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Georg Büchner Danton's Death, Leonce and Lena, and Woyzeck

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VALERIO. And I shall be Prime Minister and a decree will be published proclaiming that all persons with calluses on their hands will be taken into custody, that working oneself sick will be an offence liable to criminal proceedings, and that any subject who boasts of earning his bread by the sweat of his brow will be declared a dangerous lunatic. And then we shall lie down in the shade and pray God for macaroni, melons, and figs, for musical voices, classical torsos, and an accommodating religion!

WOYZECK

[1836-1837]

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

WOYZECK
CAPTAIN
ANDRES
OLD MAN WITH HURDY GURDY
BARKER
DRUM MAJOR
SERGEANT
SHOWMAN
DOCTOR
JEW
KARL, THE IDIOT
LANDLORD
TWO APPRENTICES
TWO MEN

MARIE
MARGRET
GRANDMOTHER
KÄTHE
THREE GIRLS

Soldiers, students, boys and girls, etc.

SCENE I *At the CAPTAIN'S.*

CAPTAIN sitting on a chair; WOYZECK shaving him.

CAPTAIN. Not so fast, Woyzeck. One thing after another. You're making me quite dizzy. So you finish ten minutes early—what use is that to me? Think, Woyzeck, you've got a good thirty years ahead of you. Thirty years. That's three hundred and sixty months. Not to mention days, hours, and minutes! What are you going to do with all that time? Space it out, Woyzeck!

WOYZECK. Yes sir.

CAPTAIN. When I think about eternity I start worrying—about the world. Food for thought, Woyzeck, food for thought. Eternity is eternity is eternity. That's quite clear. But then again it's not eternity at all, it's the twinkling of an eye. Yes, the twinkling of an eye. Woyzeck, I shudder when I think that the earth takes a whole day to rotate. What a waste of time! And where's it going to end? Woyzeck, the very sight of a millwheel depresses me.

WOYZECK. Yes sir.

CAPTAIN. Woyzeck, you always look so worked up. A decent chap doesn't look like that, I mean a decent chap with a clear conscience. Well, say something, Woyzeck. What's the weather like today?

WOYZECK. Bad, sir. Bad. Windy.

CAPTAIN. I can feel it blustering away out there. That sort of wind affects me like a mouse. [*Slyly*] I think it's a north-southerly.

WOYZECK. Yes sir.

CAPTAIN. Ha ha ha! North-southerly. Ha ha ha! God, but he's dense. Horribly dense. [*Emotionally*] Woyzeck, you're a good chap but, [*solemnly*] Woyzeck, you've got no sense of decency. Decency is when a chap acts decently, do you follow? It's a good word. You've got a child without benefit of clergy, as our right reverend padre puts it—without benefit of clergy. It's not *my* phrase.

WOYZECK. Sir. God in heaven's not going to worry about the poor brat just because nobody said Amen before his making. Our Lord said: Suffer the little children to come unto me.

CAPTAIN. What's that? What sort of answer's that? He's got me all muddled answering like that. I—I don't mean he, I mean you. You.

WOYZECK. When you're poor like us, sir . . . It's the money, the money! If you haven't got the money . . . I mean you can't bring the likes of us into the world on decency. We're flesh and blood too. Our kind doesn't get a chance in this world or the next. If we go to heaven they'll put us to work on the thunder.

CAPTAIN. Woyzeck, you have no self-control. You are not a decent man. Flesh and blood? Why, when I'm lying by my window after a rain-shower and I see all those pretty white stockings twinkling across the street . . . damn it, Woyzeck, I feel love! I'm flesh and blood too. That's where self-control comes in, Woyzeck. The things I could waste my time on! But I say to myself: You are a decent chap, [*maudlin*] a good chap, a good chap.

WOYZECK. Oh, self-control. I'm not very strong on that, sir. You see, the likes of us just don't have any self-control. I mean, we obey nature's call. But if I were a gentleman and had a hat and a watch and a topcoat and could talk proper, then I'd have self-control all right. Must be a fine thing, self-control. But I'm a poor man.

CAPTAIN. Well said, Woyzeck. You're a good chap. But you think too much. It's wearing you out. You always look so worked up. Our little chat has got me quite excited. Off you go now—and don't run. Take it easy. Walk down the street, nice and slow.

SCENE II

Open country, with the town in the distance.

WOYZECK and ANDRES cutting sticks in the bushes.

[ANDRES whistles.]

WOYZECK. It's true, Andres. There's a curse on this place. Do you see that light patch on the grass over there? Where the toadstools are. That's where this head comes rolling down every night. Somebody

picked it up once, thought it was a hedgehog. Three days and three nights later he was in his coffin. [*Whispering*] It was the Freemasons, Andres. Straight, it was.

ANDRES [*sings*]. A pair of hares were sitting there,
Nibbling the green, green grass . . .

WOYZECK. Shh. Can you hear it, Andres? There's something moving.

ANDRES. Nibbling the green, green grass
Until the ground was bare.

WOYZECK. There's something moving. Behind me. Underneath me. [*Stamps on the ground.*] Listen; it's hollow. The whole bloody place is hollow. Freemasons!

ANDRES. I'm scared.

WOYZECK. Funny how silent it is. Makes you want to hold your breath.
—Andres!

ANDRES. What?

WOYZECK. Say something. [*Stares around him.*] Andres, look how bright it is. It's all lit up above the town. The sky's on fire, and down there it's blaring like a brass band. It's coming up! Quick, don't look behind you. [*Drags him into the bushes.*]

ANDRES [*after a pause*]. Woyzeck. Do you still hear it?

WOYZECK. It's silent now. Not a sound. Like the world was dead.

ANDRES. Listen, there's the drum. We've got to get back.

SCENE III

The town.

MARIE, sitting at a window with her child on her arm; MARGRET.

[*The Retreat passes, led by the DRUM MAJOR.*]

MARIE [*holding the child up*]. There you are, boy. Brum, brum, brum. Do you hear?

MARGRET. What a man. Built like a tree.

MARIE. The walk of him—like a lion.

[DRUM MAJOR salutes her.]

MARGRET. Ooh, you gave him the glad eye, neighbour. That's not like you.

MARIE [sings]. Oh, soldiers are such handsome lads . . .

MARGRET. There's still a gleam in your eye.

MARIE. What if there is? Take yours to Abie the pawnbroker and get them polished; if they shine properly you can sell them for buttons.

MARGRET. Hark at miss motherhood. I'm a decent girl, I am. And everybody knows you can see your way through a pair of leather breeches.

MARIE. Bitch. [Slams the window shut.] Come on, boy. Let them talk. You're only a whore's brat but I love your bastard's face. Brum, brum.

[Sings] 'What shall you do now, my pretty maid?
You've got a baby without a dad.'
Never you mind about me.
All night long I'll sit and sing:
'Rockabye, rockabye, tiny thing',
Though nobody cares for me.

Unsaddle your six white horses, do,
And give them fodder fresh and new.
Oats they won't eat for you
Nor water drink for you,
Nothing will do but wine, heigh-ho!
Nothing but pure cold wine.

[There is a knock at the window.]

MARIE. Who's there? Is it you, Franz? Come in.

WOYZECK. I can't. Got to go to muster.

MARIE. Have you been cutting wood for the Captain?

WOYZECK. Yes, Marie.

MARIE. What's wrong, Franz? You look in a terrible way.

WOYZECK [mysteriously]. It happened again, Marie. Lots of things. Doesn't the good book say: 'And behold, there was a smoke coming from the land like the smoke of an oven'?

MARIE. Oh, Franz.

WOYZECK. It followed me right to the edge of town. Something we can't grasp, something we can't understand, something that drives us mad. What will come of it?

MARIE. Franz.

WOYZECK. I've got to go. See you tonight at the fair. I've put something aside. [He goes.]

MARIE. The man's seeing things. Didn't even look at his own child. Thinking's driving him crazy. [To the child] You're keeping mum, young fellow. Are you scared? It's getting so dark; it's like you were blind. Only that street lamp shining in. I can't stand it. It gives me the creeps. [Goes out.]

SCENE IV

Fairground with booths. Lights. People.

[WOYZECK, MARIE at the fair.]

OLD MAN [singing to a hurdy-gurdy while child dances].

On earth is no abiding stay.
All men must pass away.
That truth is known for aye.

WOYZECK. Jump to it, lad. Poor old man, poor young fellow. Joy and tribulation.

MARIE. When fools start talking sense then we're fools ourselves. It's a funny world.—No! It's a lovely world.

[They move on to the BARKER's pitch.]

BARKER [in front of a stall, with his wife in trousers and a monkey dressed up as a man]. Roll up, ladies and gentlemen. Examine this beast as God created him. Nothing to him, you see? Then observe the effect of

art: he walks upright and has a coat and trousers. Also a sword. The monkey's a soldier—not that that's much, lowest form of animal life.—Hey! Show us your bow. Now you're a baron. Blow us a kiss. [*He plays the trumpet.*] The little blighter likes music. Gentlemen, roll up and see the little love birds and the astronomical horse. Admired by all the crowned heads of Europe. Tell you anything you like—how old you are, how many children, what illnesses you've had. The performance is about to begin. It is the *commencemong* of the *commencemong*.

WOYZECK. Want to go in?

MARIE. I don't mind. It must be nice in there. The tassels the man has. And his wife's got trousers.

[*Both off, into the booth.*]

[*DRUM MAJOR, SERGEANT passing.*]

DRUM MAJOR. Hold it. Did you see her? That's what I call a woman.

SERGEANT. Jesus! You could foal a cavalry regiment from her.

DRUM MAJOR. And breed drum majors.

SERGEANT. Look at the way she carries her head. You'd think all that black hair would weigh her down. And those eyes!

DRUM MAJOR. Like looking down a well, or a chimney. Come on. After her.

SCENE V

Inside the brightly lit booth.

[*MARIE, WOYZECK, DRUM MAJOR, SERGEANT.*]

MARIE. Look at the lights.

WOYZECK. Yes, Marie. Black cats with burning eyes. What a night.

SHOWMAN [*leading forward a horse*]. Show them your paces. Show them your horse sense. Put human society to shame. Gentlemen, this beast you see here with four hooves and a tail behind is a member of all the learned societies and a professor at the university. He teaches

the students riding and kicking.—That's a matter of horse sense. Now show us what you can do when you use your powers of reason. Is there an ass in this learned company?

[*The horse shakes its head.*]

See that? That's the power of reason. A horse of a different colour. This is no dumb animal, this is a person. A human being in animal form—but still a beast, still an animal.

[*The horse behaves indecently.*]

That's right, put society to shame. You see, this animal is still in a state of nature. Unidealized nature. Take a lesson from him. Ask your doctor; it's very harmful not to. The message was: Man, be natural. You are created from dust, sand, and slime. Would you be more than dust, sand, and slime? Look here if you want to know what reason is: he can do arithmetic but he can't count on his fingers. Why? He just can't express himself, can't explain things. He's a transmogrified human being. Tell the gentlemen what time it is.—Any of you gentlemen got a watch? A watch, please.

SERGEANT. A watch?

[*Slowly and majestically takes a watch from his pocket.*]

MARIE. I must see.

[*Clambers on to the front row.*]

DRUM MAJOR. I call that a woman.

SCENE VI

MARIE's bedroom.

MARIE sitting with her child on her lap and a piece of mirror in her hand.

MARIE. The other man gave him an order and he had to go! [*Looks in the mirror.*] How they glitter. I wonder what sort of stones they are. What was it he said? Sleep, child. Shut your eyes tight.

[*Child puts its hands over its eyes.*]

Tighter. Don't move, or he'll catch you.

[Sings]

Polly, close the shutter tight,
A gipsy lad will come tonight.
He will take you by the hand
And lead you into gipsy land.

[Looks in the mirror again.] I'm sure they're gold. How would they suit me at a dance? The likes of me have only a hole like this to call our own, and a bit of broken mirror. But my lips are as red as madame's with her mirrors down to the floor and her fine gentlemen to kiss her hand. And I'm just a poor girl.

[The child sits up.]

Shush, child, shut your eyes. [She flashes the mirror.] There's the sand man running across the wall. Shut your eyes! If he looks into them you'll go blind.

[Enter WOYZECK, behind her. She starts and puts her hands to her ears.]

WOYZECK. What's that you've got?

MARIE. Nothing.

WOYZECK. There's something shining there. Between your fingers.

MARIE. I found an earring.

WOYZECK. Two at the same time? I never found anything like that.

MARIE. Am I a bad girl?

WOYZECK. It's all right, Marie. Look how he's sleeping. Hold his arm up, the chair's pinching him. He's got beads of sweat on his forehead. Nothing but work under the sun. Even in our sleep we sweat. We the poor. There's the money, Marie. My pay and something from the Captain.

MARIE. Bless you for it, Franz.

WOYZECK. I must be going. See you tonight, Marie.

[Goes.]

MARIE [alone, after a pause]. I'm a bad bitch. I could kill myself.—Oh, what's the use? We're all going to the devil, all of us.

SCENE VII

At the DOCTOR'S.

WOYZECK, the DOCTOR.

DOCTOR. What a thing to see, Woyzeck. And you a man of your word!

WOYZECK. What's wrong, Doctor?

DOCTOR. I saw you, Woyzeck. Pissing in the street. Pissing up against the wall, like a dog. And me giving you threepence a day, plus board! That's bad of you, Woyzeck. The world is definitely going to the bad.

WOYZECK. But Doctor, when nature calls . . .

DOCTOR. Let it call! Haven't I proved that the *musculus constrictor vesicae* is subject to the will? Nature indeed. Man is free. Man is the transfiguration of the individual urge to freedom. Can't hold his water. [Shakes his head, puts his hands behind his back and walks up and down.] Have you eaten your peas, Woyzeck? Nothing but peas, *cruciferae*, remember. There's going to be a revolution in science, I'll blow the whole thing sky-high. Uric acid 0.10, ammonium hydrochlorate, hyperoxide.—Woyzeck, can't you have another piss? Go inside and try.

WOYZECK. I can't, sir.

DOCTOR [upset]. Pissing against a wall—and have I your written agreement! I saw it with my own eyes. I had just that moment put my nose out of the window to catch the rays of the sun—I wished to study the phenomenon of the sneeze. [Going up to him.] No, Woyzeck, I am not angry. Anger is unhealthy. Unscientific. I am perfectly calm. My pulse is its usual sixty and I say to you with the utmost sang-froid: God forbid that we should feel anger towards a fellow human being. Now if a newt had just died . . .! But Woyzeck, you shouldn't have pissed against that wall.

WOYZECK. But Doctor, some people are built that way. It's in their character. But nature's a different kettle of fish. As far as nature's concerned—[He snaps his fingers.] It's a kind of thing . . . I mean to say . . .

DOCTOR. Woyzeck, you're philosophizing again.

WOYZECK [*confidentially*]. Doctor, have you ever seen nature double? When the sun's at noon and it's like the whole world was going up in flames? That's when a terrible voice spoke to me.

DOCTOR. Woyzeck, you have an *aberratio*.

WOYZECK. It's all in the toadstools, Doctor. Have you ever noticed how the toadstools grow in patterns? If we could only read them!

DOCTOR. A classic case of *aberratio mentalis partialis* of the second order. Nicely developed too. I shall give you a rise, Woyzeck. Yes, second category: *idée fixe* but otherwise generally rational. Are you still going on as usual? Shaving the Captain?

WOYZECK. Yes sir.

DOCTOR. Eating your peas?

WOYZECK. Like you said, sir. The money goes to my wife for the housekeeping.

DOCTOR. Still carrying out your duties?

WOYZECK. Yes sir.

DOCTOR. You're an interesting case. Patient Woyzeck, you're getting a rise, so behave yourself. Let me feel your pulse. Yes.

SCENE VIII

MARIE's bedroom.

MARIE, DRUM MAJOR.

MARIE [*looking at him passionately*]. Show me how you walk. Broad as an ox and a beard like a lion. There's nobody like him. I'm the proudest woman alive.

DRUM MAJOR. By God, you should see me on Sundays with my plumed helmet and my white gloves. The Prince always says: That's what I call a man.

MARIE [*mocking*]. Does he now? [*Goes up to him.*]

DRUM MAJOR. And you're what I call a woman. Christ, we'll set up a stud for drum majors.

[*Puts his arms round her.*]

MARIE [*crossly*]. Let me go.

DRUM MAJOR. Wildcat.

MARIE [*violently*]. Don't touch me!

DRUM MAJOR. The very devil's in your eyes.

MARIE. Oh, what does it matter. It's all one.

SCENE IX

A street.

CAPTAIN, DOCTOR.

CAPTAIN [*comes panting down the street, stops and looks around*]. Doctor! Don't be in such a hurry. And don't wave your stick about like that. You're running to your death, you know. A good chap with a clear conscience doesn't rush about like that. Not a good chap. [*He catches the DOCTOR by the coat.*] Permit me to save a human life, Doctor.

DOCTOR. I'm in a hurry, Captain. In a hurry.

CAPTAIN. I'm so down in the mouth, Doctor. [*Emotionally*] I can't see my coat hanging on the wall but I burst into tears.

DOCTOR. Him. Puffy. Fat. Thick neck. Subject to apoplexy. Yes, my dear Captain, you're heading for *apoplexia cerebri*. Of course you may only get it down one side. You may just be half paralysed. Or with a bit of luck it may only affect the brain. Then you'll live on like a sort of vegetable. That's your prognosis for the next four weeks. However, let me assure you that you're a most interesting case, and if the good lord decides to paralyse one side of your tongue we'll conduct experiments that will make our names go down in history.

CAPTAIN. Don't frighten me, Doctor. People have been known to die of fright, of sheer bloody fright. I can see the mourners already, squeezing lemons to make them cry. Still, they'll say: He was a good chap. A good chap. You damned old coffin-nail!

DOCTOR [*holding up his hat*]. Do you see this? This, my dear square-basher, is an empty headpiece.

CAPTAIN [*showing a button on his sleeve*]. And that, my dear coffin-nail, is a bonehead. Ha ha ha. No offence, Doctor, but I can give as good as I get. When I feel like it.

[WOYZECK comes hurrying past.]

What's the hurry, Woyzeck? Stop a bit. You rush through the world like an open razor. You'll give somebody a nasty cut. You'd think you had to shave a regiment of geldings and they were going to hang you with the last hair before you could make your getaway. But speaking of beards . . . What was I saying? Ah, yes. Speaking of beards, Woyzeck . . .

DOCTOR. Troops must be discouraged from wearing facial hair. Pliny says so.

CAPTAIN [*continues*]. Speaking of beards now, Woyzeck, haven't you noticed a hair in your soup lately? Do you follow? A hair from somebody else's beard—an engineer's, a sergeant's, or—a drum major's? Eh, Woyzeck? But then your wife's a decent girl. Not like the others.

WOYZECK. Yes sir. What do you mean, sir?

CAPTAIN. Look at the man's face! Perhaps not in your soup, but if you make a dash round the corner you may find one sticking to a certain pair of lips. Lips, Woyzeck. Ah, love—I know the feeling, Woyzeck.—Man, you're white as a sheet.

WOYZECK. I'm a poor man, Captain. She's all I've got in the world. If you're joking, Captain . . .

CAPTAIN. Joking? I joke with you?

DOCTOR. Your pulse, Woyzeck. Your pulse. Short, violent, skipping, irregular.

WOYZECK. Captain, the earth's as hot as hell. But I'm icy cold. Hell is cold, I'd bet on that. It can't be true. The bitch. It can't be.

CAPTAIN. Do you want a bullet through your head? And don't glare at me. It's all for your own good. You're a decent chap, Woyzeck, a decent chap.

DOCTOR. Facial muscles rigid, tense, occasionally twitching. Behaviour strained, excited.

WOYZECK. I'm going. A lot of things can be true. The bitch! Anything can be true. A fine day, Captain. Look. A nice solid grey sky. Makes you want to knock a nail in and hang yourself. All because of one little train of thought. One that goes from Yes to Yes again, and then to No. Is the No to blame for the Yes? Or the Yes for the No? I must think about that.

[*He strides off, slowly at first, then faster and faster.*]

DOCTOR [*runs after him*]. What a case! Woyzeck, you're forgetting your rise!

[*Exit.*]

CAPTAIN. Makes me quite dizzy, that chap. Look at him run. The long-legged one loping like a spider's shadow. The little one jerking along. The big fellow's lightning and the little one thunder. Grotesque, grotesque!

SCENE X

MARIE'S room.

MARIE, WOYZECK.

WOYZECK [*stares at her, shaking his head*]. Hm. I can't see anything. Can't see anything at all. You ought to be able to see it. You ought to be able to hold it in your hands.

MARIE. What's wrong, Franz? You're raving.

WOYZECK. A sin like that. A great fat one. It stinks fit to smoke the angels out of heaven. You've got red lips, Marie. And not a blister on them. Marie, you're as lovely as sin. Can mortal sin be as lovely as that?

MARIE. You're delirious.

WOYZECK. Damnation! Did he stand here, like this?

MARIE. It's a long day and the world is old. A lot of people can stand in the same place, one after the other.

WOYZECK. I saw him.

MARIE. You can see a lot if you've got eyes in your head and aren't blind and the sun's shining.

WOYZECK. Bitch. [*He makes to strike her.*]

MARIE. Don't touch me, Franz! I'd rather have a knife in my guts than have you lay a finger on me. My own father daren't touch me when I look at him, not since I was ten years old.

WOYZECK. Bitch.—No, it would show on you. Every man is a bottomless pit; you get dizzy when you look down. Suppose it were true. She walks like innocence itself. Well, innocence, there's a mark on you. But can I know for sure? Can anyone?

[*Exit.*]

SCENE XI

Guard room.

WOYZECK, ANDRES.

ANDRES [*sings*]. Mine host has got a pretty maid
Sits in the garden night and day;
She sits there in her garden . . .

WOYZECK. Andres.

ANDRES. Eh?

WOYZECK. Fine weather.

ANDRES. Sunny for Sunday. There's a band playing, out of town. The girls have gone on ahead. They don't half sweat.

WOYZECK [*restless*]. Dancing, Andres. They're dancing.

ANDRES. At the Horse and Stars.

WOYZECK. Dancing. Dancing.

ANDRES. Suits me.

[*Sings*] She sits there in her garden
Until the village clock strikes twelve,
Watching the redcoats passing.

WOYZECK. Andres, I can't sit still.

ANDRES. Fool.

WOYZECK. I've got to get out. My head's spinning. Dancing, dancing.
Her hands will be hot. Damn her, Andres.

ANDRES. What's up with you?

WOYZECK. I've got to go. See for myself.

ANDRES. Trouble-maker. Because of that bitch?

WOYZECK. I've got to get out, it's so hot in here.

SCENE XII

A tavern. Open windows. Dancing. Benches outside.

APPRENTICES [, WOYZECK].

1 APPRENTICE [*sings*]. I've got a little shirt, but it isn't mine;
And my soul is stinking with brandywine . . .

2 APPRENTICE. Brother, let me knock you into the middle of next week.
In a friendly way of course. Come on. I'm going to knock you into the middle of next week.—I'm as good a man as he is, see? I'll pole-axe every flea on his body.

1 APPRENTICE [*sings*]. My soul is stinking with brandywine.
—Even money rots. Little forget-me-not, what a lovely world we live in. I'm so sad I could weep buckets. I wish our noses were a brace of bottles. We could empty them down each other's throats.

OTHERS [*in a chorus*]. A hunter from the Rhine
Rode through the forest, oh so fine.
Tally ho, tally ho, as merrily we go,
Roaming the fields so free—
A hunter's life for me!

WOYZECK goes over to the window. MARIE and the DRUM MAJOR dance past; they do not see him.

WOYZECK. Him! Her! Damnation.

MARIE [*dancing past*]. On and on.

WOYZECK [*choking*]. On and on.

[*Starts up, then falls back on to the bench.*]

On and on. [*Clapping his hands.*] Keep turning, round and round. Why don't you blow the sun out, God? Let them fall on each other in their lewdness. Male and female, man and beast. Do it in broad daylight. Do it on a man's hand like flies. The bitch is in heat. [*Jumps to his feet.*] Look at him pawing her, all over her body. He's got her, like I had her once.

[*Falls back dazed.*]

I APPRENTICE [*standing on the table, preaching*]. Consider the wanderer who standeth and gazeth into the stream of time and answereth himself with the wisdom of God and saith: Wherefore is man? Verily, verily I say unto you: Wherewithal should the husbandman, the cooper, the shoemaker, the physician live, had God not created man? Wherewithal should the tailor live, had He not implanted shame in the human breast? Wherewithal the soldier, had He not armed him with the need for self-destruction? Therefore doubt ye not. . . . Oh, it's all very fine, but earthly things are evil. Even money rots. In conclusion, my beloved brethren, let's piss on the Cross and kill a Jew somewhere.

[*General uproar. WOYZECK comes to his senses and rushes out.*]

SCENE XIII

Open country.

WOYZECK.

WOYZECK. On and on, on and on. Scrape and squeak—that's the fiddles and flutes. On and on.—Sh. Music. Who's speaking down there? [*Stretches himself full length on the ground.*] What's that you say? Louder, louder. Stab the she-wolf dead. Stab. The. She-Wolf. Dead. Must I? Do I hear it up there too? Is that the wind saying it? I keep on hearing it, on and on. Stab her dead. Dead.

SCENE XIV

A room in the barracks. Night.

ANDRES and WOYZECK in the same bed.

WOYZECK [*softly*]. Andres!

[*ANDRES mutters in his sleep.*]

[*Shakes him.*] Andres. Andres.

ANDRES. What's the matter?

WOYZECK. I can't sleep. When I shut my eyes everything spins round and I hear the fiddles. On and on. And then a voice comes out of the wall. Don't you hear anything?

ANDRES. Let them dance. A man gets tired. God save us, Amen.

WOYZECK. It keeps saying: Stab! stab! And flashes between my eyes like a knife.

ANDRES. Fool. Go to sleep.

[*He goes to sleep.*]

WOYZECK. On and on. On and on.

SCENE XV

Court-yard at the DOCTOR'S.

STUDENTS and WOYZECK below, DOCTOR at the attic window.

DOCTOR. Gentlemen, here I am on the roof like David when he spied Bathsheba; but all I see are knickers on the line in the girls' boarding-school garden. Gentlemen, we come now to the important question of the relationship between subject and object. If we examine one of those creatures in which the divine spark achieves a high degree of organic expression, and if we investigate its relationship to space, the earth and the planetary universe—if, gentlemen, I throw this cat out of the window, what will be the instinctive behaviour of such a creature relative to its centre of gravity?—Woyzeck. [*He roars.*] Woyzeck!

WOYZECK [*catches the cat*]. Doctor, it bites!

DOCTOR. You fool, you're as gentle as if it were your own grandmother.

[*He comes down.*]

WOYZECK. Doctor, I'm all of a tremble.

DOCTOR [*delighted*]. Are you indeed! [*Rubs his hands, takes the cat.*]
What's this, gentlemen? A new species of animal louse. And a very fine one.

[*Produces a magnifying glass. The cat runs away.*]

Animals have no scientific instincts. I'll show you something else instead. Observe. For three months this man has eaten nothing but peas. Note the effect, feel for yourselves. What an irregular pulse—and the eyes!

WOYZECK. Doctor, everything's gone dark. [*Sits down.*]

DOCTOR. Cheer up, Woyzeck. A few more days and it'll all be over. Feel for yourselves, gentlemen.

[*They palpate his temples, wrists, and thorax.*]

By the way, Woyzeck, wiggle your ears for the young gentlemen. I meant to show you this before. He uses two muscles. Come on, man.

WOYZECK. Doctor—

DOCTOR. You clown, do I have to wiggle them for you? Are you going to behave like the cat? There you are, gentlemen; another case of progressive donkeyfication, a frequent result of feminine upbringing and the use of the German language. Your mother's been pulling out your hairs for souvenirs—it's getting quite thin these days. That's the peas, gentlemen. The peas.

SCENE XVI

The barracks square.

[WOYZECK, ANDRES.]

WOYZECK. Didn't you hear anything?

ANDRES. He's in there with one of his mates.

WOYZECK. He said something.

ANDRES. How do you know? What do you want me to say?—Oh he laughed and said: 'A luscious piece. What thighs! And she's hot as mustard.'

WOYZECK [*coldly*]. So he said that. What was it I dreamt about last night—a knife? People have stupid dreams.

ANDRES. Where are you off to?

WOYZECK. To fetch wine for my officer. But, Andres, there weren't many like her.

ANDRES. Like who?

WOYZECK. Never mind. Be seeing you. [*Exit.*]

SCENE XVII

A tavern.

DRUM MAJOR, WOYZECK, people.

DRUM MAJOR. I'm a man. [*Pounds his chest.*] A man, do you hear? Anybody looking for a fight? If you're not as pissed as creeping Jesus keep away from me. I'll ram your nose up your arse. I'll—I'll—[*To WOYZECK*] Hey, you. Drink up. Why isn't the world made of booze? Drink, will you!

[WOYZECK whistles.]

Bastard. Do you want me to yank your tongue out and wrap it round your waist?

[*They wrestle; WOYZECK is beaten.*]

I won't leave enough breath in you for an old woman's fart.

[WOYZECK sits down on a bench, trembling and exhausted.]

The bastard can whistle till he's blue in the face.

Brandy is the drink for me,
Brandy gives you spunk.

1 WOMAN. He's had it.

2 WOMAN. He's bleeding.

WOYZECK. One thing at a time.

SCENE XVIII

A pawn shop.

WOYZECK, a JEW.

WOYZECK. The gun's too dear.

JEW. You buy or you don't buy, which is it?

WOYZECK. How much is the knife?

JEW. Lovely and straight it is. You want to cut your throat with it?—
 So what's the matter? I give it to you as cheap as anybody else. Cheap
 you can have your death, but not for nothing. What's the matter?
 You'll have your death all right, very economical.

WOYZECK. It'll cut more than bread.

JEW. Tuppence.

WOYZECK. There.

[Exit.]

JEW. There, he says. Like it was nothing at all. Well, it's all money.
 Dog!

SCENE XIX

MARIE'S room.

*[MARIE, her child, the idiot KARL lying down, telling fairy-tales on
 his fingers.]*

KARL. My lord the king has a golden crown. Tomorrow I shall bring
 the queen her child, said Rumpelstilzkin. Come, sausage, said the
 black pudding.

MARIE *[turning the pages of the Bible]*. 'Nor was guile found in his mouth.'
 Dear God, don't look at me. *[Turning further.]* 'And the scribes and
 the Pharisees brought him a woman taken in adultery and set her in
 the midst . . . And Jesus said unto her: Neither do I condemn thee.
 Go, and sin no more.' *[Clasps her hands.]* Dear God, I can't. Almighty
 God, at least give me strength to pray.

[The child huddles against her.]

The child breaks my heart. *[To the idiot.]* Karl!—He's basking in the
 sun.

[KARL takes the child and lies still.]

No sign of Franz, yesterday or today. It's hot in here. *[She opens the
 window.]* 'And stood at his feet weeping, and began to wash his feet
 with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed
 his feet, and anointed them with ointment.' *[Beats her breast.]* Every-
 thing is dead. O Christ my Saviour, if only I could anoint Thy feet!

SCENE XX

Barracks.

ANDRES; WOYZECK rummaging through his belongings.

WOYZECK. Andres, this waistcoat isn't standard issue. You might find
 a use for it, Andres.

ANDRES *[numb, can find only a single word to say]*. Yes.

WOYZECK. The cross is my sister's, and so's the ring.

ANDRES. Yes.

WOYZECK. I've got a holy picture as well, with two hearts on it. It's
 real gold. Used to be in my mother's Bible. It says:

Lord, as Thy side was red and sore,
 So let my heart be evermore.

My mother's got no feeling left, only when the sun shines on her
 hands. She won't miss it.

ANDRES. Yes.

WOYZECK *[pulls out a piece of paper]*. Friedrich Johann Franz Woyzeck,
 rifleman, Four Company, Second Battalion, Second Regiment.
 Born on the feast of the Annunciation, 20th July. I'm thirty years,
 seven months, and twelve days old today.

ANDRES. Go sick, Franz. You need *schnapps* with gunpowder in it.
 That'll lay your fever.

WOYZECK. Yes, Andres. When the carpenter puts his shavings in the
 coffin nobody knows whose head will lie on them.

SCENE XXI

A street.

MARIE with GIRLS, at the front door; GRANDMOTHER.

GIRLS [*sing*]. The sun shines bright at Candlemas,
 The corn stands full and high.
 Down in the meadow, two by two,
 They all came dancing by.
 The pipers led the way,
 The fiddlers followed after.
 They had red stockings on. . . .

1 GIRL. That's silly.

2 GIRL. You're never satisfied.

1 GIRL. Marie, sing for us.

MARIE. I can't.

1 GIRL. Why not?

MARIE. Because.

2 GIRL. Because why?

3 GIRL. Tell us a story, Granny.

GRANDMOTHER. Gather round then, small fry.—Once upon a time there was a poor little boy who had no father or mother. Everything was dead, and there was nobody left in the whole wide world. Everything was dead, and he went away and searched day and night. And because there was nobody left on earth he thought he'd go up to heaven. And the moon looked at him so kindly! But when he reached the moon he found it was a piece of rotten wood. And then he went to the sun, and when he reached the sun he found it was a withered sunflower. And when he came to the stars they were little golden gnats that a shrike had stuck on a blackthorn. And when he wanted to go back to earth, the earth was an upturned pot. And he was all alone. And he sat down and cried, and he's sitting there still, all alone.

[WOYZECK appears.]

WOYZECK. Marie!

MARIE [*startled*]. What is it?

WOYZECK. Let's go, Marie. It's time.

MARIE. Where?

WOYZECK. How should I know?

SCENE XXII

The edge of the wood, by the pond.

MARIE and WOYZECK.

MARIE. That must be the town over there. It's dark.

WOYZECK. You ought to stay. Come and sit down.

MARIE. But I have to go.

WOYZECK. You'd get sore feet; I won't let you.

MARIE. What's the matter with you?

WOYZECK. Do you know how long it's been, Marie?

MARIE. Two years come Whitsun.

WOYZECK. Do you know how long it's going to be?

MARIE. I must go and get supper ready!

WOYZECK. Do you feel cold, Marie? But you're warm, your lips are hot.

Hot breath, harlot's breath. Yet I'd give heaven to kiss them again.

Do you feel cold? When we *are* cold we don't feel it any more.

You won't feel cold in the morning dew.

MARIE. What are you saying?

WOYZECK. Nothing.

[*Silence.*]

MARIE. The moon's rising. Look how red it is.

WOYZECK. Like blood on iron.

MARIE. What are you going to do, Franz? You're so pale.

[*He raises the knife.*]

Stop, Franz, for God's sake. Help! Help!

WOYZECK [*stabs convulsively*]. Take that. And that. Why can't you die?
There! There!—Still twitching; still can't die? Still? [*Stabs again.*]
Now are you dead? Dead. Dead!

[*He drops the knife and runs away.*]

[MEN *come.*]

1 MAN. Stop.

2 MAN. Shhh. Do you hear? Out there.

1 MAN. Ugh. What a sound.

2 MAN. That's the water calling. It's a long time since anyone was
drowned. Come away, it's not good to hear it.

1 MAN. Ugh, there it goes again. Like a dying man.

2 MAN. It's uncanny. Such a foggy day, with grey mist everywhere.
And the beetles whirring like cracked bells. Let's go.

1 MAN. No, it's too distinct. And too loud. Come on, it's over there!

SCENE XXIII

The tavern.

[WOYZECK, KÄTHE, KARL, *others.*]

WOYZECK. Everybody dance. On and on. Sweat and stink. He'll get
you all in the end.

[*Sings*] My daughter, oh my daughter,
What were you thinking of
Hanging round grooms and coachmen
And giving them your love?

[*He dances.*]

Sit down, Käthe. I'm hot. Hot. [*Takes his jacket off.*] That's how things
are: the devil takes one and lets the other go. You're hot, Käthe.
Why's that? Be sensible; you'll catch cold. Can't you sing something?

KÄTHE [*sings*]. To the south land I'll not go.
I will not wear long dresses; no.

For dresses long and pointed shoes
A servant girl must never choose.

WOYZECK. No, no shoes. You can get to hell without shoes.

KÄTHE [*sings*]. Shame, shame, my love, the girl made moan:
Keep your money and sleep alone.

WOYZECK. I wouldn't want to get blood all over me. Honestly.

KÄTHE. What's that on your hand then?

WOYZECK. On me?

KÄTHE. You're all red. Blood!

[*People gather round.*]

WOYZECK. Blood? Blood?

LANDLORD. Ugh, blood.

WOYZECK. I think I cut myself. On the right hand.

LANDLORD. How did it get on your elbow?

WOYZECK. I wiped it off.

LANDLORD. What, wiped your right hand on your right elbow?
Genius, you are.

KARL. Then the giant said: Fee fie fo fum, I smell the blood of a
British man. Ugh it stinks.

WOYZECK. What the hell do you want? What's it to do with you?
Out of my way or the first man . . . Hell, do you think I've done
somebody in? Am I a murderer? What are you gaping at? Look at
yourselves. Out of my way. [*He runs out.*]

SCENE XXIV

At the pond.

WOYZECK *alone.*

WOYZECK. The knife. Where's the knife? I left it here. It'll give me
away. Closer, closer. What sort of place is this? What's that noise?
Something's moving. Shh. Just over there. Marie? Marie! Nothing.

Not a sound. Why are you so pale, Marie? Why have you got that red string round your neck? Who did you sleep with for the necklace? Your sins were black. Did I whiten you again? Why is your hair so tossed—didn't you plait it today? The knife! Got it. There.

[*He goes to the waterside.*]

In you go. [*He throws the knife in.*] It sinks in the dark water like a stone.—No, it's too close, when they're bathing.

[*He wades into the pond and throws it further out.*]

There. But in summer, when they dive for mussels? Bah, it'll get rusty, nobody will recognize it. I wish I'd broken it. Is there still blood on me? I must wash it off. There's a spot. And there's another. . .

[*He wades in deeper.*]

APPENDIX

A Note on the Historical Woyzeck and Büchner's Design for the Play

The historical Woyzeck, according to the account of him by Dr J. C. A. Clarus, published in 1825 in the *Zeitschrift für die Staatsarzneikunde*, was a rolling stone who lost his parents early and wandered all over Germany looking for work in the difficult 1790s. He became a soldier, was captured by the Swedes, and entered the Swedish armed service, only to be sent back to Germany and have his regiment disbanded by the French. He then joined the Mecklenburg army, but deserted to the Swedes again because of a girl in Stralsund, by whom he had had a child out of wedlock. Then came the Congress of Vienna, which gave Swedish Pomerania to Prussia; Woyzeck's regiment was transferred *en bloc* to the Prussian army. This was not to Woyzeck's taste, so he asked for demobilization and returned to his native city of Leipzig in search of work. He was a hairdresser. Unfortunately times were hard, and Woyzeck became more and more dependent on other people's charity. He tried to enlist in the Saxon army but was turned down on the grounds that his demobilization papers were not in order. In the meantime he had formed a liaison with Frau Woost, the daughter of a surgeon; but she had a weakness for soldiers, and refused to appear in public with Woyzeck. In a fit of jealous despair he stabbed her, on 21 June 1821.

In character Woyzeck was not a criminal type. His intelligence was above average; he knew the trades of hairdressing and bookbinding. His main fault was drunkenness. He seems to have been driven to murder by a sense of humiliation built up over years of tribulation.

During the preliminary investigation of his case the defence claimed that Woyzeck was mentally disturbed; but Clarus, whom the court had appointed medical assessor, found him responsible. In February 1822 he was condemned to death by the sword. But then Woyzeck told a clergyman who visited him about his 'voices', and the defence demanded a stay of execution. A further medical examination was ordered. Clarus did not alter his judgement. He concluded that the voices did not pre-date Woyzeck's imprisonment, and were caused partly by his physical condition—his circulation was poor—partly by remorse, and partly by loneliness, which exaggerated his natural tendency to talk to himself. The defence asked to

have Clarus replaced as assessor; but the Leipzig Faculty of Medicine upheld his opinion, and on 27 August 1824 Woyzeck was executed in the Market Square at Leipzig. He made a good end, facing death calmly and reciting a little prayer of his own composition which was later circulated as a broadsheet.

Long after Clarus published the account of his medical examination of Woyzeck, his findings were still being challenged; indeed the controversy over the case continued for thirteen years. The account shows Clarus to have been conscientious and fair-minded within his limitations, but sanctimonious and lacking that sympathetic understanding of human behaviour which Büchner brings to the story of Woyzeck.

Büchner left four separate manuscripts of the play, one that can with reasonable certainty be called the final version and three others. All are fragmentary and contain much overlapping material, yet we have Büchner's own word that he thought the play almost finished. In a letter to Minna a few weeks before his death he wrote, 'In a week at most I shall publish [*erscheinen lassen*] *Leonce and Lena* with two other dramas.' One of these two is presumably the already completed *Pietro Aretino*; the other is certainly *Woyzeck*, and Büchner's remark can only mean that he would have it ready for publication within the week. Unless there was a later, fifth manuscript (which I do not think is a justifiable assumption), we must believe that Büchner thought he could put what we now possess into order within that time.

Would that have been possible? Just about. When we look at the manuscripts we find that the 'final version' is fairly plain sailing up to the scene in which Woyzeck offers his belongings to Andres, after which it breaks off. But the order of scenes is puzzling. Woyzeck shaving the Captain, which many editors place at the beginning, comes fourth. And two scenes similar in tone—those where the Captain and the Doctor appear together—are placed beside each other. And there are gaps. Why? Büchner's own proceeding gives us a clue. After the scene in which Marie sees the drum major for the first time he simply writes

Booths. Lights. People.

and goes straight into the earrings scene. Clearly he felt that the fairground scenes were complete in the earlier version—and who, reading them, would disagree with that? So the 'final version' is really an extensive filling-in operation; and we need not feel too inhibited about assembling a definitive

version of the play with the help of the earlier manuscripts—perhaps some of the added scenes were also finished to Büchner's satisfaction.

Various scholars have attempted the assembly job, with differing results. In 1879 Franzos deciphered the faded manuscripts and put together a more or less finished play from the various versions. Unfortunately, he made mistakes in transcription, the most obvious being in misreading the name of the principal character (which is why Berg's opera is called *Wozzeck*). In addition, to bring up the faded ink, he painted the manuscript with distilled water and sulphate of ammonia, which worked well at the time but as the years passed progressively blackened the paper. Later editors have corrected some of his mistakes and worked out different arrangements for the scenes. Fritz Bergemann (1922)—whose order I have for the most part followed in my translation—and Werner Lehmann (1967) are the most important. They differ in many respects. For example Lehmann starts with the Open Country scene, with Woyzeck and Andres cutting sticks; the shaving scene comes fifth, after the earrings. The most considerable of British Büchner scholars, Maurice Benn, rejected the ear-wagging scene in the belief that Büchner intended to replace it with the doctor reproaching Woyzeck for pissing in the street. Which of the various reconstructions one follows becomes a matter of personal choice: scholarship can do no more than establish probabilities as the manuscripts were left in so fragmentary a state.

I have adopted Bergemann's order because it makes good sense on the stage. But I have come to disagree with one of his decisions: placing the scene in which the two men arrive at the pond at the end of the play instead of immediately after the murder, where it would seem to belong: it is their arrival which makes Woyzeck run away.

Having completed the play in this way, however, we are left with some early manuscript material unaccounted for, of which the following short scenes are the most important:

(1)

CHILDREN.

- 1 CHILD. Let's go to Margret's.
- 2 CHILD. What's up?
- 1 CHILD. Haven't you heard? There's a dead body, a woman's. They've all gone to see.
- 2 CHILD. Where?
- 1 CHILD. To the left of the water meadow. In the little wood by the red cross.
- 2 CHILD. Come quick or they'll carry it in and we'll miss it.

- (2) *Idiot* [KARL], *child*, WOYZECK.
 KARL [*holding the child on his lap*]. This little piggy went to market, this little piggy stayed at home.
 WOYZECK. Boy. Christian.
 KARL [*stares at him*]. This little piggy had roast beef.
 [WOYZECK *tries to fondle the child, but it turns away and screams.*]
 WOYZECK. Oh God!
 KARL. And this little piggy had none.
 WOYZECK. Christian, I'll buy you a geegee. [*The child pushes him away.*]
 There, there. [*To KARL*] Buy the kid a geegee.
 [KARL *stares at him.*]
 WOYZECK. Giddyup, horsey. Giddyup.
 KARL [*joyful*]. Giddyup, horsey, Giddyup, Giddyup.
 [Runs away with the child.]

- (3) COURT USHER, BARBER, DOCTOR, JUDGE.
 POLICEMAN. A good murder, a real lovely murder. You couldn't wish for a nicer job. We haven't had one like this for years.

The first two of these scenes are effective, and may easily be fitted into the play, after the tavern scene where Woyzeck appears with blood on his hands; I have not put them in because I think they are not strictly necessary to the action. The third, obviously no more than a note, raises the interesting question: did Büchner plan to write a trial scene?

I think it may well have been his original intention to write scenes depicting both a trial and an execution. He had already done both very successfully, in *Danton*. And he must have been strongly attracted by the opportunities for social criticism they would have offered. But I believe that he changed his mind. He left no sketches either of a court or an execution scene, and to write one or both from scratch within a week, in addition to all the other work to be done on the play, seems beyond even his powers. In any case, even if brilliantly done, would not a court scene have been an anticlimax after the bleak and terrible picture of Woyzeck wading deeper and deeper into the pond?

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