(regaining composure)
Our people make wonderful doctors, haven’t you heard?

ALBERT
Is he still able to work?

LISBETH
He’s slowing down...

ALBERT
I meant, is he still getting work?

LISBETH
Some. The non-Jewish clients have “rethought their plans”...
ALBERT
Don’t worry -- please don’t worry.

LISBETH
Not enough grey paint for more wrinkles?

ALBERT
I just wish I...

LISBETH
I know.

ALBERT
Well. I have drinks with the director of the National Gallery, then I’m going to “Lohengrin”, then I have a model coming by.

LISBETH
Is that what you’re calling them? Models?

ALBERT
That’s all she is -- really.

LISBETH
When do you sleep?

ALBERT
I will sleep when the River Elbe dries up so I don’t stare at it and wonder why I can’t get it the way I want. You don’t know what it’s like, Lisbeth -- to see it in your head and not be able to make it work.

LISBETH
The Elbe?

ALBERT
The world.

LISBETH
First thing in the morning, yes?

ALBERT
Hmmm?

LISBETH
You said the light in this room.

ALBERT
Right first thing. And I demand pink cheeks.
(Albert leaves, taking his supplies.)

(Otto watches him, then looks at his mother.)

SCENE THREE

A NIGHTCLUB

(Music, dancing. Samuel sits at a cocktail table. Wilda approaches, carrying a tray with four drinks.)

WILDA
So you are the “friend” who asked to see me?

SAMUEL
You never write, you never call.

WILDA
Would you care for a drink, sir?

SAMUEL
I owe you an apology, I came on pretty strong, jet lag, still no excuse I know that. No wonder you haven’t called --

WILDA
I do not finish work until --

SAMUEL
Five minutes from now. Due diligence.

(Shedoesn’t understand.)

SAMUEL
Means I do my research. For example, you’ve worked here longer than anybody else but turned down being manager four times -- that’s very interesting.

WILDA
Not everybody is American.

SAMUEL
Ouch. I didn’t mean to --

WILDA
Spy on me?
SAMUEL
I’m sorry that’s not what I --

WILDA
You have made it very clear, you know where I live, you know where I work, you have spoken with my colleagues, perhaps my employer, you are being very pleasant but you are telling me that you are resourceful and you will not leave Hamburg until you get what you want.

SAMUEL
Let’s walk this back -- dinner.

WILDA
Thank you, I had my dinner --

SAMUEL
I’m jet-lagged, let’s call it breakfast.

WILDA
I do not eat late at night.

SAMUEL
Then how about dinner tomorrow morning?

WILDA
I do not breakfast.

SAMUEL
Lunch? You do eat? I mean Germans...

WILDA
Yes?

SAMUEL
No I don’t mean you, Americans we’re just as fat as -- not you, you’re, I mean you look great fantastic...

(Wilda laughs.)

SAMUEL
Finally!

WILDA
No you are not funny, you are just so American -- you believe flattering will get you what you want.

SAMUEL
I was kind of hoping...
WILDA

And now the charm.

SAMUEL

Let me take you out for a drink. One drink.

WILDA

You can have a drink here.

SAMUEL

Somewhere...

WILDA

Neutral, this is what you want? I can be neutral here -- the employees with their big mouths I do not care about.

SAMUEL

And you are now officially off-duty so let’s go somewhere else.

(Wilda checks her watch -- )

SAMUEL

Don’t make me come back tomorrow night.

(Wilda sighs and sits, putting her tray of drinks on the cocktail table.)

SAMUEL

Unless you’ve got a date?

WILDA

Are you flirting with me?

... No.

(Wilda takes a drink from her tray, arranges herself alluringly.)

WILDA

You are married?

(Samuel nods.)

WILDA

With three children.
SAMUEL
No children.

WILDA
Jewish, thirty-something, no children, are you gay?

SAMUEL
(laughs)
No, not so Jewish either. By birth, blood, but my parents, even their parents, totally non-religious. Never even been to a temple, well once for somebody else’s bar mitzvah. We even celebrated Christmas, a tree and everything — get this, I had an aunt who dressed up as Santa Claus, I had a cross-dressing Jewish Santa.

(Wilda smiles, offers him a drink from the tray.)

SAMUEL
Wasn’t that for someone?

WILDA
As you said, I am off duty. You will like that one, Black Label.

(Samuel hesitates.)

I did not spit in it, I did not even know you were here.

(Samuel takes the drink.)

SAMUEL
So you got a doctorate in anthropology —

WILDA
Are you stalking me?

SAMUEL
Due diligence, I studied anthropology too — my mother didn’t approve, she said it was history without the people.

WILDA
Your mother also is with you here?

SAMUEL
She died a few weeks ago.

WILDA
I am sorry.
SAMUEL
Thanks. And then you went on to study art history --

WILDA
I know my C.V., your point is that I am wasting my life, yes?

Hit a nerve?

WILDA
I do not care what people think about me. Obviously, look at me --

You look great --

WILDA
I live like a student, I work in a naughty club --

Giving it some class --

WILDA
And now the flattery.

SAMUEL
Just straight reporting -- I studied journalism too. So what made you --

WILDA
Anthropology, journalism -- women must find you fascinating.

I'm an actuarial analyst.

WILDA
Sorry?

SAMUEL
I evaluate risk for an insurance underwriter. Fascinated yet?

WILDA
And how much did you risk coming here? Absence from your job?

I took sick days.

WILDA

You flew first class?
SAMUEL
Coach -- on miles.

WILDA
So this trip is a good risk for you, everything is "up-side". The painting, you want to sell it, yes?

SAMUEL
No.

WILDA
Really? Probably it is worth a lot of money, it was the last painting Albert Brandt made.

SAMUEL
My father has a sentimental attachment to it.

WILDA
And you? Do you have a sentimental attachment?

SAMUEL
I want to help my father.

WILDA
But the painting, do you like it?

SAMUEL
Never seen it in the flesh.

WILDA
Of course, it is different in person, things are always different when they are in front of you.

SAMUEL
(taking her in)
Yes.

(Wilda finishes her drink, takes another off her tray:)

WILDA
Cosmopolitan -- Americans.

(She drinks it anyway.)

WILDA
Your wife, she is beautiful?

SAMUEL
Of course.
WILDA
Smart?

SAMUEL
Of course.

WILDA
And I think not Jewish.

SAMUEL
You’re good.

WILDA
And you are more Jewish than you think.

(Samuel laughs.)

WILDA
How did you meet? This always fascinates people who are single.

SAMUEL
Like me.

WILDA
But you said you are --

SAMUEL
Separated.

WILDA
What happened?

SAMUEL
What always happens, right?

WILDA
So you do not believe love is possible -- I do not mean sex, sex is always possible, I mean enduring romantic love.

SAMUEL
I keep trying.

WILDA
What does that mean? You fuck another girl when you are married? You are a scoundrel?

SAMUEL
My turn now.
WILDA
And now you blush -- you are becoming more attractive...

SAMUEL
Yeah right --

WILDA
No really, German girls, we are attracted to scoundrels.

(He looks at her, not sure whether to take her seriously. She smiles, intimidating him. He stumbles on:)

SAMUEL
Here’s my guess: whenever it gets serious you dump the guy.

(Wilda doesn’t respond, inscrutable.)

SAMUEL
You live alone --

WILDA
Of course, this explains everything --

SAMUEL
You’re extremely attractive, I bet you get lots of opportunities here --

WILDA
Oh yes many, and these are my favorite kind of men, the men you pick up in bars.

SAMUEL
What about women?

WILDA
Are you actually drooling?

(Samuel laughs.)

WILDA
Why is it men fantasize this? Seriously, I am interested.

SAMUEL
It’s hot.

WILDA
But what is it that is hot? Is it the fact that there are twice the amount of breasts?
SAMUEL
My turn, remember?

WILDA
One more question only.

SAMUEL
Okay, I can nail you in one question -- you ever go to the guy’s place or does he always come to your place?

WILDA
Let me think, do you have a calculator?

SAMUEL
Funny. Your place is a mess -- not a happens-to-be mess, a real all-the-time-this-is-the-way-I-live mess. But you take care of yourself, you dress -- well, could that t-shirt be any tighter?

WILDA
Perhaps I dress this way for tips.

SAMUEL
No you’re not interested in money, you haven’t sold the painting, you turn down promotions. If you wanted a guy to be really interested in you, your place would be just as sexy, just as... inviting as you are.

WILDA
You Jews are fascinated with psychology.

SAMUEL
Yeah well we’ve got a lot of it.

WILDA
Was it Herr Doctor Freud who believed in fascination with the Other? The Forbidden? Another Black Label?

(She nods to the last drink on the tray. Samuel takes it.)

SAMUEL
Why here? Why this club so long?

WILDA
You do not like it?

SAMUEL
Oh I like it, what’s not to like.
WILDA
I do my bit for Hamburg, for our famous Reeperbahn, the naughty red-light district -- but these days it is a too Disney, they need more people like me, as you said, sluts.

SAMUEL
I didn’t say that --

WILDA
The tips are excellent --

SAMUEL
We’ve established money isn’t --

WILDA
-- and it is exactly not what my parents wanted.

SAMUEL
They brought you up to be a good girl?

WILDA
They did not bring me up at all, they were too busy being perfect post-war Germans.

SAMUEL
What’s that mean?

WILDA
One father, one mother, one boy, one girl, four idiots -- sacrifice, rebuild the country, be good industrious workers.

SAMUEL
You were supposed to be an executive like your brother?

WILDA
I could be whatever I want but I must be something. This is very German. Also the way they died, extremely German -- what does every middle-class German family want? A new, top-of-the-line Mercedes. Finally they could afford it, finally they had arrived! They were so excited, they go to factory near Stuttgart, they drive it off the line.

(then:)
Lichtgrau.

SAMUEL
Sorry?

WILDA
Light grey but this does not describe the emotions of this color.
Lichtgrau is elegant, black too naturally but black was the color of the Nazi cars, lichtgrau was new, still with a touch of the past but something emerging, something challenging, powerful. Sexy. Zero to one hundred in eight seconds, top speed two-twenty, which of course my parents had to try on the way home...

(She mimes spinning the wheel to avoid something, makes a crash sound.)

SAMUEL

That’s awful.

WILDA

Well you, you lost six millions.

(He bottoms his drink.)

WILDA

Four idiots, as I said.

(His phone rings. He turns it off.)

WILDA

I think a German man has never done that. Here you would be considered a “good catch”.

SAMUEL

I’m Jewish.

WILDA

Ancient history. You have some lichtgrau up here --

(She reaches across, strokes the hair on his temple. He doesn’t move. She doesn’t take her hand away.)

SAMUEL

Another drink?

(She gets up, leans down to pick up the tray. He looks at her breasts. As she intended.)

SAMUEL

Not here.

(They look at each other.)
(A bed appears.)

(As the set changes to the hotel room in which the bed is located, we get the idea that they screw all night...)