

NIETZSCHE'S NOSE

(A Comedy in Four Scenes)

by

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NIETZSCHE'S NOSE

THE CHARACTERS

FREDERICK, an Insurance Company Employee, 50s

ALICE, His Wife, a Nurse's Aide, 40

KURT, Frederick's Brother, 40

'THE FATHER', Non-speaking, may be played by a manikin

YOUNG MAN, A Civil Servant, 20s

(KURT and YOUNG MAN may be doubled)

THE PLACE

FREDERICK and ALICE'S modest living-room

THE TIME

Recently

NIETZSCHE'S NOSE

Scene 1

(FREDERICK and ALICE'S shabby living-room: they sit at a table, playing checkers; at one side of the room, there is an upright piano. "THE FATHER" (A dummy) is sitting in a chair, on the other side of the room, dressed in a WW11 army uniform; Against the rear wall, some portable steps lead to a conventional painting of a remote cottage, FREDERICK and ALICE stare at the checkerboard)

FREDERICK

It's your move, my dear.

ALICE

Is it? (She indifferently moves a checker).

FREDERICK

(He makes a double jump) I get the feeling you're not concentrating.

ALICE

I was listening to the music next door.

FREDERICK

I don't hear any music.

ALICE

It sounds like our new neighbors are having a party.

FREDERICK

They're boors.

ALICE

How do you know that? Have you seen them?

FREDERICK

I don't need to see them.

ALICE

(Sarcastic) Extrasensory perception?

FREDERICK

Let me explain my logic, my dear. They're having a party, aren't they?

ALICE

It sounds like it.

FREDERICK

Ninety per cent of all people are boors. Therefore, it stands to reason boors are among their guests.

ALICE

Remarkable!

FREDERICK

It's just that I have principles higher than the rabble. I only respect the few people truly worthy of respect.

ALICE

Tell me. Who do you find worthy of this exalted respect of yours?

FREDERICK

(Thinks) For one, Hubert Hotchkiss.

ALICE

Your boss?

FREDERICK

And also my friend.

ALICE

What you call respect, some might call toadyism.

FREDERICK

I'm above caring what other people think!

ALICE

And now, suddenly, you admire your boss! Frederick, are you in danger of getting fired!

FREDERICK

Don't be ridiculous. Hubert and I had lunch just yesterday.

ALICE

Who asked whom?

FREDERICK

(Uneasy) That doesn't matter.

ALICE

And who paid?

FREDERICK

(Irritably) Damn it, it's your move.

ALICE

Oh no! Now I have THAT to worry about! (She angrily moves a checker).

FREDERICK

You would do better to worry about your game. (He makes a triple jump) You lose again.

ALICE

And you're losing another job! What are we going to do if you're fired?

FREDERICK

I told you there's nothing to worry about. My boss is not a fool.

ALICE

That's what worries me!

FREDERICK

(Ignores that) He respects me. I think I could even say he admires me.

ALICE

(She shakes her head in dismay, rises, goes to the rear, climbs the steps, moves the painting aside and looks through a peephole behind it) It looks like the neighbors are dancing.

FREDERICK

(He laughs) There! You see. I told you they were boors.

ALICE

You mean because they're actually enjoying themselves?

FREDERICK

(He sighs pleurably) And now I think I'll smoke my cigar.

ALICE

How does it make you feel to know that no one wants to have anything to do with us?

FREDERICK

Magnificent! It makes me feel superior. (He tries to light a cigar but begins coughing).

ALICE

The doctors have told you that you won't last another year if you keep smoking those vile things.

FREDERICK

The doctors are all asses!

ALICE

So you don't believe you might be dying.

FREDERICK

I'll live to dance on your grave.

ALICE

You'd look very dignified doing that.

FREDERICK

Let me tell you something. I haven't worked all my life—

ALICE

You don't have to tell me that.

FREDERICK

... So that when I'm dead you can indulge in every vulgar pleasure!

ALICE

You're a very unpleasant man.

FREDERICK

Do you wonder why we're never invited anywhere?

ALICE

I just told you why.

FREDERICK

(Ignores that) It's because once you have a few drinks in you, you throw yourself at the closest man, even if his wife happens to be standing between the two of you.

ALICE

That is an awful thing to say!

FREDERICK

It's an awful thing to *have* to say! (He gets a bottle of whiskey, pours himself a glassful).

ALICE

Now you're going to drink whiskey, too?

FREDERICK

When taken in moderation, it's a pleasurable consolation.

ALICE

Moderation, did you say? When can I expect you to pass out?

FREDERICK

Nonsense! Liquor has no effect on me. (He takes a drink, then suddenly staggers, puts his hand to his forehead).

ALICE

(Looks from FREDERICK to 'FATHER'). You're becoming more and more like your father.

FREDERICK

Thank you.

ALICE

You think that was a compliment?

FREDERICK

Father has always been a quiet, philosophical man.

ALICE

So quiet and philosophical he never speaks. Except when he mumbles something about goats, dancing goats....

FREDERICK

Fond reminiscences! In the good old days he and mother used to raise goats.

ALICE

(She goes over to 'FATHER' and taps his forehead with her finger) Hello.

FREDERICK

Stop that! You're disturbing his ruminations!

ALICE

The eerie part of it is there's nothing wrong with him.

FREDERICK

Of course there's nothing wrong with him!

ALICE

I mean it's not as if he'd had a stroke or something. He simply prefers to sit there, in silence, staring off at God knows what.

FREDERICK

I told you! He is recalling better days, when he and mother led a model life, raising goats, playing checkers, dining on quail and white burgundy. But you probably can't understand the meaning of such simple pleasures.

ALICE

I can't understand the meaning of *pleasure*!

FREDERICK

They led an idyllic life. (He takes a drink of whisky, reels slightly).

ALICE

Frederick, you're not well. Face it.

FREDERICK

Hogwash! I'm well enough to see through you, my love. My 'illness' is merely a product of your fantasies, but let me inform you, I'll live to be a hundred, possibly two, and all my faculties will be intact...(He suddenly becomes faint)...All my fatuities...in a sack...(He then swoons and falls into a nearby chair and stares off vacantly).

ALICE

Frederick? (She goes over and shakes him) Oh well, like father, like son!

FREDERICK

(Slowly comes around) What happened? Did you strike me?

ALICE

You had one of your spells. You're unwell.

FREDERICK

Oh yes, I remember. I was dreaming. Mother was playing the piano and I was dancing. Then, suddenly, someone else entered the room, dressed entirely in white. I stopped dancing; then he came over and grabbed me and took me outside and nailed me to a tree...

ALICE

More of your Christ complex!

FREDERICK

Don't you understand! I was done for, and I knew it! Suddenly, everything was pitch black! I was looking into eternity and it was nothing but a black, emptiness! Alice, I'm afraid.

ALICE

It's about time you faced it.

FREDERICK

Life is shit!

ALICE

(She goes over to the piano) Why don't I play something for you?

FREDERICK

Yes. Play something.

ALICE

(She taps out the opening notes of Chopin's 'Funeral March') How's this?

FREDERICK

How about something a little more lively? I want to dance. Play something full of energy, full of vigor! (In a state of nervous agitation he begins spinning around the room, 'dancing'). Come on, play. Play... (He again collapses into the chair, out of breath).

ALICE

I think it's time we thought about dinner.

FREDERICK

Yes. A good piece of meat will make us both feel better.

ALICE

(Salaciously) I'm sure it would.

FREDERICK

I'm ravenous.

ALICE

We're having tuna fish.

FREDERICK

(Pause) Life is shit.

ALICE

Quiet. Listen. (She once more climbs the steps to the peephole, looks and listens) I think that's Chopin they're playing now.

FREDERICK

The phonies! They can't appreciate him.

ALICE

(She comes down again) Maybe you're right. Some of the guests do look like creatures out of a Bosch painting.

	FREDERICK
The more intelligent ones, I'm sure!	
	ALICE
I'll go make the tuna casserole.	
	FREDERICK
One minute, my sweet. I have a surprise for you.	
	ALICE
Another one?	
	FREDERICK
We're having a visitor.	
	ALICE
Don't make me laugh. I couldn't stand it.	
	FREDERICK
I'm serious.	
	ALICE
Oh, I understand. You invited your boss over, hoping he won't fire you.	
	FREDERICK
I got a call from my bother, Kurt. <i>He's</i> coming.	
	ALICE
Kurt? Why would Kurt want to come here? He hasn't been to see us in almost twenty years.	
	FREDERICK
Is that my fault?	
	ALICE
Yes! You were so rude to him he said he'd never come back.	
	FREDERICK
I was only giving him honest criticism.	
	ALICE
Then you mean he really <i>is</i> coming?	
	FREDERICK
I see you're pleased.	
	ALICE
He was here at the time our daughter was born.	
	FREDERICK
YOUR daughter!	

ALICE

Don't start that again. Didn't you tell me Kurt had picked up some money some how?

FREDERICK

Probably out of someone else's pocket.

ALICE

Listen, if we really are having company, don't you think it would be a good idea if you shaved and put on a clean shirt?

FREDERICK

Well, my love, you suddenly seem very animated. But then it isn't every day one of your former lovers comes to visit, is it?

ALICE

It isn't every day *anyone* comes to visit.

FREDERICK

Well, I wasn't born yesterday. Just remember that.

ALICE

(She looks at him) How could I forget it? Now go put on a clean shirt. And try to be nice. After all, he *is* your brother. (She kisses him on the cheek, wipes her lips). Ugh! And remember to shave.

FREDERICK

But don't think I'll toady to my brother just because he's got a little money! (He exits).

ALICE

My God, Kurt! Is he really coming? I feel like playing the piano. (She hits a few keys) Out of tune, naturally. I wonder if Kurt is married?

(Then, suddenly, when the doorbell rings, ALICE seems frozen with fear)

ALICE

Kurt! (She answers the door, returning with the YOUNG MAN who looks very uneasy) It's been so long. I don't know what to say. How do I look?

YOUNG MAN

I think you made a mistake.

(Then FREDERICK re-enters the room. He has shaving cream on his face)

FREDERICK

What the hell is going on here!

YOUNG MAN

I'm afraid there's been a mistake, sir. I'm with the IRS. (BLACKOUT, and...)

THE SCENE IS OVER

NIETZSCHE'S NOSE

Scene 2

(Lights up on the living-room: The FATHER' is in his chair; ALICE is standing by the piano. KURT sits in a chair, and FREDERICK stands with glass upraised, ready for a toast)

FREDERICK

Kurt, I give you my wonderful wife.

ALICE

Will you take me, Kurt? (KURT and FREDERICK look awkward at ALICE'S joke).

FREDERICK

Nevertheless, that was a wonderful dinner, my love.

KURT

Yes. It was an excellent tuna casserole, Alice. (They drink).

ALICE

But it was your champagne that made it so good, Kurt. Wasn't it, Frederick?

FREDERICK

(Grudgingly) It was a very decent vintage.

KURT

Thank you, Frederick.

FREDERICK

Of course I've had better.

ALICE

Not in the forty years I've known you.

KURT

(Laughing) Let's not say another word about it.

FREDERICK

That's a very good idea.

ALICE

I might bring it up one more time.

FREDERICK

Well, Kurt, I hope we've made you feel welcome in our home.

KURT

Yes. Thank you both.

FREDERICK

Good. So then may I ask what you're doing here?

ALICE

Frederick! That was terribly rude...even for you.

KURT

It's all right, Alice, I know Frederick.

FREDERICK

By that, Kurt, I assume you mean you know my honesty and respect it.

KURT

(Laughs) Well, something like that.

ALICE

Kurt, tell us something about yourself. We heard you made some money.

FREDERICK

Nothing disreputable, I hope.

KURT

You're not accusing me of dishonesty, are you?

FREDERICK

No. But I hope my faith isn't misplaced.

ALICE

Frederick, for heaven's sake!

FREDERICK

Kurt, I'm very happy if you've made something of yourself, and I know father is also.

KURT

(He looks at 'FATHER' in dismay) It's time to talk about that, I think, Frederick. How long has he been like this? I feel as if he's only half-alive.

ALICE

You're giving him too much credit.

KURT

What have the doctors told you?

FREDERICK

The doctors! They are all fools!

KURT

What do you mean by ALL! Surely—

FREDERICK

I mean every one of them! Father has many good days, believe me...

ALICE
Yes, he does.

FREDERICK
Excellent days!

ALICE
And this is one of them.

KURT
Good God! You can't be serious!

ALICE
First it was dizzy spells. Then he began to sit for hours on end in a kind of semi-conscious state, staring into nothingness—

FREDERICK
Deep in thought!

KURT
But Frederick, haven't you tried to find some place where they can care for someone in his condition?

FREDERICK
(Rises abruptly, tipping over his chair) He belongs here! I owe it to him because of the fine example he set for me. Damn it, man, can't you remember what an exemplary marriage he and mother had! (He suddenly seems dizzy again and wanders aimlessly, as if looking for a chair).

ALICE
Calm down, you're over-exciting yourself.

KURT
(As FREDERICK finally stumbles into his chair) Frederick, are you all right?

FREDERICK
Of course!

KURT
Is there anything I can do for you?

FREDERICK
Yes. Get me a glass of whisky.

KURT
Whiskey! (He looks at ALICE)

ALICE
(She shrugs as if to say 'What can I do?') It's over there.

KURT
Good God, I had no idea! (He pours FREDERICK a glass of whisky).

ALICE
That's right. He's a drunk, too.

FREDERICK

(As KURT hands him the whisky) Thank you, Kurt. You've been a good brother, in spite of everything.

KURT

(To ALICE) Shouldn't we call a doctor?

ALICE

You'd have to call another planet to find one he hasn't alienated.

KURT

But what about an emergency room?

FREDERICK

Nonsense! It's just a slight dizzy spell, Kurt. I'm fine now. Let me tell you, when the two of you are six feet under, I'll still be dancing. Now then, what were we discussing before you both over-reacted to a slight case of indigestion?

KURT

(Dazed) I can't even remember.

FREDERICK

Well then, pull up a chair beside me and let's have a good talk. It isn't every day you have the opportunity of talking to me, and how about a cigar? (He takes one for himself).

KURT

No thank you, Frederick. I don't smoke.

FREDERICK

Oh yes, I forgot. The smoke was always too much for those delicate lungs of yours. You know, Kurt, if I may say something, brother-to-brother.

KURT

Of course.

FREDERICK

You're just a bit pathetic. (He lights the cigar, coughs) These cigars are one of my last remaining pleasures. (He coughs badly) But life really is a lot of shit. Don't you agree?

KURT

No, Frederick, I'm afraid I must disagree with you.

FREDERICK

YOU would! But enough philosophizing.

KURT

Listen, Frederick, there is something I'd like to discuss with you....

FREDERICK

What is that?

KURT

It's about your daughter, Judith.

FREDERICK

(Instantly forbidding) Never mind her.

KURT

You refuse to say anything about her?

ALICE

She never had a husband, Kurt. At least she was spared that.

FREDERICK

All right, Kurt, if you must know, I'll enlighten you. She disgraced us. And so I refuse to permit her name mentioned in my house. Now, does that satisfy your curiosity? (ALICE goes to the piano and begins to strike a few desultory notes).

KURT

I'd like to know how Judith disgraced you, as you put it.

FREDERICK

First, perhaps you'll tell me something.

KURT

I will, if I can.

FREDERICK

Why all this interest in...(He points at ALICE)...her daughter?

KURT

HER daughter! What does that mean?

ALICE

Please, Kurt, you'd better drop it. You'll only make him angry.

FREDERICK

(He begins pacing, which ALICE underscores with a single note rhythm on the piano) I'll tell you this, Kurt. It's a miracle I still have my sanity! God knows what might have become of a weaker man. While living alongside this common trash which calls itself humanity, I have tried to survive with dignity and integrity. (He stops, looks grimly at KURT) Kurt, did you know that at one time men killed game by the strength of their bare hands?

ALICE

Frederick does everything with his bare hands, Kurt. It's part of that famous dignity.

FREDERICK

(Turns on her) Quiet, Hyena!

KURT

(Shocked) Frederick!

FREDERICK

Well, there you have it! She's jealous of me! Of my strength of character, of my pride!

ALICE

Don't forget your dignity.

KURT

But what does Judith have to do with all this?

ALICE

All right, Kurt, I've listened to enough of his pathetic boasting. Now I'll tell you the truth. For one thing, he can't hold a job. So I've been forced to take a job at the hospital, the lowest job they have. And yet I still bring home more money than him. Of course a trained monkey could do that. But still, every month I have to beg the grocer for a few scraps of meat to tide us over—

KURT

My god!

FREDERICK

The grocer is a pig.

ALICE

There you have it, Kurt. The whole truth! Such is our life.

KURT

I hardly know what to say.

FREDERICK

(Looking for some leverage over ALICE) Come, come now, we all know what life is, I think. But do you know, Kurt, it really is good to see you again. After all, we are brothers. I think we can still get drunk together. (He picks up the bottle and drinks from it) Do you know, I still sometimes get melancholy when I think of the wonderful life mother and father shared. But then, in spite of everything, Alice and I have had our moments, too, haven't we, my love?

KURT

I certainly hope so.

FREDERICK

Oh yes. A few years ago we spent a weekend in Fort Wayne. Now there is a cultured and elegant city. And what superb restaurants! The pheasant, the veal, the quail! No, it hasn't all been a living hell, has it, my sweet? Come on, Kurt! Share a drink with me. (He drinks, passes the bottle to KURT).

KURT

(Staggered) You know I think I AM ready for a drink.

FREDERICK

That's it! Be a man, for once. Alice, bring us a snack.

ALICE

We had the 'snacks' for supper.

KURT

Look, why don't I buy a little something? (He takes out his wallet).

ALICE

No, no, Kurt, that's not necessary.

KURT

Please. After all, you fed me supper. (He tries to hand her some cash; she initially balks).

ALICE

Kurt, I'm so ashamed.

KURT

It's the least I can do.

FREDERICK

He's right. Go on, my dear. Take it.

ALICE

(She takes the money) Kurt, I want to thank you for bringing a little light into this black hole. (She exits, giving KURT a surreptitious kiss as she does so, which, however, FREDERICK observes).

(After ALICE exits, there is a rather lengthy and uneasy silence in the room)

KURT

(He clears his throat) May I say something?

FREDERICK

I suppose you're disturbed by my blunt honesty.

KURT

I'm telling myself you have reasons for what you do.

FREDERICK

For one thing, life is a manure heap.

KURT

And I can see conditions here are not the best.

FREDERICK

Well, I have a wife. What do you expect?

KURT

So it's all her fault?

FREDERICK

Of course!

KURT

Why is that?

FREDERICK

(He takes a large drink of whisky) She drinks like a fish.

KURT

Alice does! That surprises me.

FREDERICK

Yes, it is surprising, considering she is the happiest woman alive.

KURT

She is?

FREDERICK

I see you know nothing about women. They are only happy when they can deceive and torment a man, making his life a nightmare. And so, by that law, Alice is the happiest of a rotten lot.

KURT

Tell me, have you ever heard the saying 'Do Unto Others....'

FREDERICK

Absolute drivel! And I'm sure you've already noticed she can't keep her hands off men.

KURT

(Blushing a bit) But you can't convince me Alice would actually be unfaithful.

FREDERICK

I'm quite certain she could convince you.

KURT

But...how do you know that?

FREDERICK

(Taps his nose) My dear Kurt, I have Nietzsche's nose for smelling deception.

KURT

(Pause) You said something about your job. You claimed you were doing well.

FREDERICK

Why be modest? I'm doing extremely well. My task is to interview prospective employees.

KURT

That sounds like a responsible position.

FREDERICK

The boss finds my methods revolutionary. In fact, I'm writing a book on the subject which, if I must say it myself, is destined to become a classic. I'm calling it THE PRINCIPLES OF INTERVIEWING.

KURT

Then you really are doing well. I'm glad to hear it. Alice gave me a different impression.

FREDERICK

That's another thing about her. She's become extremely envious of me. Her own husband!

KURT

But Frederick, listen, we need to talk about your daughter—

FREDERICK

(Slamming his fist on the table) Damn it, she's Alice's daughter. Listen, Kurt, have you noticed most people are vulgar scum?

KURT

I see you're still in love with humanity.

FREDERICK

How can one be in love with jackasses?

KURT

Well, I ought to tell you that I've become a Christian, and I believe God loves us all.

FREDERICK

He has a strange way of showing it.

KURT

He works in mysterious ways.

FREDERICK

Rubbish! Such idiotic comments are like putting blinders on a horse in a storm! (He rises and looks melancholy) Ah, Kurt, what happened to the good old days? Surely you can remember them, too. I recall mother and father leading a model life. They knew what it was like to be truly happy. (He turns to 'FATHER') Did you?

KURT

(Astounded) They did!

FREDERICK

What serenity, what bliss! Sitting by the checkerboard, listening to the peaceful bleating of the goats, with an occasional tune on the piano...

KURT

You're fantasizing.

FREDERICK

Damn it, man! We're staring at the end. It's the last stage of the journey. The locomotive is rushing towards the station, and what do we see? A black void! And there is no escape! (Suddenly, he swoons again, reaching out his hand) Kurt! Where are you! (He tumbles into a chair, staring vacantly).

KURT

Frederick? (He goes to FREDERICK and shakes him) Frederick! Merciful Heaven! You really are ill! Frederick!!

(And then ALICE re-enters; she is now carrying a large bag overflowing with groceries)

KURT

Alice, thank God!

ALICE

What is it?

KURT

It's Frederick!

ALICE

(She looks at FREDERICK) Is that all?

KURT

ALL?

ALICE

That's how it began with your father.

KURT

But shouldn't we call a doctor?

ALICE

He won't thank you for that. And he usually snaps out of it in a few minutes.

KURT

He blacks out like this; then he simply snaps out of it?

ALICE

So we might only have a couple of minutes to talk. (She sits on the sofa) Come and sit beside me. There's a lot I want to ask you.

KURT

I seem to remember you and Frederick were in love at one time. Frederick once had a strong influence on us both. He seemed so strong.

ALICE

Yes, he fooled both of us. But I'm the only one who's suffered for it.

KURT

Are things really so terrible?

ALICE

Worse! But I'd rather not talk about that. Tell me about yourself. What is your wife like? I suppose she's young and beautiful. Do the two of you have any children?

KURT

Alice, please! I'm trying to understand what's happening here.

ALICE

It's pretty obvious.

KURT

But Frederick keeps talking about mother and father's exemplary marriage. A delusion! They hid the kitchen knives from each other. And father...(He glances over at 'FATHER') The man was a sadist. He used to make mother arm wrestle with him—

ALICE

So that's where Frederick got that idea! (She walks over and looks at FREDERICK). Kurt, have you ever seen anything as ugly as he is?

KURT

(Looks at FREDERICK) He is pretty ugly.

ALICE

Isn't he! (Laughs) Oh, it feels so good to laugh again. Kurt, I want to thank you for making me happy, if only for a moment. You know, I remember you used to think I was attractive when I laughed. But that was a few years ago, you probably don't even remember.

KURT

Alice, please, we really need to talk....

ALICE

I agree. (She sits beside him again, takes his hand) Yes, about so many things. You know I had a very strange dream the other night. I want to tell you about it—

KURT

Now?

ALICE

It was strange but very beautiful, too. I was standing in the middle of a field, and this field was covered with snow, but I wasn't sad. In fact, I was happy. I was excited, because I was waiting for something. Do you know what I was waiting for, Kurt?

KURT

(Barely paying attention to her) What?

ALICE

You!

KURT

Me! Well, that's probably because you knew I was coming.

ALICE

And now you're here. Oh, Kurt! (She takes his hand again)... I won't be angry if you want to—

KURT

Alice, listen, tell me about Judith?

ALICE

(Irritated and upset) Judith! All right, Kurt, I'll tell you. Judith is dead! (She points at FREDERICK) It is all that monster's fault!

KURT

Dead! What makes you say that?

FREDERICK

(Slowly rouses) Dance? Did somebody say something about dancing?

KURT

(Looks at FREDERICK) Dear God! I think I need another drink.

ALICE

A wonderful idea! Let's both have one. (She takes the bottle, drinks, then hands it to KURT. He shrugs helplessly, and then takes a drink).

FREDERICK

(Stands groggily) Now what's this about dancing? You want some dancing, I'll show you what it means! (He stumbles about knocking into furniture).

ALICE

I told you he'd snap out of it.

KURT

Shouldn't we try and get him to bed?

ALICE

That would only make him belligerent. Forget about him, Kurt. Let's you and I dance. (She puts her arms around KURT, finally inducing him to dance with her, rather like a zombie).

FREDERICK

You call that dancing! Come on, you weaklings! (He stumbles around; then falls into the chair again).

KURT

Alice! He's out again!

ALICE

Thank heavens!

KURT

But—

ALICE

Come on, Kurt! It won't last forever. We haven't much time.

KURT

Time...for what?

ALICE

For... dancing! (She laughs wildly).

FREDERICK

(Mutters) Dancing... like the goats, yes, dancing...

ALICE

Let's oblige him, Kurt! (She starts to dance with a bewildered KURT).

KURT

Can this be happening?

ALICE

That's how I feel! Isn't it wonderful! (She pulls KURT very close) Oh, Kurt, I knew some day you'd come back for me, I knew it! (Then, suddenly, she kisses him passionately, as the lights fade to A BLACKOUT, and so...)

THE SCENE IS OVER

NIETZSCHE'S NOSE

Scene 3

(The following morning KURT sits gloomily staring at FREDERICK, who is sleeping on the sofa. 'FATHER' is as before. ALICE enters with an i.v.; connects it to FATHER. She also carries a pot of coffee, which she puts on the coffee table.)

ALICE

You don't look very cheerful, Kurt.

KURT

(He looks around the room) It's rather gloomy in here.

ALICE

I suppose this IS a rather gloomy house. Well, maybe a little coffee will cheer you up.

KURT

All right. (She pours him some).

ALICE

Would you like me to play something for you on the piano?

KURT

Good God no! You'll waken Frederick.

ALICE

You're right. We don't want him awake yet, do we? Oh, Kurt, it was really a wonderful night, wasn't! (She tries to kiss him, but he walks off uneasily). What's this? This morning you seem as shy as a school boy. (She giggles) Nothing like you were last night. (She laughs merrily).

KURT

Alice, wasn't I a little drunk last night?

ALICE

Certainly not.

KURT

I wasn't?

ALICE

I think the word would be 'plastered!' (She laughs happily).

KURT

I have the feeling I made an ass of myself.

ALICE

Thank you!

KURT

But Alice, there is your husband!

ALICE

I know he's there, Kurt, but do I have to look?

KURT

I seem to recall he was in a jealous rage last night. That must mean he still loves you.

ALICE

That rage was simply due to his hurt pride.

KURT

(He walks over and picks up a saber) My God! What's this?

ALICE

(She laughs) Oh yes! Frederick got very upset about the way you and I were dancing!

KURT

You mean...? Now stop fooling, Alice.

ALICE

(She approaches him) Kurt, last night you were telling me you inherited all your money when your wife died.

KURT

Poor Grace.

ALICE

Was she very much older than you?

KURT

That was unimportant. What I can tell you is that she was an incredibly pious woman.

ALICE

Many people become so in old age.

KURT

I miss her very much.

ALICE

I think you mentioned she left you over eight hundred thousand dollars?

KURT

But there are things far more important than money. For instance, we read THE BIBLE together every night.