

# **EYES FORWARD**

By Philip Gerson

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**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.

SAMUEL

I did.

WILDA

I did not receive it.

SAMUEL

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.

SAMUEL  
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 --

SAMUEL  
Yes thanks but --

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

SAMUEL  
An enforced sale, a ridiculously low price --

WILDA  
This is what the lawyers discuss --

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

SAMUEL  
But they're not --

WILDA  
"Enforced sale" has a very legal specific meaning --

SAMUEL  
How can they discuss it when --

WILDA  
-- and you have not established --

SAMUEL  
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 --

WILDA  
These things take time --

SAMUEL  
The appraisal from 1939, right after your grandfather took the painting --

WILDA

After he bought it --

SAMUEL

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

WILDA

My grandfather never sold it, this proves nothing --

SAMUEL

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

WILDA

Exactly, he helped them --

SAMUEL

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

WILDA

He was taking a risk --

SAMUEL

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

WILDA

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

SAMUEL

He was a member of the party --

WILDA

Everyone had to become a member --

SAMUEL

Everyone who wanted to do business with the Nazis.

(She gets her coat:)

WILDA

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

SAMUEL

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

WILDA

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.

ALBERT

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  
(flip)  
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

Scared of what? Me? My husband? A dangerous engineer?

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.

LISBETH

He should've demanded payment for the commission before you started --

ALBERT

My students bring in enough filthy lucre.

LISBETH

Albert...

ALBERT

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

LISBETH

Your hand would get cramped.

ALBERT

Your face, it changes all the time.

LISBETH

It gets older.

ALBERT

Yes, more beautiful lines.

LISBETH

And I think we're done for today.

ALBERT

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

LISBETH

Because it's only in your imagination.

ALBERT

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 --

LISBETH

That teacher was mean.

ALBERT

She said you drew a very nice house.

LISBETH

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.

LISBETH

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.

(She doesn'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?

SAMUEL

... 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?

SAMUEL

Hit a nerve?

WILDA

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

SAMUEL

You look great --

WILDA

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

SAMUEL

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.

SAMUEL

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?

SAMUEL

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.

Smart? WILDA

Of course. SAMUEL

And I think not Jewish. WILDA

You're good. SAMUEL

And you are more Jewish than you think. WILDA

(Samuel laughs.)

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

Like me. SAMUEL

But you said you are -- WILDA

Separated. SAMUEL

What happened? WILDA

What always happens, right? SAMUEL

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

I keep trying. SAMUEL

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

My turn now. SAMUEL

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...)