THE WEAVERS

GERHART HAUPTMANN

ER EDRICLER EDITIONS IN DRAMA
W. CORT W. CORRIGAN, EDITOR

The Weavers

CHANDLER EDITIONS IN DRAMA

ROBERT W. CORRIGAN, *Editor*

GERHART HAUPTMANN

THE WEAVERS

TRANSLATED

by

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WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

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CHANDLER PUBLISHING COMPANY

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Contents

Introduction

The loom is cracking,
  The shuttle flies,
Nor night, or day
  Do we close our eyes.
Old Germany,
  Your shroud's on our loom,
And in it we weave
  The threefold doom.
We weave, we weave.

—HEINRICH HEINE: *"The Silesian Weavers"*

One of Gerhart Hauptmann's first followers, the eminent critic and director Otto Brahm, recognized very early in the young playwright's career a talent for ". . . clear dramatic observation, a new art which does not depend on great models but surely and self-assuredly goes its own way . . ."

His youth, described by Hauptmann himself as an "adventure," revealed premonitory traits. A queer fellow full of vital power, he was not easy to live with. He was a poor student who liked to draw, loved music, and wrote poems and fairy tales in the style of Hans Christian Andersen. After working on a farm for a time, he studied art at academies in Germany and Italy to develop his considerable talent as a sculptor. This activity, however, was soon subordinated to his true calling: literature and the theatre. He even tried acting in order "to play Hamlet some day." His drama teacher was the prototype of the inimitable Harro Hassenreuter in *The Rats* (1911), just as the artists he met at the academies later appeared in *Colleague Crampton* (1892) and *Michael Kramer* (1900), one of his finest and most moving plays.

The "clear dramatic observation" he had noted in young Hauptmann prompted Otto Brahm to accept his first play, *Before Sunrise*, for production at the Freie Bühne in 1889.

The Freie Bühne was founded two years after the opening of André Antoine's Théâtre Libre in Paris in 1887, emulated in London by J. T. Grein with his Independent Theatre (1891), and eventually in Russia, at least ideologically, by Constantin Stanislavsky and Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko when they established the Moscow Art Theatre in 1898.

The unique position these "free" theatres occupy in the history of our modern theatre is due to the fact that they were, above all, playwrights' theatres. They would be forgotten today, had they not given first hearings to Ibsen and Tolstoi, Strindberg and Chekhov, Gorki and Shaw, Zola and Gerhart Hauptmann.

At the age of 27, Hauptmann, whom Frank Wedekind described as one who "worked like a steam engine," was ready to embark on a career that would make him the anointed king of German letters for an epoch which "ended with burning of the Reichstag in 1933."

When Arno Holz, his friend and staunch supporter, wrote about *Before Sunrise*, "we consider it the best play ever written in the German language," Holz expressed the sentiments of the "youngest Germany," a group of artists and poets who had settled in and around Berlin and Munich.

In 1888 the Munich leader of the "youngest Germans," M. G. Conrad, had already printed the parable of *Signalman Thiel* in his periodical *Die Gesellschaft*. And "enthusiastic letters" to the editor had alleged that "no better short story had been read in Germany since Zola."

The holy wrath of Zola and Tolstoi animated the sordid scenes of peasant life in *Before Sunrise*, while the theory of heredity, used only symbolically by Ibsen in *Ghosts*, emerged as its central theme. The matinée première, marking the arrival of Germany's naturalistic drama, gave rise to a scandal which almost wrecked the theatre. At a crucial scene, a renowned local physician protested by throwing his forceps on the stage. Even a year later, a deputy in the Prussian Diet would still speak of the contemporary theatre as "an intellectual brothel," and the Berlin Chief of Police wanted "the entire movement eradicated." However, for his fellow playwrights, as Max Halbe later remembered, *Before Sunrise* was "a strong, compelling experience."

The two plays which followed his controversial first production, the "family catastrophe," titled ironically *The Feast of Peace* (1890), and *Lonely Lives* (1891), the drama of an incompatible marriage, showed in form and in content the influence of Henrik Ibsen. When Ibsen became acquainted with these early plays, he called them "courageous and valiant."

In the spring of 1890 Hauptmann revisited Italy, where earlier impressions and experiences had aroused his social conscience. He, who later would make the Mediterranean countries practically his second home, was in his youth more deeply distressed by the misery and poverty he saw than he was delighted with the regional beauty. His compassion for human suffering, the foundation of his creative talents, caused him many a day of pain and sorrow in Naples, Rome, and Venice.

Upon his return, he was well prepared to treat of a subject matter which had occupied his mind since childhood: the shameful, miserable life of the Silesian linen weavers—the plight which had inspired Heinrich Heine to write his stirring poem.

"Your tales of grandfather, who in his youth sat at the loom,

a poor weaver, like those whom I describe, became the germ of my play." With these words Hauptmann dedicated the first printed version of *The Weavers,* written in his native Silesian dialect, to his father, an innkeeper in Ober-Salzbrunn where Gerhart had been born on the fifteenth of November, 1862.

His grandfather's tales were confirmed when Hauptmann read of the weavers' wretched life in the vicinity of Salzbrunn and of their unsuccessful rebellion in 1844. The book was Alfred Zimmerman's history of the Silesian weaving industry through three centuries, entitled *Blüte und Verfall des Leinengewerbes in Schlesien.* The documentary reports of this economist can be credited with having provided the main literary source of the play, and the book induced Hauptmann to take several trips in March and April of 1891 to the mountain area where the revolt had occurred.

From his letters and diaries we know that in Peterswaldau he "talked with eyewitnesses of 1844," and that he visited Langenbielau to "study the locality." There, in "an old blind woman, still turning the spindle, and a half-naked girl, hardly ten years old, at the spinning wheel," he found models for his characters, while the shabby rooms, "with windows pasted over with paper and nailed up with small wooden boards" must have suggested the setting for Old Hilse's abode in the last act.

Through five masterfully built acts Hauptmann shows the germinating, the growing, the swelling, the culminating, and the gradual waning of the mutinous compulsion which, for a short time, aroused the famished, diseased, deadly exhausted creatures to trembling fury. When, in the second act, one character, the "reservist" Moritz Jaeger, "who would like to teach those many factory owners a thing or two," intones the historical weaver song, *Bloody Justice,* the group is carried away and ready for action: ". . . it's got to change now! We won't stand it no more! We won't stand it no more, no matter what happens."

In James Huneker's felicitous phrase: *"The Weavers* is a symphony in five movements, with one grim bleeding motive—hunger." But the physical plight of the starving villagers is not the only theme in this great social drama—which is comparable to Schiller's *Love and Intrigue,* Hebbel's *Maria Magdalena,* and Buechner's *Woyzeck*—there is also a very strong spiritual force permeating the action from beginning to end. Fundamentally, these rebels are good, diligent, God-fearing people. Of the prolific Hauptmann's nearly fifty plays—in addition he wrote novels and short stories, poems and essays—this, his finest (perhaps best) proves the validity of H. F. Garten's succinct observation that "within the whole range of his work, there is hardly a villain, only men misguided by weakness, thwarthed by blind instinct, or corrupted by social environment."

In *The Weavers* we possess the acknowledged masterpiece of naturalistic drama.

When, in March 1892, the play—rewritten in High German—appeared, it met with strong opposition from the German government. Hauptmann stated emphatically that he had written a drama "without a thesis" (*ein Drama ohne Tendenz*), and indeed it was a remote, historical incident he had exposed. But, as John Gassner points out, "this blind revolt of the 'masses' was anything but remote when regarded as an early, inchoate example of 'class war' and a symbol of the continuing struggle of a conscious working class against capitalism under the leadership of the growing Social Democratic party in Germany." Without preaching revolution, the dramatist had given strong, artistic utterance to the spirit of an era. For our own age, Leroy R. Shaw has come close to an acceptable interpretation when he says: "The uprising in *Die Weber* is to be regarded as a warning to the contemporary world of what is bound to happen if the present social struggle for existence were to break out in its most extreme form."

In 1892, the censor was adamant. And although the Freie Bühne, reactivated for the purpose, gave a private performance on February 26, 1893, the ban was not lifted until later in the year. When *The Weavers* could finally be shown to the public on September 25, 1894 (Antoine had already produced the play in French translation four months earlier), the success was great and, as we know now, lasting. Even so, the German Emperor was so incensed that he canceled the royal box at the Deutsche Theater, then under the management of Otto Brahm. This gesture was the signal for a veritable hate campaign against the author. Hauptmann recalled later: "I was treated like a criminal, a scamp. In the Prussian Diet I was insulted. An aristocrat went as far as to say, the ruffian—meaning me—belongs behind prison bars."

Having dealt with the personal tragedy of working-class people in *Before Sunrise* and with their mass miseries in *The Weavers*, Hauptmann attempted historical drama on a large scale. His "thieves' comedy," *The Beaver Coat* (1893), admired by Otto Erich Hartleben "above all for its ethics," (together with Lessing's *Minna von Barnhelm* and Kleist's *The Broken Pitcher*) has gained a place in literature as one of the three best German comedies.

In the historical pageant *Florian Geyer* (1896), Hauptmann depicted the hero of the suppressed German peasants who, in the sixteenth century, rebelled against the tyranny of the nobility. Initially a failure, the play triumphed when the actor Rudolf Rittner—immortalized as the "black knight" in Lovis Corinth's famous painting—took the part.

The year of *The Beaver Coat* had brought still another signifi-

cant Hauptmann play to the Berlin stage—*The Assumption of Hannele.* It marked the transition in the author's creative work from realism to a new form of symbolism that served him best in *The Sunken Bell* (1896), a fantasy in blank verse and, for a long time, a popular success.

Rittner was also in *Drayman Henschel* (1898), a drama which, like the later *Rose Bernd* (1903), unfolded the dreary story of an unhappy life with the impact of a Greek tragedy.

The impressive chronicle of Hauptmann's drama from 1889 through 1946 shows a steady alternation of realism and poetry.

In 1912, at the age of fifty, when half, and no doubt the stronger half, of his work had been completed, he received the Nobel Prize. The citation read: "In the conscientious, never pedantic research of your work, in the consistency of your feelings, your ideas, your actions, in the tight structure of your drama you have attained the highest artistry. . . ."

Five more times the anniversary of Hauptmann's birth became the occasion for national, and even international, recognition and celebration. Although the six plays of the next decade, from the controversial *Festival in German Rhymes* (1913) to *Indipohdi* (1922) were weaker and often only repetitious of his earlier work, there is at least one among them, *The White Savior* (1920), dealing with the Spanish conquest of Mexico, which showed a new, dramatic vigor.

In the Weimar Republic, the playwright's sixtieth birthday became a national holiday. "By honoring Gerhart Hauptmann the German people honor themselves," proclaimed President Friedrich Ebert. In Breslau, thirteen plays were presented in repertoire during a ten-day festival, launching the all-year festivities which involved every one of the 275 state, city, and private theatres in operation during the season of 1922. Decorations and honorary degrees arrived from many countries and, for the third time, there appeared an edition of his collected works—this time in twelve volumes.

Ten years later the septuagenarian commenced his jubilee in the United States of America, where Columbia University conferred an honorary degree of Doctor of Letters upon him, and President Hoover received him at the White House.

The plays produced between 1924 and 1932 include *Dorothea Angermann* (1926) and *Before Sunset* (1932), the symbolic drama of old age that was to close the cycle which had been begun with *Before Sunrise* forty-three years earlier.

When, in 1932, Hauptmann said in one of the numerous speeches: ". . . to disdain human beings is barbarism," he did not know that only one year later such barbarism would threaten all that he and the best of his countrymen had stood for. His

work bore witness. On the strength of it, the world expected him to protest against what was happening with rapidly increasing force in 1933. However, now he did not speak up against tyranny as he had done so articulately in his early writings.

Hauptmann did continue to work, and altogether nine plays including *The Golden Harp* (1933), *Hamlet in Wittenberg* (1935), and *Iphigenie in Delphi* (1941) were completed in his remaining years. He continued to live on German soil in his beloved Silesian mountains, where he died on June 6, 1946, and by the sea, where he was buried on Sunday, July 28.

In 1942 he had received, as a precious birthday gift, the first seventeen volumes of the last edition of his collected writings for which he himself had read proof. The final volumes, containing his posthumous papers, are now in progress.

The ninetieth anniversary of Hauptmann's birth was commemorated in Germany with revivals of his plays and new editions of his drama, prose, and poetry. The Hauptmann Centennial in 1962 called, once more, world-wide attention to the great pioneer of a new drama. And if one of the many prominent speakers on this occasion could claim "there is no question that among the great Germans, Bach and Beethoven, Goethe and Schiller, Grillparzer and Kleist, Gerhart Hauptmann has found his place," he must have thought of his early work, and particularly of *The Weavers.*

WILLIAM W. MELNITZ

Los Angeles, California

Translator's Note

The following translation of Hauptmann's *The Weavers* has been carried out with the sole thought in mind that any play which is published is worthy of being presented on a stage. If it is a play "for the study," then it ought to indicate as much. *The Weavers* is a play for the stage. The primary aim, then, has been to prepare a version which is true not only in all major (and many minor) respects to the original, but also one which is speakable and in the present-day idiom. No attempt has been made to find dialects corresponding to Hauptmann's, which he uses brilliantly. In an American version dialects would be either presumptuous, ludicrous, or both. It is hoped, then, that this is a play in American English and not a crib for reading the play in the original, with or without the necessary preparation.

CARL RICHARD MUELLER

Los Angeles, California
November, 1964

The Weavers

Translator's Dedication

For DON, PAT, KATHY, LYNN and MICHAEL

C. R. M.

CHARACTERS

DREISSIGER, fustian manufacturer
FRAU DREISSIGER, his wife
PFEIFER, manager
NEUMANN, cashier
TILGNER, an apprentice } in Dreissiger's service
JOHANN, coachman
A SERVANT GIRL
WEINHOLD, tutor to Dreissiger's sons
PASTOR KITTELHAUS
FRAU PASTOR KITTELHAUS, his wife
HEIDE, police superintendent
KUTSCHE, a policeman
WELZEL, an innkeeper
FRAU WELZEL his wife
ANNA WELZEL, their daughter
WIEGAND, a joiner
A TRAVELING SALESMAN
A PEASANT
A FORESTER
SCHMIDT, a surgeon
HORNIG, a ragpicker
WITTIG, a blacksmith

Weavers

BAECKER
MORITZ JAEGER
OLD BAUMERT
MOTHER BAUMERT, his wife
BERTHA BAUMERT, their daughter
EMMA BAUMERT, another daughter
FRITZ, Emma's son, four years old
AUGUST BAUMERT, Baumert's son
OLD ANSORGE
FRAU HEINRICH
OLD HILSE
FRAU HILSE, his wife
GOTTLIEB HILSE, their son
LUISE HILSE, his wife
MIELCHEN, their daughter, six years old
REIMANN
FRANZ HEIBER
A BOY, eight years old
DYE WORKERS
A large crowd of young and old WEAVERS and WEAVER WOMEN

The events described in this play take place in the 1840s in Kaschbach in the Eulengebirge, as well as Peterswaldau and Langenbielau at the foot of the Eulengebirge.

ACT ONE

[*A large whitewashed room in* DREISSIGER'S *house in Peterswaldau. It is the room where the* WEAVERS *must deliver their finished products. To the left there are windows without curtains; in the back wall a glass door; and to the right a similar glass door through which we see a continuous flow, in and out, of* WEAVERS: *men, women, and children. The right wall, like the others, is for the most part hidden by wooden shelves for storing cotton. Along this wall stands a bench on which the incoming* WEAVERS *spread their goods. They step forward in order of their arrival and present their goods for inspection.* PFEIFER, *the manager, stands behind a large table on which the goods to be inspected are placed. He inspects the goods with the use of dividers and a magnifying glass. The inspection finished, the* WEAVERS *place the goods on the scale where an* APPRENTICE *tests them for weight. The same* APPRENTICE *then places the accepted goods on a shelf. Each time,* PFEIFER *calls out loudly to* NEUMANN, *the cashier, sitting at a small table, the amount to be paid.*

[*It is a sultry day towards the end of May. The clock is at the stroke of twelve. Most of the* WEAVERS *resemble persons standing in front of a bar of justice where with tortuous expectation they must wait for a life-and-death decision. There is something of the oppressed about them, something characteristic of the receiver of charity, who, having passed from one humiliation to another, is conscious of the fact that he is merely tolerated and is accustomed to making himself as inconspicuous as possible. Add to this an inflexible feature in their bearing of irresolute, harassed brooding. The men all resemble one another, half dwarflike, half schoolmasterlike. They are, for the most part, flat-chested, coughing, miserable creatures with pallid faces: creatures of the loom, whose knees are bent as a result of excessive sitting. Their women, at first glance, are less of a type; they are broken individuals, harassed, worn out—whereas the men still have about them a look of pathetic gravity. The clothes of the women are ragged, while those of the men are patched. The young girls among them are not without a certain charm: a waxlike paleness, delicate figures, and large, protruding, melancholy eyes.*]

NEUMANN [*counting out money*] That leaves sixteen silver groschen and two pfennig.

FIRST WEAVER WOMAN [*About thirty, very emaciated. She puts away the money with trembling fingers.*] Thank you.

1 NEUMANN [*when the* WOMAN *fails to move on*] Well? Something wrong again?

FIRST WEAVER WOMAN [*excitedly, begging*] I was wondering, could I have a few pfennig in advance; I need it awful bad.

2 NEUMANN And I need a couple of hundred thalers. Nice if all we had to do is need it—! [*already busy counting out money to another* WEAVER, *curtly*] Herr Dreissiger's the one who takes care of advance payments.

FIRST WEAVER WOMAN Then maybe I could talk with Herr Dreissiger for a minute?

3 PFEIFER [*Formerly a weaver himself, his type is unmistakable, except that he is well-fed, well-groomed, clean-shaven, and a heavy user of snuff. He calls across brusquely.*] God knows, Herr Dreissiger'd have enough to do if he had to worry about every petty request. That's what *we're* here for. [*He measures*
4 *some goods and then inspects them with the magnifying glass.*] Damn! There's a draft! [*He wraps a heavy scarf around his neck.*] Close the door when you come in.

APPRENTICE [*loudly to* PFEIFER] Might as well talk to a stone-wall.

5 PFEIFER All right, that's done! Weigh it! [*The* WEAVER *places his web on the scale.*] Why don't you learn to do your work better? It's full of lumps again. I don't even have to look at it. A good weaver don't put off the winding for God knows how long.

6 [BAECKER *enters. He is a young and exceptionally strong weaver whose unconstrained deportment is almost impudent.* PFEIFER, NEUMANN, *and the* APPRENTICE *exchange knowing glances at his entrance.*]

7 BAECKER Damn! Sweating like a dog again!

FIRST WEAVER [*in a low voice*] This heat means rain.

[OLD BAUMERT *pushes through the glass door at the right. On the other side of the door one can see the* WEAVERS *waiting, crowded together, shoulder to shoulder.* OLD BAUMERT *has hobbled his*
8 *way forward and laid down his pack on the bench near* BAECKER'S. *He sits down beside it and wipes the perspiration from his face.*]

OLD BAUMERT I can use a rest after that.

9 BAECKER Rest's better than money any time.

OLD BAUMERT I could use a little money too. Good day to you, Baecker! 1

BAECKER Good day to *you,* Father Baumert! Looks like another long wait here, uh?

FIRST WEAVER What's the difference? A weaver can wait an hour or a day. He don't count. 2

PFEIFER Quiet back there! How can I hear myself think?

BAECKER [*softly*] One of his bad days again.

PFEIFER [*to the* WEAVER *in front of him*] How many times do we have to tell you to clean up our webs better! What do you call a mess like this? Clots of dirt in here long as my finger, and straw and all kinds of muck. 3

WEAVER REIMANN But there's always a pound waste figured in.

PFEIFER I haven't got time. That's done with. —What have *you* got? 4

WEAVER HEIBER [*Puts down his web. While* PFEIFER *examines it, he steps up to him and talks to him in a low and eager voice.*] Beg pardon, Herr Pfeifer, sir, I wanted to ask you a favor, sir, if maybe you'd be so kind and wanted to do me a good turn, sir, and not have my advance pay come off this time. 5

PFEIFER [*measuring and inspecting, scornfully*] Well, now! Very well done. Looks like half the woof was left on the spool again.

WEAVER HEIBER [*continues in his own way*] I'll be sure to make it up this week, sir. Last week I had to work two days on the estate. And then my wife's home sick too . . . 6

PFEIFER [*placing the web on the scales*] Here's another fine piece of sloppy work. [*already beginning to inspect a new web*] You call this a selvage? Broad here, narrow there! In one place the woof's all drawn together, God knows how much, and then here the reed's been pulled apart. And you've hardly got seventy threads to the inch. Where's the rest of it? You call this honest work? Whoever heard of such a thing? 7

[WEAVER HEIBER, *suppressing his tears, stands there humiliated and helpless.*] 8

BAECKER [*in a low voice, to* OLD BAUMERT] Looks like these bastards would like to make us pay for our own yarn too.

FIRST WEAVER WOMAN [*She has stepped back only a few paces from the* CASHIER'S *table and has looked staringly about her from* 9

time to time, seeking help, without moving from the place. She now takes heart and turns again beseechingly towards the CASHIER.] I can hardly . . . I just don't know if you don't give me any advance . . . O Jesus, Lord Jesus . . .

PFEIFER [*calls across*] What's all this calling the Lord Jesus! Leave Him in peace for a while! You never bothered much about your Lord Jesus up to now. Give a little more mind to your husband, you'd be better off, so we don't see him sitting at a tavern window all day long. We can't give any advances. We have to account here for every pfennig. Besides that, it's not our money. They'd be after *us* for it later. People who work hard and understand their business and do their work in the fear of the Lord don't need advances. So that's the end of that.

NEUMANN And if a weaver from Bielau got paid four times as much, he'd waste just four times as much and still be in debt.

FIRST WEAVER WOMAN [*loudly as if appealing to everyone's sense of justice*] There's nobody can say I'm lazy, but I can't go on like this anymore. Two times I had a miscarriage. And for my husband, he can do only half his part too. He even went to the shepherd at Zerlau but he couldn't help him with his trouble either . . . there's nobody can do more than he's able. We do our work here, all right, we do all we can. I've not had much sleep these past weeks, but everything'll be all right soon if only I can get some strength back into my bones. But you must have a little bit of consideration then. [*beseeching him fawningly*] You'll be good enough, won't you, sir, and allow me a few groschen this time.

PFEIFER [*without interrupting himself*] Fiedler: eleven silver groschen.

FIRST WEAVER WOMAN Just a few groschen to buy our bread. The farmer, he won't give no more on credit. And then there's all our children . . .

NEUMANN [*in a low voice, with comic earnestness, to the* APPRENTICE] Every year the linen-weaver has another kid, lálalala, lálalala, lá, lá, lá!

APPRENTICE [*takes it up*] And the little brat is as blind as a lid, lálalala, lálalala, lá lá lá!

WEAVER REIMANN [*not touching the money which the* CASHIER *has counted out for him*] We always used to get thirteen and a half groschen for a web.

PFEIFER [*calling over*] If it don't suit you, Reimann, all you got to do is say so. There's enough weavers around. Especially your kind. You get full pay when your web's full weight.

WEAVER REIMANN How could anything be wrong with the weight . . . ? 1

PFEIFER Bring us a flawless piece of cotton sometime and your pay'll be all right too.

WEAVER REIMANN I don't understand how there are any mistakes in it. 2

PFEIFER [*as he inspects*] Weave well, live well.

WEAVER HEIBER [*He has stayed near* PFEIFER, *looking for another favorable opportunity. He smiles together with the others over* PFEIFER'S *witticism, and now he starts towards him again and addresses him as before.*] What I wanted to ask you, Herr Pfeifer, sir, is if perhaps you'd be so kind as not to take the five groschen advance off this week's pay. My wife she's been abed since Shrove Tuesday. There's nothing she can do to help me. So I have to pay the girl to tend the spools. So you see . . . 3

PFEIFER [*taking snuff*] Heiber, you're not the only one I've got to take care of here. The others want their turn too. 4

WEAVER REIMANN This is how I got the warp—so this is how I wound it up and took it off again. I can't bring back better yarn than I got.

PFEIFER If you don't like it then don't bother picking up anymore. We got enough around here who'd run their soles off for it. 5

NEUMANN [*to* REIMANN] Do you want the money or not?

WEAVER REIMANN How could I feel right if I took that money?

NEUMANN [*no longer troubling himself with* REIMANN] Heiber: ten silver groschen. Take off five for advance, that leaves five silver groschen. 6

WEAVER HEIBER [*steps forward, looks at the money, shakes his head as though there were something he can't believe, then puts the money slowly and carefully into his pocket*] My God, my God—[*sighs*] Well— 7

OLD BAUMERT [*looking* HEIBER *in the face*] Yes, yes, Franz! There's cause enough for sighing.

WEAVER HEIBER [*speaking with difficulty*] Then you see, I got a sick girl at home too. She needs a bottle of medicine. 8

OLD BAUMERT What's she got?

WEAVER HEIBER Well, you see, she's been a sick one from when she was born. I don't know . . . well, I can tell you this much: she's brought it with her into the world. All kinds of troubles break out over and over on her. It's in the blood. 9

1 OLD BAUMERT There's trouble all over. Wherever there's poor people there's bad luck after bad luck. There's no end to it and no salvation.

WEAVER HEIBER What's that there in the bundle?

OLD BAUMERT We had nothing at all to eat at home. And so I
2 had our little dog killed. There's not much on him, he was half starved away. He was a nice little dog. I didn't want to kill him myself. I couldn't find the heart for that.

PFEIFER [*has inspected* BAECKER's *web, calls*] Baecker: thirteen and a half silver groschen.

3 BAECKER That's a shabby piece of charity, not pay.

PFEIFER Whoever's been taken care of has to leave. We can't even move around for all the crowd.

BAECKER [*to the people standing about, not lowering his voice*] This is a shabby tip, that's all it is. And for this we're supposed
4 to work our treadle from early morning to late at night. And when you've worked eighteen days over the loom, night after night, worn out, half dizzy with the dust and the burning heat, then you're lucky if you made thirteen and a half silver groschen.

PFEIFER We don't allow back talk here.

5 BAECKER You don't tell *me* what not to say!

PFEIFER [*jumps up shouting*] We'll see about that! [*goes to the glass door and calls into the office*] Herr Dreissiger, Herr Dreissiger, if you'd be so kind, sir!

6 [DREISSIGER *enters. He is in his early forties, fat, asthmatic, with a severe look.*]

DREISSIGER What is it, Pfeifer?

PFEIFER [*angrily*] Baecker here says he won't keep his mouth shut.
7

DREISSIGER [*draws himself up, throws back his head, stares at* BAECKER *with quivering nostrils*] Yes, of course—Baecker! [*to* PFEIFER] Is this the one?

BAECKER [*impudently*] Right enough, Herr Dreissiger! [*pointing to himself*] This is *this* one—[*pointing to* DREISSIGER] and that's
8 *that* one.

DREISSIGER [*with indignation*] Who does he think he's talking to?

PFEIFER He's too well off, that's what! He'll skate on thin ice just once too often.
9

BAECKER [*roughly*] You shut your mouth, you stinking toad. Your mother must have rode a broomstick with Satan himself to get a devil like you! 1

DREISSIGER [*bellowing in sudden anger*] Hold your tongue! Hold your tongue this minute or I'll . . . [*He trembles, comes forward a few steps.*] 2

BAECKER [*awaiting him with determination*] I'm not deaf. My hearing's all right.

DREISSIGER [*controls himself and asks with apparent business-like calm*] Isn't this one of those who . . .

PFEIFER He's a weaver from Bielau. You find them wherever there's trouble. 3

DREISSIGER [*trembling*] Just let me warn you of one thing: if ever it happens again like it did yesterday evening that a horde of half-drunken wet-nosed young louts passes my house again —and singing that vile song . . . 4

BAECKER I guess it's "The Song of Bloody Justice" you mean, uh?

DREISSIGER You know which one I mean. You just let me warn you: if I ever hear it again, I'll get hold of one of you and— I promise you this on my word of honor, I'm not joking—he will be turned over to the state's attorney. And if I ever find out who's responsible for that vile thing you call a song . . . 5

BAECKER It's a beautiful song!

DREISSIGER One more word out of you and I'll send for the police—and at once. I don't fool around. We know how to take care of young louts like you. I've taken care of people a lot different from your kind. 6

BAECKER I take your word for it. Sure, a factory owner like you can take care of two or three hundred weavers before a man can turn around, and not even a bone left over. A man like that's got four bellies like a cow and the jaws of a wolf. For him it's nothing, nothing! 7

DREISSIGER [*to* PFEIFER *and* NEUMANN] This one gets no more work from us.

BAECKER What do I care whether I go hungry over a loom or at the side of a road! 8

DREISSIGER Get out of here! Get out!

BAECKER [*firmly*] First I'll take my pay.

DREISSIGER What's he got coming, Neumann? 9

1 NEUMANN Twelve silver groschen, five pfennig.

DREISSIGER [*takes the money overhastily from* NEUMANN *and tosses it onto the counter so that some of the coins roll onto the floor*] There you are! Now—get out of my sight!

BAECKER First I'll get my pay.

2 DREISSIGER There's your pay; and unless you get out of here, and quick . . . It's exactly twelve . . . My dyers are just now taking off for lunch . . .

BAECKER I get my pay in my hand. My pay belongs here. [*He touches the palm of his left hand with the fingers of his right*
3 *hand.*]

DREISSIGER [*to the* APPRENTICE] Pick it up, Tilgner.

[*The* APPRENTICE *does so and places the money in* BAECKER'S *hand.*]

4

BAECKER Everything done proper. [*Without hurrying he places the money in an old purse.*]

DREISSIGER Well? [*impatiently, since* BAECKER *does not leave*] Shall I *help* you out?

5 [*Agitation has risen among the crowd of* WEAVERS. *A long, deep sigh is heard. Then someone falls. All interest is turned towards the new event.*]

DREISSIGER What's the matter here?

6 VARIOUS WEAVERS AND WEAVER WOMEN Someone fainted.—It's a sick little boy.—Is it the falling sickness, or what?

DREISSIGER What . . . what's that? Fainted, you say? [*He goes nearer.*]

AN OLD WEAVER He just lays there.

7

[*Room is made. An eight-year-old* BOY *is seen lying on the ground as if dead.*]

DREISSIGER Does anybody know the boy?

8 THE OLD WEAVER Not from our village.

OLD BAUMERT He looks like one of the Heinrichs. [*looks at him more closely*] Yes, yes! It's Heinrich's boy Gustave.

DREISSIGER Where do these people live?

9 OLD BAUMERT Up around us, in Kaschbach, Herr Dreissiger.

He goes around playing music, and in the daytime he works at his loom. They have nine children, the tenth on the way. 1

VARIOUS WEAVERS AND WEAVER WOMEN They've got a lot of trouble, those people.—It rains through their roof.—The wife can't get two shirts for all the nine children.

OLD BAUMERT [*grabbing hold of the* BOY] Hey there, boy, what's the matter with you? Wake up now! 2

DREISSIGER Get hold of him there, we'll pick him up. Whoever heard of such foolishness, letting a child weak as him make such a long trip! Pfeifer, bring some water!

WEAVER WOMAN [*helps* BOY *sit up*] You're not going to go and die on us now, boy, are you? 3

DREISSIGER Or some cognac, Pfeifer, cognac's better.

BAECKER [*Forgotten by everyone, he has stood there watching. Now, with one hand on the doorknob, he calls across loud and mockingly.*] Give him something to eat, too, and he'll come round all right. [*Goes off.*] 4

DREISSIGER That one'll come to no good end.—Grab him under the arms, Neumann. Slowly, slowly . . . there . . . there . . . we'll take him into my office. What is it?

NEUMANN He said something, Herr Dreissiger! He moved his lips. 5

DREISSIGER What do you want, boy?

The BOY [*whispering*] I'm hungry!

DREISSIGER [*turning pale*] I can't understand him. 6

WEAVER WOMAN I think he wants . . .

DREISSIGER We'll see what it is. Just don't hold us up.—He can lie down on my sofa. We'll hear what the doctor has to say.

[DREISSIGER, NEUMANN *and the* WEAVER WOMAN *take the* BOY *into the office. Excited agitation arises among the* WEAVERS *as though they were school children whose teacher had just left the room. They stretch their limbs, they whisper, they shift from one foot to another, and within a few seconds their conversation is loud and general.*] 7

8

OLD BAUMERT I do believe Baecker was right.

SEVERAL WEAVERS AND WEAVER WOMEN The boy said something that sounded like that.—It's nothing new around here, people fainting with hunger.—And what'll happen with us this winter if this cutting our wages keeps up?—And with the po- 9

tatoes like they are, it'll be a bad year.—They won't do anything here till they find us all laying flat on our backs.

OLD BAUMERT The best thing to do is what the weaver in Nentwich did, put a rope around your neck and hang yourself to your loom. Here, take yourself a pinch of snuff. He give me a few grains to take along. What have you got in your handkerchief there that's nice?

AN OLD WEAVER A little bit of pearl barley, that's all. The wagon from the miller in Ullbrich drove along ahead of me. One of the sacks had a little hole in it. That was a very handy thing, you can believe me.

OLD BAUMERT Twenty-two mills there are in Peterswaldau and for us there's nothing left over.

OLD WEAVER We mustn't ever lose our courage. There's always something to come along and help us on a little farther.

WEAVER HEIBER When we're hungry the thing to do is pray to the Fourteen Helping Saints, and if that don't fill you up then you must put a pebble in your mouth and suck away. Right, Baumert?

[DREISSIGER, PFEIFER *and* NEUMANN *return.*]

DREISSIGER Nothing serious. The boy's wide awake again. [*He walks about excited and puffing.*] Still and all it remains a disgrace. The child's as strong as a piece of straw in a windstorm. It's quite impossible to understand how people . . . how parents could be so unreasonable. Loading him down with two bundles of cotton and making him come all that way. I'll simply have to make it clear that goods brought by children will not be accepted. [*He walks back and forth in silence again for a while.*] In any case, I urgently hope that such a thing will never happen again.—Who's to be blamed for it in the end? The factory owners, of course. We get blamed for everything. If a little fellow like this one gets stuck in the snow in wintertime and falls asleep there'd be a reporter there before we know it, and the gruesome story would be in all the papers in two days. The father, the parents who send a child like that out . . . why, of course, why should *they* be blamed? The factory owner's the one, the factory owner's the scapegoat. The weaver is always the one they let off easy, and the factory owner is the one who gets the lash: he's the one with no feelings, the one with a heart of stone, he's the dangerous one that every press hound can bite in the leg. He lives as splendid and happy as a prince and pays his weavers starvation wages.—

They forget in all their high-sounding phrases that a man like that has troubles, too, and sleepless nights, and he runs tremendous risks that the worker doesn't even dream about; that there are times when he's so confused that his head swims with all the addition and multiplication and division that he has to do, with calculations and recalculations; that he has a hundred different things to think about and consider and has to fight competition tooth and nail, so to speak; that not a single day goes by without aggravation and losses; but these they never mention. Think of all the dependents the factory owner has around his neck, all the people who try to suck him dry to live off him! No, no! You ought to be in *my* shoes for a while, you'd have your fill of it soon enough. [*after a moment of reflection*] And what about that fellow, that one, that Baecker, how did he act! Now he'll go out and shout all over town what a hard-hearted creature I am, how I discharge my weavers over insignificant matters. Is that true? Am I as hardhearted as all that?

MANY VOICES No, Herr Dreissiger!

DREISSIGER Well, that's the way I see it, too. And still these young louts come around singing their vile songs about us factory owners. They talk about being hungry, yet they have enough left over to be able to drink their liquor by the quart. They ought to snoop around a little more and see what conditions are like with the linen weavers. Those are the people who can talk about being in need. But those of you here, you cotton weavers, you can still thank God quietly that you're as well off as you are. And I ask you now, you old, industrious and efficient weavers that are here: can a worker who knows what a good job is make a living working for me?

A GREAT MANY VOICES Yes, Herr Dreissiger!

DREISSIGER There, you see!—One like that Baecker, of course, couldn't. Let me advise you to keep fellows like him in check. If things go too far, then I'll just quit. I'll give up the whole business, and then you'll see how things really are. Then you can see about finding work for yourselves. And I can assure you, it won't be from your honorable Herr Baecker that you'll get work.

FIRST WEAVER WOMAN [*has made her way up to* DREISSIGER *and with servility and humility brushes some dust from his coat*] You've gone and brushed yourself up against something, Herr Dreissiger, sir.

DREISSIGER Business is miserable right now, you know that your-

selves. I'm losing money instead of making it. And if, in spite of this, I always see to it that my weavers have work, then I expect a little gratitude in return. I have piles of cloths by the thousands, and right now I don't know if I'll ever be able to get rid of them.—But then I heard how many weavers around here are out of work entirely, and so . . . well, Pfeifer can give you the rest of the details—But the fact is simply that in order to show you my good intentions . . . I can't, of course, hand out charity, I'm not rich enough for that, but up to a certain point I *can* give the unemployed the opportunity to earn at least *something*. The fact that I am running a tremendous risk is, of course, *my* worry.—It has always been my opinion that it is better for a man to earn a piece of cheese each day than to have to starve. Am I right?

MANY VOICES Yes, yes, Herr Dreissiger.

DREISSIGER And therefore I am more than happy to give work to another two hundred weavers. Pfeifer will explain to you under what conditions. [*He is about to go.*]

FIRST WEAVER WOMAN [*steps into his path, speaks hastily, imploringly and urgently*] Herr Dreissiger, if you'd be so good, sir, what I wanted to ask you in a friendly way, if maybe you'd . . . well you see I been laid up two times already.

DREISSIGER [*hastily*] You'll have to speak with Pfeifer, my good woman, I'm late as it is. [*He leaves her standing there.*]

WEAVER REIMANN [*also steps into his path; in an injured and accusing tone*] Herr Dreissiger, I'm sorry, I have a complaint to make. Herr Pfeifer there has . . . Well, I always used to get twelve and a half groschen a web . . .

DREISSIGER [*interrupting him*] My manager is over there. You may go to him: he's the one to see.

WEAVER HEIBER [*stopping* DREISSIGER] Herr Dreissiger, sir— [*stuttering and with confused haste*] What I wanted to ask you, sir, was if maybe you could be so kind as to . . . that is maybe you could be so kind as to . . . that is maybe if Herr Pfeifer could . . . if I could . . .

DREISSIGER What is it you want?

WEAVER HEIBER That advance pay I had last time, well, what I mean is that . . .

DREISSIGER I don't understand a word you're saying.

WEAVER HEIBER Things were awful hard up for me, sir, because . . .

DREISSIGER That's Pfeifer's business, that is all Pfeifer's business. There is really nothing I can . . . settle your business with Pfeifer. [*He escapes into the office.*] 1

[*The suppliants look helplessly at one another. One after another they step back, sighing.*]

2

PFEIFER [*starts his inspecting again*] Well there, Annie, what have you got for us today?

OLD BAUMERT How much do we get for a web, Herr Pfeifer?

PFEIFER Ten silver groschen a web.

3

OLD BAUMERT Now what do you think of that!

[*Excitement rises among the* WEAVERS, *whispering, and murmuring.*]

ACT TWO

[*A room in the house of* WILHELM ANSORGE *in Kaschbach in the Eulengebirge. It is a narrow room, not six feet high. The floor is decayed and the rafters black with soot. In the room are two young girls,* EMMA *and* BERTHA BAUMERT, *sitting at their looms;* MOTHER BAUMERT, *a stiff-limbed old woman, sitting on a stool by her bed, in front of a spooling wheel; her son* AUGUST, *twenty years old, an idiot, with a small body and head, and long spidery limbs, sitting on a footstool, also spooling yarn.*

[*The weak, rose-colored light of evening forces its way through two small windows, holes in the left wall which are partially stuffed with paper and straw. It falls onto the whitish-blond loose hair of the girls, on their bare, lean shoulders and thin waxen necks, on the folds of their coarse blouses which, except for short skirts of the roughest linen, constitute their entire clothing. The warm glow falls fully upon the face, neck, and chest of the old woman: a face emaciated to a skeleton, with folds and wrinkles in its bloodless skin, with sunken eyes which are inflamed and watery as a result of the lint, the smoke, and the working by lamplight; a long goiter neck with folds and sinews; a sunken chest which is packed in cloths and scarfs.*

[*A part of the right wall, along with the stove and the stove bench, the bedstead, and several loudly tinted holy pictures, also stands in light.—On the bar of the stove, rags are hung up to dry, while behind the stove all the old worthless rubbish is piled. On the stove bench are several old pots and cooking utensils; potato peelings are laid out on a paper to dry.—From the rafters there hang skeins and reels of yarn. Baskets with spools stand beside the looms. In the back wall there is a door without a lock. Leaning against the wall beside the door is a bundle of willow switches. Several damaged quarter-bushel baskets lie about near them.—The room is filled with the sounds of the looms: the rhythmic movement of the machinery shaking both floor and walls, the shuffle and clicking of the rapid shuttle moving back and forth. Mixed into this is the deep constant whirring of the spooling wheels which resembles the humming of bumblebees.*]

MOTHER BAUMERT [*in a pitiful, exhausted voice as the girls leave off their weaving and lean over their looms*] Do you have to make knots again?

EMMA [*the elder of the two girls, twenty-two years old; while knotting threads*] This is sure some yarn!

BERTHA [*fifteen years old*] This warp is giving us trouble too.

EMMA Where's he at so long? He went away at nine o'clock.

MOTHER BAUMERT Yes, I know, I know! Don't you know where he could be?

BERTHA Don't you worry, mother.

MOTHER BAUMERT It's always a worry to me.

[EMMA *goes on with her weaving.*]

BERTHA Wait a minute, Emma!

EMMA What's the matter?

BERTHA I thought I heard a noise like somebody coming.

EMMA More likely Ansorge coming home.

FRITZ [*A small, barefoot, ragged little boy of four comes in crying.*] Mother, I'm hungry.

EMMA Wait a while, Fritzy, wait a while! Grandpa'll be here soon. He'll bring some bread with him and some grain.

FRITZ I'm still hungry, mother!

EMMA I just told you. Dont be so stupid. He'll be here right away. He'll bring some nice bread with him and some coffee beans.—When work's over, mother'll take the potato peelings and she'll go to the farmer with them, and then he'll give her a nice swallow of milk for her little boy.

FRITZ Where'd grandpa go?

EMMA To the factory owner's, to deliver a web, Fritzy.

FRITZ The factory owner?

EMMA Yes, Fritzy, yes! Down to Dreissiger's, in Peterswaldau.

FRITZ That where he gets the bread?

EMMA Yes, yes, he gets money there, and then he can buy the bread.

FRITZ Will he get much money?

EMMA [*intensely*] Oh, stop it, boy, with your talking.

[*She goes on weaving like* BERTHA. *Then they both stop again.*]

BERTHA August, go and ask Ansorge if we could have a little light.

[AUGUST *leaves.* FRITZ *goes with him.*]

MOTHER BAUMERT [*with increasing, childlike fear, almost whining*] Children, children, where could he be so long?

BERTHA He probably just dropped in to see Hauffen.

MOTHER BAUMERT [*cries*] I only hope he's not in a tavern!

EMMA You mustn't cry, mother! Our father's not that kind.

MOTHER BAUMERT [*beside herself with a multitude of fears*] Well, well . . . well, tell me what will happen if he . . . if he comes home and . . . and if he's drunk everything up and don't bring nothing home? There's not a handful of salt in the house, not a piece of bread. We need a shovel of fuel . . .

BERTHA Don't worry, mother! The moon's out tonight. We'll take August with us and gather some wood for the fire.

MOTHER BAUMERT So you can be caught by the forester?

[ANSORGE, *an old weaver with a gigantic body frame, who must bend low in order to enter the room, sticks his head and upper body through the doorway. His hair and beard are quite unkempt.*]

ANSORGE What's the matter here?

BERTHA You *could* give us some *light!*

ANSORGE [*in a subdued voice, as though speaking in the presence of a sick person*] It's light enough here.

MOTHER BAUMERT Now you even make us sit in the dark.

ANSORGE I do the best I can. [*He pulls himself out through the doorway.*]

BERTHA You see there how stingy he is?

EMMA So now we sit here and wait till he's ready.

[FRAU HEINRICH *enters. She is a woman of thirty and pregnant. Her tired face expresses torturous anxieties and fearful tensions.*]

FRAU HEINRICH Good evening, everyone.

MOTHER BAUMERT Well, Heinrich, any news?

FRAU HEINRICH [*limping*] I stepped on a piece of glass.

BERTHA Come here, then, sit down. I'll see if I can get it out for you.

[FRAU HEINRICH *sits down, while* BERTHA *kneels in front of her and works with the sole of the woman's foot.*]

MOTHER BAUMERT How are you at home, Mother Heinrich? 1

FRAU HEINRICH [*breaks out in despair*] It can't go on like this. [*She fights in vain against a torrent of tears. Then she cries silently.*]

MOTHER BAUMERT It would he better for our kind, Mother Heinrich, if the Good Lord had a little understanding and took us from the world altogether. 2

FRAU HEINRICH [*Her self-control gone, she cries out, weeping.*] My poor children are starving! [*She sobs and moans.*] I don't know what to do. You can do what you want, but all you ever do is chase around till you drop. I'm more dead than alive, and still there's no use. Nine hungry mouths I've got to feed, and how will I do it? Last evening I had a small piece of bread, it wasn't even enough for the two littlest. Which one was I to give it to? They all cried out to me: Me, mama, me, mama . . . No, no! This is what happens when I can still get about. What'll happen the day I can't get up out of bed no more? The flood's washed away the couple potatoes we had. We haven't got bread nor food to eat. 3 4

BERTHA [*has removed the piece of glass and washed the wound*] We'll tie a rag around it now. [*to* EMMA] See if you can find one. 5

MOTHER BAUMERT It's no better here with us, Mother Heinrich.

FRAU HEINRICH You still got your girls at least. You got a husband who can work, too. Last week my husband just broke down. He had such a fit and I was so scared to Heaven I didn't know what to do with him. Whenever he has an attack like that he just has to lay in bed for a good eight days. 6

MOTHER BAUMERT Mine's not so much better either anymore. He's about to give out, too. It's in his chest and his back. And there's not a pfennig in the house now. If he don't bring a couple of groschen home tonight, I don't know what'll happen. 7

EMMA You can believe her, Mother Heinrich. We're so hard up, father had to take Ami along with him. He had to let them butcher him so we could have something solid in our bellies again.

FRAU HEINRICH Don't you have a handful of flour left over, maybe? 8

MOTHER BAUMERT Not even that much, Mother Heinrich; not even a grain of salt left in the house.

FRAU HEINRICH Well then, I don't know! [*She rises, remains standing and broods.*] Then I just don't know!—I just can't help it! [*crying out in rage and fear*] I'd be happy if we only had pig 9

swill! But I can't go home with empty hands. I just can't. God forgive me. I just don't know what else there is to do. [*She limps out quickly, stepping on the heel of her left foot.*]

MOTHER BAUMERT [*calls after her, warningly*] Mother Heinrich, Mother Heinrich, you mustn't go and do nothing foolish.

BERTHA She won't do no harm to herself. Don't you worry.

EMMA She's always like that. [*She sits down and weaves again for a few seconds.*]

[AUGUST *lights the way for his father,* OLD BAUMERT, *with a tallow candle, as the old man drags in a bundle of yarn.*]

MOTHER BAUMERT Jesus, Lord Jesus, where were you all this time, father?

OLD BAUMERT There, don't snap at me all at once. Let a man catch his breath a minute first. Why don't you go and see who's come in with me?

[MORITZ JAEGER *enters through the doorway, stooping. He is a robust average-sized, red-cheeked reservist. His Hussar's cap is worn jauntily on his head, and his clothes and shoes are in good repair; he also wears a clean shirt without a collar. Having entered, he takes a military stance and salutes; energetically*]

JAEGER Good evening, Aunt Baumert!

MOTHER BAUMERT Well, well, now, you're home again, are you? And you didn't forget us. Sit down over here, then. Come over here, sit down.

EMMA [*wipes off a wooden chair with her skirt and pushes it over towards* JAEGER] Good evening, Moritz! Did you come home again to see how us poor people live?

JAEGER Tell me, now, Emma, I almost didn't want to believe it. And you've got a youngster here almost old enough to be a soldier. Where'd you get him?

[BERTHA *takes the little food her father has brought, puts the meat in a pan and places it in the oven, while* AUGUST *builds a fire.*]

BERTHA You know the weaver named Finger?

MOTHER BAUMERT He used to live with us here once. He wanted to marry her all right, but even then he had it awful bad in the lungs. I warned the girl enough. You think she listened? Now he's long dead and forgotten and she has to see

about raising the boy. But you tell me now, Moritz, how things went with you. 1

OLD BAUMERT You be quiet there, mother, can't you see how good he's fed? He'll laugh us all out, he will. He brought clothes with him like a prince. And a silver watch. And on top of all that, ten thalers cash. 2

JAEGER [*takes a boastful stance, with a swaggering, self-important smile on his face*] I can't complain. I never knew a bad time in the army.

OLD BAUMERT He was orderly to a cavalry captain. Listen to him, he talks like a regular gentleman. 3

JAEGER I got so used to all their fine talk I can't get rid of it.

MOTHER BAUMERT No, no, now I want you to tell me! And such a good-for-nothing as you was, too, and coming into all that money. No, you weren't fit for nothing; you couldn't spool one bobbin after another without having to stop. You were always gone; setting up traps for titmice and robin snares was what you really liked. Now, ain't that the truth? 4

JAEGER True enough, Aunt Baumert. It wasn't robins I caught, it was swallows.

EMMA And all we used to tell him was: swallows are poison. 5

JAEGER It was all the same to me. But how have you all got on, Aunt Baumert?

MOTHER BAUMERT Oh, Lord Jesus, so bad, so bad these last four years. I had these pains, you see. Just look at my fingers here. I don't know if I got rheumatism or what. I'm in such misery. I can hardly move a limb. Nobody'd believe the pains I had to suffer. 6

OLD BAUMERT She's in a real bad way now. She can't hold out much longer.

BERTHA Mornings we have to put her clothes on, nights we have to take them off for her. We've got to feed her like a child. 7

MOTHER BAUMERT [*continues in a doleful, tearful voice*] They have to help me every which way. I'm more than sick, I'm a burden. How have I prayed to the good Lord God that He should just take me, O Jesus, my Jesus, it's too much for me. I just don't know . . . maybe people think that . . . but I have been used to working since I was just a little one. I could always do my job, then all of a sudden [*She tries in vain to raise herself.*] it just won't go anymore. I have a good husband and good children, but if all I can do is watch . . . Just you look there at 8 9

those girls! They got almost no blood in them anymore. White as a sheet. It never stops here with this treadle, even if they get nothing for it. What kind of life is that for them? They never get away from that bench the whole year. There's not a dress they own they can show for their work so that they can cover themselves sometimes and go out among the other people or go to church sometimes and find some comfort. They look like they was cut down from the gallows, girls of fifteen and twenty.

BERTHA [*at the stove*] It's smoking again now.

OLD BAUMERT Just look at that smoke. Can anything be done about it, you think? It'll fall to pieces soon, that stove. Well, we'll just have to let it fall to pieces, and as for the soot, we'll just have to swallow it. We all cough, one more than the other. If you cough, and if it gets you and you choke to death, what's it matter, nobody'll ask no questions.

JAEGER But that's Ansorge's business, he's got to fix it.

BERTHA He'd only look at us like we was crazy. He already grumbles too much.

MOTHER BAUMERT We take up too much room for him as is.

OLD BAUMERT And if *we* start to grumble, we'll be out on our ears. He's had no rent from us this half-year.

MOTHER BAUMERT A man like him that ain't married could be a little more friendly.

OLD BAUMERT He's got nothing either, mother, things are as bad for him, too, just be glad he didn't raise the roof on us.

MOTHER BAUMERT Still, he's got his own house.

OLD BAUMERT There, mother, what are you talking about! There's hardly a board in this house he can call his.

JAEGER [*sits down and removes a short pipe with a nice tassel hanging from it from one pocket, and from the other pocket a bottle of brandy*] This can't go on much longer. I'm amazed how things here look. Why, the dogs in the city live better than you people do.

OLD BAUMERT [*eagerly*] That's right, isn't it, isn't it? You know that! And if any one of us makes a complaint about it they just say it's the bad times.

ANSORGE [*enters with an earthenware bowl of soup in one hand and a half-finished quarter-bushel basket in the other*] Welcome home, Moritz! You've come back, I see.

JAEGER Thank you, Father Ansorge.

ANSORGE [*pushing his bowl into the oven*] Just look at him now, if he don't look almost like a count. 1

OLD BAUMERT Show him the nice watch you got. He brought along a new suit and ten thalers cash.

ANSORGE [*shaking his head*] Well, well, well!

EMMA [*puts the potato peelings into a little sack*] I'm going over now with the peelings. Maybe it'll be enough for a little milk. [*She goes out.*] 2

JAEGER [*while they all watch him with attention and admiration*] You think back and remember how many times you made things hot as hell for me. That'll teach you a thing or two, Moritz, you always used to say, when you get in the army. Well, you can see, things went pretty good for me. I had my stripe in half a year. You got to be willing to work, that's the main thing. I polished the sergeant's boots; I brushed his horse, got his beer. I was fast as a weasel. I was sharp as a tack; my stuff really shined. I was the first to the stables, the first to roll call, the first in the saddle; and then when we attacked—forward march! Holy Moses and damnation! I watched like a bloodhound! I always said to myself: you'll get no help here, it's up to you now; and then I pulled myself together, and I was all right. I did so much that one time the captain said in front of the whole squadron: this is what a Hussar ought to be. [*Silence. He lights his pipe.*] 3 4 5

ANSORGE [*shaking his head*] Then you were lucky, uh? Well, well, well!—Well, well, well! [*He sits down on the floor with the willow switches beside him, and with the basket between his legs he continues mending it.*] 6

OLD BAUMERT Let's hope now you brought some luck with you. —Well, maybe we'll have a drink with you now, uh?

JAEGER Sure, Father Baumert, sure, and when that's gone, there'll be more. [*He puts a coin onto the table.*] 7

ANSORGE [*with stupid, grinning amazement*] Lord in Heaven, what goings-on . . . a roast there in the oven, and here a quart of brandy—[*He drinks from the bottle.*] Your health, Moritz! Well, well, well! Well, well, well! [*From here on the brandy bottle is handed around.*] 8

OLD BAUMERT If only on Holy Days we could have a little roast like this instead of never seeing meat for months and months.—So now we'll have to wait till another little dog comes by like this one four weeks ago, and a thing like that don't happen so often in a life. 9

ANSORGE Did you have to have Ami killed?

OLD BAUMERT He would have starved to death anyway . . .

ANSORGE Well, well, well—well, well, well.

MOTHER BAUMERT And he was such a nice, friendly little dog.

JAEGER Are you still so eager around here for roast dog?

OLD BAUMERT O Jesus, Jesus, if we only had enough of it.

MOTHER BAUMERT Well, a little piece of meat is a good thing.

OLD BAUMERT Don't you have taste for things like that anymore? Well, you just stay with us, Moritz, you'll get it back soon enough.

ANSORGE [*sniffing*] Well, well, well—that's something good there, good smell, too.

OLD BAUMERT [*sniffing*] The real thing, you might say.

ANSORGE Tell us what you think now, Moritz. You know the way it is out there in the world. Do you think things'll ever be different here with us weavers?

JAEGER I really hope so.

ANSORGE We can't live here, and we can't die. It's bad for us here, you can believe that. You fight to the last, but in the end you got to give in. Poverty tears the roof off from over your head and the floor from under your feet. In the old days when you could still work at the loom, you could just about half get by with all kinds of trouble and misery. Nowadays month after month can go by and I can't find a piece of work. Weaving baskets is all over with too now, all you can do is stay alive at it. I weave till late into the night, and when I fall into bed I've made a groschen and six pfennigs. You got education, you tell me: can anybody get by nowadays with these rising prices? I have to toss out three thalers for house tax, one thaler for property tax and three thalers for interest. I can count on fourteen thalers pay. That leaves seven thalers the year for myself. Out of it I have food to pay for, and heat and clothes and shoes and patches and thread for mending and then I got to have a place to live in and God knows what else.—Is there any wonder when you can't pay the interest?

OLD BAUMERT Somebody ought to go to Berlin and explain to the king how things are with us.

JAEGER There wouldn't be much good in that, Father Baumert. There's been enough said about it in the newspapers. But these rich people, they turn and they twist the news so that . . . they can bedevil the best Christians.

OLD BAUMERT [*shaking his head*] Not to know better than that in Berlin! 1

ANSORGE Tell me, Moritz, you think that's possible? Aren't there laws for such things? If a person works the skin right off his hands and still can't pay the interest, can the farmer take my house away from me? He's a farmer who wants his money. I just don't know what'll come of it all.—If I have to get out of the house . . . [*speaking through his tears*] I was born here, my father sat here at his loom for more than forty years. How many times did he tell my mother: If ever I'm not here anymore, don't let the house go, he said. I worked for this house, he said. Every nail in it I paid for with a night of work, and every beam is worth a year's bread. Wouldn't you think that . . . 2 3

JAEGER They're able to take the last thing you've got.

ANSORGE Well, well, well! If it ever comes to that, I'd rather they carry me out than have to walk out in my old age. What's there to dying! My father was glad enough to die.—It was only at the last he got a little scared. But then when I crawled into bed with him he quieted down a bit.—When I think about it, I was just a boy of thirteen then. I was so tired out I went to sleep right beside that sick man—I didn't know no better—and when I woke up he was already cold. 4

MOTHER BAUMERT [*after a pause*] Reach into the stove, Bertha, and give Ansorge his soup. 5

BERTHA Here you are, Father Ansorge!

ANSORGE [*weeping as he eats*] Well, well, well—well, well, well!

[OLD BAUMERT *has begun to eat the meat out of the pan.*] 6

MOTHER BAUMERT Now, father, father, you can wait awhile. Let Bertha set the table right first.

OLD BAUMERT [*chewing*] It was two years ago I went to the Lord's Supper last. Just after that I sold my Sunday clothes. We bought a little piece of pork with the money. Since then I've had no piece of meat till tonight. 7

JAEGER What do we need meat for? The factory owners eat it for us. They wade in fat up to here. Whoever don't believe that can go down to Bielau and Peterswaldau and see for himself. He'd have an eyeful there: one factory owner's mansion after another. With glass windows and little towers and iron fences. Believe me, they don't know what bad times are. There's enough money down there for roasts and cakes, for carriages and coaches, for governesses and who knows what else! They're so stuffed with their greed they don't know what to do with all their riches out of cockiness. 8 9

1 ANSORGE It was all a different thing in the old days. Then they gave the weavers enough to live on. Today they waste it all on themselves. But I say that's because those people in high places don't believe in God no more or in the devil either. What do they know about commandments and punishments? They
2 all but steal our last piece of bread from our mouths and make us weak and eat up the little food we got whenever they can. Those are the people our troubles come from. If the factory owners was good men, there wouldn't be no bad times for us.

JAEGER Listen to me now. I want to read you something real nice. [*He pulls some pieces of paper from his pocket.*] Come
3 on, August, you run down to the tavern and get another quart. What's the matter, August, why are you laughing?

MOTHER BAUMERT I don't know what it is with the boy. He's always happy. He'll laugh himself sick no matter what happens. Well, run now, run!

4 [AUGUST *goes off with the empty brandy bottle.*]

MOTHER BAUMERT Ha, you know what it is tastes good, don't you, father!

OLD BAUMERT [*chewing, stimulated by the food and drink*] Mo-
5 ritz, you're our man. You can read, you can write. You know how things are with us weavers. And you have a heart for the weavers, too. You ought to step in and take up our cause for us around here.

JAEGER If that's all. Sure, I'd like to teach those mangy factory
6 owners a thing or two. Wouldn't bother me at all. I'm an easy-going enough person, but once I get my temper up and get mad, I could take Dreissiger in one hand and Dietrich in the other and knock their heads together till sparks fly from their eyes. If we could manage to stick together we could really make a racket for those factory owners.

7 [OLD BAUMERT *goes out unnoticed.*]

We wouldn't need a king for that *or* a government; all we'd have to do is say: we want this and this and we want it done this way and not that, and they'd whistle another tune soon
8 enough. Once they see we got some guts, they'll calm down. I know their kind. They're a bunch of cowardly bastards.

MOTHER BAUMERT That's the truth. I'm sure not bad. I was always one to say: there have to be rich people too. But when it comes to this . . .

9 JAEGER For all I care the devil can take them, they deserve it.

BERTHA Where did father go? 1

MOTHER BAUMERT I don't know where he is.

BERTHA Do you think maybe his stomach's not used to meat anymore?

MOTHER BAUMERT [*beside herself, crying*] You see now, there you see! He can't even keep it down. He'll vomit up that nice little piece of food. 2

OLD BAUMERT [*returning, crying in rage*] No, no! It can't go on much longer with me. It has to end soon! When you finally get something good to eat, you can't even keep it down. [*He sits down crying on the stove bench.*] 3

JAEGER [*in a sudden frantic outburst*] And to think there are people, judges, not far from here, with their potbellies, who've got nothing to do all year long but steal a day from the Lord God. And they're the ones who say the weavers could get along well and good if they wasn't so lazy. 4

ANSORGE They're not people. Those are monsters.

JAEGER Don't you worry, he's got what he asked for. Red Baecker and me gave him a piece of our mind, and before we left, we even sang "Bloody Justice" for him. 5

ANSORGE Good Lord, is that the song?

JAEGER Yes, yes, I've got it here.

OLD BAUMERT They call it "Dreissiger's Song," don't they? 6

JAEGER I'll read it to you.

MOTHER BAUMERT Who wrote it?

JAEGER Nobody knows. Now listen. [*He reads, spelling like a schoolboy, stressing poorly, but with unmistakably strong feeling. Despair, pain, rage, hatred, and a thirst for vengeance are felt in his reading.*] 7

A bloody justice rages here,
A law that's worse than lynching,
Where courtroom trials are not the rule,
They kill us without flinching. 8

A man is slowly tortured here,
A man is tortured long,
His sighs are counted as the proof
Of his affliction's song. 9

1 OLD BAUMERT [*Gripped by the song and deeply moved, he has several times had to control himself from interrupting* JAEGER. *Now he can contain himself no longer; he stammers amid tears and laughter to his wife.*] "A man is tortured long." Whoever wrote that, he knew what he knew. "His sighs are proof . . ." How does it go? "His sighs . . . affliction's song . . ." Is that it?
2 "Counted as the proof . . ."

JAEGER His sighs are counted as the proof
Of his affliction's song.

OLD BAUMERT You know how we sigh, mother, day after day,
3 in bed or on our feet.

[*While* ANSORGE, *who has stopped his work, sits brokenly on the floor, deeply moved, and while* MOTHER BAUMERT *and* BERTHA *constantly wipe their eyes,* JAEGER *continues to read.*]

4 JAEGER Our hangmen are the Dreissigers,
Their servants are their henchmen,
And each one takes his pound of flesh
As though it were no sin.

You scoundrels, all you brood of hell . . .

5 OLD BAUMERT [*trembling with rage and stamping on the floor*]
Yes! "Brood of hell! Brood of hell!"

JAEGER [*reads*]

You demons of the fire,
6 You eat the poor from house and home—
May curses pay your hire.

ANSORGE Yes, yes, that's worth a curse.

OLD BAUMERT [*clenching his fists, threateningly*] "You eat the poor from house and home!"—

7 JAEGER [*reads*]

Pleading gets you nowhere here,
Begging's all in vain;
"If you don't like it, then go starve
Elsewhere," they complain.

8 OLD BAUMERT How does it go? "Begging's all in vain"? Every word . . . every word . . . it's all as true as the Bible itself. "Pleading gets you nowhere here!"

ANSORGE Well, well, well! Nothing does any good.

9 JAEGER [*reads*]

Let every man regard our need, 1
Whom misery doth bow,
With not a bite of bread at home—
Where is your pity now!

Pity! that you've never known,
And never did ask why: 2
But every man must know your aim,
To bleed us till we die.

OLD BAUMERT [*jumps up, almost in a frenzy*] "Till we die." That's what it is, "bleed us till we die." Here I stand, Robert Baumert, master weaver of Kaschbach. Who can step forward 3
and say . . . ? I have been a good man all my days, but look at me now! What do I have to show? What do I look like? What have they done to me? "A man is slowly tortured here." [*He holds out his arms.*] Here, feel me, feel me . . . skin and bones. "You scoundrels all, you brood of hell!!" [*He collapses into a chair with anger and despair.*] 4

ANSORGE [*tosses his basket into the corner, lifts himself, his whole body trembling with rage; stammers*] And it's got to change, I say it's got to change now! We won't stand it no more! We won't stand it no more, no matter what happens!

ACT THREE

1 [*The taproom of the Peterswaldau village tavern. It is a large room whose beamed ceiling is supported by a wooden center column, around which runs a table. In the rear wall, to the right of the column, is an entrance door, one jamb of which is hidden by the column. Through the door there is a large store-*
2 *room with barrels and brewing utensils. In the corner of the taproom, to the right of the door, is a bar: a wooden partition, the height of a man, with compartments for bar utensils; behind it is a cupboard containing rows of whisky bottles; between the partition and the liquor cabinet is a small area for the bartender. In front of the bar stands a table decorated with*
3 *a multicolored cloth. A pretty lamp hangs above it, and round about it are a number of cane chairs. Not far off, in the right wall, there is a door with "Weinstube" written above it leading into a room for more prominent guests. Farther downstage right stands an old grandfather's clock. To the left of the entrance door in the back wall there is a table with bottles and*
4 *glasses, and farther on, in the corner, is the great tiled stove. There are three small windows in the left wall, below them runs a bench, and in front of each window is a large wooden table with one of its ends towards the wall. Along the sides of these tables are benches with backs, while at the window end*
5 *of each table is a single wooden chair. The entire room is whitewashed almost blue, covered over with advertisements, pictures, and colored prints, including the portrait of Friedrich Wilhelm IV.*

[SCHOLZ WELZEL, *a good-natured colossus of more than fifty, is*
6 *drawing beer from a barrel into a glass.*

[FRAU WELZEL *is ironing at the stove. She is a dignified, cleanly dressed woman not yet thirty-five.*

7 [ANNA WELZEL, *a pretty seventeen-year-old girl with beautiful reddish-blond hair, and nicely dressed, sits behind the table with the colored cloth and embroiders. She looks up for a moment from her work and listens as the sound of a funeral hymn sung by school children is heard in the distance.*

8 [MASTER WIEGAND, *the joiner, sits in his working clothes at the same table with a glass of beer in front of him. One can see that he is a man who knows what it takes to be a success in the world, namely: cunning, quickness, and ruthless determination.*

[A TRAVELING SALESMAN *sitting at the column table is vigorously chewing at a chopped steak. He is of medium height, well-fed, stout, inclined to be cheerful, lively, and impudent. His clothes are in fashion. His traveling effects—handbag, sample case, umbrella, overcoat, and blanket—are on the chair beside him.*] 1

WELZEL [*carrying a glass of beer to the* SALESMAN, *aside to* WIEGAND] Seems like the devil's loose in Peterswaldau today. 2

WIEGAND [*with a sharp trumpetlike voice*] Sure, because it's delivery day at Dreissiger's.

FRAU WELZEL But they don't usually make such a stir.

WIEGAND Well, it's maybe because of the two hundred new weavers that he wants to take on now. 3

FRAU WELZEL [*continues ironing*] Yes, I suppose that would be it. If it's two hundred he wants, at least six hundred must have showed up. There's enough of that kind around.

WIEGAND O Jesus, yes, there's enough of them. Their kind don't ever die out even when times are bad. They put more children into the world than we know what to do with. [*For a moment the hymn is heard more clearly.*] Then there's a funeral today, too. The weaver Fabish died. 4

WELZEL He's been at it long enough. Running around like a ghost all this long time. 5

WIEGAND Believe me, Welzel, never in my life did I ever glue together such a tiny little casket. That was a corpse for you, couldn't have weighed ninety pounds.

SALESMAN [*chewing*] I don't understand it . . . wherever you look, in whatever paper, all you ever read is gruesome stories about the need of the weavers. You get the impression that people in this neighborhood are three-quarters dead from starvation. But take this funeral. I just got to the village. Brass band, schoolmaster, schoolchildren, the pastor, and that procession of people behind them—my God, it's like the Emperor of China was being buried. Well, if these people have money to pay for something like that . . . [*He drinks the beer. After putting down his glass, with frivolous levity*] Isn't that right, miss? Am I right or not? 6 7 8

[ANNA *smiles with embarrassment and eagerly continues her embroidering.*]

SALESMAN I'll bet those are a pair of slippers for your papa.

WELZEL You won't catch *my* feet in any such thing. 9

1 SALESMAN Let me tell you that I'd give half of what I'm worth if those slippers were for me.

FRAU WELZEL He just don't understand things like that.

WIEGAND [*after having coughed several times, moved his chair about, and made an attempt to speak*] The gentleman seemed
2 surprised about the funeral. Wouldn't you say, miss, that it's a rather small funeral?

SALESMAN Yes, but the question is . . . Why, that must cost a monstrous lot of money. Where do these people come by it?

3 WIEGAND If you will excuse me, sir, but there's a kind of lack of reasonableness among these poor classes of people. With your permission, I will say that they have an exaggerated idea of the respect and duty they owe to those taken from them. And if it happens to be the parent who died, you never saw such superstitiousness. The children and nearest relatives scrape to-
4 gether whatever they can get their hands on. And what they can't get, they borrow from the nearest man of wealth. His Eminence, the pastor, finds himself borrowed from, not to mention the sexton and everyone else standing about. And then there's the food and drinks and all the other things they need. I have nothing against a child's respect for his parents, but when the
5 mourners are put in debt for the rest of their lives, then it's too much.

SALESMAN If I may say so, the pastor should talk them out of such foolishness.

6 WIEGAND If you'll excuse me, sir, I must say something in support of this, that every little community has its own house of God and has to support the shepherd of its flock. The clergy has its advantages from large funerals. The more people at a burial, the richer flows the offertory. Whoever knows the working conditions around here, sir, can tell you with absolute certainty
7 that the pastors regard quiet funerals with little favor.

[HORNIG *enters. He is a small bowlegged old man with a draw-rope around his shoulders and chest. He is a ragpicker.*]

HORNIG Good day to you all. Could I have a small glass of
8 schnapps? Well now, miss, have you any rags for me? Miss Anna! I have beautiful hair ribbons, and shirt bands, and garters in my cart, nice pins, hairpins, and hooks and eyes. It's all yours for a couple of rags. [*in a changed tone of voice*] A nice white piece of paper will be made from those rags, and
9 then your sweetheart will write you a lovely letter on it.

ANNA Thank you, no. I don't want a boy friend.

FRAU WELZEL [*putting a heating-iron into her flatiron*] That's the way the girl is. She won't hear a word about marrying.

SALESMAN [*jumps up, apparently pleasantly surprised, goes to the covered table and holds his hand across it towards* ANNA] That's the way to be, miss, do like me. Agreed? Give me your hand on it! We'll both of us stay single.

ANNA [*red as a beet, gives him her hand*] But you're already married, aren't you?

SALESMAN God forbid! You think that because I wear this ring? I only do that to protect my irresistible personality from the sordid attacks of people. But I'm not afraid of you. [*He puts the ring in his pocket.*] But seriously, miss, wouldn't you like to get even just a little bit married?

ANNA [*shaking her head*] You leave me alone!

FRAU WELZEL She'll stay single unless something awful special comes along.

SALESMAN Well, why not? I know of a rich Silesian grandee who married his mother's chambermaid; and the rich factory owner Dreissiger, he married an innkeeper's daughter, who isn't half as pretty as you are, miss, and she rides around now in a carriage and with servants in livery. So why not? [*He wanders about, stretching himself and his legs while walking.*] How about a cup of coffee here?

[ANSORGE *and* OLD BAUMERT *enter, each with a pack, and sit quietly and humbly at the table to the front and left with* HORNIG.]

WELZEL Welcome, Father Ansorge! Good to see you again!

HORNIG Did you really crawl out again from that smoked-up nest of yours?

ANSORGE [*awkward and obviously embarrassed*] Yes, I went and took another web.

OLD BAUMERT He'll do the work for ten groschen.

ANSORGE I would never have done it, but now there's an end to my basket-weaving, too.

WIEGAND It's better than nothing, I always say. And he's doing it so that you'll have something to work at. I know Dreissiger good enough. A week ago I took out his storm windows. We talked about it then. He's doing it out of pity.

ANSORGE Sure, sure, sure—I believe every word you say.

WELZEL [*placing a shot of schnapps in front of the* WEAVERS] There you are. Tell me now, Ansorge, how long's it been since you had a shave?—The gentleman over there wants to know.

SALESMAN [*calls over to them*] Now, Herr Welzel, I said no such thing. I was merely struck by our good weaver's venerable appearance. It's not often you get to see a giant like him.

ANSORGE [*scratches his head in embarrassment*] Sure, sure, sure—well.

SALESMAN Primeval men of nature like him are rather rare nowadays. We've been licked so smooth by civilization . . . but I can still take pleasure in nature in the rough. Bushy eyebrows! Wild beard . . .

HORNIG Now you let me tell you something, sir; people like them can't afford a barber, and a razor is even more out of the question. What grows grows. They can't afford to worry about what they look like.

SALESMAN I beg your pardon, sir, but I had no intention . . . [*quietly to the innkeeper*] Would it be all right to offer the hairy one a glass of beer?

WELZEL I wouldn't try it. He wouldn't take it anyway. He's got strange ideas.

SALESMAN Well, then I won't. Will you allow me, miss? [*He takes a place at* ANNA's *table.*] I can assure you, miss, I noticed your hair the moment I came in. Its gentle brilliance, its softness, and the fullness of it! [*While he speaks he kisses his finger tips as though enchanted.*] And its color . . . like ripe wheat. Come to Berlin with hair like that and you'll be the toast of the town. On my word of honor, you could even go to the Court with such hair . . . [*Leaning back, he looks at her hair.*] Magnificent! Absolutely magnificent!

WIEGAND That's why they've given her the name she's got.

SALESMAN What is it?

ANNA [*laughing constantly to herself*] Oh, don't listen to him!

HORNIG They call you the chestnut filly, don't they?

WELZEL Now, now, that's enough! Don't you be confusing the girl more than she is! She already has enough silly ideas in that head of hers. Today she wants a count and tomorrow it'll be a prince.

FRAU WELZEL You let the girl alone now, father! It's no crime

if a person wants to get ahead in the world. It's a good thing everybody doesn't think like you; if they did nobody'd ever get anywhere. They'd all still be sitting here. If Dreissiger's grandfather had thought like you, they'd all of them still be poor weavers. Now they're rich as kings. And old Tromtra was nothing but a poor weaver, too, and now he's got twelve estates and besides that they made him a nobleman. [FRAU WELZEL *leaves.*] 1 2

WIEGAND Be fair now, Welzel; this time your wife knows what she's talking about. I'll vouch for it. If I thought like you, would I be boss over seven journeymen now?

HORNIG You know your way around all right, no denying that. While a weaver's still running about on two legs, you're already busy with his coffin. 3

WIEGAND If a man's to get ahead in the world, he has to stick by his business.

HORNIG Yes, and you do stick by your business, don't you! You know better than a doctor when death's coming for a weaver's child. 4

WIEGAND [*no longer smiling, suddenly furious*] And you know better than the police where the thieves are among the weavers, and which of them end each week with a nice spool of yarn left over. You come for rags, but you don't object if there's a little yarn among them. 5

HORNIG And luck comes your way in the churchyard. The more of us that go to sleep on wooden planks, the better for you. When you look at all the children's graves, you pat yourself on the belly and say: another good year; the little brats have fallen like June bugs from the trees again. That means another extra quart for me each week. 6

WIEGAND At least that don't make me a receiver of stolen goods.

HORNIG The most you ever do is bill the rich manufacturer twice, or take a couple extra planks from Dreissiger's new building when the moon happens not to be shining. 7

WIEGAND [*turns his back on him*] Babble on all you want but don't bother me with it. [*then suddenly*] Hornig the liar! 8

HORNIG Deadmen's butler!

WIEGAND [*to the others*] He can put a hex on cattle.

HORNIG You watch yourself, or I'll put one on you.

[WEIGAND *grows pale.*] 9

1 FRAU WELZEL [*returns now and places a cup of coffee in front of the* SALESMAN] Should I serve your coffee in the little room, sir?

SALESMAN I should say not! [*with a languishing glance at* ANNA] I shall sit here until I die.

2 [*A* YOUNG FORESTER *and a* PEASANT *enter. The* PEASANT *carries a whip.*]

PEASANT AND FORESTER [*together*] Good day to you! [*They remain standing at the bar.*]

PEASANT Two gingers.

3 WELZEL Welcome to both of you!

[*He pours them their drinks; they both take up their glasses, clink them together, drink down, and place the glasses back on the bar.*]

4 SALESMAN Well, young forester, have a good march?

FORESTER Not bad. I come from Steinseifersdorf.

[TWO OLD WEAVERS *enter and seat themselves beside* ANSORGE, OLD BAUMERT, *and* HORNIG.]

5 SALESMAN Excuse me, but aren't you one of Count Hochheim's foresters?

FORESTER I work for Count Keil.

SALESMAN Of course, of course, that's what I meant to say. It's a little confusing with all these counts and barons and other
6 worthy gentlemen. One needs a giant's memory to remember so much. Why do you carry an axe?

FORESTER I took it from some wood thieves.

OLD BAUMERT These lords of ours take great offense over a
7 piece of kindling wood.

SALESMAN Well, if you don't mind my saying so, suppose everyone took what he wanted . . .

OLD BAUMERT With your permission, sir, there's the same difference here between big and little thieves. There are some here
8 with wholesale lumber businesses who get rich off their stolen wood. But when a poor weaver does it . . .

FIRST OLD WEAVER [*interrupts* BAUMERT] We don't dare take a twig, but these lords they skin us alive. We got protection fees to pay, spinning fees, fees in kind, we got to run here and
9 there.

ANSORGE That's how it is: what the factory owners leave behind for us, their lordships steal from our pockets. 1

SECOND OLD WEAVER [*has taken a place at the next table*] I said so myself to his lordship, I said, you'll pardon me, my lord, I just can't manage to work so many field days this year, I just can't! And why? You'll pardon me, my lord, but the rain ruined everything for me. The flood's carried off the little field I had. I have to work day and night if I'm to live. What a terrible storm! My God, my God, all I could do was stand there and wring my hands! All that good soil came rushing down the hill and into the hut. And all my good, fine seeds! O Jesus, Jesus, I screamed out at the clouds, and for eight days I cried until I almost couldn't see the road anymore. And afterwards I had to lug eighty heavy loads of soil back up the mountain. 2 3

PEASANT [*roughly*] You sure do know how to send up a terrible complaint here. What Heaven sends us, we got to take. And then if things don't go well, whose fault is it but your own? What did you do when business was good? Gambled it all away, and drank it up. If you'd saved something then, you'd have something to fall back on now, instead of stealing yarn and wood. 4

FIRST YOUNG WEAVER [*with some of his comrades in the hallway, talks loudly through the doorway*] A peasant's a peasant even if he sleeps till nine! 5

FIRST OLD WEAVER That's just the way it is: a peasant and a nobleman, they pull at the same rope. When the weaver needs a place to live, the peasant says to him: I'll give you a little hole to live in, and you'll pay me a nice rent and help me get in my hay and my grain; and if you don't want to, you'll see where you'll land. And then you go to another one and he says the same thing. 6

OLD BAUMERT [*enraged*] A weaver's like an apple that everybody takes his bite out of. 7

PEASANT [*flaring up*] Oh, you poor hungry bastards, what are you good for anyway? Can you force a plow down into the soil? Can you plow a straight furrow? Or toss a bundle of oats onto the wagon? You're good for nothing but being lazy and laying with your women! You dirty bastards, what help are you? [*He has paid and now goes off.*] 8

[*The* FORESTER, *laughing, follows the* PEASANT. WELZEL, WEIGAND, *and* FRAU WELZEL *laugh loudly; the* SALESMAN *laughs to himself. When the laughter dies down there is a moment of silence.*] 9

1 HORNIG A peasant like that is as dumb as his own ox. Talking like he didn't know there was any misery here. What don't a person see in these villages around here? I seen four, five people lay naked on one sack of straw.

SALESMAN [*in a mildly reproving tone of voice*] If you'll per-
2 mit me, my good man, there is some divided opinion about the misery in these mountains, if you can read . . .

HORNIG Oh, I can read straight on down the page, just as good as you, No, no, I know what I've seen. I've been around enough with these people. When a man's had a drawrope around his
3 shoulders for forty years, he knows what's going on. What happened to Fuller? His children played around with the neighbor's geese in dung heaps. They died, those people, naked, on the flagstones in their house. They was so hungry they ate that stinking weaver's glue in fear of death. Death took them off by the hundreds.

4 SALESMAN If you can read, as you say, then you must know that the government has investigated the matter and that . . .

HORNIG Yes, we know, we know: A man comes from the government who knows all about it better than if he'd seen it. He wanders about a bit in the village, down there by the brook, where
5 the nicest houses are. Why should he dirty his nice polished boots? And then he thinks: well, the rest of the place must look as good as this, and climbs back in his carriage and rides on home. And then he writes to Berlin that there was no poverty here. But if he'd had a little more patience and climbed up
6 higher in the village where the brook comes in, or across the brook on the narrow side, or even off the road, where the little single shacks are, the old thatch huts on the side of the hill that are so black, so dirty and broken down sometimes that it's not even worth a match to set them on fire—maybe then he'd have something to write about to Berlin. It's to me they should have
7 come, these government gentlemen who wouldn't believe there was any need here. I'd have showed them something. I'd have opened their eyes for them in these starvation pits.

[*The weavers' song is heard from outside.*]

8 WELZEL They're singing the devil's song again.

WIEGAND They're turning the whole village upside down.

FRAU WELZEL It's like there was something in the air.

[JAEGER *and* BAECKER, *arm in arm, at the head of a group of* YOUNG
9 WEAVERS, *enter the hallway noisily and go into the taproom.*]

JAEGER Squadron, halt! Dismount! 1

[*The new arrivals take places at the various tables at which* WEAVERS *are already seated, and engage them in conversation.*]

HORNIG [*calls out to* BAECKER] What does this mean, your running around in a mob like this? 2

BAECKER [*significantly*] Who knows, maybe something might happen. Right, Moritz?

HORNIG Wouldn't that be something! Don't get yourself into trouble.

BAECKER There's already been some blood spilt. Want to see it? 3

[BAECKER *pulls up his sleeve and shows bloody tattoo marks on his bare upper arm. As he does so, the* YOUNG WEAVERS *at the other tables do the same.*]

4

BAECKER We've been to Barber Schmidt's to get tattooed.

HORNIG I see now. No wonder there's such an uproar in the streets, with louts like you babbling all over the village.

JAEGER [*swaggeringly, in a loud voice*] Two quarts here, Welzel! I'll pay! You think maybe I ain't got enough to pay? Wait and see! If we wanted to we could sit here drinking schnapps and sipping coffee till tomorrow morning, just like any *traveling salesman.* 5

[*Some of the* YOUNG WEAVERS *laugh.*]

6

SALESMAN [*with comic surprise*] Are you referring to me?

[WELZEL, FRAU WELZEL, *and* ANNA, *the joiner* WIEGAND, *and the* TRAVELING SALESMAN *laugh.*]

JAEGER If the cap fits, wear it.

7

SALESMAN If I may say so, young man, your business seems to be going quite well.

JAEGER No complaints. I travel around selling ready-to-wear goods. I go in halves with the manufacturers. The hungrier the weaver is, the better I eat. The more they need, the better I feed. 8

BAECKER Well said, Moritz! Well said!

WELZEL [*brings the corn schnapps; on his way back to the bar he stops and slowly turns himself with all the power of his nature and bulk to face the* WEAVERS *again; clamly, but em-* 9

phatically] You will let the gentleman alone, he's done nothing to you.

YOUNG WEAVERS Who's hurting him?

[FRAU WELZEL *has exchanged some words with the* SALESMAN; *she picks up his coffee cup with the remainder of the coffee and takes it into the next room. The* SALESMAN *follows her as the* WEAVERS *laugh.*]

YOUNG WEAVERS [*singing*]

Our hangmen are the Dreissigers,
Their servants are their henchmen . . .

WELZEL Psst! Quiet! You can sing that song wherever you want, but not in *my* house!

FIRST OLD WEAVER He's right, you stop singing.

BAECKER [*shouts*] But we're going to pass by Dreissiger's once more; we want to make sure *he* hears the song again.

WIEGAND You better not go too far so that he takes it all wrong!

[*Laughter and cries of "Ho-ho!"*]

[OLD WITTIG, *a gray-haired old smith, enters. He has on a leather apron and wooden shoes, and is sooty as though he had just come from his workshop. He waits, standing at the bar, for a glass of brandy.*]

WITTIG Let them do what they want. Dogs that bark, don't bite.

OLD WEAVERS Wittig! Wittig!

WITTIG Here's Wittig! What do you want with him?

OLD WEAVERS Wittig's here—Wittig, Wittig—Come over here, Wittig, sit down with us!—Come over here, Wittig!

WITTIG I better be careful sitting with rascals like you.

JAEGER Come on, have a drink with us.

WITTIG You can keep your brandy. When I drink I pay by myself.

[WITTIG *takes his schnapps glass and sits with* BAUMERT *and* ANSORGE.]

WITTIG [*tapping* ANSORGE *on the belly*] What do you weavers use for food, sauerkraut and louse meat?

OLD BAUMERT [*ecstatically*] And what would you say if we're not happy with that no more? 1

WITTIG [*stares dumbly at the* WEAVERS, *with affected surprise*] No, no, no, don't tell me it's you, Heinerle! [*bursts out into laughter*] Lord in Heaven, I could die laughing! Old Baumert wants rebellion. That really does it! Next it'll be the tailor's turn, and then the baa-baa sheep will want a rebellion and then the mice and the rats. My God, if that ain't going to be a fine dance! [*almost helpless with laughter*] 2

OLD BAUMERT I'm no different now than I ever was, Wittig, and I still say it'd be better if it worked out peaceable. 3

WITTIG It'll work out, the dirty way, but not peaceable. What was ever worked out peaceable? Did they work it out peaceable in France? Maybe Robespierre patted the hands of the rich? What he said was: Away with them all! To the guillotine with them! That's the way it has to work, *allong sangfang*. Did you ever see a roast duck fly into your open mouth? 4

OLD BAUMERT If only I could make just half a living . . .

FIRST OLD WEAVER We're in water up to our chins already, Wittig.

SECOND OLD WEAVER We almost don't want to go home again. Work or lay abed, you starve both ways. 5

FIRST OLD WEAVER At home a man's like to go mad.

ANSORGE It's all the same to me. It'll come one way or the other.

OLD WEAVERS [*with mounting excitement*] No peace anywhere anymore.—No spirit left to work.—Up there by us in Steinkunzendorf there's a man who sits beside the brook the whole day and washes himself, naked as the Lord God made him. It's made him lose his senses. 6

THIRD OLD WEAVER [*raises himself up, moved by the Spirit, and begins to talk with "tongues," raising his finger threateningly*] A judgment is nigh. Forsake your dealings with the rich and the great. A judgment is nigh. The Lord God of Sabaoth . . . 7

[*A number of the* WEAVERS *laugh; he is pushed back into his seat.*]

WELZEL He can't even drink a little glass without going out of his head. 8

THIRD OLD WEAVER [*jumps up again*] Alas, they believe not in God, nor in Heaven nor Hell. Religion is a mockery . . .

FIRST OLD WEAVER Let that be enough! 9

1 BAECKER You let the man pray his sermon. There might be somebody who could take it to heart.

MANY VOICES [*tumultuously*] Let him speak!—Let him!

THIRD OLD WEAVER [*with his voice raised*] And therefore Hell opened wide its soul, and its jaws gaped without measure, so
2 that all who violate the rights of the poor, and use force upon them in misery, might descend into it—thus speaks the Lord.

[*A great commotion.*]

THIRD OLD WEAVER [*suddenly declaims in schoolboy fashion*]

3 If one regard it well
How strange it is to tell
Why anyone should scorn
The linen weaver's ware.

BAECKER But we're only fustian weavers.

4 [*Laughter.*]

HORNIG Linen weavers are even more miserable. They wander about in the hills like ghosts. You people here still have enough nerve to talk back.

5 WITTIG You think maybe the worst is over for us here? The little bit of strength they still got left in their bodies the factory owners will beat out of them soon enough.

BAECKER He even said it: Before I'm through with these weavers they'll work for a crust of bread.

6 [*A great commotion.*]

VARIOUS OLD AND YOUNG WEAVERS Who said that?

BAECKER That's what Dreissiger said about the weavers . . .

7 A YOUNG WEAVER We ought to sling the filthy bastard up by his ass!

JAEGER Listen here, Wittig, you're always the one telling us about the French Revolution. You always had a lot to say. Well, maybe a time's coming soon when a man can show himself for what
8 he is: a big-mouth or an honest man.

WITTIG [*infuriated*] You say just one more thing! Have you heard the whistle of bullets? Have you ever stood guarding an enemy country?

JAEGER I never said you were a bad one. We're friends, aren't we?
9 I didn't mean anything bad by that.

WITTIG I don't give a damn for your friendship, you bloated oaf! 1

[POLICEMAN KUTSCHE *enters.*]

A NUMBER OF VOICES Shhh! Shhh! The police!

[*There is a sound of hissing which continues for an extremely long time, until finally there is complete silence.*] 2

KUTSCHE [*takes a place at the center column, while the others maintain a deep silence*] A small brandy, please. [*Silence again.*]

WITTIG Well, Kutsche, you've come to see that everything's all right with us here? 3

KUTSCHE [*without listening to* WITTIG] Good morning, Master Wiegand!

WIEGAND [*still in the corner in front of the bar*] Thank you, Kutsche. 4

KUTSCHE How's business?

WIEGAND Thanks for asking.

BAECKER The Superintendent's afraid we're ruining our stomachs with all the pay we're getting.— 5

[*Laughter.*]

JAEGER Tell him about it, Welzel: we've been sitting here eating roast pork, and sauce, and dumplings, and sauerkraut, and now we've settled back for some champagne.— 6

[*Laughter.*]

WELZEL Your world's upside down today, uh?

KUTSCHE And even if you had champagne and roast pork, you still wouldn't be satisfied. I don't have champagne either and still I have to get on. 7

BAECKER [*with reference to* KUTSCHE'S *nose*] He waters that beet-red pickle of his with brandy and beer, that's why it's so ripe.—

[*Laughter.*] 8

WITTIG It's a hard life for a policeman like him: one time he has to lock up a starving beggar boy, another time he has to lead a pretty young weaver girl astray; then he's got to get stone drunk so he can beat his wife up, so that she can go running to the neighbor's in mortal fright; and then he has to ride around 9

on horseback and lay in bed until nine. I tell you, it's not easy!

KUTSCHE Talk all you want! Sooner or later you'll talk a rope around your neck. We already know what kind *you* are. Even the Magistrate knows that seditious tongue of yours. I know someone who'd bring his wife and child to the poorhouse with his drinking and squatting in the village tavern, and get himself into jail. He'll keep on agitating and agitating until he ends up with what he deserves.

WITTIG [*laughs bitterly*] Who knows what's to come? You may be right about that last bit. [*bursting out even more furiously*] But if it ever comes to that, I know who I've got to thank for it, who blabbed to the factory owners and to the lords, who shamed me and blackened my character, so that I can't get work anywhere—who turned the peasants against me and the millers, so that all week long I don't have a single horse to shoe, or a wheel to fix. I know who it is. Once I pulled this miserable beast off his horse because he was beating a poor dumb boy with a horsewhip, for stealing a few unripe pears. But let me tell you this, and you know me: if you ever get me in jail, you'd better write up your will. And if ever I hear even a whisper of it, I'll take up anything I can get, whether it's a horseshoe or a hammer, the spoke of a wheel or a water bucket, and I'll search you out, even if I have to pull you out of bed from next to your wife, and I'll beat your skull in, just as sure as my name is Wittig. [*He has jumped up and attempts to attack* KUTSCHE.]

OLD AND YOUNG WEAVERS [*holding him back*] Be reasonable, Wittig, be reasonable!

[KUTSCHE *has risen involuntarily; his face is pale.*]

KUTSCHE [*Retreating during the following. The nearer he gets to the door the braver he becomes. His last words are spoken on the threshold, so as to be able to disappear immediately thereafter.*] What do you want from me? I never had anything to do with you. I never hurt you. I've got no business with you. What I came to say was to you weavers: the Superintendent of Police forbids you to sing that song, the "Dreissiger Song," or whatever you call it. And if it doesn't stop in the streets at once, he'll take pains to give you ample time and leisure for it in jail. You can sing there on water and bread as long as you like. [*He goes off.*]

WITTIG [*shouts after him*] He can't forbid us a damned thing! And if we shout it till the windows shake, and they hear us in Reichenbach, and if we sing until all the factory owners' houses

tumble down on their heads, and the helmets of the Superintendents dance around on their skulls, that's nobody's business but ours. 1

BAECKER [*has risen in the meanwhile, given the sign to sing, and begins himself as they all join in during the last of* WITTIG'S *speech*] 2

A bloody justice rages here,
A law that's worse than lynching,
Where courtroom trials are not the rule,
They kill us without flinching.

[WELZEL *attempts to keep them quiet, but they pay no attention to him.* WIEGAND *covers his ears and runs away. The* WEAVERS *rise and, while the following verses of the song are sung, follow* WITTIG *and* BAECKER *who, by means of nods, have given signs to break up.*] 3

A man is slowly tortured here,
A man is tortured long, 4
His sighs are counted as the proof
Of his affliction's song.

[*The greater number of the* WEAVERS *sing the following verses on the street; only a few of the younger men are still inside the tavern, paying. At the end of the next line the room is empty except for* WELZEL, FRAU WELZEL, ANNA, HORNIG, *and* OLD BAUMERT.] 5

You scoundrels all, you brood of hell,
You demons of the fire,
You eat the poor from house and home—
May curses be your hire. 6

WELZEL [*calmly gathers the glasses together*] They've sure gone wild today.

[OLD BAUMERT *is about to leave.*] 7

HORNIG What in God's name are they up to now, Baumert?

OLD BAUMERT They're on their way to Dreissiger's to see that he adds something to their wages.

WELZEL Do you go along with all these crazy goings on?

OLD BAUMERT It's like this, Welzel: I can't help it. Sometimes a young man *can* go, but an old man *must.* [*He goes off somewhat embarrassed.*] 8

HORNIG [*rises*] It'll sure surprise me if this don't turn out bad.

WELZEL Even these old ones are losing their heads!

HORNIG Well, everybody's got a dream. 9

ACT FOUR

[*Peterswaldau.—A private room in the house of* DREISSIGER, *the textile manufacturer. It is a room luxuriously decorated in the frosty taste of the first half of the century. The ceiling, stove, and doors are white; the wallpaper is of a cold lead-gray tone, with straight rows of small flowers on it. The furniture is of mahogany and upholstered in red, carved, and richly decorated; the cabinet and chairs are of the same material. To the right, between two windows with cherry-red damask curtains, stands the secretary with a drop front; on the wall directly opposite it is the sofa, not far from the iron safe; in front of the sofa are table, easy chairs, and other chairs. A gun cabinet stands at the back wall. All the walls are partially hidden by bad pictures in gold frames. Above the sofa hangs a mirror with a sturdy, gilt, rococo frame around it. A single door, left, leads into the hallway; an open double door in the rear wall leads into a salon, decorated in the same uncomfortable splendor. There are two women in the salon,* FRAU DREISSIGER *and* FRAU PASTOR KITTELHAUS, *busy looking at pictures.—In addition,* PASTOR KITTELHAUS *is in conversation with* WEINHOLD, *the tutor and theology student.*]

KITTELHAUS [*a small, friendly little man, enters the front room with the tutor, both of them smoking and talking pleasantly; looks around and, finding no one there, shakes his head in surprise*] There's nothing at all surprising about it, Herr Weinhold; the fact is you are still young. When we old folks were your age—I don't mean to say we had the same ideas, but similar ones. Yes, by all means similar. And then there's always something nice about youth—all those wonderful ideals. But, alas, they are fleeting, fleeting as the April sunshine. Wait till you get to be my age! When for thirty years a man has had his say from the pulpit fifty-two times a year, not counting saints' days, then he must of necessity become more calm. Think of me sometimes, Herr Weinhold, when you have come as far as I.

WEINHOLD [*nineteen years of age, pale, thin, tall, with simple long blonde hair. His movements are very restless and nervous.*] With all due respect, Herr Pastor . . . I simply don't know . . . After all, there is a great diversity in our natures.

KITTELHAUS My dear Herr Weinhold, however restless an individual you may be—[*in a tone of reproof*]—and you are exactly that—however violently and unrestrainedly you may attack existing conditions, you will calm down in the end. Oh, yes, I quite

admit that among our brethren in office there are individuals of advanced age who still play youthful pranks. One preaches against the evils of drinking, and founds temperance societies; the other composes proclamations which make undeniably gripping reading, but what good are they? They do not lessen the distress among the weavers, wherever it may exist, whereas social freedom is undermined. No, no, in cases of this sort one would really rather say: cobbler, stick to your last! And you who are keeper of souls, do not become keeper of bellies! Preach the pure Word of God, and leave the rest to Him Who provides shelter and food for the birds and will not suffer the lily of the field to perish.—But now I should like to know what has happened to our good host, why he has disappeared so suddenly?

[FRAU DREISSIGER *enters the front room now with* FRAU PASTOR KITTELHAUS. *She is in her thirties, a pretty woman of a healthy, robust sort. A certain discrepancy between her manner of speaking, or the way in which she moves, and her elegant, rich way of dressing is obvious.*]

FRAU DREISSIGER You're quite right, Herr Kittelhaus, Wilhelm does this all the time. Whenever he gets an idea he runs away and lets me sit here. I've said enough about it already, but what good does it do?

KITTELHAUS My dear, good woman, that's why he is a businessman.

WEINHOLD Unless I'm mistaken something's happened downstairs.

DREISSIGER [*enters; hot, excited*] Well, Rosa, have you served the coffee?

FRAU DREISSIGER [*sulking*] Why must you always run off?

DREISSIGER [*lightly*] Oh, you wouldn't understand!

KITTELHAUS I beg your pardon, Herr Dreissiger, but have you had any trouble?

DREISSIGER I have trouble every day that the Good Lord lets be, my good Herr Kittelhaus. I'm used to it. Well, Rosa! Are you taking care of it?

[FRAU DREISSIGER *walks ill-humoredly to the wide, embroidered bellpull, and tugs violently at it several times.*]

DREISSIGER I wish—[*after a few strides*]—Herr Weinhold, that you had been along just now. You would really have seen something. And besides . . . But come, what do you say to a game of whist?

1 KITTELHAUS Why, of course, Herr Dreissiger, of course! Shake the dust and burden of the day from your shoulders, and join the company!

DREISSIGER [*has walked to a window, pulls aside one of the curtains; involuntarily*] Hoodlums!—Come here, Rosa!

2 [FRAU DREISSIGER *goes to him.*]

DREISSIGER Do you see that tall red-haired man over there?

KITTELHAUS They call him Red Baecker.

DREISSIGER Tell me, is that the same man who insulted you the
3 day before yesterday? You remember what you told me about when Johann was helping you into the carriage?

FRAU DREISSIGER [*pouts*] I don't remember.

DREISSIGER Will you stop sulking! I must know. I've had enough
4 of his impudence. If he's the one, then I will make him answer for it.

[*The weavers' song is heard.*]

DREISSIGER Will you listen to that, will you listen!

5 KITTELHAUS [*extremely angry*] When will this nonsense stop! I must confess I think it is time the police step in. If you please. [*He goes to the window.*] Do you see, Herr Weinhold! Those aren't merely young people out there, there are old, steady, weavers out there, too, who for many years I have thought to be respectable, God-fearing men. And there they are. There they
6 are, taking part in this unheard-of nonsense. They are trampling God's law underfoot. Do you still insist on defending these people?

WEINHOLD Certainly not, Herr Kittelhaus. That is, Herr Kittelhaus, *cum grano salis.* They are nothing but hungry, ignorant
7 people. They are expressing their dissatisfaction in the only way they know. I couldn't possibly expect that such people . . .

FRAU PASTOR KITTELHAUS [*small, thin, faded, looks more like an old maid than an aging wife*] Herr Weinhold, Herr Weinhold, how *can* you!

8 DREISSIGER Herr Weinhold, I'm terribly sorry . . . I did not take you into my house so that you could lecture me on humanitarianism. I must ask that you confine yourself to educating my sons, and to leave my own affairs entirely to me! Do you understand?

WEINHOLD [*stands rigid and white as death for a moment, then*
9 *bows with a forced smile; softly*] Of course, of course, I quite

understand. I saw this coming; it is my wish as well. [*He goes off.*] 1

DREISSIGER [*brutally*] Then see to it as soon as possible, we need the room!

FRAU DREISSIGER But Wilhelm, Wilhelm!

DREISSIGER Have you lost your senses? Would you protect a man who would stand up in defense of such vulgar, villainous libel as this song? 2

FRAU DREISSIGER But, Wilhelm, he didn't, he didn't at all, he didn't . . .

DREISSIGER Herr Kittelhaus, did he defend it or did he not defend it? 3

KITTELHAUS Herr Dreissiger, you must consider his youth.

FRAU PASTOR KITTELHAUS I just don't understand, that young man comes from such a good, respectable family. His father held public office for forty years and was never guilty of the slightest error. His mother was overjoyed when he found such a wonderful position here. But now, now he hasn't the least idea how to make the most of it. 4

PFEIFER [*tears open the hall door and shouts into the room*] Herr Dreissiger, Herr Dreissiger! They've caught him. 5

DREISSIGER [*hastily*] Did someone go for the police?

PFEIFER The Superintendent is coming up the stairs now.

DREISSIGER [*in the doorway*] Your servant, sir! I am happy that you have come. 6

[KITTELHAUS *indicates to the women through gestures that it were better if they retire. He,* FRAU PASTOR KITTELHAUS *and* FRAU DREISSIGER *go into the salon.* HEIDE, *the police superintendent enters. He is a man of about fifty, of medium height, fat, with high blood pressure; he is wearing a cavalry uniform with a long sabre and spurs.*] 7

DREISSIGER [*in extreme excitement to the* SUPERINTENDENT] Sir, I have finally had one of the chief singers of this mob taken captive by my dye-workers. I could stand it no longer. Their impudence simply knows no bounds. It's disgraceful. I have guests in my house and these scoundrels have the nerve to . . . They insult my wife whenever she goes out; my sons' lives are not safe. I risk having my guests pummeled about. I assure you that if it is possible in a well-ordered community for unoffending people like myself and my family to be publicly put to ridicule 8 9

1 time and again . . . well then . . . then I must regret to having different ideas about law and morality.

HEIDE Certainly not . . . No, certainly not, Herr Dreissiger! I am completely at your disposal. You may rest at ease, I am completely at your disposal. Everything is quite in order . . . In fact
2 I'm delighted that you've caught one of the chief trouble-makers. I'm pleased that this matter is finally coming to a head. There are a few disturbers of the peace around here on whom I've had my eye for a long time.

DREISSIGER A few young brats, that's right, a lazy rabble of louts
3 afraid to work, that lead disgusting lives, and hang around day after day in the taverns until they've drunk down their last pfennig. But I am determined once and for all to put an end to the trade of these professional foul-mouths. It is in the public interest, not merely in my interest.

4 HEIDE No doubt about it! No doubt about it, Herr Dreissiger. No one could possibly blame you. And whatever lies in my power . . .

DREISSIGER This pack of louts should be gone after with a bull-whip.

5 HEIDE Quite right, quite right. We must make an example of them.

[KUTSCHE *enters and stands at attention. With the door to the hallway open, the sound of heavy footsteps coming up the stairs*
6 *is heard.*]

KUTSCHE I wish to report, sir, that we've taken one of the men.

DREISSIGER Would you care to see this man, sir?

HEIDE Why, certainly, certainly. First of all we must see him at
7 close range. Would you oblige me, Herr Dreissiger, and not speak to him just at first. I assure you every satisfaction, or my name is not Heide.

DREISSIGER I cannot be satisfied with that, the man must be turned over to the magistrate without fail.
8

[JAEGER *is led in by five of the* DYE-WORKERS *whose faces, hands, and clothes are covered with dye, having come directly from work. The prisoner, his cap set cockily on his head, behaves with impudent gaiety and finds himself, as a result of his earlier*
9 *consumption of liquor, in high spirits.*]

JAEGER Oh, you poor sons-of-bitches! You call yourselves workers, you call yourselves comrades? Before I ever did a thing like that—before I ever took one of my fellow workers prisoner, I think my hand would wilt on my arm first! 1

[*At a sign from* HEIDE, KUTSCHE *signifies to the* DYE-WORKERS *that they take their hands from the captive.* JAEGER *stands there free and impudent, while around him all doors are being guarded.*] 2

HEIDE [*shouts at* JAEGER] Off with your hat, you lout!

[JAEGER *removes his cap, but very slowly, without relinquishing his ironic smile.*] 3

HEIDE What's your name?

JAEGER What do you think I am, your swineherd?

[*His words create a great commotion among those present.*] 4

DREISSIGER Who does he think he is!

HEIDE [*changes color, is about to blow up, but controls his rage*] We'll see about that! I asked you what your name is! [*since he receives no answer, wildly*] Answer me or you will get twenty-five lashes! 5

[JAEGER, *with absolute cheerfulness, and without so much as batting an eyelid at the fury of words, calls over the heads of those present to a pretty* SERVANT GIRL *who, about to serve coffee, stands wide-eyed looking at the unexpected scene.*] 6

JAEGER Well, ironing-board Emily, what are you doing with this crowd? You better see to it that you get out of here, there might come a wind that will blow everything away over night.

[*The* SERVANT GIRL *stares at* JAEGER, *and as soon as she is aware that it is she who is being spoken to, she grows red with embarrassment, covers her face with her hands and runs out, leaving the dishes behind her just as they are.*] 7

HEIDE [*almost beside himself, to* DREISSIGER] I have never in my life come across such unheard of impudence in . . . 8

[JAEGER *spits on the floor.*]

DREISSIGER May I remind you that this is not a stable!

HEIDE I have reached the end of my patience. Now for the last time: what is your name? 9

[KITTELHAUS, *during the last scene, has looked through the slightly open door to the salon and listened. He comes forward now to intervene, shaking with excitement, unable to restrain himself any longer.*]

KITTELHAUS His name is Jaeger, Herr Superintendent. Moritz. Right? Moritz Jaeger. [*to* JAEGER] Well, say something, Jaeger, don't you remember me?

JAEGER [*seriously*] You are Pastor Kittelhaus.

KITTELHAUS Yes, Jaeger, the keeper of your soul! The same one who accepted you into the Community of Saints when you were but a babe in swaddling clothes. The same one out of whose hands you first received the Lord's Supper. Do you still remember? I took every pain to bring home the Word of God to your soul. Is this the thanks I have?

JAEGER [*darkly, like a humiliated schoolboy*] I put a thaler in the plate.

KITTELHAUS Money, money . . . Do you perhaps believe that that filthy, miserable piece of money . . . Keep your money, I prefer it that way. What nonsense! Be good. Be a Christian! Think of what you once promised. Keep the Lord's Commandments, be good and be pious. Money, money . . .

JAEGER I'm a Quaker, Herr Kittelhaus, I don't believe in anything anymore.

KITTELHAUS Quaker! What are you talking about! See to it that you better yourself, and forget these words that you know nothing about! The Quakers are pious people, not heathens like you. Quaker! Quaker!

HEIDE With your permission, Herr Kittelhaus. [*He steps between* KITTELHAUS *and* JAEGER.] Kutsche, bind his hands!

VOICES [*from outside, yelling wildly*] Jaeger! Jaeger! Come out!

DREISSIGER [*slightly frightened like the others present, steps automatically to the window*] What's the meaning of this?

HEIDE Oh, I understand all right. It means they want this scoundrel outside again. But I'm afraid we can't do them the favor. Do you understand, Kutsche? He goes to jail.

KUTSCHE [*the rope in his hand, hesitant*] With all due respect, sir, we may have some trouble. That's a damned big crowd down there. A regular band of devils. There's Baecker, and there's the smith . . .

KITTELHAUS Wtih your permission—so as not to incense them any

more, would it not be better, Herr Superintendent, if we tried to do this peaceably. Perhaps Jaeger will promise to come along quietly, or . . . 1

HEIDE Do you know what you are saying? He's my responsibility! I couldn't possibly allow such a thing. Come on, Kutsche, don't waste time! 2

JAEGER [*puts his hands together and holds them out, laughing*] Tighter, tighter, tight as you can. It won't be for long.

[KUTSCHE *binds him with the help of his men.*]

HEIDE All right now, off with you, march! [*to* DREISSIGER] If you're worried about him escaping, let six of your dye-workers go along. They can form a guard around him. I'll ride in front and Kutsche will follow. And if anyone gets in the way he'll be beaten down. 3

VOICES [*from below, shouting*] Cock-a-doodle-do! Bowwowwow! 4

HEIDE [*threateningly towards the window*] Rabble! I'll cock-a-doodle and bowwow you! Now march!

[HEIDE *strides out ahead with sabre drawn. The others follow with* JAEGER.] 5

JAEGER [*shouts as he goes off*] Let her highness Frau Dreissiger act as proud as she wants, but she's no better than us. There's hundreds of times she served my father three pfennigs of schnapps. Squadron, left! March! [*He goes off laughing.*]

DREISSIGER [*after a pause, seemingly calm*] Well, what do you think, Herr Kittelhaus! Shall we have a game of whist? I think there's nothing to prevent us now. [*He lights a cigar, emitting short laughs as he does so; as soon as it is lighted, he laughs loudly.*] I'm beginning to see the thing as quite amusing. That scoundrel! [*in a nervous burst of laughter*] It's incredibly ludicrous. First the row at table with Weinhold—then five minutes later he takes his leave, wherever that may be! Then *this* business. And now we'll have a game of whist. 6 7

KITTELHAUS Yes, but . . . [*Roaring is heard from downstairs.*] Yes, but . . . That crowd is making a terrible noise down there. 8

DREISSIGER Then let's retire to another room. We won't be disturbed there.

KITTELHAUS [*shaking his head*] If only I knew what has got into these people. I must agree with Herr Weinhold, at least until quite recently I was of the opinion that these weavers were a 9

humble, patient, and easily handled class. Wouldn't you say so, Herr Dreissiger?

DREISSIGER Of course they were once patient and easily handled; of course they were once well-mannered and orderly. At least as long as these humanitarians left them alone. These people have had it made clear enough to them for a long time in what terrible misery they find themselves. Just think of it: all those societies and committees for the relief of distress among the weavers. Finally the weaver believes it himself, and now they've all gone out of their minds. Let one of them come back and set their heads straight again. Now that they're started they grumble at everything. They don't like this, and they don't like that. Now they want nothing but the best.

[*Suddenly a loud, swelling cry of* "Hurray!" *is heard from the* CROWD.]

KITTELHAUS And so with all their humanitarianism all they've succeeded in doing is making wolves out of lambs.

DREISSIGER I wouldn't say that, Herr Kittelhaus. If you look at the matter with calm understanding, something good might come of it even yet. Perhaps such occurrences as this will not go unnoticed in leading circles. It is possible they will be convinced that this can go on no longer, that something must happen, unless our local industry is to be completely ruined.

KITTELHAUS Tell me then, what is the cause of this enormous depression?

DREISSIGER Foreign markets have barricaded themselves from us through high import duty. We lose our best markets there, and here at home we have to fight all kinds of competition. We're being abandoned, completely abandoned.

PFEIFER [*totters in pale and breathless*] Herr Dreissiger, Herr Dreissiger!

DREISSIGER [*already in the doorway to the salon and about to leave, turns, irritated*] Well, what is it now, Pfeifer?

PFEIFER No, no . . . just a minute!

DREISSIGER What's the matter?

KITTELHAUS You're frightening us. Say something.

PFEIFER [*not yet recovered*] No, just a minute! I never saw anything like it! The Superintendent . . . they really got themselves into it this time.

DREISSIGER For God's sake, man, what is it? Has someone broken his neck? 1

PFEIFER [*almost crying with fear, yells out*] They've set Moritz Jaeger free. They thrashed the Superintendent and chased him off, and then they thrashed the policeman and chased him off. Without his helmet . . . his sabre broken . . . No, no! 2

DREISSIGER Pfeifer, you've gone mad!

KITTELHAUS This could well mean revolution.

PFEIFER [*sitting in a chair, his whole body trembling, whimpering*] It's serious, Herr Dreissiger, it's serious! 3

DREISSIGER That whole damned police force can go and . . .

PFEIFER It's serious, Herr Dreissiger!

DREISSIGER Oh, shut your mouth, Pfeifer! For God's sake!

[FRAU DREISSIGER *enters from the salon with* FRAU PASTOR KITTELHAUS.] 4

FRAU DREISSIGER This is disgraceful, Wilhelm. Our whole evening has been ruined. Frau Kittelhaus just said she thought that she'd rather go home.

KITTELHAUS My dear Frau Dreissiger, perhaps it is the best solution for right now . . . 5

FRAU DREISSIGER But, Wilhelm, why don't you do something really drastic about it?

DREISSIGER Go on and try! Go on! Go on! [*standing helplessly in front of* KITTELHAUS] Am I a tyrant? Am I a slave driver? 6

JOHANN [*enters*] Ma'am, I've got the carriage ready. Herr Weinhold's already put Jorgel and Karlchen in the wagon. If it gets much worse, we can leave.

FRAU DREISSIGER What's there to get worse? 7

JOHANN Well, I don't know, ma'am. I just thought I'd tell you. There are more people coming all the time. They already ran off the Superintendent and the policeman.

PFEIFER It's serious, Herr Dreissiger, it's serious!

FRAU DREISSIGER [*with mounting fear*] What's going to happen? What do these people want? Surely they can't attack us, Johann. 8

JOHANN There are some awful rough ones down there, ma'am.

PFEIFER It's serious, it's serious.

DREISSIGER Shut up, you fool! Are the doors barred? 9

KITTELHAUS Do me one favor . . . do me this favor . . . I've come to a decision . . . just one favor . . . [*to* JOHANN] What do the people want?

JOHANN [*embarrassed*] They want more pay, the crazy bastards.

KITTELHAUS Very well!—I shall go out and do my duty. I shall speak seriously with these people.

JOHANN But, Herr Kittelhaus, Herr Kittelhaus, you mustn't! They won't listen to words.

KITTELHAUS My dear Herr Dreissiger, one word more. I should like to ask you to station some people behind the door, and as soon as I have gone out, to close it behind me.

FRAU PASTOR KITTELHAUS Joseph, you're not really going to do it.

KITTELHAUS I am. I am. I know what I am doing. Have no fear, the Lord will protect me.

[FRAU PASTOR KITTELHAUS *presses his hand in hers, steps back, and wipes tears from her eyes.*]

KITTELHAUS [*while the incessant dull rumbling of a great mob of* PEOPLE *forces its way up from below*] I shall pretend . . . I shall pretend that I am on my way home. I want to see whether my spiritual office . . . whether or not there is still that much respect left in these people . . . I want to see . . . [*He takes his hat and walking stick.*] I go forward in the Name of God.

[*He goes off accompanied by* DREISSIGER, PFEIFER, *and* JOHANN.]

FRAU PASTOR KITTELHAUS My dear Frau Dreissiger—[*She breaks into tears and throws her arms around* FRAU DREISSIGER.]—They mustn't hurt him!

FRAU DREISSIGER [*lost in thought*] I really don't know, Frau Kittelhaus . . . what I feel. Things like this aren't possible. If that's how it is . . . then it's just like saying it's a sin to be rich. If someone had told me all this, Frau Kittelhaus, I don't know but I would rather have remained with the little I had at first.

FRAU PASTOR KITTELHAUS My dear Frau Dreissiger, there are troubles and disappointments in every way of life.

FRAU DREISSIGER Of course, of course, that's what I tell myself, too. And just because we have more than other people . . . Lord only knows we didn't steal it. We came by every pfennig honestly. Such things are simply not possible, that people come and attack you. Is it my husband's fault if business is bad?

[*A tumultuous roaring is heard from below. While the two women still look at one another, pale and frightened,* DREISSIGER *rushes into the room.*] 1

DREISSIGER Quick, Rosa, throw something over your shoulders and get into the carriage! I'll be right there! [*He rushes towards the safe, opens it and removes various valuable articles.*] 2

JOHANN [*entering*] Everything's ready! But hurry before they take the back door, too!

FRAU DREISSIGER [*panic-stricken, throws her arms around* JOHANN] Dear, dear Johann! Save us, dear, dear Johann! Save my boys, oh, oh . . . 3

DREISSIGER Be reasonable! Let go of Johann!

JOHANN Ma'am, ma'am! You mustn't worry. Our horses are in good shape. Nobody can overtake us. If anyone gets in my way I'll run over him. [*He goes off.*] 4

FRAU PASTOR KITTELHAUS [*in helpless fear*] But my husband? Herr Dreissiger, my husband?

DREISSIGER Frau Kittelhaus, Frau Kittelhaus, he's all right. You must calm yourself, he's all right. 5

FRAU PASTOR KITTELHAUS Something terrible has happened to him. You just won't tell me, you just won't tell me.

DREISSIGER Oh, never mind, they'll regret it. I know exactly who's to blame. Such a nameless, shameless piece of impudence will not stay unavenged. The devil take the community that would manhandle its own pastor. Mad dogs, that's what they are, beasts gone mad, and they will be handled accordingly. [*to* FRAU DREISSIGER *who stands there as though in a trance*] Go on now, move. [*Pounding is heard against the front door.*] Don't you hear? The rabble has lost its senses. [*The clatter of broken glass panes on the ground floor is heard.*] The rabble's gone mad. There's nothing we can do but get ourselves out of here. 6 7

INDIVIDUAL VOICES [*from off stage*] Bring Pfeifer out!—Bring Pfeifer out!

FRAU DREISSIGER Pfeifer, Pfeifer, they want Pfeifer out there! 8

PFEIFER [*rushes in*] Herr Dreissiger, there are people at the back door already. We can't hold the front door more than three minutes longer. Wittig's banging at it with a pail, like a madman.

INDIVIDUAL VOICES [*from off stage*] Bring Pfeifer out!—Bring Pfeifer out! 9

[FRAU DREISSIGER *runs off as though chased;* FRAU PASTOR KITTELHAUS *follows her.* PFEIFER *listens, grows pale, understands the calling and is gripped with maddening fear. The following is spoken at a frantic pace, while he cries, whimpers, begs, and whines. He overwhelms* DREISSIGER *with childish affections, he caresses his cheeks and arms, kisses his hands, and finally clings to him like a drunken man, thereby restraining and fettering* DREISSIGER *without letting him go.*]

PFEIFER Dear, good, kind Herr Dreissiger, don't leave me behind, I always served you faithfully; and I always handled the people good, too. I couldn't give them more wages than you'd set. Don't leave me here, they'll kill me. If they find me they'll beat me to death. My God, my God! My wife, my children . . .

DREISSIGER [*tries in vain to free himself from* PFEIFER] At least let go of me, man! We'll see, we'll see about it.

[*He goes off with* PFEIFER. *The room is empty for several seconds. Window glass is shattered in the salon. A loud crack reverberates through the house, from below there is heard a roar of* "Hurray!" *And then silence. Several seconds pass, then the sounds of quiet, cautious footsteps are heard on the stairs leading to the second floor, as well as quiet, timid exclamations.*]

VOICES To the left!—Upstairs!—Psst!—Slowly! Slowly! Don't slip! —Take it easy!—Damn, what's this!—Get on there!—We're going to a wedding!—Go on in!—Go on!

[YOUNG WEAVERS, *both boys and girls, appear at the door to the hallway; they dare not enter, and one tries to push the other on into the room from behind. After a few seconds their shyness is overcome and the poor, thin, often sickly figures dressed in rags or mended clothes spread themselves out across* DREISSIGER'S *room and across the salon. They are curious at first and look shyly at things, then they touch them. The girls try out the sofas; groups form and admire their reflections in the mirror. Some climb up on the chairs to look at the pictures and to take them down; in the meanwhile other miserable forms stream in from the hallway.*]

AN OLD WEAVER [*enters*] No, no, I don't want no part of it! They're already tearing things apart downstairs. It's all madness! There ain't no sense or reason in it. It will all turn out a bad thing in the end. No man who's got a clear head would do such a thing. I'll be careful and take no part in such crime!

[JAEGER, BAECKER, WITTIG *with a wooden pail,* OLD BAUMERT, *and a number of* YOUNG AND OLD WEAVERS *rush in as though*

chasing after something, shouting to one another with hoarse voices.] 1

JAEGER Where's he gone?

BAECKER Where is the slave driver?

OLD BAUMERT If we can eat grass he can eat sawdust.

WITTIG When we catch him we'll string him up. 2

FIRST YOUNG WEAVER We'll take him by the legs and throw him out the window onto the stones, so that he'll never get up again.

SECOND YOUNG WEAVER [*enters*] He's gone.

ALL Who's gone? 3

SECOND YOUNG WEAVER Dreissiger.

BAECKER Pfeifer too?

VOICES Let's get Pfeifer! Let's get Pfeifer!

OLD BAUMERT Come, Pfeifer, come, here's a weaver you can starve. 4

[*Laughter.*]

JAEGER Even if we don't get that Dreissiger brute . . . we'll make a poor man of him.

OLD BAUMERT We'll make him poor as a churchmouse. We'll make a poor man of him. 5

[*They all rush towards the salon door with the intention of demolishing it.*]

BAECKER [*runs ahead, turns around, and halts the others*] Halt, listen to me! When we've finished here we haven't even begun. 6 From here we go to Bielau, to Dietrich's where they've got mechanical looms. All our misery comes from these factories.

[ANSORGE *enters from the hallway. After he has entered a few steps he remains standing, looks around, bewildered, shakes his head, and strikes his forehead.*] 7

ANSORGE Who am I? A weaver, Anton Ansorge. Has he gone mad, this Ansorge? It's true, my head is going round like a wheel. What's he doing here? What he wants to do, he'll do. Where is he, Ansorge? [*He strikes his forehead again.*] I've gone crazy! 8 I'm not responsible. I'm not right in the head. Get out, get out! Get out, you rebels. Heads out, legs out, hands out! You take my shack and I'll take your shack, come on, let's go!

[*With a howl,* ANSORGE *goes into the salon. Those present follow him with shouting and laughter.*] 9

ACT FIVE

[*Langenbielau.—The small weaving room of* OLD HILSE. *To the left is a small window, in front of it a loom; to the right there is a bed with a table pushed close to it. In the right corner, a stove with a bench. Sitting around the table on a footstool, on the bed and on a wooden stool are:* OLD HILSE, *his equally old, blind, and almost deaf wife* FRAU HILSE, *his son,* GOTTLIEB, *and his wife* LUISE. *They are at morning prayers. A spooling wheel with bobbins stands between the table and the loom. All kinds of spinning, spooling, and weaving implements are stored on top of the smoke-browned ceiling beams. Long strands of yarn hang down. All sorts of trash lie about in the room. In the back wall of this very narrow, low, and shallow room is a door leading into the hallway. Opposite this door, at the other end of the hallway, is another door which is open, and through which we can see into a second, similar weaving-room. The hallway is paved with stone and the plaster is cracked; a flight of unsteady wooden stairs leads up into the attic living quarters. A washtub on a stool is partially visible; ragged pieces of clothes and the household implements of poverty-stricken people lie about in disorderly fashion. The light falls from the left into all three rooms.*

[OLD HILSE, *a bearded, heavy-boned man, now, as a result of age, work, sickness, and hardships, is bent and wasted. A war veteran, he has only one arm. He has a pointed nose; his face is pale; he trembles; he is obviously only skin, bones, and sinews, and he has the deep-set sore eyes so characteristic of the weavers. He, his son, and daughter-in-law rise as he prays.*]

OLD HILSE Dear God, we cannot thank you enough that you in your goodness and graciousness have had pity on us on this night, too. That on this night, too, we have suffered no grief. Lord, so far does your graciousness reach, and we are poor, evil, sinful children of man, not worthy that your foot should stamp us out, so sinful and all bad are we. But you, dear Father, you want to see and accept us for the sake of your dear son, Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Jesus' blood and righteousness are my adornment and my clothes of honor. And if at times we are too much cast down by your chastisement—when the oven which is to purify us burns with too terrible heat—then do not take us too sorely to task, forgive us our sins. Give us patience, Heavenly Father, so that after this suffering we may be made partakers in your eternal bliss. Amen.

MOTHER HILSE [*bending forward, straining to hear, weeping*] Oh, father, what a beautiful prayer you always say. 1

[LUISE *goes to the washtub,* GOTTLIEB *goes into the opposite room.*]

OLD HILSE Where's the girl?

LUISE She went over to Peterswaldau—to Dreissiger's. She spooled a few more bobbins last night. 2

OLD HILSE [*speaking very loudly*] You want me to bring you your wheel now, mother?

MOTHER HILSE Yes, father, bring it, bring it. 3

OLD HILSE [*setting it down in front of her*] Oh, how I wish I could do it for you.

MOTHER HILSE No . . . no . . . what could I ever do with all the time I'd have?

OLD HILSE I'll wipe your fingers for you, so you won't get grease on the yarn, you hear? [*He wipes her hands with the rag.*] 4

LUISE [*from the washtub*] From where would she get grease on her fingers?

OLD HILSE When we got no grease, we eat our bread dry—when we got no bread, then we eat potatoes—and when we got no potatoes either, then we eat dry bran. 5

LUISE [*sneering*] And when we've got no black flour, we'll do like that Wengler woman down below, we'll find where a skinner has buried a rotten horse. Then we'll dig it up and live off the carrion for a few weeks. That's what we'll do, isn't it? 6

GOTTLIEB [*from the back room*] You sure do like to jabber!

OLD HILSE You should watch yourself with that Godless talk! [*goes to the loom, calls*] Will you help me, Gottlieb—there's still a few threads to pull through. 7

LUISE [*from the washtub*] Gottlieb, you're to help your father.

[GOTTLIEB *enters. The old man and his son now begin the troublesome task of putting up the threads. The threads of the warp are pulled through the eyes of the comb, or shaft of the loom. They have scarcely begun when* HORNIG *appears in the hallway.*] 8

HORNIG [*in the doorway to the room*] Good luck with your work!

OLD HILSE AND GOTTLIEB Thank you, Hornig!

OLD HILSE Tell me now, when do you ever sleep? In the daytime you make your rounds and at night you stand guard. 9

1 HORNIG I can't sleep anymore!

LUISE Welcome, Hornig!

OLD HILSE Well, what's the good news?

HORNIG It's fine news, too, master. The weavers at Peterswaldau
2 have risked the devil and chased Dreissiger and his whole family out of the place.

LUISE [*with signs of emotion*] Hornig's lying again as sure as he's talking.

HORNIG Not this time, ma'am, not this time—I've got some nice
3 children's aprons in the wagon. No, no, I'm telling you the God's truth. They chased them right out. They got to Reichenbach last night. And believe it or not, they didn't want to let them stay —for fear of the weavers. So off he went again to Schweidnitz this time.

4 [OLD HILSE *carefully takes up the threads of the warp and brings them near the shaft, while from the other side* GOTTLIEB *uses a wire hook to pull them through one of the eyes.*]

OLD HILSE It's about time you stopped, Hornig!

5 HORNIG May I never leave this room in one piece if it's not true. Why, every child knows as much.

OLD HILSE Tell me, am I crazy, or are you?

HORNIG What I told you is as true as the Word of God. I wouldn't say nothing about it if I hadn't seen it, but I seen it with my own
6 eyes. With my own eyes, just the same as I see you here, Gottlieb. They tore up the factory owner's house from the cellar to the roof. They threw his china from the attic windows—right out over the roof—I wonder how many bolts of fustian are laying in the brook now? The water can't get through, you can believe it. It's running over its sides. It looked real sea-blue from all the indigo
7 they threw out the window. Those sky-blue clouds of dust just came floating down. Yes, they sure tore that house apart. And not only the house, the dyeworks, too, and the warehouse! The banister's knocked in pieces, the floor's torn up and mirrors shattered, sofa and chairs, everything torn and slashed, cut and
8 thrown, kicked and hacked to pieces—damnation, believe me, it's worse than in wartime.

OLD HILSE They were weavers from around here? [*He shakes his head slowly and unbelievingly.*]

[*Curious* TENANTS *of the house have gathered at the door.*]

9 HORNIG Who else would it be? I could name every one of them.

I led the Commissioner through the house. So I talked to a lot of them. They was as friendly as ever. They went about their business real slow, but they did it good. The Commissioner talked to a lot of them. And they was as humble as ever. But they wouldn't be stopped. They hacked up beautiful pieces of furniture like they was getting paid for it.

OLD HILSE You took the Commissioner through the house?

HORNIG Well, what would I be afraid of? Those people all know me like I was a bad coin. I never have trouble with them. We're all friends. As sure as my name's Hornig, I went through the house. And you can believe it or not, but it got all soft here around my heart—and I saw it happen to the Commissioner, too —it touched him real close. And why? You couldn't hear a single word, they did their work so quietlike. It made a man feel downright solemn to see those poor hungry bastards finally take their revenge.

LUISE [*with tears in her eyes, drying them with her apron*] Yes, yes, that's what has to happen!

VOICES OF THE NEIGHBORS There's enough slave drivers around here, too.—There's one just across the street.—He's got four horses and six carriages in his stables and lets his weavers go hungry so he can pay for them.

OLD HILSE [*still incredulous*] Why did it start, over there?

HORNIG Who knows, who knows? Once there's one thing and another time another.

OLD HILSE What do they say?

HORNIG Well, they say Dreissiger said that if the weavers are hungry they can eat grass. That's all I know.

[*There is a commotion among the* NEIGHBORS *who angrily pass the word from one to the other.*]

OLD HILSE You listen to me, Hornig, For all I care, you could say to me: Father Hilse, tomorrow, you're to have a visit from the King of Prussia. But when you tell me that weavers, men like me and my son, should have done things like that—no! No, I will never believe it.

[MIELCHEN, *a pretty girl of seven years with long, free flaxen hair, comes running in, carrying a basket. She holds out a silver spoon towards her mother.*]

MIELCHEN Mummy, look here what I got. You can buy me a dress with this.

1 LUISE Why do you come running in like that, girl? [*with increased excitement and tension*] What's that you've got there, show me? You're all out of breath. And the bobbins are still in your basket. What do you mean by this, girl?

OLD HILSE Child, where did that spoon come from?

2 LUISE Maybe she found it.

HORNIG It's worth at least two or three thalers.

OLD HILSE [*beside himself*] Get out, girl, get out! I said get out of here now! Will you behave or do I have to beat you! And you take that spoon back to where you got it. Get out! Do you
3 want to make all of us thieves, eh? You little brat, I'll teach you to steal.—[*He looks for something to strike her with.*]

MIELCHEN [*clinging to* LUISE'S *skirt, weeping*] No, grandfather, no, don't hit me, we—we found it. All the . . . all the bobbin children have them.

4 LUISE [*between fear and anxiety, bursts out*] There now, you see, she found it. Where did you find it?

MIELCHEN [*sobbing*] We found it in Peterswaldau, in front of Dreissiger's house.

5 OLD HILSE Don't make it worse. You get out of here now or I'll teach you what it means to move.

MOTHER HILSE What's all this?

HORNIG I'll tell you what, Father Hilse. You let Gottlieb put on a coat and take that spoon over to the police station.

6 OLD HILSE Gottlieb, put on a coat!

GOTTLIEB [*already putting his coat on, eagerly*] I'll go to the station and say: You mustn't blame her too much, a child like her don't understand such things. And here I'm bringing the spoon. Stop crying, girl!

7 [*The crying child is taken by her mother into the back room. The door is closed.* LUISE *comes back.*]

HORNIG That's worth at least three thalers.

GOTTLIEB Give me a cloth, Luise, to wrap this up in. My, my,
8 what an expensive thing. [*There are tears in his eyes while he wraps the spoon.*]

LUISE If we kept it we could eat for a couple weeks.

OLD HILSE Go on, go on, hurry up! As fast as you can! Wouldn't that be something! That's all I need. See that you get that devil's
9 spoon out of my house!

[GOTTLIEB *goes off with the spoon.*]

HORNIG Well, I'd better get on my way, too. [*He goes out, talks for a few seconds in the hallway, then goes off.*]

[SURGEON SCHMIDT, *a round, quick-silvery little man with a wine-red, cunning face, enters the hallway.*]

SCHMIDT Good morning, people! What lovely stories I've heard here this morning. You take care! [*threateningly with his finger*] Pretty sly lot, that's what you are. [*in the doorway to the front room, without entering*] Good morning, Father Hilse! [*to* A WOMAN *in the hallway*] Well now, mother, how's the pain? Better, eh? There, you see! Well, Father Hilse, I thought I'd come to see how you're getting on. What's the matter with mother?

LUISE Doctor, the veins are dried up in her eyes, she can't see no more.

SCHMIDT That's from the dust and from weaving by candlelight. Tell me, do you know what this is all about? All Peterswaldau is on its way here. I got into my carriage this morning like usual, thinking nothing at all was wrong, and then I started to hear such strange things. What the devil has taken hold of these people, Father Hilse? They're raging like a pack of wolves. It's a regular revolution, a rebellion; they're plundering and mauraud-ing . . . Mielchen! Where's Mielchen?

[MIELCHEN, *her eyes still red from crying, is pushed in by her mother.*]

SCHMIDT Say, Mielchen, look into my coat pocket.

[MIELCHEN *does so.*]

SCHMIDT The ginger snaps are for you. Now, now, not all at once. A song first though! "Fox, you have . . ." Well? "Fox, you have stolen our goose . . ." You just wait, I know what you did; you called the sparrows on the pastor's fence a dirty name because of what they do to it. And they went and told the choirmaster. What do you have to say to that?—Almost fifteen hundred people are on the march.

[*The pealing of bells sounds in the distance.*]

SCHMIDT Listen to that: they're sounding the alarm bell in Reichenbach. Fifteen hundred people. It's like the world was coming to an end. It makes a person uneasy!

OLD HILSE Are they really on their way to Bielau?

SCHMIDT Of course, of course, I just now drove through them,

right through the middle of that whole mob. What I should have done was get down and give them all a powder. There they were, jogging along, one behind the other, gray as death and singing so that it almost turned a man's stomach. It makes you want to vomit. My Frederick up in the driver's seat was wailing like an old woman. As soon as we were past them we had to go and buy us a good stiff drink. I wouldn't be a factory owner now even if I could have rubber rims on my wheels.

[*Singing in the distance*]

SCHMIDT Listen to that! Like somebody knocking with his knuckles on an old, cracked boiler. It won't be five minutes before they're here. Good-bye, my friends. Don't do anything foolish. Soldiers are right behind them. Don't lose your heads. These people from Peterswaldau have sure lost theirs.

[*Bells are rung close by.*]

SCHMIDT By God, now they're ringing our bells. That'll drive them crazy for sure. [*He goes upstairs.*]

GOTTLIEB [*returns; from the hallway, out of breath*] I saw them, I saw them. [*to* A WOMAN *in the hallway*] They're here, Auntie, they're here! [*in the doorway*] They're here, father, they're here! they've got beanpoles and goads and axes. They're already up there at Dietrich's house, making a terrible racket. I think they're getting paid money. O Jesus, what's going to happen here! I won't look at it. I never seen so many people in all my life! Once they get started—my God, my God, our factory owners will be really hard put.

OLD HILSE Why did you run so! You'll chase around till you get your sickness again, then you'll be flat on your back waving your arms around like before.

GOTTLIEB [*almost joyously excited*] I had to run, or they would have caught me. They were already screaming at me to join them. Godfather Baumert was there, too. He said to me: Go get your five groschen, too; you're one of those poor, starving weavers, too. He even said: Go tell your father . . . Father, I'm supposed to tell you to come and help pay the factory owners back for cutting our wages. [*passionately*] Times are changing, he said. Now things are going to be different for us weavers. He wants us to all come and help bring it about. We're all going to have our half-pound of meat on Sundays, and Holy Days we'll have a nice blood sausage with sauerkraut. It's all going to change, he said to me.

OLD HILSE [*with suppressed indignation*] And he calls himself your godfather! And he tells you to take part in such terrible deeds! You stay out of such things, Gottlieb. There's the devil's hand in such business. They're doing the devil's work. 1

LUISE [*overcome with passionate excitement, vehemently*] Yes, Gottlieb, yes, go crawl there behind the stove, in the corner, take a spoon in your hand and a bowl of buttermilk on your knee, put on a dress and say your prayers, then you'll be what your father wants.—And he calls himself a man! 2

[*Laughter from the* PEOPLE *in the hallway.*] 3

OLD HILSE [*trembling, with suppressed rage*] And you call yourself a good wife, eh? Just you let me tell you something. You call yourself a mother with that evil tongue of yours, you want to teach your little girl what's right, and you stir your husband up to crime and wickedness! 4

LUISE [*without control*] You and all your big talk . . . did it ever give us enough food to feed even one child? Just because of that they've laid in dirt and rags . . . all four of them. They never even had a dry diaper. Yes, I call myself a mother all right, if you want to know! And if you want to know something else, that's the reason I wish these factory owners to hell and damnation—just because I *am* a mother.—How was I to keep such little things alive? I have cried more than I have breathed, from the minute one of the poor things came into the world, till death had pity on it and took it. And you never gave a damn. You prayed and you sang, while I ran my feet bloody trying to find a bowl of buttermilk. How many hundreds of nights have I wracked my brain how just once I could cheat the churchyard and keep my child! What did the child ever do to deserve such a miserable end!—And over there in Dietrich's house, they get bathed in wine and washed in milk. No, no . . . if it ever starts here—there aren't ten horses could hold me back. And I tell you this: if ever they storm Dietrich's house, I'll be in front of them all, and pity the man who tries to hold me back. I've had enough, and that's a fact. 5 6 7

OLD HILSE You're a lost soul; there's no help for you.

LUISE [*in a frenzy*] You're the one there's no help for. Ragpickers, that's what you are. You're disgraces, you're not men. You're no better than the gutter-scrapers they spit at in the street. You're weak-livered cowards, that get scared at the sound of a child's rattle. Fools who thank their beaters for a sound thrashing. They've bled you so white you can't even turn red in the face 8 9

anymore. Somebody ought to take a whip to you and beat some life into your dead bones. [*Breathless, she goes off quickly.*]

[*An embarrassed pause.*]

MOTHER HILSE What is it with Luise, father?

OLD HILSE Nothing, mother dear, what should be the matter with her?

MOTHER HILSE Tell me, father, are the bells really ringing, or am I hearing things?

OLD HILSE They must be burying someone, mother.

MOTHER HILSE And still there's no end to my life. Why can't I die?

[*Pause.*]

OLD HILSE [*leaves his work, holds himself straight, solemnly*] Gottlieb—you heard what your wife told us. Gottlieb, look at this! [*He opens his shirt.*] There was a bullet here once, big as a thimble. And the king knows where I lost my arm. It wasn't the mice ate it off. [*He walks back and forth.*] Your wife—before she was ever thought of, I was spilling my blood for my country. And that's why she can jabber at all she wants. It's all right with me. I don't care.—Afraid? Me, afraid? What's there to be afraid of, tell me? Of a few soldiers, maybe, who'll be coming after the rioters? O Jesus, if that was all! That'd be nothing. No, no, maybe I'm a little stiff in the back, but if it ever comes to that, I got bones as strong as ivory. I'd stand up all right against a couple of miserable bayonets.—And if it really got bad? How glad I'd be, oh, how glad I'd be to leave this world behind. No need for them to ask me twice to die. Better today than tomorrow. No, no. How glad I'd be! For what would I leave behind? Who would cry over this old torture box of aches and pains, that little heap of fear and torment that we call our life, how glad I'd be to leave that behind.—But then, Gottlieb! Then there comes something else—and when we've thrown that away, then there's nothing left.

GOTTLIEB Who knows what's to come after you're dead? Nobody's ever seen it.

OLD HILSE You listen, Gottlieb, don't you be throwing doubt on the one thing that we poor people got left. Why else would I have sat here—why would I have worked this treadle here for forty years until I was almost dead? And why would I have sat here and watched him over there living in pride and gluttony,

making himself rich on my hunger and misery? Why? Because I had hope. In all this misery I still have something. [*pointing out the window*] You've got your share here in this world, I've got mine in the other. That's what I've been thinking all this time. And you can tear my body to pieces—but I know what I know. We've been promised. The day of judgment is coming; but we are not the judges: Vengeance is Mine, saith the Lord Our God. 1 2

A VOICE [*through the window*] Weavers, come out!

OLD HILSE Go do what you want! [*He sits down at his loom.*] But you'll never make me leave. 3

GOTTLIEB [*after a brief struggle with himself*] I'm going to work, too. Come what will. [*He goes off.*]

[*The sound of the weavers' song, sung by hundreds of voices, is heard in the immediate vicinity; it sounds like a dull monotonous wailing.*] 4

VOICES OF THE NEIGHBORS [*in the hallway*] O Jesus, Lord Jesus, they're coming like ants.—Where did all them weavers come from?—Stop pushing, I want to see, too.—Look at that beanpole walking in front of them all.—My God, my God, now they're coming in swarms! 5

HORNIG [*steps among the* PEOPLE *in the hallway*] How's that for a show? You don't see something like that every day. Come on up to Dietrich's house. There's a *real* show up there. He ain't got a house, or a factory, or a wine cellar, or a nothing anymore. They're drinking down the bottles like they was water. They don't even bother to take out the corks anymore. One, two, three, and the necks are off even if they cut their mouths open on the glass. Some of them run around bleeding like pigs—they'll do the same now for Dietrich across the street. 6

[*The singing of the* CROWD *has stopped.*] 7

VOICES OF THE NEIGHBORS They don't look like such bad people.

HORNIG Never mind! You just wait! They're taking time now to look the place over first. See there, how they're looking that place over? Look at that little fat man—he's got a horsepail along, he's the smith from Peterswaldau, he's a dangerous man. Believe me, he can break down the thickest doors like they was pretzels. If he ever gets one of those factory owners in his hands, there'll be no helping him! 8

VOICES OF THE NEIGHBORS Bang, something happened there!—That 9

was a stone flying in the window!—I bet old Dietrich's afraid now—Look, he's hanging a sign out.—He's hanging a sign out?—What does it say?—Can't you read?—What do you think would happen to me if I couldn't read?—Well then, read it!—"You will all get satisfaction. You will all get satisfaction."—

HORNIG He might have spared himself that one. That won't do him much good. They got their own ideas. It's the factory they want. It's the mechanical looms they want to get rid of. The looms are what's ruining the weavers; any blindman can see that. No, no! These people won't be stopped today. No magistrate or councilor could change their minds—and least of all a sign. If you ever saw them work, you'd know what they was up to.

VOICES OF THE NEIGHBORS My God, my God, who ever saw such a crowd!—What can they want?—[*rapidly*] They're coming across the bridge now! [*fearfully*] They're coming over here? [*in utmost surprise and fear*] They're coming, they're coming.—They're coming to get the weavers out of their houses. [*They all run off. The hallway is left empty.*]

[*A swarm of* RIOTERS *surges into the hallway, dirty, dusty, their clothes torn, rumpled as though they had been up all night, their faces flushed with fatigue and liquor; they cry out:* "Weavers, come out!" *Then they disperse themselves through the house.* BAECKER *and* SEVERAL YOUNG WEAVERS *enter* OLD HILSE'S *room, they are armed with clubs and sticks. When they recognize* OLD HILSE, *they stop, slightly cooled off.*]

BAECKER Father Hilse, stop your slaving away. Let whoever wants to run the treadle. You won't have to do yourself any more harm by working. That'll all be taken care of.

FIRST YOUNG WEAVER You won't have to go to bed hungry anymore.

SECOND YOUNG WEAVER The weavers'll have a roof over their heads and a shirt for their backs.

OLD HILSE What the devil are you doing here with sticks and axes?

BAECKER We'll break them on Dietrich's back.

SECOND YOUNG WEAVER We'll get them red hot and stuff them down these factory owners' throats so that they'll know how hunger can burn.

THIRD YOUNG WEAVER Come with us, Father Hilse! We give no quarter.

SECOND YOUNG WEAVER Nobody took pity on us. Neither God nor man. And now we're seeing to our own rights.

[OLD BAUMERT *enters, already somewhat unsteady on his feet, a newly killed rooster under his arm. He stretches out his arms.*] 1

OLD BAUMERT My brothers—we are all brothers! Come to my arms, my brothers!

[*Laughter.*] 2

OLD HILSE So this is what you look like now, Wilhelm!

OLD BAUMERT Gustave, is it really you. Gustave! Poor starving weaver, come to my arms. [*He is deeply moved.*]

OLD HILSE [*muttering*] Leave me in peace. 3

OLD BAUMERT Gustave, that's the way it is. A man must have luck. Gustave, look here at me once. How do I look? A man must have luck! Don't I look like a count? [*striking his belly*] What do you think I've got here in my belly? There's a king's dinner in this belly. A man must have luck, that's when he gets champagne and roast rabbit.—Let me tell you something: we've made a great mistake: we've got to help ourselves. 4

ALL [*together*] We've got to help ourselves! Hurray!

OLD BAUMERT No sooner you get the first bite of good food in your belly, that's when you start feeling you're alive again. Jesus, Jesus, you feel the power come back into you like you was a bull. And the strength flies out of your arms so that you don't see where you're hitting any more. It's a damned good feeling! 5

JAEGER [*at the door, armed with an old cavalry saber*] We made a couple of pretty good attacks.

6

BAECKER We know what we're doing now. One, two, three and we're inside the house, and then it's like a fire run wild, so that everything crackles and shakes, and sparks fly like at the forge.

FIRST YOUNG WEAVER What do you say we have a nice little fire? We'll march to Reichenbach and burn the roofs right off of people's houses. 7

JAEGER There's nothing they'd like better. Think of all the insurance money they'd get.

[*Laughter.*]

8

BAECKER From here we march to Tromtra's in Freiburg.

JAEGER We ought to see about them government officials for once. I read that all our bad luck comes from these bureaucrats.

SECOND YOUNG WEAVER And then we'll go to Breslau. More people are joining us all the time. 9

1 OLD BAUMERT [*to* OLD HILSE] Here, have a drink, Gustave!

OLD HILSE I never drink whiskey.

OLD BAUMERT That was in the old world, Gustave, we're in a new one now!

2 FIRST YOUNG WEAVER Christmas don't come every day.

[*Laughter.*]

OLD HILSE [*impatiently*] You hounds of hell, what do you want from me!

3 OLD BAUMERT [*somewhat startled, in an overfriendly manner*] Why, look here, Gustave, I meant to bring you a chicken. You have to cook mother a nice soup out of it.

OLD HILSE [*touched, in a half friendly manner*] Well, you tell mother herself about it.

4 MOTHER HILSE [*With her hand cupped at her ear she has, with some strain, been listening to them; now she waves* OLD BAUMERT *off.*] Leave me in peace. I don't want no chicken soup.

OLD HILSE That's right, mother, I don't want none either. Least of all, not that kind. And you, Baumert, I want to tell you something! The devil stands on his head for joy when he sees us
5 old people jabbering away like we was little children. And just so you know! Just so all of you know: me and you, we got nothing in common. I gave you no leave to come in here!

A VOICE Who's not with us is against us.

6 JAEGER [*threatening, brutally*] You got it all wrong, old man, we're no thieves.

A VOICE We're hungry, that's all.

FIRST YOUNG WEAVER All we want to do is live. And so we cut the rope we were hung to.

7 JAEGER And we were right! [*his fist in front of* OLD HILSE'*s face*] Another word out of you and you'll get this right in the face.

BAECKER Stop it now, stop it! Let the old man alone. Father Hilse, we felt this way, too, once: better to be dead, we used to say, than start another life like this again.

8 OLD HILSE Haven't I lived it sixty years and more?

BAECKER It makes no difference; it's got to change.

OLD HILSE When, on Saint Nevercomes' Day?

BAECKER What we don't get from them peaceably we'll take by
9 force.

OLD HILSE By force? [*laughs*] Then you can start digging your graves right here. They'll teach you where force is. You just wait a while, sonny! 1

JAEGER Because of the soldiers? We were soldiers, too. We can take care of a few companies.

OLD HILSE With your tongues. I believe it. And even if you do, for every two you chase away, ten will come back at you. 2

VOICES [*through the window*] The soldiers are coming. Watch out!

[*Suddenly there is a general silence. For a moment the weak sound of fife and drum is heard. Into the silence there comes a short involuntary cry*: "The hell with it! I'm taking off!"—*General laughter.*] 3

BAECKER Who's talking about taking off? Who said that? 4

JAEGER Who's afraid here of a few miserable helmets? I'll take the command. I was in the army. I know their tricks.

OLD HILSE What will you use for guns? You going to use clubs?

FIRST YOUNG WEAVER Let the old fool alone; he ain't right upstairs. 5

SECOND YOUNG WEAVER He's out of his head, that's what.

GOTTLIEB [*Without being noticed he has entered among the* RIOTERS. *He takes hold of the speaker.*] Is that how you talk to an old man? 6

FIRST YOUNG WEAVER Get your hands off me, I didn't say it.

OLD HILSE [*interrupting*] Let them jabber, Gottlieb. Have nothing to do with them. He'll know soon enough which of us is crazy: him or me.

BAECKER Are you coming with us, Gottlieb? 7

OLD HILSE No, he ain't going with you!

LUISE [*enters the hallway, calls in*] Don't stop for them. Don't waste your time with these prayerbook jackasses. Come out on the square! You've got to come out on the square! Godfather Baumert, come out as quick as you can! The major's talking to the people from up on his horse. They're to go home. If you don't hurry it'll be all over. 8

JAEGER [*going off*] That's a brave husband you've got!

LUISE Where's my husband! I see no husband here! 9

1 VOICES [*singing in the hallway*]

Once there was a man so small,
Heigh, diddle diddle!
He wanted a woman big and tall,
Heigh, diddle, heigh diddle,
2 Heigh, diddle diddle!

WITTIG [*comes down from the upper story, the horse pail still in his hand, is about to go out but remains standing for a moment in the hallway*] Come on! Anyone who ain't a coward follow me! Hurray! [*He storms out.*]

3 [*A group of* PEOPLE, *with* LUISE *and* JAEGER *among them, follow him, crying*: "Hurray!"]

BAECKER Stay well, Father Hilse, we'll see each other again. [*about to go*]

4 OLD HILSE I don't think so. I won't last five more years. And you won't be out before then.

BAECKER [*stops suddenly, surprised*] Out of where, Father Hilse?

OLD HILSE Out of prison; where else?

BAECKER [*laughing wildly*] I'd never argue with that. At least you
5 get enough to eat there, Father Hilse! [*He goes off.*]

OLD BAUMERT [*has been sitting on a stool in a dull, brooding mood; now rises*] You're right, Gustave, I am a little bit drunk. But I'm still clear enough in my head. You've got your opinion of this business and I've got mine: I say that Baecker is right,
6 even if he ends up in chains; it's always better in prison than at home. You're taken care of there; and you don't starve either. I would have been happy not to have joined them. But you must understand, Gustave, a man has got to breathe just once in his lifetime. [*He goes slowly towards the door.*] Good-bye, Gus-
7 tave. If anything happens, say a little prayer for me, you hear? [*He goes off.*]

[*The* RIOTERS *have all gone now. The hallway gradually becomes full again with curious* NEIGHBORS. OLD HILSE *knots at his web.* GOTTLIEB *has taken an axe from behind the stove and tests*
8 *the blade unconsciously. Both of them are silently shaken. Outside one hears the hum and roar of a great crowd of* PEOPLE.]

MOTHER HILSE Look, father, look, the floors are trembling—what's happening? What will become of us?

9 [*Pause.*]

OLD HILSE Gottlieb! 1

GOTTLIEB What do you want?

OLD HILSE Put down that axe.

GOTTLIEB Then who'll cut the kindling? [*He leans the axe against the stove.—Pause.—*] 2

MOTHER HILSE Gottlieb, you listen to what your father tells you.

A VOICE [*singing in front of the window*]

Stay home, stay home, my little man,
Heigh, diddle diddle!
Clean the dish and clean the pan, 3
Heigh, diddle, heigh, diddle,
Heigh, diddle diddle!

[*Goes past*]

GOTTLIEB [*jumps up, rushes to the window with his fist clenched*] Bastard! You try me once more! 4

[*The crack of a volley is heard.*]

MOTHER HILSE [*shrinking with fright*] O Jesus, Jesus, it's thundering again!

OLD HILSE [*his hand on his chest, praying*] O Lord in Heaven, protect the poor weavers, protect my poor brothers! 5

[*There is a short silence.*]

OLD HILSE [*who is shaken, to himself*] There's blood flowing now. 6

[GOTTLIEB *at the sound of the volley has jumped up and taken the axe into his hands with a firm grip; he is pale, almost beside himself with his deep inner excitement.*]

GOTTLIEB Am I still supposed to stay here like a scared dog! 7

A WEAVER GIRL [*calls into the room from the hallway*] Father Hilse, Father Hilse, get away from the window. A bullet went right through our upstairs. [*She disappears.*]

MIELCHEN [*sticks her laughing face in through the window*] Grandfather, grandfather, they shot with their guns. Some of them fell down. One of them's turning himself all around like a wheel. And the other one's kicking like a sparrow when you tear its head off. And you should see all the blood that's coming out—! [*She disappears.*] 8

A WEAVER WOMAN Some of those will never get up again. 9

1 AN OLD WEAVER [*in the hallway*] You just wait, they're going to make a run at the soldiers.

A SECOND WEAVER [*beside himself*] Look there at the women, look at the women, look at them! Lifting their skirts up! Spitting at the soldiers!

2 A WEAVER WOMAN [*calls in*] Gottlieb, take a look at your wife out there, she's more man than you ever were, running around out there in front of the bayonets, like it was a dance.

[FOUR MEN *carry a wounded* MAN *through the hallway. Silence. Then a voice is heard saying clearly:* "It's Weaver Ulbrich."
3 *After another few moments of silence, the voice is heard again:* "It won't last long with him; he got a bullet right through the ear." *Men are heard ascending the wooden stairs. Suddenly from outside:* "Hurray, hurray!"]

VOICES [*from inside the house*] Where did you get the stones?
4 —You better clear out!—From the road they're building.—Bye-bye, soldiers.—It's raining paving stones now.

[*Screams of terror and roaring spread from the street into the house itself. The door is banged shut with a cry of terror.*]

VOICES [*in the hallway*] They're loading up again.—They'll fire
5 another volley soon.—Father Hilse, get away from the window.

GOTTLIEB My God, my God, my God! Are we mad dogs! Are we to eat gun powder and bullets instead of bread! [*He hesitates for a moment with the axe in his hand. To* OLD HILSE] Do you want my wife to be shot? I won't let them! [*He rushes*
6 *out.*] Let me through! I'm coming! [*He goes off.*]

OLD HILSE Gottlieb, Gottlieb!

MOTHER HILSE Where has Gottlieb gone?

OLD HILSE To the devil.

7 VOICES [*From the hallway*] Get away from the window, Father Hilse!

OLD HILSE Not me! Not even if you all go mad! [*to* MOTHER HILSE, *with mounting ecstasy*] Here is where the Heavenly Father has placed me. Isn't that right, mother? Here we will sit and do
8 what is our duty, though the snow itself catch fire. [*He begins to weave.*]

[*There is a loud volley. Struck,* OLD HILSE *raises himself up and falls forward across his loom. At the same moment there is a strengthened, resounding cry of* "Hurray!" *Joining the cry, the*
9 PEOPLE *who till now have stood in the hallway surge outside.*]

MOTHER HILSE [*repeats several times*] Father, father, what's the matter with you? 1

[*The uninterrupted cry of* "Hurray!" *gradually fades into the distance. Suddenly in a great hurry* MIELCHEN *runs into the room.*]

MIELCHEN Grandfather, grandfather, they're chasing the soldiers out of town, they tore down Dietrich's house, it's just like over at Dreissiger's. Grandfather? [*Suddenly frightened, she grows alert, sticks her finger in her mouth, and cautiously approaches the dead man.*] 2

MIELCHEN Grandfather! 3

MOTHER HILSE Why don't you say something, father! You're scaring me.

THE END