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# *A Momentary Kingdom*

A play in two acts

By Motti Lerner

Translated from the Hebrew by Anthony Berris

The life of Heinrich Heine served solely as inspiration for the play, and most of the characters and events depicted in it are figments of the author's imagination

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**Unless otherwise stated, all Heinrich Heine's poems are taken from *The Complete Poems of Heinrich Heine: A Modern English Version*, translated by Hal Draper  
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## **Introduction**

"Momentary Kingdom" is a play about the life in exile of the German-Jewish poet Heinrich Heine. From the time he began writing he was persecuted by the King of Prussia for his criticism of the Prussian regime. In 1831 he was forced to flee Germany and find refuge in Paris. The King of Prussia continued with his attempts to gag him by banning all his books, prohibiting German publishers to publish and sell his works, and forcing newspapers to reject his articles. Despite all this Heine continued to write poetry and prose in which he criticized the king, his government, the clergy, and also writers and intellectuals who took no part in the struggle for freedom and democracy in Germany. Heine led the struggle against the kings of Prussia until his last breath. He died in Paris in 1856.

While the play deals with a historical character in a historical context, it is not a historical play. It explores the power of the writer in a modern world to change the political reality by creating a public discourse on the values of the political regime. It explores the personal sacrifice that radical writers must make for expressing their demand for changes in the political climate. It also explores the effect of the writer's political convictions on his own life and on the aesthetics of his own writing.

**The greater part of the action takes place in Paris between 1831 and 1856**

**The Characters:**

**Heinrich Heine**, a German émigré poet (34)

**Ludwig Beckerman**, a German émigré writer and journalist (45)

**Mathilde**, Heine's wife (19)

**Aunty Julie**, Mathilde's aunt (60)

**Princess Marie Barthélémy**, who has a salon (40)

**Alfred Mathieu**, secretary of L'Académie française, Marie's suitor and later her husband (45)

**Paolo**, Marie's servant (35)

**Wolfgang Strauss**, a German émigré (35)

**Jeanette**, Strauss's wife and Beckerman's lover (42)

**Brauner**, a German émigré poet (38)

**Glück**, a German émigré and Brauner's friend (44)

**Lottchen**, a German waitress (30)

**Gretchen**, a German waitress (28)

**Albert**, a Parisian gendarme (50)

**Camilla Selden**, a young German woman and admirer of Heine (25, in Act Two)

**King Friedrich Wilhelm III of Prussia**, (60, in Act One)

**King Friedrich Wilhelm IV of Prussia**, (50, in Act Two)

**Baron Cotta**, owner of the newspaper for which Heine writes (50)

**Julius Campe**, Heine's publisher (39)

**Friedrich Hoffmann**, the Censor (41)

**Street musicians, policemen, officers, border guards, etc.**

**The majority of the actors play several parts**

**The set:**

The stage is empty. The props mentioned in the action will be brought on and taken off by the characters. The set should provide allusive theatrical solutions to the various locations in which the action takes place.

**Style:**

The play is written as a performance by a group of actors, i.e., the theatrical components are visible to the audience. The majority of the actors play several roles. The actors openly bring in and take out props and set parts. The musicians are visible onstage throughout the play. A number of actors make up a chorus that sings Heine's lieder. When the actors in the chorus take part in a scene, they leave the chorus and assume their character's role by means of an item of clothing or a prop.

## Act One

### Scene 1

**1831. The German-French border. A stormy night. The Chorus sings Heine's *Gruss*.**

Softly singing measures wing	Ring far out, where blossoms sprout
Sweetly, through my mind.	Round a house you'll see.
Ring out, little song of spring,	If you find a rose about,
Ring out unconfined!	Say hello for me.

**Enter Heine and Campe in a "carriage". Campe whips up the "horses".**

Campe: If you had listened to me I would not have had to smuggle you over the border like a thief in the night.

Heine: I am proud to flee, Julius.

Campe: Only a fool like myself would publish a book stating that the King of Prussia and the bishops have swallowed each other's vomit so that they can enslave Germany together.

Heine: With that book you will add another floor to your home.

Campe: The King is sending his agents after you because he fears you?

Heine: Then why *is* he sending them? To discover how I write and then write like me?

Campe: Because you besmirch his honor! (**Angrily**) And why did you have to add that silly joke about the announcement in the *Allgemeine Zeitung* that old Jehovah has not authorized anyone on earth to speak in his name? You have outraged the entire church.

Heine: You laughed when you read it.

Campe: The King will have you killed because of it.

Heine: What are you angrier about, Julius? That you were forced to leave your warm fireside in the middle of the night, or that your goose has decided to lay its golden eggs in Paris?

Campe: Do not flatter yourself, Heinrich. No other publisher will take the risk of publishing your books.

Heine: I would not be very surprised if one day I discovered that you bribed the Censor to ban that book. Whatever he bans always sells better.

Campe: Not this time.

**They stop at the border crossing. Heine makes to shake hands. Campe swallows his anger, embraces him, and takes his leave. Heine hands his papers to the two border guards.**

Guard A: No crossing at night. Come back in the morning.

Heine: **(Gives him a coin)** Here.

Guard A: You want me to open the gate in the middle of the night for one thaler?

**Heine takes out another coin. Guard B, who has inspected his papers, hurries to open the gate.**

Guard B: Herr Heine? It is an honor. You can pass, sir.

Guard A: He'll pay first.

Guard B: Six years ago I met a beautiful woman, Herr Heine. I stood no chance of her choosing an ugly oaf like me. But I didn't give up. Every evening I read her one of your poems. A month later we got married. Today we've got four children. And she's not all that beautiful anymore.

**Heine puts the coin back into his pocket, goes through the gate and exits. Lighting up on King Friedrich Wilhelm's bureau in which are the King and Hoffmann, the censor. Enter Campe.**

Friedrich: You published this book, Campe, even though you knew that the Censor would ban it.

Campe: I sent it to the Censor the moment it came off the press, sire.

Friedrich: You should have given it to him before you printed it.

Campe: According to the law, your majesty, before printing I must only give him books containing less than three hundred and twenty pages.

Hoffmann: According to my information, Herr Campe, the book had only three hundred pages. You asked Heine to write an introduction so there would be three hundred and twenty-one.

Campe: I asked Heine for an introduction to elucidate the book for the reader.

Hoffmann: And the introduction is a paean to the French Revolution.

Friedrich: I have been building this kingdom for thirty-four years, Campe. All those who tried to get in my way did not live to regret it. Heine should bear that in mind. If he thinks that my arm cannot reach Paris, he is mistaken. **(Darkness)**

## **Scene 2**

**Night. A café where German émigrés gather. In the corner a beggar is playing an accordion. Sitting at one of the tables are Beckerman, Brauner, Glück, Jeanette and Strauss. Lottchen and Gretchen are serving them beer.**

Beckerman: This is not how a revolution in Germany will come about. When King Friedrich Wilhelm's spies tell him what is to appear in the next issue of "The German Revolution", he will go to his bed and snore in peace.

Brauner: I write my poetry from the heart, Ludwig.

Strauss: I am ready to translate another of Robespierre's articles.

Beckerman: All the blame is on the china teapot on your sideboard.

Brauner: The china teapot?

Beckerman: You fear that if anything you write angers the King, you'll have to flee and the china teapot might get broken along the way .

Glück: We bought it to make tea.

Beckerman: The peddler who sold it to you was one of the King's agents, who wanted to dishearten you.

Strauss: This is what Buddha meant when he said we must put our ideas into action.

Jeanette: That's enough, Wolfgang.

Beckerman: If we want revolution we must shatter all chinaware.

**Enter Lottchen and Gretchen carrying glasses of beer.**

Lottchen: We're closing.

Brauner: And what is to become of the revolution, Lottchen?

Lottchen: It's going to rain. It isn't the weather for a revolution.

Glück: Anyone suckling at your breast, Lottchen, will be a slave forever.

Lottchen: If I threw all the beer I've poured for a Free Germany into the sea, the sea would overflow.

**Suddenly the sounds of a bugle and shouts of “Halt!” are heard. A man carrying a valise enters at a run, and before anyone recognizes him he embraces the stunned Gretchen and buries his face in her bosom. Albert the gendarme, who enters on his heels, does not recognize him as the fugitive.**

Albert: Has anybody come in here? I was walking down the street checking the locks, and suddenly there was this man running. “Halt!” I called. “Ja, ja, ein moment” he said. I was trying to put the manacles on him when five ruffians appeared, and they, too, said “Ja, ja, ein moment”, and tried to abduct him. I immediately took my trusty bugle, the same bugle that sounded the victory at Austerlitz, that heralded the retreat from Moscow, that accompanied the Emperor on his last journey to St. Helena. The ruffians heard the bugle blast and took to their heels, and as I was wiping the spittle from my bugle’s hoarse throat, the first “Ja, ja, ein moment” also vanished.

Beckerman: (**Interrupts him**) We haven’t seen a soul, Monsieur Albert.

Albert: Are you sure, Monsieur Beckerman?

Brauner: We have not seen anyone.

Albert: All the Germans and the whores gather in my street. Why? I’ve got a sick wife and six children and an old father who lost his hearing at the Battle of Waterloo. If you see him, you’ll call me, won’t you?

Beckerman: Of course, Monsieur Albert.

**Exit Albert. Gretchen frees herself from the man and adjusts her blouse.**

Gretchen: The gentleman did not have to exploit my patriotism.

**Everyone is astonished to see that the man is Heine.**

Beckerman: Heinrich!

Brauner: Heinrich Heine!

Strauss: Gott in Himmel!



- Heine: I was unaware that poets are accorded such great respect in Paris. An entire entourage was awaiting me. In Berlin they throw poets into dank cellars where only the rats await them.
- Beckerman: We read your *Harzreise*, Heinrich, and we knew that the King would be unable to restrain himself. Every day we looked for you among the travelers crossing the Rhine.
- Glück: We heard that the police collected your books from the shops.
- Brauner: We did not know if you were still able to write.
- Heine: When a German policeman sees a man with a pen in his hand, he immediately draws his sword.
- Brauner: Here nobody will close down any newspaper you write for.
- Glück: (**Emotionally**) I shall bring you pen and paper every morning.
- Strauss: (**Shaking his hand**) Robespierre says in his book on the revolution which I am translating that.
- Jeanette: That's enough, Wolfgang.
- Beckerman: Lottchen, beer for everyone!
- Heine: Had I known that you would be so happy to see me, I would have fled here long ago.
- Beckerman: Let us raise a glass to the German censors, thanks to whom we shall form here legions of freedom-loving writers .
- Heine: I actually hoped that I would be arrested at the border. A heroic flight from the gallows would have doubled the sales of my books. In fact it would have been better had I been executed. The mediocre poems of dead martyrs sell far better than the magnificent poems of living émigrés.

**They all laugh, clink their glasses and drink.**

- Beckerman: I have had an idea, Heinrich. We shall open a new column in our next issue: "Beckerman and Heine – Conversations", or if you wish, "Heine and Beckerman – Conversations". Not simply conversations but arguments, debates, barbs, the plucking of feathers and cockscombs. Together we shall mock that ignorant king, the decadent aristocracy, the corrupt Church.

- Jeanette: The impotent intelligentsia.
- Glück: I am ready to write down every word that falls from you lips.
- Brauner: (**To Heine**) Nobody will dare to censor you here.
- Strauss: And on the last page I shall add some lines from Robespierre's journal.
- Beckerman: These issues will be sold throughout Germany. In bookshops. In apothecaries. At vegetable stalls. Under butchers' counters. Within a few months the King of Prussia will go out of his mind. He will be the first ruler in the world to be overthrown by two pens.
- Strauss: In the morning we shall go to Place Louis XVI and you can talk at the spot where the guillotine stood.
- Glück: And from there to the ruins of the Bastille and you can talk at the place where the blood ran from the wounds of the rebels.
- Heine: I hope that afterward you will all come to say *Kaddish* at the funeral.
- Beckerman: Whose funeral?
- Heine: Don't you see the rope crooked around my neck?
- Gretchen: Don't worry, Herr Heine. You can always make use of my patriotism.
- Lottchen: I'm willing to hide you in a safer place.
- Beckerman: There was a revolution here a few years ago, Heinrich.
- Heine: I am quite sure that both the King of France and the King of Prussia have heard about it, but I am also sure that for the sake of the friendship between them they will have no hesitation in tightening that rope around my neck until it is quite difficult for me to breathe.
- Beckerman: I am also followed by agents, Heinrich. A year ago I suggested to the King of Prussia that he save their wages and hire me to follow myself. I am prepared to send him far more detailed reports.
- Heine: Were you to write like me, he would have had you killed long ago.

**Silence. Beckerman is hurt. Knowing his sensitivity, his friends fear his reaction. Heine regrets his remark.**

- Heine: It is the fear, Ludwig. The same fear that pursues us in Frankfurt's *Judenstrasse*, in Dusseldorf, in Hamburg. What am I to do when somebody chases me with a drawn knife, shouting that he wants to stab me? Tell him a joke? When I am assailed by fear I am filled with venom, so that anyone preying on me will die when he digests me.

Beckerman: (**Swallows his pride**) If you are so afraid, Heinrich, I shall introduce you to a lady who can obtain the protection of the French government for you.

### **Scene 3**

**The salon of Princess Marie Barthélemy. Enter Paolo, her manservant.**

Paolo: Her Highness Princess Marie is pleased to receive you!

**Enter the strikingly beautiful Marie.**

Marie: Bon jour, Monsieur Beckerman.

Beckerman: Bon jour, mademoiselle.

Heine: (**Bows**) Heinrich Heine, mademoiselle.

Marie: So you are the man who so frightens the King of Prussia? You seem far too gentle. And you are not all that ugly, as one might expect of a poet who has spent his life writing about unrequited love.

Heine: I hope, mademoiselle, that here I shall be able to write of loves that are requited.

Beckerman: It is not Heine's love poems that are angering the King of Prussia, mademoiselle, but his poems that expose the king's tyranny. His agents in Paris have been given explicit orders.

Marie: (**To Heine**) By the way, monsieur, do you think that your poems exposing the king's tyranny are good?

Heine: If they expose the reasons for his tyranny. If they reveal why the Germans submit to it.

Beckerman: They are good because they are written by a poet who has not closed himself off to write about his tortured heart. Heine writes to the common people, reveals their torment and prepares them for the revolution.

Marie: Poets who write for the common people are usually common poets.

Heine: Only if they flatter the common people.

Beckerman: I hope that that the princess is not belittling the importance of the revolution.

Marie: I do not belittle the importance of the revolution. I fear for the fate of poetry.

Heine: If the revolution will ensure liberty, it.

Beckerman: (**Interrupting**) The fate of poetry depends upon the fate of poets. Heine needs protection to continue writing. We beg that you exert your influence on your friends in the government to protect him.

Marie: He will merit that protection if his poetry is worthy of it.

Heine: If they were unworthy, the King of Prussia would not have tried to kill me.

Beckerman: The princess has great influence with the secretary of The French Academy.

Marie: I can influence the secretary of The Academy more than a veteran revolutionary like yourself?

Beckerman: Mademoiselle's beauty accords greater weight to her words.

Marie: My dear sir, are you suggesting that I offer my body to the secretary of The Academy.

Beckerman: My dear lady.

Marie: I would consent had you admitted it and respected me for it. But you do not even take the trouble to change the ruff of your coat for me.

Beckerman: I am fighting for a republic, mademoiselle, and cannot conduct myself with the mannerisms of a noble.

Marie: If you are fighting for a republic by dubious means, Monsieur Beckerman, then your republic will also be dubious.

Heine: My life is in danger, mademoiselle.

Marie: Thank you, Monsieur Beckerman. (**Gestures him to leave**)

Beckerman: Many people in the world wear threadbare coats, but they are still worthy of liberty.

Marie: I said 'thank you'.

**Beckerman glances at Heine and sees that he is not joining him. He exits.**

Heine: You think my poetry is unworthy, mademoiselle?

Marie: If you are as fanatical about the revolution as that man, then it quite possibly is.

Heine: I am a lover, mademoiselle. Lovers are more fanatical about women than revolutions.

Marie: Permit me to doubt your talents as a lover as well.

Heine: Mademoiselle has not yet availed herself of my talents.

Marie: They are written on your face.

Heine: They are written on my heart. You will discover them only if you tear my heart from my breast.

**Marie laughs. Heine kisses her hand. Enter Paolo.**

Paolo: The Secretary of The Academy wants to see you, your highness.

Marie: Show him in.

**Exit Paolo. Enter Mathieu and kisses Marie's hand.**

Marie: **(To Heine)** Alfred heard that I was to receive you, Monsieur Heine, and has hastened to discover if he has grounds for concern.

Mathieu: Does mademoiselle think I have grounds for concern?

Marie: Had you taken the trouble to know poets you would have found them to be ordinary mortals. Just a little more arrogant, selfish and petty.

Heine: Mademoiselle thinks me arrogant because I want to write, she thinks me selfish because I seek to have my poems published, and she thinks me petty because I fear for my life.

Mathieu: Do you have good reason to fear for your life, Monsieur Heine?

Heine: The King of Prussia found numerous reasons. Monsieur must know that if I'm harmed in Paris, then the sovereignty of France will be harmed too.

Mathieu: The government of France will not intervene in an internal German matter.

Heine: The revolution in Germany is not a purely internal matter. If Germany is ruled by tyrants, it will destroy Europe in a vast conflagration that will consume the eagles in the sky.

- Mathieu: And if you write your poetry here, those tyrants will relinquish their rule?
- Heine: I am a poet. I cannot remain indifferent to human suffering.
- Mathieu: **(To Marie)** I see that he is as arrogant as you say.
- Marie: He is arrogant because he is young. Once he gives up the revolution he will discover poetry.
- Mathieu: If we offer him our protection, we shall be compelled to offer it to others.
- Heine: Monsieur can assure His Majesty the King of France that I shall not exploit this protection against him.
- Mathieu: Monsieur Heine, I deeply regret.
- Marie: My dear Alfred, surely you would not want that one day I find out that Monsieur Heine did not gain the protection of the government simply because you sought to keep me from the pleasure of his company?
- Mathieu: Monsieur Heine will have the protection he seeks, if only to prove that your suspicions are groundless.

**Heine shakes Mathieu's hand and kisses Marie's hand.**

#### **Scene 4**

**Lighting up on the Chorus that sings Heine's Poem 109 from "Book of Songs".**

When in the heaven of your kisses	I beg you, Leave Germany out of your chatter!
Enraptured in your arms I lie,	Don't plague me with questions – you must
Then never mention Germany to me –	forswear it.
I cannot bear it – there's a reason why.	Don't ask me about my home and kindred –
	There's a reason why – I cannot bear it.

**Lighting up on King Friedrich Wilhelm's bureau in which are the King, Hoffmann the Censor and Baron Cotta.**

- Friedrich: You know me well, Baron Cotta. I am not a tyrant. I am trying to ensure the future of Prussia. Without a stable monarchy it will sink into anarchy. Blood will flow like water. For what? So that the writers in

your paper can make a living from their scribblings? I cannot understand why you employ that Heine.

Cotta: Your majesty, Heine is a well-known poet. Even your majesty reads his poems on occasion.

Friedrich: Then let him write poems, not articles.

Cotta: His articles increase the distribution of the paper, sir.

Friedrich: He accuses me of treason. He claims that I have broken my promise to give Prussia a constitution.

Cotta: Although I do not agree with him, your majesty, yet.

Friedrich: (**Interrupting him**) I will give Prussia a constitution when Prussia is ready for a constitution. When those calling themselves liberals will not exploit the constitution to undermine me.

Cotta: Your majesty, I am willing to publish articles written by your ministers explaining the delay in the formulation of the constitution. I am sure that they will be more persuasive than those written by Heine.

Friedrich: If my ministers were capable of writing like him, I would have a better government. If you want to continue publishing your paper, Baron Cotta, you must rein that man in.

Hoffmann: Come to my office tomorrow, Baron Cotta. I will be happy to advise you.

### **Darkness on the bureau. The angry Heine addresses Baron Cotta.**

Heine: The fact that you publish the paper does not give you the right to censor me.

Cotta: If I didn't censor you, I would be unable to publish it at all.

Heine: Herr Baron, we are on the same side. We are both fighting for freedom.

Cotta: Do you seek to cut off your nose to spite your face?

Heine: Do your readers not have the right to understand the world in which they live? One day they will realize that the king is indeed a bully, that his brain is too small in relation to his body, that his most notable talents are riding his horse and brandishing his sword. And on that day you will despise yourself for not publishing it when I wrote it.

- Cotta: On that day I will be proud that my readers know it without me publishing it explicitly.
- Heine: What do I have but my truth, sir? The world detests me for writing it, but at least I respect myself. What has remained of that respect? I did not have to flee Germany to write what you have published. I could have written the same words while in the king's service, and earned twice as much.
- Cotta: You want to write everything, Heinrich. But not everything is possible. And by the way, on the day you learn to write the possible, you will be a better writer.
- Heine: Thank you for your advice, sir, but if you do not publish everything I write, I shall not write for you.
- Cotta: You are resigning?
- Heine: Yes!

**Exit Cotta.**

### **Scene 5**

**The café. A beggar is playing his accordion. Gretchen and Lottchen are serving beer to Brauner and Glück. Heine comes into the café, sits down at a table and scans the menu.**

- Glück: Herr Heine, it is indeed an honor.
- Heine: I hope that this honor will gain me a discount here. **(To Lottchen)** May I have the veal, Lottchen? **(Lottchen bows and exits)**
- Glück: Now that you have resigned from the *Allgemeine Zeitung*, perhaps you can write for us.
- Brauner: With us you can write anything. **(Heine does not reply)** You can protest against the Church, against the censor, against the arrest of the writers, against the ban on demonstrations in Berlin. **(Heine does not reply)** If a poet like yourself would raise his voice, his cry will echo in many more ears.
- Heine: The world is tired of protests, Baron. The louder you cry out, fewer will listen.
- Brauner: This is capitulation, Heinrich.



Glück: You don't have to cry out. Just write an article or two. If you fear the king's agents, we shall publish your articles anonymously.

Heine: Your puerile jokes, Glück, sound like quotations from the baron's poetry.

Brauner: **(Gets up angrily)** Heinrich!

**Heine gets up to leave. Enter Beckerman, Strauss and Jeanette. Heine sits down, followed by Brauner.**

Beckerman: I see that you are still addicted to sausage and sauerkraut, Heinrich.

Heine: Even poets are sometimes hungry.

**Beckerman sits down next to Heine. Jeanette and Strauss sit next to him. Lottchen serves them beer.**

Strauss: **(Raises his glass)** Buddha said that the poet constantly hovers between the peaks of the sublime and lowest of the low. **(He falls silent)**

Beckerman: I was happy to hear of your resignation, Heinrich. From this day forth our paper is at your service.

Heine: I would be pleased to write for your paper if it only had some readers.

Beckerman: If you write for it, it will. **(Heine is silent)** When we read what appeared in the *Allgemeine Zeitung*, we all felt betrayed.

Heine: Then you are in good company. The king also felt that I had betrayed him, and I feel that I have betrayed myself too.

Beckerman: I give you the assurance of a man whose decency is his principal asset that we shall not censor a comma.

Heine: Ludwig, I cannot remain hungry all my life.

Brauner: Actually, for some poets hunger is a source of endless inspiration.

Heine: The baron is prepared to starve a poet to death so that he can read a good poem after lunch.

Jeanette: I was most surprised to discover that Herr Heine has written mostly art and literature critiques recently, and a few sea poems here and there, too.

Strauss: Really, Heinrich, what is there in the sea that you write about so much? I, too, was once at the sea, and I saw that all that is in it is water.

Heine: **(To Lottchen)** Lottchen, I ordered the veal.

- Beckerman: We shall pay you the same as the *Allgemeine Zeitung*, Heinrich.
- Jeanette: If he is thinking of sending us “literary critiques”, he should save himself the trouble.
- Beckerman: On the contrary, Jeanette. Radical literary critiques could bring Berlin’s lovers of literature closer to us.
- Jeanette: Love of literature is the excuse of cowards to avoid fighting for freedom.
- Heine: **(To Gretchen)** Fraulein, my veal has already grown into a cow.
- Jeanette: **(Insulted)** A cow?
- Beckerman: Jeanette would prefer that even in your literary critiques you should try to emphasize the importance of the fight for freedom. In her opinion you could have written pure literary critique in Germany too.
- Brauner: But it is far easier for Heinrich to write literary critique in Germany. Writers and poets whose hands are manacled don't scare him. Writing criticism of the king is slightly more dangerous. The king might belch and Heinrich’s head will part company from his body.
- Beckerman: Please, Baron.
- Brauner: I am a German noble, and I am a poet. And I also have other sensitivities. Why must I beg him to write for us?
- Heine: **(Angrily)** I promise you I shall write. What else do you want from me? A donation? Here. **(Gets up and empties his pockets)** That is all I have. The address of a whore, a concert ticket, a note I meant to send to an opera singer, a handkerchief with which I have blown my nose. And now the real treasure: two francs. Irrefutable proof that I am a poet. **(Sits down)**
- Jeanette: This man is unashamed of his decadence.
- Beckerman: **(Forcefully)** He has promised to write!
- Brauner: We don't need his charity. His hypocrisy proves he still has all the attributes of his ancestors. They sold rags, and he sells words. He sprinkled a few drops of water on his head so he would be considered a German, and now he pretends to be a republican so that he can lay his head on the bosoms of a few dubious young girls. It is because of him that everyone thinks we all are Jews.
- Beckerman: Baron Brauner.

Heine: When my 'merchant' ancestors wrote the Song of Songs, Baron, yours were running around the forests in bearskins, worshipping idols of wood and stone.

Beckerman: Heinrich.

Heine: And while I lay my head on the bosoms of a few dubious young girls, you lay yours in the arms of a few dubious young boys whose contribution to the revolution is very similar to your own contribution to poetry.

**Brauner and Glück exit angrily.**

Beckerman: Heaven blessed you with a sharp tongue, Heinrich, but you'd better use it to defend justice and not to satisfy your desires.

Heine: If I did not have to satisfy my desires, I would not be a poet.

Beckerman: Perhaps you should really question whether the end of poetry has indeed arrived. The zeitgeist is no longer the beautiful and the good.

Heine: The zeitgeist has always been the refuge of the mediocre.

Beckerman: An entire nation is fighting for its freedom across the Rhine, Heinrich, if only the mediocre engage in the revolution, then.

Heine: Which nation? The ones drinking beer in the taverns? Those who lick the boots of a few crude barons and wait to have their behinds kicked? When their flesh has rotted in the ground they will still stick out their bones so that the king can fetter them.

Jeanette: **(Gets up)** This man is no patriot, Ludwig. If I were not a woman I would rip out his tongue.

Strauss: Another beer please, Lottchen.

Jeanette: Wolfgang! **(Exits. Strauss follows her)**

Beckerman: I would be most happy if you would write for us what you have just said.

Heine: I am tired of writing it, Ludwig.

Beckerman: Why? Because the king still sits on his throne? Because no barricades have yet been erected in the streets of Berlin?

Heine: Because I am tired of striking a sheet of tin with my fist when all I want is to pluck a harp with my fingers.

- Beckerman: Your readers need simple, clear and practical words.
- Heine: I seek to learn from you the mysterious, the nebulous and the profound, and you want me to write simply, clearly and practically?
- Beckerman: Why have you come to Paris, Heinrich?
- Heine: To discover the heartbeat of the heavens and the earth.
- Beckerman: Mortals cannot discover the heartbeat of the heavens and the earth, even if they are great poets. You would do much better to devote yourself to more modest ambitions. Like a republic, for instance.
- Heine: **(Takes an acorn from his pocket)** What do you see in my hand, Ludwig?
- Beckerman: **(Ignoring the question)** When there is less suffering in Germany and the cries of the oppressed no longer fill the air, we shall all be able to open wide our ears and hear the heartbeat of the heavens and the earth.
- Heine: **(Insistently)** What is this, Ludwig?
- Beckerman: An acorn.
- Heine: You see an acorn, while I see forests with oak trees swaying in them.
- Beckerman: Acorns will not topple Friedrich Wilhelm from his throne, even though you see forests with oak trees swaying in them.

**Beckerman gets up and exits. Enter Lottchen carrying a tray.**

- Lottchen: Here's your chicken, Herr Heine.
- Heine: Chicken?
- Lottchen: Yes.
- Heine: I ordered veal. Roast veal. Is there any way of ordering it in simpler words?

**The angry Heine snatches the tray to throw it in her face. Enter Crescence Eugénie Mirat (known later as "Mathilde"), carrying a bundle of women's clothing. Heine stands facing her, the tray in his hands. Crescence looks at him and bursts into laughter.**

- Heine: Would mademoiselle care for a chicken?
- Crescence: Perhaps monsieur would care for a dress? **(Still laughing)**

Heine: **(Menacingly)** If mademoiselle is laughing at me, perhaps she should tell me why.

Crescence: Why should I? Who are you that I should tell you anything?

Heine: **(Angrily)** Why is mademoiselle laughing?

Crescence: Monsieur is a very odd waiter.

Heine: A waiter? **(Throws the tray to the floor)** I am an exiled poet who wants to write. I try to explain to God the world he has created, and he does not understand. I tell the world of his suffering and the world laughs.

Crescence: A poet? **(She laughs even louder)**

**To silence her, Heine grasps her cheek and kisses it. She slaps him.**

Crescence: Son of a bitch! Attacking a decent maid like me? On the Day of Judgment demons will rise from Hell and skewer your bum. Oh, Jesus. **(Toward the street)** Auntie Julie! **(To Heine)** She'll be here in a minute and rip your balls off – if you've got any – and I can't see any sign that you have. **(Toward the street)** Auntie Julie! **(To Heine)** Even the sick dogs rooting in the rubbish in Rue le Chevalier have more respect for me.

Heine: Mademoiselle. mademoiselle.

Crescence: Crescence Eugénie Mirat. I sell underthings in the first shop on the left. Open from ten till four. **(Exits)**

**Heine remains, embarrassed. The waitresses laugh and clear the tables.**

## **Scene 6**

**The salon of Princess Marie Barthélemy. Enter Heine. Paolo stops him.**

Paolo: Her highness is engaged, monsieur .

Heine: She is probably preparing for my call. I wrote to her.

Paolo: Her highness does not receive uninvited callers.

Heine: I am sure that she will be pleased to receive me.

**Paolo hesitates. Mathieu suddenly comes out of Marie's room.**

Mathieu: Monsieur Heine. How are you, sir?

Heine: Like a fish in water. Or more precisely, should you inquire of a fish in water how it is, it will surely reply that it is as well as Monsieur Heine in Paris.

Mathieu: **(Laughs)** I hope that the King of Prussia's agents have stopped troubling you.

Heine: They certainly have, monsieur.

Mathieu: And you, of course, will not trouble her highness.

Heine: Of course not, monsieur.

**Paolo hands Mathieu his coat. Marie appears in the doorway to her room.**

Mathieu: By the way, Heine, his highness King Louis-Philippe did not like your new book. Some of the expressions you used even angered him. He aspires to be a dictator? He chops down the trees of liberty to strengthen his unstable rule with them?

Heine: Heaven forbid! The French translator of the book distorted what I wrote. I actually lauded the king for granting freedom to the citizens of France that in Germany is not even dreamt of.

Mathieu: The king's protection is not given gratis, Monsieur Heine.

Heine: Most certainly, monsieur. I know that very well, monsieur.

**Mathieu bows to Marie, Paolo escorts him to the door and they both exit.**

Heine: I have never met such a unique man, mademoiselle. Should a surgeon open up his chest he will find that he does not have a heart. Quite a phenomenon in mammals.

Marie: He is soon to become my husband, Heinrich.

Heine: **(Trying to correct his mistake)** Congratulations, my dear lady. The secretary of The Academy is a fascinating man. So fascinating that he could be the subject of a poem. Now mademoiselle must understand why I was so happy to meet him. When I saw him, I could immediately

see the goose I shall eat on the Champs-Élysées with my fee for this poem.

Marie: **(Smiling)** I am happy that you have come, Heinrich. **(Extends her hand to be kissed)**

Heine: I sent my book to you, too.

Marie: I have read it.

Heine: And?

Marie: You know that I seek aesthetic perfection in poetry.

Heine: And your highness has my admiration for it. **(Strokes her arm)**

Marie: And yet you claim that poetry is not a circus in which the writer presents the wonders of his art, and that it should not divert the readers' attention from their suffering.

Heine: Your highness must admit that poetry has reached a new era. Poets are no longer high-minded visionaries who delude their readers with the magic of their dreams, but shrewd wizards who turn the water flowing in the veins of their readers into blood.

Marie: In all their fervor, Heinrich, these poets are liable to cause the blood of their readers to be spilt like water. **(Breaks away from him)**

Heine: Of course, but they must stop playing their flutes among the clouds and descend to fight in the trenches of their readers' lives. **(Kisses her shoulder)**

Marie: You would do better to go back to writing poetry, Heinrich, and leave fighting in the trenches of readers' lives to lesser men than yourself.

Heine: Mademoiselle, a poet who fights in the trenches of his readers' lives will discover himself.

Marie: A poet such as that, Heinrich, is afraid of fighting in the trenches of his own life.

**She breaks away from him. Silence.**

Heine: And that is why you did not reply to my letter?

Marie: You have no genuine interest in my opinion.

Heine: I swear by Apollo, mademoiselle.

Marie: Do not swear vain oaths. You've had enough of your émigré friends who are forcing you to write empty rhymes for their revolution, and you have discovered that the ladies you meet at night become dreary housewives in the light of day.

Heine: Mademoiselle is a woman with an immense soul. I came to her for inspiration.

Marie: You do not want inspiration, Heinrich. You want me.

Heine: (**Embarrassed**) Mademoiselle is the most beautiful woman in Paris. And I am not made of stone.

Marie: And so you will agree with my every word.

Heine: I will certainly disagree with that.

Marie: And you hope that your wit will undo the laces of my corset.

Heine: God forbid!

Marie: I am prepared to read your books, Heinrich. I am even prepared to discuss them with you.

Heine: (**Hurt**) My dear lady, you determine the permissible, for you desire the forbidden. For you fear that at any moment you might fall into my arms. But now I am not at all sure that I want you in my arms. Had you read my poems properly, you would have known that I never desire a woman who desires me.

**Heine turns to leave. Marie grasps him. He stops. A moment later they kiss prolongedly.**

Heine: Mademoiselle intends to marry the secretary of The Academy soon?

Marie: Yes.

Heine: When?

Marie: Tomorrow.

Heine: And when shall we continue our discussion on the aesthetic perfection of poetry?

Marie: The day after tomorrow.

**They kiss again. Darkness.**



**Scene 7**

**Aunty Julie's house. From one side knocking at the door is heard, and from the other the screeching of a parrot.**

Crescence: **(From her room)** I'm coming, Aunty Julie! I'm coming. **(She emerges, wearing a robe, goes towards the door as she talks to the huge parrot perched on her hand)** Don't be frightened, Cocotte. It's only Aunty Julie back from the market with her baskets. She can't open the door, so she kicks it. **(Laughs)** And what's in the baskets, Cocotte? **(Joyfully)** Birdseed for the sweetest parrot in the world.

**She opens the door. Enter Heine carrying a bouquet. Crescence is surprised.**

Crescence: You!

Heine: The very same. **(Hands her the flowers)**

Crescence: You won't get a chicken here.

Heine: I will be happy with a young pullet.

Crescence: A pullet? Monsieur will leave right now. My aunt will be back any minute.

Heine: I am happy to hear that mademoiselle is alone.

Crescence: Monsieur! **(Insulted, she turns towards her room)** If he takes one look at me, Cocotte, peck his eyes out. **(Exits)**

Heine: Mademoiselle, your flowers.

**Enter Aunty Julie carrying baskets.**

Julie: Monsieur is the waiter who attacks chaste young maids in cafés?

Heine: Madame is the ball ripper of Rue Chevalier?

Julie: **(Laughs)** You look like a sensible fellow, monsieur. What do you want of her? She's just a cow with a big bum. Her parrot's got more sense than her.

Heine: Had I been seeking wisdom, I would have gone to the crones washing their underthings in the fountain.

- Julie: Has monsieur already discovered that stupidity is a mark of good health?
- Heine: I have discovered that I need naivety, youth and love.
- Julie: Love? **(Sings)** “Love is star on a pile of dung, a plucked rose in a pool of mud.”
- Heine: No other woman in Paris laughs like her, Madame. When I see her walking, I know how the ground trembles when she dances. When she roars, I can imagine how she moans.
- Julie: You don’t need to go on. I understand. A thousand francs.
- Heine: A thousand francs?
- Julie: If you want to feel the ground tremble, you’ll have to pay. **(Loudly)** Crescence Eugénie Mirat! Crescence Eugénie!! **(Enter Crescence)**
- Crescence: Yes, Aunty Julie.
- Julie: **(Presents her)** Crescence Eugénie Mirat.
- Heine: What a name! How noble it is. How many dentists could make a living from repairing my teeth until I learn to pronounce it.
- Julie: Monsieur. **(Realizes that she does not know his name)**
- Heine: Heinrich Heine.
- Julie: Monsieur Henri Eine wishes to speak to you, Crescence.
- Crescence: Cocotte is waiting for me, Aunty Julie. **(Turns to leave)**
- Julie: Monsieur is willing to pay a thousand francs for you, Crescence.
- Crescence: **(Turns to her)** Half and half.
- Heine: Monsieur would like an advance, Mademoiselle. **(Tries to kiss her hand and has difficulty in pronouncing her name)** It would be better if I called you by another name. Mathilde, perhaps.
- Crescence: My name is Crescence.
- Heine: Mathilde is such a simple name, filled with so much youthfulness.
- Crescence: My name is Crescence!
- Heine: It has the wildness of a tavern girl and the softness of a loving mother. **(To Julie)** One thousand and one francs, and your permission to call her Mathilde.
- Crescence: My name is Crescence Eugénie Mirat.
- Heine: Mathilde. **(Kisses her on the lips)**

Crescence: **(She detaches herself from him after a moment)** Don't think you've bought me, Henri Eine. I'm not as stupid as I look, and I won't sell myself to anyone. I let you kiss me because you're nicer than all the men who've pinched my bottom this year. And now, Henri Eine...

Heine: Heinrich Heine.

Crescence: Now, Henri Eine, I'm going to tell Cocotte.

**Aunty Julie laughs. Mathilde née Crescence exits, followed by Aunty Julie.**

## **Scene 8**

**The Chorus sings four stanzas of Heine's "Song of Songs"<sup>1</sup>.**

Fair woman's body is a song	Yes, woman's body is, amongst songs,
Inscribed by our great Maker	The song most sweet and tender,
In Nature's mighty album,	And wondrous strophes are her limbs,
When moved to life to wake her.	So snowy-white and slender.

Before the splendour of your song	Yes, day and night I'll study it,
I'll bow in adoration,	No loss of time admitting;
And to its study day and night	So shall I soon with overwork
Pay closest application.	Be thinner than befitting.

**Lighting up on Friedrich Wilhelm who is visiting his stable accompanied by Hoffmann and an officer. He strokes the horses and feeds them sugar cubes. Hoffmann has a book in his hand. It is clearly evident that he does not like horses.**

Friedrich: I am a king, Hoffmann. I do not have time to read books. What seems to be the problem?

Hoffmann: Heine.

Friedrich: What has he written now?

Hoffmann: A big book, your majesty. "The Romantic School".

Friedrich: How on earth could he harm us in a book on "The Romantic School"?

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<sup>1</sup> Translated by E. A. Bowring.

- Hoffman: He ridicules Goethe, sir. **(Quotes)** “Goethe was a hypocrite and a coward. He feared to attack the Romanticism that resurrected the ancient Germanic myths.”
- Friedrich: So he ridicules Goethe. Goethe’s dead.
- Friedrich: Then he writes that “because of the rise of these Germanic myths, the revolution in Germany will be cruel and merciless. It will release our demonic powers not to win, but only for the sake of fighting.”
- Officer: How does he know that?
- Hoffman: And afterwards he writes that the German lust for blood will be revealed in all its savagery. The god Thor will appear in heaven with a huge hammer in his hand, and destroy all the cathedrals.
- Officer: Your majesty, he is trying to cause friction between us and the Church.
- Friedrich: This is very bad.
- Officer: He is encouraging the French to attack us.
- Friedrich: That is even worse.
- Officer: The man should be executed, your majesty.
- Friedrich: He is in Paris.
- Officer: I stand ready to go to Paris.
- Friedrich: And the day after his death there will be a diplomatic incident.
- Officer: I will challenge him to a duel. He will be unable to refuse.
- Hoffmann: It seems to me, your majesty, that if Heine is eliminated, his books will sell in even greater numbers.
- Friedrich: So what is to be done?
- Hoffmann: So far he has always found a way of deceiving the censorship. I think that now we should take a more courageous decision.
- Friedrich: This time we shall ban all his books. Today I shall issue a diktat prohibiting their printing and sale. And their reading.

**Hoffman hand him pen and paper, The King writes and signs.**

- Hoffmann: What of Ludwig Beckerman, your majesty?
- Friedrich: What about him?
- Hoffmann: He, too, writes against your majesty.
- Officer: Ban him too.

Friedrich: Beckerman can continue with his scribbling. Nobody reads him. If we ban him too, we might create an impression in the world that I am a dictator.

## **Scene 9**

### **Heine's house. Beckerman is showing two German newspapers to Heine.**

Beckerman: This is not just censorship, Heinrich, it is a ban. Look at the papers. He has prohibited the publishers from publishing anything new written by you. This is an innovation of global proportions. For the first time in human history books have been banned even before they have been written.

Heine: Impossible!

Beckerman: He has declared war on us all. Tomorrow he will ban my books too.

Heine: But why? What have I done?

Beckerman: He accuses you of subverting his rule, of harming morals and religion.

Heine: When have I subverted his rule?

Beckerman: Somebody read him a few excerpts from "The Romantic School" and claimed that you are inciting against Germany.

Heine: I am a loyal German. How could I ever incite against Germany?

Beckerman: But this time his tyranny will be the trap he falls into. We shall publish a special issue of "The German Revolution". Writers from all over the world will protest. The free governments will come out in condemnation. All over Germany young people will take to the streets. His end is nigh.

Heine: Have you lost your mind? I shall apologize to him. I shall recant everything I have written. No tyrant has ever resisted a poet's flattery.

Beckerman: You cannot recant everything you have written.

Heine: I am willing to crawl to Berlin and kiss the silken fringes of his underwear.

Beckerman: And the republic? What will become of the republic?

Heine: Poetry is more important.

Beckerman: We cannot renounce our principles the moment we face an obstacle.

Heine: I will not fight the king for the sake of some stupid principles. I have only one principle: Poetry will reform Man, and Man will reform the world.

Beckerman: There is no shame in upholding a few more.

Heine: If I must humiliate myself to write poetry, then I shall do so with pride.

Beckerman: And you will not seize this opportunity of exposing his tyranny?

Heine: No.

Beckerman: (**Angrily**) What a fool the King of Prussia is! He declares war on a corrupt sycophant like you, who has scribbled a few biting remarks against him. And I, who has fought him all my life, written books against him, spoken at assemblies, organized demonstrations, drawn up petitions – he does not even take the trouble of banning me. (**Turns to leave**)

Heine: When he lifts the ban against me, I shall expose his true face to the world, Ludwig. I shall write an article for you. I shall write a poem too.

Beckerman: I will not publish a word you write.

**Exit Beckerman. Enter Mathilde.**

Mathilde: Has something happened, Henri?

Heine: Nothing.

Mathilde: What did he want?

Heine: Nothing.

Mathilde: Aunty Julie's got a gendarme friend called Albert.

Heine: I said that nothing has happened.

Mathilde: I've got relatives in the country. If you need to run away then.

Heine: There is no need to run away either.

Mathilde: Don't deceive me, Henri. I want to know the truth. And if I don't understand, you'll explain it to me. When the priest explains, I understand everything.

**She moves to embrace him. He evades her angrily.**

- Heine: The king has ordered the banning of my books, Mathilde. From this day forth nobody will buy them. Nobody will read them.
- Mathilde: So what if nobody reads them? They're just words.
- Heine: Just words?
- Mathilde: Yes. Words of love that you write to other women. I asked the priest. He said that if I knew how to read what you write, I wouldn't let you write at all.
- Heine: With those words I tell the world what I think of it. People buy those words to understand their lives. They also pay for them. If I am unable to sell them, by the end of next week we shall be penniless. Even your brain should be able to comprehend the catastrophe.
- Mathilde: What catastrophe? If you can't sell your words, then come to the shop and sell underwear.
- Heine: I am a poet, Mathilde.
- Mathilde: But you've got to work as well.
- Heine: What can I do except sit on chickens' eggs?
- Mathilde: You could be a waiter too.
- Heine: A waiter? (**Despairingly**) What a slattern, oh, what a slattern.

**Heine sits down. Mathilde moves to him and tries to console him.**

- Mathilde: A king's a king, Henri. You can't fight him. But God is greater than him. If you pray to him, he'll fight for you. (**Heine is silent**) Perhaps God is angry with us because we're living together without a wedding? (**Heine is silent**) Father Jean-Paul said that if you were a Catholic, he would marry us. (**Heine is silent**) And then God would not be angry and he'd fight the king. (**Heine is silent**) Would you like me to hug you?

**Scene 10**

**King Friedrich Wilhelm's bureau in Berlin. Present are the King and Hoffmann, the censor. An officer escorts Campe into the room, and unlocks the manacles on his wrists. Heine observes the scene from Paris.**

Friedrich: I hope that you have not suffered too much during your interrogation, Campe.

Campe: Yes, your majesty.

Friedrich: The wounds on your arms will heal within a few weeks.

Campe: Yes, your majesty.

Heine: (**From Paris**) Your majesty! Law and justice are the cornerstones of your glorious kingdom. Every thief, rapist or murderer is entitled to defend himself in court. Why has my verdict been sealed without me being heard?

Friedrich: Perhaps now you will understand that you are forbidden to sell Heine's books anywhere in Germany. Not only in Berlin.

Campe: Yes, your majesty.

Friedrich: Should you try and bribe the censors in other cities, your publishing house will be closed down.

Campe: Yes, your majesty.

Heine: Your majesty, I have apparently been remiss in my writing, and a number of lines were not entirely clear. As soon as I clarify them it will be seen that they cause no damage.

Friedrich: I hope for your sake that you have not hidden any other copies of Heine's books in your stockrooms.

Campe: Heine's books have long since been out of print, your majesty.

Heine: If your majesty would, in his grace, deign to hear me out, he will see that I have never favored a republic. Should the republicans ever seize power, Heaven forbid, my head will be among the first to roll.

Friedrich: All his books are out of print? (**Campe nods**) His first book of poems, too? (**Campe nods**) Print a few copies for me. My old one has fallen to pieces.

Hoffmann: That book should not be seen in the palace, your majesty. Even Heine's apparently innocent poems are subversive and permissive. They encourage licentiousness and adultery.



- Friedrich: Licentiousness and adultery?
- Campe: They are love poems, your majesty.
- Heine: **(Despairingly)** If your majesty would only read my books he would find that I am a great patriot. In every one of them I have written about Germany. On every page and in every line. Had Germany not been dear to my heart, I would never have written about her so much.
- Friedrich: Actually, I would be quite pleased to see a few copies of that book in the palace. If my ministers read a little more about licentiousness and adultery, they will not be so busy undermining me.

**Campe bows to the King and exits. Heine continues with his pleas to the King.**

- Heine: I am willing to write a public apology, your majesty. I am willing to prove to all my readers that everything I wrote is nonsense and folly. The caprice of a young and foolish man unable to control his urges. Who erred because of his arrogance and blindness. I humbly beg your majesty's benevolent forgiveness.
- Friedrich: **(To Hoffmann)** Leave for Paris tomorrow and warn all the newspaper editors that if they publish Heine's articles, they will not be permitted to sell their papers here.
- Hoffmann: Yes, your majesty.

## **Scene 11**

**Night. The bureau of the secretary of The French Academy. Heine addresses Mathieu and Marie.**

- Heine: .Monsieur cannot imagine the horror of this ban. If his majesty the King of France does not grant me an allowance, I will die of hunger. Monsieur must explain this to his majesty and lay emphasis on the benefits that my poetry brings him.
- Mathieu: His majesty is aware of these benefits, Heinrich, but I will have to persuade him that they are worth five thousand francs a year.

- Heine: Tell him that a man who reads my poems will have a better understanding of himself and his world.
- Mathieu: I am not entirely sure that his majesty is actually interested in that, Heinrich.
- Heine: I would think, monsieur, that with my articles I make a contribution to the public discourse on the structure of the regime, on the status of the monarchy, on the rights of the citizen.
- Mathieu: His majesty prefers that your contribution in that sphere be as modest as possible.
- Heine: I am sure that his majesty is aware of my important contribution to the national security of France.
- Mathieu: The national security of France?
- Heine: Who other than I can describe the German spirit for him? Who other than I can interpret the German nature that is awaiting the moment to erupt and destroy the world? It is I who inscribes the writing on the wall. If the King of France were to invest five thousand francs a year in me, he would be ready to face the German danger.
- Mathieu: I am not sure that the King of France determines his policies according to books of poetry that he does not read. **(To Marie)** What do you think, my dear?
- Marie: I'm wondering how anyone can doubt the value of poetry simply because it cannot be measured in francs.
- Mathieu: I cast no doubt on the value of poetry, Marie.
- Marie: Then why are you forcing him to voice worthless reasoning in which he himself does not believe? He is in need of an allowance.
- Heine: Pay her no heed, monsieur. I believe in every word I say. I am willing to place myself at his majesty's disposal. He knows that the value of a sharp tongue is greater than that of a sword.
- Marie: He cannot place himself at the disposal of any king, Alfred. A poet's loyalty is only to his poetry.
- Heine: His majesty can place his trust in me, monsieur.
- Marie: Don't plead with him, Heinrich.

Heine: I am not pleading. I am demanding a reward for my contribution. (**To Mathieu**) The world will be a better place if I continue writing about it.

Marie: You are an enlightened man, Alfred. So you say, at least. I hope that you will act like one.

**Hurt, Mathieu is silent. Heine construes this as tacit agreement.**

Heine: Thank you, monsieur. I will be grateful to his majesty to my dying day.

Alfred: For your own good, Heine, it would be better that no one hear of this.

## **Scene 12**

**Night. Aunty Julie's house. Enter Heine.**

Heine: Mathilde. Mathilde.

**Enter Aunty Julie from the passage.**

Julie: She's in bed. Crying. You'll have to explain to her where you've been all night.

Heine: In church. I made my confession, fasted, received absolution, and was saved.

**Enter Mathilde.**

Mathilde: Henri! (**Embraces him**) I was sure you'd run away, or that the Germans had kidnapped you or killed you. I was afraid I'd never see you again.

Heine: Do you really think that a man like me would leave a woman like you?

Mathilde: And their king? Has he pardoned you? Will he let you write?

Heine: I have never asked his permission.

**He kisses her. The kiss is prolonged. She suddenly breaks away from him.**

Mathilde: You're not touching me again until we're married.

Heine: Married?

Mathilde: I've already given you what any decent girl can give to her husband. I don't want to be afraid that you'll leave me again.

Heine: I have sworn to live with you for eternity.

Mathilde: You swore and left. You're not going anywhere until the wedding.

Julie: In the morning.

Mathilde: A Catholic wedding. So don't even think about divorce. I'm getting married just this once. **(Examines his trousers)** And why isn't anything happening in your breeches all of a sudden?

Heine: **(Embarrassed)** Mathilde!

Julie: Take her to bed. Can't you see that the earth is trembling beneath her feet?

Mathilde: Come.

**Suddenly bugle blasts are heard. Enter Albert accompanied by a Sergeant and a Soldier.**

Albert: Halt, monsieur!

Sergeant: Is this the man?

Albert: He's a German, a poet, and his name's Heine.

Mathilde: We're going to bed. Come back tomorrow.

Sergeant: **(To Heine)** Come along, monsieur.

Heine: Of what does monsieur accuse me?

Sergeant: I'm not accusing you, monsieur. I'm arresting you.

Heine: Me?

Mathilde: He won't write any more poems. He promised me.

Heine: One moment, monsieur. There surely has been some mistake.

Mathilde: We're getting married in the morning.

Heine: I am just a poet. A modest poet. With no pretensions, no illusions.

Mathilde: Come back after the honeymoon.

Heine: I wish to know of what I am accused.

Sergeant: You'll be told at the gendarmerie. **(Takes Heine by the arm)**

Mathilde: I'm not leaving him alone, not even locked up in a prison cell.

**She exits after them.**

Albert:           There's a smell of shamelessness in the air, Aunty Julie. And without the blessing of the church too. And with a German who's a poet and a Jew. Why in my street? Why? I've got a sick wife and six children and an old father who lost his hearing at the Battle of Waterloo. And my bugle doesn't sound like it used to. Well, if they can't do it, we certainly can. **(Kisses her. Darkness)**

**Scene 13**

**The Chorus sings "Dedication to 'The Rabbi of Bacharach'". As they sing, Friedrich Wilhelm, the Censor and the Officer are seen in Friedrich's bureau.**

Burst out in loud lamenting,	It pierces through ears and vision,
O somber martyr-song	And so into heart and brain;
That's lain so unrelenting	I've conjured up with precision
On burning hearts so long!	The thousand years of pain.

They weep, little men and big powers,	And all of the tears are flowing
Even lords with frigid eyes,	South, quiet and unified,
The women weep, and the flowers,	They're flowing together, and going
The stars weep up in the skies.	To pour into Jordan's tide.

**A room in the gendarmerie. The Sergeant and the Soldier bring in the manacled Heine.**

Heine:           I have loved France all my life, monsieur. I have many French friends. Old Lafayette, for example, or Victor Hugo who, by the way, is almost as tactless as our own Goethe. And Balzac, who is the only man in the world who never bores me. I have always been grateful to the government of France for taking exiled intellectuals into her bosom. Like Chopin, or Wagner, or Karl Marx. The French are Europe's pioneers of progress. Monsieur may rest assured that I would not cause them even the slightest discomfort.

Sergeant:       The officer will be here shortly, monsieur.

Heine: And if you have arrested me because of a complaint by the King of Prussia, monsieur, it is surely a mistake. Every word I have written proves that I am a true German patriot. Germanism is the essence of my life. I need Germanism the way a stove needs coal. I love it more than anything else in the world. My heart is German in precisely the same way as my poetry is German, monsieur. I have not written a single word in French, and I have not robbed your own great writers of a single reader.

Sergeant: Yes.

Heine: If monsieur is thinking that I humiliate myself because I fear questioning, then monsieur is surely mistaken. Poets are the most courageous of men. A man needs great courage to tell the world the truth. But it would seem that the bravery of poets is akin to that of thieves, which only becomes apparent in the small hours of the morning. Monsieur would be well advised to write down what I say. It is quite possible that one day you will be able to sell my words to The Louvre for a bag of gold.

Soldier: He said 'gold', Sergeant. (**The Sergeant nods**)

Heine: You would do well to learn from my landlady, monsieur. She waived my rent so that in a few years she'll be selling tickets to tourists who will come to see my chamber pot.

Sergeant: Most certainly.

Heine: If monsieur has arrested me because I am a Jew, then he must release me immediately. I was indeed born a Jew, and the God of the Jews endowed me with a long nose so he could recognize me should I attempt to evade him. But I have been baptized. My baptism certificate is always in my pocket. Look, my ticket into European culture. You should know that a Jew becomes a German with the greatest of ease. The closeness of these two peoples is truly astounding. Both are dedicated to abstract ideas with a pathological meticulousness, both are zealots of a strict and cruel morality. The Jews were always the Aryans of the Orient.

Soldier: (**Mimicking a chicken**) Cluck-cluck, cluck-cluck, cluck-cluck.

Heine: **(Despairingly)** Perhaps you would be so good as to tell me what you want of me. Why are my hands manacled? Because of a few poems? Since when have poets been arrested because of their poems? Tomorrow you will be arresting tailors because of their underwear. Who can I harm? The artist is a child whose tears are pearls. And the cruel world beats him harder to make him cry more. It is not I that should be under arrest, but the King of Prussia who ordered the burning of my books. And you should not wait too long. Wherever they burn books, they will also burn people. Let me go, monsieur. You have seen my Mathilde. If I am not in church in the morning, she will marry another.

**Enter the Officer, Marie and Mathieu.**

Officer: I apologize for the misunderstanding, Monsieur Heine. Had I known of your friendship with the secretary of The Academy, I would not have troubled you. But as you must know, every German is suspected of being a Prussian agent. **(Gestures to the Sergeant to remove the manacles)**

Marie: I hope you have not been subjected to great torture, Heinrich.

Heine: If you had been another hour I would have been on the way to the gallows in Berlin.

Mathieu: In the morning I shall dispatch a letter of protection to your residence, signed by the minister of justice.

Marie: **(To Heine)** I want you to move into our home tonight.

Mathieu: One moment, Marie.

Marie: He is in need of protection.

Mathieu: The letter will protect him.

Marie: **(To Heine)** I shall send Paolo to bring your belongings.

Mathieu: I suggest that we discuss this matter before you send Paolo.

Marie: It is not a matter for discussion.

Heine: **(Painfully)** It is the King of Prussia. He sent the agent who informed on me. A king of military parades and horse races. All his power is in his riding boots. The only thought in his mind is that he is great and

strong. **(To the King in his bureau)** I beg you to continue persecuting me, your majesty. Each day when I feel tired of fighting you, you remind me that my fight has not ended.

Friedrich: In other words, if I stop persecuting you, Heine, you will stop writing?

Heine: That is impossible, your majesty. You will always fear that if you cease persecuting, you will cease to rule.

Friedrich: And you will always fear that if you stop writing against me, your pen will dry up.

Heine: My pen will only dry up, sire, on the day I die.

Friedrich: We are an enlightened kingdom, Heine. We do not execute poets, but we will do everything in our power to stop them writing. You don't have to try too hard to understand why you are at the top of the list. **(Angrily)** Because you are a pain in the neck.

Marie: My carriage is waiting, Heinrich.

Mathieu: His fears are groundless, Marie. The police had no intention of deporting him to Germany. They simply wanted to question him. **(To Heine)** The German émigré who informed on you wrote that you spy for the King of Prussia. The questioning would not have proved a thing. You would have been released tomorrow.

Heine: **(Stunned)** A German émigré informed on me?

Officer: According to his grammatical errors. We are still trying to find out who he is.

Heine: I know who he is.

## **Scene 14**

**Night. The Beckerman home. Knocking on the door is heard. Beckerman goes outside in his robe, carrying a lamp. Heine approaches him.**

Heine: I fear that you are not pleased to see me, Ludwig.

Beckerman: It is two o'clock in the morning.

Heine: The hour at which friendship is put to the test.

Beckerman: If you need a few francs, Heinrich, go to the king in Berlin. He will be happy to give you the money.

Heine: Do you think that I am a Prussian agent?



- Beckerman: You do not even know whose agent you are.
- Heine: I asked if you think that I am a Prussian agent.
- Beckerman: Is that why you have come here in the middle of the night?
- Heine: Who informed on me to the police?
- Beckerman: Someone who discovered that the King of Prussia banned your books in order to dispel any suspicion that you serve him.
- Heine: I am a soldier in the service of the revolution, Ludwig. You despise me only because I wrote a few witty words that do not echo like hailstones on the roof. Only because my articles do not bore the censor to tears.
- Beckerman: You are no soldier. You are a boy who went off to war, and when he came to the battlefield he chased butterflies instead.
- Heine: That is why you informed on me? Because I gained the favors of a few women?
- Beckerman: You did not gain their favors gratis. You sold big ideas for those favors. Goodnight, Heinrich! (**Indicates he should leave**)
- Heine: Tell me that it was not you who informed on me and I will believe you. You have always been my mentor and friend, Ludwig.
- Beckerman: And you have betrayed that friendship.
- Heine: I have not. I am loyal to the republic, but I desire some freedom within that loyalty. The commitment to the revolution is not a cage for the heart.
- Beckerman: (**Angrily**) Again I hear the voice of a Jew who is incapable of absolute loyalty. There can be no freedom within loyalty to the revolution.
- Heine: You are more of a Jew than I. Only a Jew could follow a revolution with such fanaticism.
- Beckerman: (**Angrily**) Judaism is a disease of which I was cured long ago.

**He turns to go back inside. Suddenly Jeanette appears, also in a robe. On seeing Heine she stops and turns to go back, but Heine sees her.**

- Heine: Good evening, Madame.
- Jeanette: Good evening.
- Heine: (**To Beckerman**) I see that you, too, try to gallop like a foal in the pasture. Perhaps I did sell an idea or two for the favors of a woman. But what a woman. (**Laughs**) What did you see in her, Ludwig? She is

all pocked, like the Passover *matzos*. Even a monk who had never known a woman would not touch her.

Beckerman: Shut your mouth, Heinrich.

Heine: It was she who informed on me.

Beckerman: (**Seeing Jeanette's discomfiture**) She did not inform on you!

Heine: And I shall inform on her. (**Towards the neighboring house**) Herr Strauss! If you are looking for your old slippers, they are here.

Jeanette: (**Moaning**) Ludwig.

Heine: Herr Strauss, your old slippers are taking the air outside.

Beckerman: Heinrich!

**Strauss appears and is astounded to find his wife in the Beckerman house. He is followed by Brauner and Glück.**

Heine: The great revolutionary is nothing but an adulterer with bad taste. The least he could have done is find a lover worthy of his status. But it seems that his status is equal to his lover's looks. The face of the earth after your revolution, Ludwig, will be even more pocked than hers.  
(**Exits**)

Strauss: (**To Jeanette**) You order me to translate Robespierre's books, and meanwhile.

Jeanette: I heard him in the street and came to see what he was plotting. Everybody knows that he is a spy.

Beckerman: That man has slandered your wife, Wolfgang.

Strauss: I have already forgiven him.

Beckerman: It is not only you he has harmed. He has harmed all of us. You must challenge him to a duel.

Strauss: A duel? God forbid! Just when I need a good verse from Ecclesiastes, I can only repeat some barren sayings of Buddha .

Beckerman: You are a man of honor, Wolfgang. At a time of revolution there is no choice. It is kill or be killed.

Strauss: That is exactly what Robespierre said in his book on.

Jeanette: That's enough, Wolfgang.

Strauss: Come on home. (**Darkness**)

**Scene 15**

**The Bois de Boulogne. Enter Heine dressed like a bridegroom, wearing white gloves. He is followed by Mathilde in a bridal dress, stumbling, her shoes in her hand. After them comes Aunty Julie, carrying a basket.**

Mathilde: Why do you insist on dying? Since when has a liar like you had honor that must be defended? Have you lived long enough? Have you already done enough in your life? Why do I have to go right from my wedding to your funeral?

Heine: I assure you that I will not die.

Mathilde: Can I believe your promises? Have you ever even held a pistol? Have you ever shot anybody?

Heine: He, too, does not know how to shoot. **(To Aunty Julie)** The pistol, if you please.

Julie: **(Takes the pistol from her basket)** My father killed seven men with this.

Heine: It is a piece of scrap iron, Aunty Julie.

Julie: Too many men used it to shed each other's blood in order to feel my nipples.

Mathilde: I'm scared, Henri.

Heine: Have no fear. You are my lawful wedded wife, and you shall inherit the royalties on my books without having to suffer me all your life.

Mathilde: Don't talk like that. You're angering God.

Heine: If there was a God, he would have struck me down by lightning a long time ago.

Mathilde: O Christ in Heaven! **(Crosses herself)** Quickly, cross yourself. Apologize. And ask forgiveness.

Heine: I promise you that I shall split his skull.

Mathilde: At least I want to have your child.

Heine: How can I give life to someone when I myself do not have the skill incapable to live?

**He embraces her. Enter from the other side Strauss, Jeanette, Beckerman, Brauner and Glück.**

Brauner: Heinrich Heine, are you ready?

Heine: Ready.

**Straus raises his pistol. Mathilde bursts into tears. Heine hears her.**

Heine: I am still alive, Mathilde.

**Strauss fires. Heine flinches but remains standing. Mathilde enthuses.**

Mathilde: Blow his head off, Henri. Put it between his eyes. Smash his face so that even God won't recognize him.

**Heine slowly takes aim at Strauss.**

Strauss: No, Heinrich. My honor is satisfied, and so is my wife's. After all, Jews have always been merciful. I bear a grudge against no man. Buddha said that. **(To Beckerman)** Tell him to stop, Ludwig. **(Mumbles)** *Shema Yisrael, Adonai Eloheinu.* Tell him to stop, Ludwig. It was your idea.

**In tears, Strauss kneels. Heine aims his pistol at Beckerman.**

Beckerman: Even though you are a crook, Heinrich, you cannot shoot an unarmed man. Or perhaps I am mistaken and you think that anything is permissible. To despise the revolution and the king. Germany and France. Christianity and Judaism. God and Man. You have made deceit an art and art a deceit. Do not stay your hand. Pull the trigger. I am willing to die to prove to the world what scum you are.

**Heine raises his pistol, fires nobly into the air, and collapses. Mathilde rushes to him, embraces him and finds that he is bleeding from his thigh.**

Mathilde: He hit him! The bastard hit him! Henri! Henri.! **(Darkness)**

## Act Two

### Scene 16

**1848. A Paris street. Heine and Mathilde are riding in a “carriage”. The driver whips up the “horses”. In the background, sounds of the revolution: shots, shouting, the clatter of running feet.**

Mathilde: Turn right here. Now left. What’s the matter with your horses? Are they tired?

Heine: This way would be better, Mathilde.

Mathilde: There’ll be no barricades down here.

Heine: How do you know? Did you plan the revolution? **(To the driver)** Drive down here.

Mathilde: That’s the street of the whores. They’re all against this stupid revolution. **(To the horse)** Giddap. giddap. Shift your stinking bum already.

Heine: I think that this horse actually supports the revolution, Mathilde. The other one is the royalist.

**Three revolutionaries block their way. One has a pistol, the others carry staves.**

Revol. A: Get down.

Mathilde: We’re on our way home.

Revol. A: Get down.

Heine: Why, sir?

Revol. A: We need your carriage for a barricade.

Mathilde: My husband’s ill. We’ve been to the doctor.

Revol. A: He’ll recover after the revolution.

Revol. B: Do you want us to overturn the carriage with you inside?

**Heine and Mathilde quickly get down from the carriage. Suddenly a young man, a sack over his shoulder, hurries past them. Revolutionary A aims his pistol at him.**

Revol. A: Halt!

Revol. C: What’s in the sack?

Thief: Food. From Baron de Bourbon’s palace. They fled and left it all on the table.

- Revol. A: There'll be no looting in our revolution. **(Shoots him)**
- Heine: **(Shocked)** Why, sir? Perhaps he was hungry? Perhaps he has hungry children? Even God does not strike by lightning someone who picks a flower.
- Revol. A: Who are you to be so insolent?
- Heine: I am a poet.
- Revol. A: A poet? You probably made your living from glorifying the king. **(Aims his pistol at him)**
- Mathilde: He's no poet. He hardly speaks French. **(To Heine)** Come on home before I tear your tongue out.

**She drags Heine away. It is now evident that he limps.**

- Revol. A: Put the thief on the barricade. If anyone asks, say he was shot by the king's soldiers.

**The revolutionaries exit. Lighting up on the bureau of King Friedrich Wilhelm IV, in which are the King, the Censor, and Baron Cotta. The King is angry and continually drinks champagne.**

- Friedrich: **(To Cotta)** I think there was a tacit agreement between you and my late father that Heine would not write for your paper.
- Cotta: Heine has not written for me for many years, your majesty. But a revolution is taking place in Paris. The king has fled. The people have taken to the streets. I thought that Heine could relate the story. After all, when Paris sneezes, all of Europe catches cold.
- Friedrich: But why Heine?
- Cotta: Heine is a man of penetrating vision, your majesty. From him we can learn about what might take place here in Germany. By the way, his articles do not support the revolution.
- Censor: But they do not oppose it either.
- Friedrich: Heine's articles will not be published, Baron Cotta!
- Cotta: Yes, your majesty.
- Friedrich: And if you want to know what will happen in Germany, listen to me. I shall continue to rule by the grace of God. No power on earth can

come between me and my people. No minister of war shall come between me and my soldiers. And no minister of the treasury will come between me and my treasures.

**The Chorus sings Heine's "1849".**

In woods the quiet rillets run,	Perhaps they caught him, arms in hand,
Soft moonlight bathes the garden plot,	That firebrand who would not obey –
But sometimes <i>bang</i> – Was that a gun? –	(Not everyone can understand
Perhaps it is a friend who has been shot.	Like Horace when it's brave to run away.)

**Scene 17**

**Heine and Mathilde's home. Heine leans on his cane, seeking to go out. Mathilde blocks his path. On her arm is Cocotte the parrot that every now and again screeches at Heine.**

Mathilde: What's so interesting in those barricades that you've got to go and see them?

Heine: I have to write about them.

Mathilde: What is there to write about?

Heine: Not about them. About the people fighting on them. About the revolution.

Mathilde: There's already been a revolution here, and it's been written about. Maybe write about the pyramids in Egypt? Haven't you heard that there's a country called Egypt with pyramids in it?

Heine: From whom did you hear about these pyramids?

Mathilde: From somebody who came into the shop.

Heine: He recalled the pyramids because he saw your breasts. (**Cocotte screeches**) Shut up!

Mathilde: Cocotte doesn't want you to go out either.

Heine: God has given me the task of explaining to people what is happening in his world .

Mathilde: You said there is a God, Henri! I heard you! (**Cocotte screeches again**)

Heine: (**To Cocotte, menacingly**) Screech again and I shall wring your neck.

Mathilde: And why must you explain what's happening in the world? Father Jean-Paul explains it so beautifully. Do you know what he told me yesterday?

Heine: Yes!

Mathilde: If you make your confession, God will forgive you for what you said about him.

Heine: He should start thinking about what I said about him. (**Cocotte screeches**) Tonight I shall strangle you .

Mathilde: You're not going out because you're not well. You can hardly walk.

**The parrot screeches again. The angry Heine snatches it from Mathilde and exits to the passage with it.**

Mathilde: (**Rushing after him**) Heinrich. (**She suddenly notices Beckerman who entered from the other side**) Ah, Monsieur Beckerman.

Beckerman: Good evening, Madame.

Heine: (**Returns**) Ludwig!

Mathilde: I had just started to undress, monsieur.

Beckerman: I shall wait until you dress, Madame.

Heine: You have come just in time, Ludwig. I have been waiting for you for seventeen years. Perhaps you will dine with us? I have taught Aunty Julie how to make *cholent*.

Beckerman: (**Surprised**) *Cholent*?

Heine: The passing years have made me yearn for home.

Mathilde: Maybe I'll get undressed anyway, Henri? (**Unbuttons her dress**)

Heine: Mathilde! (**She takes the parrot and exits**) Have you ever seen a slattern like my wife, Ludwig? I am sometimes so angry with her that instead of kissing her a thousand times, the way I want to, I kiss her only nine hundred and ninety-nine times.

Beckerman: How are you, Heinrich?

Heine: Better than the world.

Beckerman: The world is changing for the better. The revolution is spreading. Here. Italy. Hungary. Austria. And now in Germany, too. The parliament is convening in Frankfurt next week.

Heine: And how are you, Ludwig?



Beckerman: When I hear of barricades in Berlin, I become younger. If the fighting in the streets continues, my pate will sprout curls.

Heine: A curly head seems far nobler as it falls from the blade of the guillotine.

**Beckerman laughs too loudly and then falls silent.**

Beckerman: We must overcome our past disagreements, Heinrich. The people need us. Our ideas. Our words. When Germany awakens we cannot sit yawning in Paris.

**Enter Mathilde. She serves them wine.**

Heine: To the Revolution. **(To Mathilde)** Perhaps we can offer our guest some *cholent* too?

Mathilde: He'll get sausage and sauerkraut. **(Exits)**

Heine: What a cow. You cannot imagine how low I have fallen. When she moos love to me, I bray in French.

Beckerman: A sign that the time is ripe. **(Discreetly)** Tomorrow we embark on our journey. A thousand Germans who were exiled from their country and have waited to return to it. In five days' time we cross the Rhine and join the struggle.

Heine: A thousand?

Beckerman: Armed.

Heine: Most interesting.

Beckerman: You shall sit beside me in the first carriage. When we reach the parliament in Frankfurt, you shall ascend the stage and speak.

Heine: The moment I cross the Rhine I shall be arrested, Ludwig.

Beckerman: A thousand men will guard you.

Heine: Even they will not cool the King's desire to hang my head among the bears' heads he hunted.

Beckerman: I assure you that the parliament will guarantee your protection.

Heine: The parliament? **(He laughs)**

Beckerman: And you will be able to write completely uncensored.

- Heine: A man whose legs have been shackled all his life can suddenly stand up and walk?
- Beckerman: Once those shackles are removed, you will start running.
- Heine: I want to live in Germany more than anything else in the world. But each time I make up my mind to go back, the desire to remain here arises in me. Exile is a more natural condition for us.
- Beckerman: We are not Jews, Heinrich. Exile is not our natural condition.
- Heine: And what about my wife? You know I have been unwell.
- Beckerman: Lottchen and Gretchen will take care of you.
- Heine: The moment I leave her, all the cocks of Paris will be strutting around her.
- Beckerman: You are worthy of better than her, Heinrich.
- Heine: With whom can I fight with such joy in Germany? When God is bored, he peeps into this house and amuses himself with our quarrels.
- Beckerman: **(Forcefully)** If we do not return home, we shall go mad.

**Enter Mathilde and Aunty Julie with a tray and dishes.**

- Mathilde: Haven't you finished talking yet? Bring three chairs, Aunty Julie.
- Julie: **(Mishearing)** Three pears?
- Mathilde: Chairs!
- Julie: I heard, I heard. Go upstairs. **(Exits)**
- Mathilde: **(Laying the table)** I'm not as stupid as I look, and I know that when you want to do something good, you're not ashamed of talking out loud. But when you want to do something bad, then you whisper. And if this man is whispering so much, then I want to know why he's here.
- Heine: He has come to eat *cholent*.
- Beckerman: I am waiting for your answer, Heinrich.
- Mathilde: **(To Beckerman)** Do you think I've forgotten how much you wanted Henri dead? It was because of you that that idiot shot him in the leg. Here. Just imagine if he'd hit him a little more towards the middle, I'd have had a husband with no balls.
- Heine: Not now, Mathilde.

Mathilde: I'll never give up on Henri's balls, Monsieur Beckerman. Even for Germany. **(Exits)**

Beckerman: You will relinquish the republic because of that vulgar woman?

Heine: No, not because of her, Ludwig. The tyranny of the masses can be even more terrible than that of kings. With my own eyes I have seen revolutionaries shoot a beggar who stole some bread. Revolutionaries such as that will never stop the beheading.

Beckerman: Heads roll in every revolution. When a body is sick, the gangrenous limbs must be amputated. That painted woman, with her flamboyant clothes, her stupid prattling, will not even squash a louse in her hair.

Heine: Mathilde and her parrot are a poem that I'll never be able to write.

Beckerman: You seek poems while the people are crying out for human rights?

Heine: I am not fighting for human rights for the masses, Ludwig, but for God's rights to Man. What is the point of a struggle if we all end up eating bean soup? There are some men worthy of the fruits of Paradise. I do not wish to live in a republic in which no one can make the distinction between peaches and horse dung. In which marble statues are shattered and bridges are built from the pieces. You will uproot lilies and plant potatoes in their place.

Beckerman: And what of those with bellies distended by hunger and who long for the summer in order to eat those potatoes?

Heine: In order to feed them we do not have to dress fairies in uniforms. We do not have to roast a nightingale for lunch.

Beckerman: And all this because that woman is in love with your balls?

Heine: **(Angrily)** Do you want to know what Germany will look like after your revolution? When you awaken in the morning, look into your chamber pot.

Beckerman: **(Angrily)** You'll pick up your pen, cross the Rhine and write everything in order to make it a free, enlightened and just republic.

**He grabs Heine and drags him toward the door. Enter Mathilde who hurries to them.**

Mathilde: Leave him be. (**Beckerman hesitates**) Leave him be. (**She picks up a knife from the table and threatens him with it**) before I slash your face.

**Beckerman frees Heine.**

Beckerman: The new prime minister in the Palais de l'Élysée is as fanatical about the revolution as me. When I quote you to him, he will have you expelled from France.

**He exits. Mathilde rushes to Heine who has collapsed onto the floor.**

Mathilde: Heinrich!

**She kneels beside him. Enter Aunty Julie. She thinks they are making love.**

Julie: I see that the revolution's already here. In the previous revolution people had hopes, too, and it was because of those hopes that your mother was born, Mathilde, but despite the revolution she died poor and sick, and you grew up ignorant and stupid.

Mathilde: Just help me get him up, Aunty Julie.

**Together they manage to get Heine into a chair.**

Heine: (**Angrily**) May I have a glass of water!

Mathilde: I'll get it for you.

**Exit Mathilde. Heine picks up his cane and limps from the house.**

**Scene 18**

**Heine enters Marie's home, hands his cane to Paolo and addresses Mathieu.**

Heine: Beckerman has already been to see him. The prime minister has requested my presence for a talk. I am sure that he has already signed the deportation order.

Mathieu: Your opposition to the revolution has been known to the prime minister for a long time. I am not at all sure that I can help you.

Heine: I do not oppose the revolution. On the contrary. I have always supported human freedom anywhere in the world.

Mathieu: That is not what you have written.

Heine: I wrote that I am not prepared to support the replacement of one tyranny with another that is even worse.

Mathieu: The prime minister will not be pleased to hear that you think him a tyrant.

Heine: I did not say he is a tyrant. Precisely the opposite. He is an enlightened prime minister. I am prepared to write that again. My only concern is that in his naivety he is liable to be dragged into tyranny.

Mathieu: So you think him naïve?

Marie: **(To Mathieu)** He does not think him naïve. He is cautioning him against naivety.

Heine: He should be grateful to me for what I have written.

Mathieu: You leave him no choice, Heinrich.

Marie: **(To Mathieu)** You cannot expel from France every person who disagrees with the prime minister.

Mathieu: We can expel any person who is not a citizen of France.

Heine: I am a German refugee, monsieur. I cannot become a citizen of France.

Mathieu: Then you will be compelled to keep your pen in your pocket.

Heine: I cannot keep my pen in my pocket when I see a prime minister who was borne into office on the shoulders of the masses, and who consolidates his regime with the help of the army. On the day the masses beg for bread, he will order the army to fire on them.

Mathieu: How do you know?

Heine: Any man who rules with the help of guns will one day be tempted to use them.

Marie: The prime minister should be grateful to him for that warning too.

Mathieu: Our friendship with you has become dangerous, Heinrich. I was given my office by the king, so my loyalty to the revolution is somewhat questionable and the prime minister is liable to have me thrown into prison. It is not only your ankles that are too delicate for iron shackles.

Heine: And you continue serving a prime minister who throws people into prison just because they had served the king?

Mathieu: Yes.

Marie: **(To Mathieu)** If you are not willing to take a risk for Heinrich's freedom to write, then the freedom to write is not sufficiently important to you.

Heine: Perhaps you have not discerned it, monsieur, but my health is deteriorating. I have to obtain medical help. Deportation means death for me.

Mathieu: I am sure that there are good physicians in Germany too.

**Heine takes his cane from Paolo and turns to leave. Marie calls after him.**

Marie: If you are deported, Heinrich, I shall come with you.

Mathieu: **(Astounded)** If I am not mistaken, Marie, you are my wife.

Marie: If you do not want me to go with him, do not allow the government to deport him.

Mathieu: **(Angrily)** I promised that I would do my best.

**Heine stops. Mathieu hesitates, and a moment later submits.**

Mathieu: I will speak to the Prime Minister, Heinrich. You will be reprimanded but not deported.

**Heine limps out. The Chorus sings two stanzas of "Germany, A Winter's Tale".**

Fellow wolves, you never doubted me	I am a wolf, and I'll howl with the wolves
Nor believed the rascals around you	As long as I can yelp. You
Who told you I'd gone over to	Can count on me, and help yourselves –
The side of the dogs that hound you,	Then even God will help you!

### **Scene 19**

**Lighting up on Heine standing at his writing desk and listening to the Chorus. When the singing ends, enter Mathilde, festively dressed and carrying a parasol.**

Mathilde: Are you coming? **(Heine is silent)** It's spring outside, Henri. I've bought a new parasol. **(Heine is silent)** Why are you so worried? The government won't deport you. **(Heine is silent)** You promised we'd go for a walk when you finished your book. If you haven't written anything against the government in it, you don't have to worry. **(Heine is silent)** If it's hard for you to walk, we can sit on a bench. **(She realizes that he is unable to walk)** Actually, there's no point in going out. It's going to rain. It would be a shame to muddy my new shoes. We'll stay in together. We'll play with the toys God gave us.

**She embraces him. As she does so, lighting up on Campe's office in Germany. He is reading the manuscript of Heine's latest poem, "Germany, A Winter's Tale" and braying with laughter.**

Heine: So what do you think, Julius?

Campe: This is by far your best work, Heinrich. **(Laughs)** The nobles in Berlin choose for king the first one to shoot a bird. **(Laughs)** And the king claims that all German citizens enjoy complete freedom of expression, except for a few fools that insist on writing. **(Laughs)** A scandal is assured.

Heine: I am pleased to have succeeded in amusing you.

Campe: I am going to the printing house. The winds of freedom will not continue to blow here for much longer.

Heine: One moment, Julius. We have not discussed the matter of money.

Campe: I shall pay you as usual.

Heine: In usual times you can pay as usual. But the present times are somewhat unusual.

- Campe: Do you think that because censorship has been removed I will sell more books? On the contrary. When the censor bans a book, it sells far better.
- Heine: I am ill, Julius. I am not sure that I will live much longer. And I have a wife.
- Campe: Do not worry, Heinrich.
- Heine: I would like a new contract.
- Campe: Are you mad? You know how much I risk for your sake. How much I have to fight for every book I sell.
- Heine: With my books you have built yourself a palace.
- Campe: You get more from me than I pay any other poet, Heinrich.
- Heine: I am a pariah, Julius. A death sentence awaits me in Germany. In France, too, I am living on borrowed time. Like a church mouse, in a wretched apartment that a junior civil servant would be ashamed to live in. I am not His Majesty von Goethe the Great who lives under the auspices of his king.
- Campe: I know.
- Heine: I demand a permanent annual contract.
- Campe: And should you suddenly stop writing?
- Heine: Then publish new editions of my old books.
- Campe: How much?
- Heine: Five thousand a year.
- Campe: Five thousand?
- Heine: My wife is nursing me. She no longer goes to work.
- Campe: Two thousand.
- Heine: Very well. You swallow your two thousand and choke on them, and I shall go to another publisher.
- Campe: One moment. Three thousand.
- Heine: And after my death, my wife continues to receive the money every year.
- Campe: Out of the question. If she lives for another forty years it will bankrupt me.
- Heine: Three thousand a year until her dying day and you can go to the printing house.



Campe: And you will continue writing until *your* dying day.

Heine: That is something you have no need to ask.

**Campe turns to leave. Lighting up on King Friedrich Wilhelm IV who is in his bureau with Hoffmann and an Officer.**

Friedrich: The party is over, Campe. **(Drinks from his glass of champagne)**

Campe: **(Stops)** Which party is that, your majesty?

Friedrich: I am restoring censorship. Every book you wish to publish will be given to the Censor for inspection. **(He coughs)**

Hoffmann: My office will be open at eight o'clock in the morning, Herr Campe.

Campe: **(To Friedrich)** Your majesty, only two weeks ago the government announced that.

Officer: **(Interrupts him)** This meeting is over, Campe. His majesty is unwell.

## **Scene 20**

**A street in Paris. In the background, the sounds of shooting and explosions. The column of exiles returns defeated from its campaign in Germany and moves toward the closed café. The line is headed by Beckerman who is supported by Jeanette and Strauss. They are followed by Brauner and Glück, and then Lottchen. In the corner the beggar plays his accordion. They all sit down in silence. Lottchen opens up the café.**

Lottchen: A glass of beer? There's a barrel left over from before the revolution.

Brauner: Look at this blister on my thumb, Ludwig. Even Heine doesn't have one like it. Ten volumes of poems, articles, critiques. All for nothing. A waste of paper. A waste of ink.

Jeanette: Bring Ludwig a glass of water, Lottchen.

Glück: We risked our lives on the barricades in vain.

Strauss: We are lucky to still have our heads on our shoulders.

Brauner: And the snow in Berlin has thawed. The trees are in leaf. And the cats in heat are mewling in the courtyard doorways.

Glück: When you talk we see that you have lost two teeth.

Brauner: I lost those teeth in battle, Glück. Tomorrow I shall hang a placard on my chest.

Lottchen: **(Enters and serves them beer)** Fifty centimes, please.

Brauner: We'll wash dishes for it, Lottchen.

- Glück: (To Brauner) I am secretary to a baron, sir. Not to a dishwasher.
- Strauss: (To Beckerman) Your speech in the parliament was remarkable, Ludwig. Like that of an ancient prophet whose god was revealed to him from within a storm. Buddha would have said of you.
- Jeanette: He is unwell, Wolfgang.
- Brauner: By next spring he'll smell the revolution and be in heat again, just like the cats.

**The sounds of shooting and explosions heighten, but the émigrés remain indifferent. Enter Heine, limping and leaning heavily on his cane. Albert the gendarme follows him in, blowing his bugle.**

- Albert: Halt, Monsieur Eine.
- Heine: It's a cane, Albert, not a gun.
- Albert: You are not going to shoot anybody, monsieur, but somebody could shoot you. This morning I went for a walk with my bugle, and when I reached the boulevard I suddenly heard shooting. I put my bugle to my lips and began sounding it, and the bullets were whizzing over my head. On one side there were thousands chanting 'Bread, bread, bread', and on the other the government troops were firing at them, 'Boom, boom, boom'. I was in the middle. My mouth was dry. My bugle was choked. People were falling dead. Blood was flowing like water. (Swallows his tears) What would I say to Aunty Julie if you caught a bullet too?
- Heine: Sit down and have a drink.

**Heine sits him down at a table and pours him a glass of water from the jug. The émigrés turn their back to them demonstratively.**

- Heine: (To the émigrés) Good evening. (To Beckerman) Good evening, Ludwig. I heard you had returned. I also heard of your brilliant speech to the parliament. About your heroic battle against the Prussian army. I also heard of the soldiers' brutality. (To Lottchen) Could I perhaps have a glass of beer? (Lottchen does not reply) I was not surprised to hear that they fired at you. The King of Prussia has not yet discovered that human beings have stopped being cannibals. If his cooks were not

from the proletariat, he would have revolutionaries' hearts for dinner every evening.

**Heine sees that Lottchen will not serve him beer, so he takes a drink from Brauner's glass.**

- Brauner: That, my dear sir, is my beer!
- Heine: I thought you ordered it for me.
- Brauner: (**Angrily**) This man has come to boast of how the blister on his thumb has swollen.
- Heine: Heaven forbid! I have come to re-forge the alliance between us. I am prepared to write against the king and his generals. I have always been a soldier in the fight for freedom.
- Albert: You can't say 'freedom' here now, Monsieur Eine.
- Heine: I said it quietly.

**Beckerman angrily addresses Heine.**

- Beckerman: You, a soldier in the fight for freedom? You are a despicable lackey of the dictatorship! You are the king's cat's paw.
- Heine: Which king?
- Beckerman: (**Takes out a paper**) The King of France. You have always written in the service of the King of France. He has paid you. An annual allowance. This is the treasury record.
- Heine: (**Aghast**) What record?
- Beckerman: Five thousand francs every year. Now it's clear why you betrayed the revolution. Now it's clear why you vilified the revolution. Now it is clear why the revolution failed.
- Jeanette: Ludwig, please calm yourself.
- Heine: Do you believe that I wrote anything at all in return for that money?
- Beckerman: (**Gets up**) You were given that money not only for what you wrote, but mainly for what you did not write.
- Jeanette: Sit down!
- Beckerman: (**Sits down**) You have betrayed Germany and the German people. You hired out your pen to anyone willing to pay for it. Had the Devil

himself been willing to pay you, you would have hired it out to him, too. History will remember you in eternal shame as a man who turned morality into a bad joke. I am writing a big book about you. A book, not a newspaper that tomorrow will be used to wrap fish. It is because of Jews like you that there is anti-Semitism in the world.

**Heine cannot bear to hear him, and he exits.**

Beckerman: **(With difficulty)** That man only sees the world through the hole in his circumcised organ.

Jeanette: Enough, Ludwig.

Beckerman: **(Choked)** O God. God in Heaven. Have mercy on me.

Jeanette: We had better go home.

**She helps him up. The émigrés exit. Albert addresses Lottchen.**

Albert: You will not object, mademoiselle, if I take a small glass of cognac in your kitchen?

Lottchen: And then you'll want to rest for ten minutes in my bed.

Albert: Heaven forbid! I've got a sick wife and children and grandchildren, and my old father who lost his hearing at the Battle of Waterloo has long been six feet under.

**Scene 21**

**The chamber of King Friedrich Wilhelm IV, who is wearing underpants. He has difficulty dressing himself. His servants dress him in the royal uniform. Also present are the Censor and the Officer.**

Friedrich: If Heine has received an annual allowance from the King of France, he can be charged with treason.

Officer: He must be brought to Berlin and put on trial. Together with him we shall try all those who published his words, and all those that read them.

Friedrich: You'll have to put half of Germany on trial, myself included.

- Officer: Only those who supported the revolution, your majesty.
- Friedrich: And how, in your opinion, do we bring him here?
- Officer: The new government in France will be only too happy to get rid of him.
- Friedrich: Good. Order the ambassador to submit a request for his extradition.
- Officer: Of course, your majesty. And should the request be denied, I will go to Paris myself and eliminate him.
- Hoffmann: If Heine is eliminated, new editions of his books will be printed.
- Officer: You're right. On second thought, perhaps we could gain some benefit from him. If he has written for the King of France in return for an annual allowance, we, too, should offer him the same allowance and he will write for us.
- Friedrich: Heine? Heine hates me. Everything he will write will be against me.  
(**He coughs**)
- Hoffmann: In my opinion, your majesty, if the allowance granted to Heine by the King of France should become public knowledge, the public will not want to read his books.
- Officer: An announcement must be published in all the newspapers.
- Friedrich: Especially the one he wrote for (**Cannot remember the name of the paper**)
- Hoffmann: The *Allgemeine Zeitung*.
- Friedrich: Have them put it on the front page. In large print. So that every German will know.

**The King has finished dressing and leaves the room accompanied by his servants and aides. Lighting up on Baron Cotta in his office. Heine addresses him from Paris.**

- Heine: (**To Cotta**) My dear baron, that announcement contains but part of the truth. It conveys a mistaken impression. The citizens of Germany have to know that I requested an allowance from the King of France only after the King of Prussia imposed a ban on all my books. They have to know that the King of France has never asked anything of me in return for that allowance.

- Cotta: The very fact that the allowance was granted in secret is evidence that you had something to hide.
- Heine: Of course I had something to hide. The shame that a poet like myself has become a beggar.
- Cotta: And that is all?
- Heine: Had you known that I was receiving an allowance from the King of France, would you have printed my articles in the *Allgemeine Zeitung*?
- Cotta: I would have printed them, with a note underneath that the writer is supported by the King of France.
- Heine: Baron Cotta, you know, better than anyone else in the world, that I cannot be bought. Not because you published what I wrote, but rather because of what you did not publish.
- Cotta: And you, better than anyone else in the world, know that I published everything I could.
- Heine: Then you will publish this article too.
- Cotta: I can no longer publish your articles, Heinrich.
- Heine: It will be the last.
- Cotta: I can publish it as an announcement.
- Heine: And who will pay for it?
- Cotta: (**Derisively**) The King of France.

**Lighting down on Baron Cotta. In the background the screeching of Cocotte the parrot can be heard. Heine enters his home. Aunty Julie is sitting at the table, knitting. Enter Mathilde in a colorful dress and puts down a bottle of wine and a glass before her aunt. The enraged Heine pours out his wrath on her.**

- Heine: Where are you going?
- Mathilde: For a walk.
- Heine: And how could you permit yourself to buy that stupid dress? I shall be unable to pay for it even if I write a book that sells as well as the Bible.
- Mathilde: Why are you so angry? Did the wind blow your hat off on the boulevard?
- Heine: In all of Paris were you unable to find a corset big enough to hold your breasts?
- Julie: What's he saying?

- Mathilde: It was evidently not only the wind. **(Laughs)**
- Heine: I would be happy to know who is the idiot in whose honor you expose them.
- Mathilde: What's the matter, Henri? Do you want a kiss? Come, I'll give you one.
- Heine: What a cow you are, Mathilde. You will never comprehend the magnitude of this catastrophe. Nobody in Germany will ever read even a title of one of my books.
- Mathilde: You're always saying that, and there are always people who read.
- Julie: **(To Mathilde)** What does he want? To eat?

**The parrot's screeching is heard off.**

- Heine: **(Toward the parrot)** Shut up out there! **(To Mathilde)** I hope that at least you have found a respectable lover. I shall need something to be proud of when my poems have been forgotten.
- Mathilde: I haven't got a lover, Henri. Ask Father Jean-Paul. I have never mentioned any man except for you in all of my confessions .
- Heine: Even if all the horses of Paris stood in line before you, they would not succeed in sating your lust.
- Mathilde: Shut your mouth, you pig.
- Julie: The Jew wants to eat pig?

**Angrily, Mathilde goes to the table, takes the wine bottle and swigs from it.**

- Mathilde: You always think that the whole world's against you. When a dog barks in the street, you think it's barking at you. When a leaf falls from a tree, you think that the tree doesn't want to offer you its shade. You're sure that I put the bottle into my mouth so you'd be jealous of it.
- Heine: I think that everyone is against me because I no longer know who is for me. Any one of my friends who knew that I receive an allowance from the King of France could have told Ludwig. Even you.

- Mathilde: I suggest that you don't start accusing me, Henri, because I can hate you in ways that even God himself would not want to save you.
- Heine: God can no longer do anything. If this is what his world looks like, he needs to appoint a younger replacement as soon as possible.
- Julie: There's no need to shout. I heard you. I'm bringing the food right away.

**She leaves her knitting and exits to the kitchen. The parrot screeches.**

- Heine: **(Enraged)** Shut up out there!
- Mathilde: **(Angrily)** God can do anything. And now he'll punish you for what you said. You won't come into my bed for a whole week. You won't see me bathing. I won't even undo a single button on my dress for you.
- Heine: An adulteress like you will not survive it for even a day.
- Mathilde: I'm an adulteress? Ever since our wedding day you have gone to other women. Even when we're walking in the street, you wink at the whores in the windows.
- Heine: I only wish I could do more than that.
- Mathilde: I also know that you visit that rich woman every week, the one who likes your poems. But I'm cleverer than you. I'm waiting until her husband comes home from the royal palace, and I see you crawling back home like a puppy kicked up his ass.
- Heine: Her husband?
- Mathilde: One day you'll find out that it was him who informed on you. You're so stupid you don't even know that in the end, betrayed husbands get fed up.

**The parrot screeches again. With his remaining strength Heine staggers towards it.**

- Mathilde: Henri!

**Mathilde rushes after him, but Auntie Julie, carrying a tray of food, blocks his path.**

- Julie: Where's he going? He's got the runs?



Mathilde: If he touches Cocotte I'll kill him.

Julie: Give him cod liver oil, he'll feel better.

**The parrot's screeching stops suddenly. Silence.**

Mathilde: He's killed him.

**Heine returns, panting heavily.**

Heine: It is her husband. It is really him.

**Heine picks up his cane and limps out.**

## **Scene 22**

**Mathieu and Marie in their home. Enter Heine. Paolo tries to stop him.**

Paolo: Monsieur Heine. You do not have an appointment. Monsieur Heine.

**But Heine moves into the room and addresses Mathieu.**

Heine: You gave the records of my allowance to Ludwig Beckerman. Despite your knowing that my hands were clean. Despite your knowing that I had never written a single word in return for it.

Mathieu: (**Smugly**) You know full well why I gave them.

Heine: My friendship with your wife was pure, monsieur. She has not besmirched your good name at all. Ask her.

Mathieu: I know what she will say.

Heine: You do not believe her?

Mathieu: I gave the records to Beckerman because you treated her too freely, Heine.

Heine: And so you decided to ruin my life? Now every word I have written for reforming the world is seen as a word in the service of the king. Who will read any book of mine?

- Mathieu: You established a friendship with a woman married to the wrong husband.
- Heine: You must help me, monsieur. I beg you to speak to the prime minister and make it clear that he has to continue my allowance.
- Mathieu: I owe you nothing, monsieur, and neither does the prime minister. **(Loses his presence of mind)** You can go and beg for alms in the synagogue. Go to your bent and bearded cousins, who nose in their ancient books and fill the world with the stench of pickled herring and garlic. Perhaps they will put their hands into their pockets and give you a few centimes they earned from selling secondhand breeches in the market.
- Heine: Thank you, monsieur.
- Mathieu: **(Angrily)** Of all the women in Paris, you had to choose my wife? Could you not have chosen a Jewess? Even God chose a Jewess to bear his Son. **(Exits)**
- Marie: That man does not cease to disappoint me. Behind his enlightened countenance lurks a dark and boring man. Every flower he looks at wilts under his cold gaze.
- Heine: Yet, in fact, I have now discovered something good, Marie.
- Marie: Something good?
- Heine: I am persecuted for what I have written. I am incapable of writing anymore. I am penniless. I am critically ill. A vengeful wife awaits me at home. Wherever I may go must be better than all that.
- Marie: It would be better for us if we left Paris.
- Heine: Where to?
- Marie: The country. I have a house. The air there is clear and the sun warm. You will recuperate. You will write again.
- Heine: About what? The grass on the mountain slopes? The sheep bleating in the valley? Here one can feel the heartbeat of the world, Marie.
- Marie: We have already felt that heartbeat. We have seen blood melting the snow in the streets. And the drops of light rain washing away the bloodstains.
- Heine: Someone must write about that blood.
- Marie: But why must it be you?

Heine: Because I must. (**Gets up and picks up his cane**)  
 Marie: Are you going back to her?  
 Heine: I am the most loyal betrayer in the world, Marie.  
 Marie: I do not think you are capable of betrayal anymore.  
 Heine: Of course I am. If I had King Solomon's harem I could spend my days with his thousand women, and revel with you at night. Give me your hand and we'll dance. (**He throws down his cane**) One step, and another. Now a turn. That is how King David danced before the Holy Ark. Can you not hear the timbrels and cymbals? And here are the lyres. Weeping lyres and a harp. Glorify the Eternal King. (**He falls**)  
 Marie: Paolo!  
 Heine: Marie.

**Enter Paolo. Heine is unable to get up.**

Marie: Take him to his house. (**Exits**)

**Paolo lifts Heine and carries him off.**

### Scene 23

**The Chorus sings Heine's "Miserere".**

Permit me, Lord, I'm shocked at this,  
 I think you've made a bloomer:  
 You formed the merriest poet and now  
 You rob him of his good humor.

The pain has dulled my sense of fun,  
 I'm melancholy when sick;  
 If there's no end to this sorry jest,  
 I'll end up a Catholic.

Like other good Christians, I fill your ears  
 With wails – if I persist,  
 O Miserere! you will lose  
 Your very best humorist!

**Lighting up on the chamber of King Friedrich Wilhelm IV, who is ill in bed after suffering a stroke. His movements are restricted. He speaks with difficulty. Lighting up on Heine's room, where he is lying on two mattresses, his body paralyzed, except for his right arm and head. At the King's bedside are two Officers who attend him. At Heine's side are Mathilde and Aunt Julie.**

Heine: His majesty's agents in Paris have surely informed him about my illness. I would imagine that he has not sent his good wishes for my recovery only because of his own illness.

Officer A: What do you want, Heine?

Heine: There are spinal cord specialists in Berlin. I ask that they examine me.

Officer A: With pleasure, Herr Heine. You are invited to Berlin for an examination. You should be aware, of course, that the moment you set foot on Prussian soil, you will be arrested.

Heine: I am critically ill, sir.

Friedrich: (**With difficulty**) That is the man who wrote that I am a drunken impotent, isn't it? What's his name?

Heine: Heinrich Heine, your majesty.

Officer B: You will be charged with treason, Heine.

Officer A: In view of your condition, the court will possibly show leniency and sentence you to be hanged.

Heine: Why, sir? I am prepared to prove to you that there is no greater German patriot than me.

Friedrich: Is that Heine, the poet?

Officer A: Yes, your majesty.

Friedrich: I want to ask him something.

**Officer A signals to Officer B, and the latter crosses the stage to Heine's room, lifts him up, and brings him before the King.**

Friedrich: If I find your answer satisfactory, Heine, you can be examined in Berlin.

Heine: Yes, your majesty.

Friedrich: I am King of Prussia. I love Prussia. All my life I have fought for her. All my life I have prayed for her. How could you debase her that way? And her flag? And her king?

Heine: I, too, love Prussia, your majesty.

Friedrich: According to your poems, you love it very little.  
 Heine: I will love it more, your majesty, when it is worthy of more love.  
 Friedrich: And when will it be worthy of more love?  
 Heine: When its citizens are free. When their spirit is free. When reforming  
 Man will be their highest ambition. When they will admire his  
 sensitivity more than his power, and his genius more than his  
 bestiality.

**Friedrich bursts into tears.**

Heine: I hope that your majesty finds my answer satisfactory.  
 Officer A: We do not find it satisfactory, Heine.  
 Heine: **(Laughs)** Now, on my deathbed, I shall suddenly begin to satisfy you?  
 Even when my life had some value, I was ready to sacrifice it to  
 undermine you.

**Officer A signals to Officer B who returns carrying Heine towards his room.**

Heine: **(Towards the King)** Your majesty, in another few days you will be  
 able to see deep in the ground what remains of your tyranny above it.  
 The maggots will devour your flesh without clicking their heels.  
**(Laughs)**

**Officer B places Heine on his mattresses.**

Heine: **(To Officer B)** Perhaps you would like to be well remembered in  
 human history, sir?  
 Officer B: But of course.  
 Heine: Please pass me the pen and paper from the dressing table.

**The Officer does so. Heine begins writing slowly. Because of his partial blindness he has difficulty in seeing what he is writing. The Officer waits for a moment.**

Officer: **(Reminding Heine)** You said I would be well remembered in history.  
 Heine: You will be remembered as the man who enabled me to write one  
 more poem. **(Laughs)**

**The Officer exits angrily. Heine continues writing in increasing agony.**

Mathilde: Henri, you'll get a headache if you go on writing.

Heine: On the contrary, my dear. Each line I write eases the pain.

Julie: What's he saying? Does he want me to chew a piece of meat for him?

Mathilde: (**Loudly**) He needs to have his hand massaged.

Julie: He needs his head massaged?

Mathilde: (**Stressing**) His hand. So it doesn't weaken.

**The Chorus sings. Mathilde and Julie massage Heine's hand.**

By the Babylonian waters	That old tune – do you still know it? –
There we sat and wept – our harps were	How it starts with elegiac
Hung upon the weeping willow.	Whining, humming like a kettle
That old song – do you still know it?	That is seething on the hearth?

Long has it been seething in me –	Dog, I thank you for your spittle,
For a thousand years. Black sorrow!	But its coolness merely soothes me –
And my wounds are licked by time	Only death can really heal me,
Just as Job's dog licked his boils.	But, alas, I am immortal!

**At the same time, enter Campe who looks at the pages of poetry.**

Campe: This is the acme of your work, Heinrich. We shall call it "Romancero". What do you think? We shall publish it immediately. We will imprint your portrait on the cover. With the expression of a martyr. Lying on the mattresses, writing. I'll go bring an artist. (**Turns to leave**)

Heine: How are you, Julius?

Campe: Excellent, thank you. This book will sell better than all your other works. First, we must bribe the censor to order its banning. Then we shall publish a limited edition to create demand. And finally, we shall put a high price on it. Expensive books sell much better today.

Heine: Just a moment.

Campe: Let's not waste time. Keep writing. (**Again turns to leave**)

- Heine: Perhaps you will not see me again.
- Campe: Why? Are you going away?
- Heine: Sit down for a moment. Do you think that this book will open its readers' eyes to the stupidity of their priests? Do you think it can fortify them in the face of God's indifference to their suffering?
- Campe: I must hurry to the printer's, Heinrich.
- Heine: Julius, I shall die soon.
- Campe: (**Angrily**) If you want to be immortal, Heinrich, do not speak to me of death. I am a publisher. I do not know what to say about it. I only know how to sell a book in which you write about it. (**Lowers his eyes**) I do not want to know too much about it. It is bad for business.
- Heine: This thing called 'Death' actually does very good business. Look at what it has squeezed out of me. (**Gestures towards the poems**)
- Campe: Do not joke about it!

**Exit Campe. Heine's pain intensifies. Mathilde tries to help him.**

- Mathilde: Like this? (**Trying to turn him onto his side**) That way?
- Heine: Ahh!
- Mathilde: (**To Aunty Julie**) Opium. (**She does not hear**) Opium!
- Julie: You don't have to shout. (**Brings the vial**)
- Mathilde: (**To Heine**) Open wide. Open wide.
- Heine: (**Groans**) Ahh.

**Mathilde tries to open Heine's lips so that Julie can put a few drops of opium into his mouth.**

- Mathilde: (**To Julie**) A knife. (**Shouts**) A knife! Get me a knife! A sharp knife.
- Julie: A half knife?
- Mathilde: A sharp knife! (**Exit Julie**)
- Mathilde: Now listen to me. We'll give you some opium and send for a priest. If you want to live, make your confession to the priest and pray to God.
- Heine: God already has millions of fools praying to him.
- Mathilde: If you had any respect for God, Henri, you wouldn't be suffering like this. Our God is full of mercy.

Heine: Really? Have you met him recently?

Mathilde: **(Angrily)** Stop it! **(Restrained)** I want you to live, Henri. To stand on your feet. I want you to be angry and shout and mock. I want to walk down the street with you and see you sniffing at the perfumed women waiting at their doors. I'm willing to pray for you, to confess and fast. You are not willing to do anything. Why? If you say that you believe in God, he'll cure you. Jesus raised people from the *dead*.

Heine: If your God is capable of working a miracle on me, and still abandon me to this suffering, then he's worse than a murderer.

Mathilde: **(Despairingly)** God only works miracles for those who believe in him.

Heine: Does the elephant of the King of Siam care whether a mosquito which got caught in his tail believes in him?

Mathilde: **(Bursts into tears)** Enough, Henri. Please stop.

Heine: **(In pain)** Embrace me.

**Enter Aunty Julie carrying a knife.**

Julie: The neck?

Heine: She's going to slaughter me!

Mathilde: I'll do it. **(Takes the knife from her)** Hold him down.

**Aunty Julie lays Heine down on the mattress.**

Mathilde: **(Shouts)** I'll cut into his neck and you pour opium onto the wound.

Julie: Why are you shouting? I can hear.

**The two women execute the introduction of the opium into Heine's neck. He is calmed. Mathilde sits beside him, holding his hand.**

Julie: Sleep in peace, Henri, and I'll go and make you something to eat. And don't worry. I won't put poison in it. God put us into this world, and he'll take us out of it. But all in good order. I'm older, so I'll die before you.

**Exit Julie. Enter a Priest, his face hidden by his hat, a candle in his hand.**



- Priest: (In Latin) *Deo gratias*<sup>2</sup> (Clasps the crucifix hanging on his chest) *in hoc signo vinces*<sup>3</sup>. (Places his hand on the body's head) *Durus est hic sermo. Et quis potest eum audire*<sup>4</sup>.
- Heine: (Angrily, to Mathilde) I told you that I do not want a priest!
- Mathilde: I didn't call him. (To the Priest) Who called you, father?
- Priest: The Holy Spirit.
- Mathilde: (Terrified) Christ Jesus! He isn't going to die, is he?
- Priest: Apparently not.
- Mathilde: Thank you, father. (Quickly kisses his hand)
- Priest: I would like to be alone with the sick man during his confession, my daughter.
- Mathilde: God bless you, father.
- Priest: May God bless you too, my daughter.

**Mathilde kisses Heine, the Priest's hand, and exits.**

- Heine: Who are you? (The Priest removes his hat. It is Beckerman)  
Ludwig?
- Beckerman: I read your *Romancero*, Heinrich. The more you write, the worse you say.
- Heine: Since when are you a priest?
- Beckerman: Since I discovered that human beings are incapable of redeeming themselves, and that they need God's grace to be redeemed.
- Heine: I see that we use the same medicines. I take opium, and so do you.
- Beckerman: Opium?
- Heine: You have not read me meticulously enough, Ludwig. I wrote that religion is the opium of the masses.
- Beckerman: I have read you very meticulously indeed. Now, after that awful *Romancero*, it is time for you to be punished.
- Heine: For what?

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<sup>2</sup> God be praised.

<sup>3</sup> In this sign you will conquer.

<sup>4</sup> This saying is hard; and who can hear it?

- Beckerman: For profaning the name of God. (**Angrily**) You continue preaching to people that they were created in God's image, and so they are capable of redeeming themselves. God's image is nothing compared with God himself, just as Man's shadow is nothing compared with Man.
- Heine: If you have come here to bring me back into the fold, I am prepared to write to whoever sent you that you did your best.
- Beckerman: (**Insistently**) Anyone reading your *Romancero* will be convinced that there is no point in praying to God, and so he sentences himself to Hell.
- Heine: Anyone reading my *Romancero* looks at the world and asks himself if there is a God in that world.
- Beckerman: Who are you to cast doubt on his existence? Even if you know how to scribble a few clever lines, that does not mean that you know the secret of the world .
- Heine: I do not know the secret of the world, but with each passing day I know more.
- Beckerman: You are a wretched maggot. You delude yourself that you know.
- Heine: Man can be king of the world. (**Gestures at himself**) And he can also be enslaved by his God and be a wretched maggot. (**Gestures at Beckerman**)
- Beckerman: You lie here paralyzed and dying, and in your heart you are still king of the world? Even your heresy is nothing but the arrogance of a conceited fool.
- Heine: I am a paralyzed blind Jew, Ludwig. Of what could I possibly be arrogant?
- Beckerman: Your arrogance is your refusal to beg for mercy. I am warning you, Heinrich. Get down on your knees, recant everything you have written, and perhaps you will merit forgiveness.
- Heine: I cannot.
- Beckerman: If you recant, God may end your life and shorten your suffering.
- Heine: And if I do not?
- Beckerman: Then he will prolong your life and every day on this earth will be a living hell for you.

**Heine hesitates. It is hard to refuse such a tempting offer. After a moment he regains his composure and replies.**

Heine: I prefer hell on earth to promises of paradise in heaven.

Beckerman: You wanted hell on earth? You shall have it. Had you studied history you would have known that there has never been a man whom a Catholic priest has not brought to confess his sins. This candle, intended to light your way to paradise, will give you the agonies of hell.

**He brings Heine's hand close the burning candle.**

Heine: (**Fearfully**) Mathilde. Mathilde.

**Suddenly a young woman, Camilla Selden, enters carrying a briefcase.**

Camilla: Monsieur Heine?

**Beckerman quickly extinguishes the candle. He realizes that his plan has been foiled.**

Beckerman: I have no need to torture you, Heinrich. God himself is doing that. (**He moves quickly to Camilla and pulls down her dress, revealing her breasts**) Look at this woman, Heinrich. See her neck? Her shoulders? Her breasts? Caress them. Kiss them. (**Laughs**) The *cholent* stands before you, but you haven't got a fork.

**He exits. Meanwhile Camilla has buttoned up her dress.**

Camilla: My name is Camilla, Herr Heine.

Heine: You have come in time, my child.

Camilla: I adore your poems, sir.

Heine: Thank you.

Camilla: There are many in Germany who love them.

Heine: Thank you very much.

Camilla: I am very happy to see you, sir.

- Heine: There is not very much in me that can make you happy.
- Camilla: Your words.
- Heine: Can you not see that I am dying?
- Camilla: I see a king striding tall in the world, while we little people crawl around at his great feet in search of a few crumbs from his musings.
- Heine: This king is but the punchbag of the gods exacting their vengeance for competing with them for the love of human beings.
- Camilla: A man who is a king in the hearts of people, sir, will not be bowed by the gods. (**Heine is silent**) I beg your permission, sir, to sing you one of your poems. (**Sings “Spring Song”**)

Now May has come all over,	The nightingales are singing
The flowers and trees bloom high,	From leafy bowers unseen,
And rosy cloudlets hover	And little lambs are springing
Upon the azure sky.	In clover fields of green.

**Heine takes her hand and kisses it. After a moment he embraces her. After another moment his strength fails.**

- Camilla: I will come again tomorrow, sir.
- Heine: When?
- Camilla: In the afternoon. I do not wish to disturb your rest, sir.
- Heine: By tomorrow afternoon you will find a man mad with longing for you.
- Camilla: In that case, sir, I shall come in the morning.
- Heine: In the morning? And what of my longings tonight? I shall be unable to close my eyes from expectation.
- Camilla: Very well, sir, I shall return this evening.
- Heine: Why don't you stay?

**She smiles. Enter Mathilde.**

- Mathilde: Thank you very much, mademoiselle. He has done enough work for today. He doesn't need a secretary anymore.
- Heine: Just one more letter, Mathilde.
- Mathilde: You must eat, Henri.

- Heine: Perhaps Camilla can eat with us.
- Mathilde: There's no room at the table.
- Camilla: Thank you, Madame. **(Exits)**
- Mathilde: The priest was very angry, Henri. **(Heine is silent)** I'm frightened. **(Heine is silent)** I'm prepared to call a Jewish priest for you. I'm even prepared to bring you a skullcap.
- Heine: I always wear my skullcap over my heart.
- Mathilde: I'm prepared to light a Jewish Sabbath candle for you.
- Heine: I am blind, Mathilde. Even an army of candles will not illuminate my darkness.
- Mathilde: If the God of the Jews is punishing you for betraying him, I'm willing for you to go back to being a Jew.
- Heine: I cannot go back to being a Jew.
- Mathilde: Why not?
- Heine: Because I have never stopped being one.

**He laughs and then falls silent.**

- Mathilde: Then perhaps your illness is my punishment? Perhaps it's me that has sinned? **(He is silent)** If you're not prepared to pray for yourself, then ask forgiveness for me. I'm suffering too. **(He hesitates)** Lots of people have fallen ill and returned to him, even though they never believed.
- Heine: I want to believe when I am of sound mind. Not because I lie dying in bed.
- Mathilde: If you don't believe in him he'll send you to hell.
- Heine: There is no hell, Mathilde. It was invented to frighten foolish people.
- Mathilde: I'm foolish, and I'm frightened.
- Heine: And I am wise and I am frightened. Because I do not know for what I am being punished. Because I do not know why I am dying when I so much want to live. Why is he so insistent on filling my mouth with a handful of earth in order to silence me? Is this the answer of your God? A handful of earth?

**Mathilde chokes back her tears and takes his hand. Enter Aunty Julie carrying a plate.**

Julie: You can go and rest, Mathilde. **(To Heine)** I've chewed a meatball for you. Do you want it? **(He does not reply)** At least you haven't got piles, you don't have to worry about rotten teeth, and it looks like you're not going to get a hump on your back.

**She laughs, sits down next to them and eats silently.**

### **Scene 24**

**The Chorus sings "Miserere". As they do, two servants carry King Friedrich Wilhelm IV on a stretcher into Heine's room. The King is accompanied by two Officers and a Priest, whose face is hidden by his hat.**

How much I envy him his lot!	O God, cut short my agony,
For seven years I lie	Hasten the muffled drum!
Tossing in pain upon the ground,	You know I have no talent for
I writhe and cannot die.	The act of martyrdom.

**Two officers bring in King Friedrich Wilhelm on a stretcher. They are accompanied by the Priest whose face is hidden beneath his hat brim.**

Priest: **(In Latin)** *Deo gratias (Clasps the crucifix hanging on his chest) In hoc signo vinces. Durus est hic sermo, et quis potest eum audiere.*

Officer: **(To Heine)** His majesty wishes to speak to you, poet.

Heine: This very minute? I await a beautiful woman.

Officer: Shut your mouth.

Heine: All my life I have tried and not succeeded.

Priest: **(Into the King's ear)** This is he, your majesty.

Friedrich: Why have you stopped writing against me, Heinrich? Do you feel sorry for me because I have fallen ill?

Heine: No, sire.

Friedrich: Did you think that I've already been defeated?

Heine: No, sire. I have found an adversary of my own stature.

- Friedrich: Greater than me? Who?
- Heine: The one you call “God”, sire.
- Priest: **(Into the King’s ear)** This is infamous blasphemy, your majesty.
- Friedrich: What do you want of God?
- Heine: I do not like his jokes.
- Friedrich: **(Aghast)** Heinrich!
- Priest: **(Into the King’s ear)** God in heaven will be very angry if your majesty does not stand upon his dignity and have this man executed.
- Heine: **(Painfully)** The power that men have given him has corrupted him. Old age has made him foolish. His humor is blacker than Death. He has become a merciless monster. Let him die already. Before we are all burnt in flames because of him.
- Priest: **(Aloud)** He should be burnt, your majesty.
- Friedrich: **(To the Officers)** Take him to the square!

**The Officers move to Heine and examine him.**

- Officer A: There is hardly anything to burn, sire. What is left will not burn for more than a minute.
- Officer B: He will surely die on the way.

**Now the Priest’s face can be seen. It is Beckerman who angrily attacks Heine.**

- Beckerman: Die already. Stop persecuting me. Your mockery stings me like a mosquito. Smarting. Poisoning. Profaning all that is holy. You have made this world an impossible place to live in, and you will be driven from it before you destroy it. Even you will not find a word that will save you now.

**The Officers stop Beckerman. He struggles with them until he collapses and dies.**

- Officer A: Sire, he is dead.
- Heine: He died sanctifying the Holy Name, your majesty. He is worthy of burial at your side. **(Laughs)**

Friedrich:     **(To Heine)** Your death will not save you from my vengeance, Heine. Germany will continue to hound you and your books until the end of time.

**The Officers take Beckerman, the servants lift the stretcher and they turn to exit.**

Heine:           **(After them)** Death will not save you from my vengeance either, your majesty. My spirit will pursue you and your sons, and your sons' sons, and will continue to warn against them, denounce them and mock them, until all men know who you are.

**The King and his entourage exit. Heine's pain intensifies. He moans.**

Mathilde:       Do you want some water, Henri? **(He does not reply)** A cold compress?

Julie:           I'll drip some opium into his mouth. Go and bring a towel to clean up his vomit.

**Mathilde turns to exit. Aunty Julie picks up the opium vial.**

Julie:           Drink the whole bottle, Henri. **(Holds out the vial)** Even birds know when to fly high into the sky and then fall onto the rocks. Drink it quickly before you change your mind.

**He takes the vial. Thinks. Looks at her. Thinks again. Then he returns the vial.**

Heine:           I still have a thirst for this damned life, Aunty Julie. I still crave it, as if I was born only yesterday.

**Mathilde sees what is happening and quickly comes back.**

Mathilde:       Aunty Julie! Give me the bottle.

Julie:           He wants to drink.

Mathilde:       Bring him a glass of water.



Julie: What?

Mathilde: **(Shouts)** Bring him a glass of water!

**Exit Aunty Julie. Enter Camilla carrying a briefcase.**

Mathilde: You again?

Camilla: He asked me to write for him.

Heine: Two or three poems, Mathilde, and please do not disturb us.

Mathilde: **(To Heine)** It's what I can't give you that you want more than anything. **(To Camilla)** Don't sit too close to him. He can still smell.  
**(Exits)**

Camilla: Good morning, sir.

Heine: Now you can come closer.

Camilla: I am close.

Heine: You are so beautiful, Camilla. You are the most wonderful, enchanting and pretty creature I have ever seen. **(He kisses her hand)**

Camilla: The attention you pay me, sir, makes me very happy.

Heine: Put the papers down on the bed. **(She does so)** Take my hand in yours. Yes, like that. Run my hand over your face. Over your curls. Your neck. Your shoulders.

**She kisses his hand and caresses his face. Silence.**

Heine: I want to feel your heart. **(She places his hand on her chest)** It is beating.

Camilla: So is yours.

**After a moment he drops his hand.**

Heine: **(Painfully)** I shall not let Him rob me of this life.

Camilla: You still live.

Heine: What is the point of living if I am not a king?

Camilla: Your poetry is a kingdom, sir.

Heine: A momentary kingdom. The crown of a king of the spirit is as light as a feather in a dream. And now the dream is over and the crown has been taken on the wind. If I were able I would even grasp at a rotten wooden rafter. Just when I am so sure that there is no God, he deals me such a deadly blow. **(Regains his composure)** Hold me, Camilla. When he sees me in your arms, he will vanish shamefaced into the clouds.

**Camilla kneels beside him and embraces him. Enter Mathilde. She stands looking at them for a moment. Then she addresses Camilla.**

Mathilde: **(Calmly)** Leave.

Heine: Stay.

Camilla: I will come tomorrow. **(She turns to leave)**

Heine: **(After her)** Stay.

**She exits.**

Heine: **(To Mathilde)** Call her. Run after her. Send a carriage.

Mathilde: She will never enter this house again.

Heine: I shall go after her. Call a driver. **(Towards the window)** Camilla! **(To Mathilde)** I want to borrow a few more heartbeats from her, a few more breaths of air.

Mathilde: You're already a corpse, Henri. You can't want anything anymore.

Heine: I do want.

Mathilde: You live in a world created by God, and in this world even poets cannot want everything.

Heine: God no longer forbids and permits. Look at how far he has fallen. How he waits for Death to reach out for me and hopes that I will go down on bended knee and plead for his mercy. See how much he longs to hear me bless him, and die. But I shall not bless him and die. I shall curse him and live. Damn you for grinding me under your boot heel. Damn you for crushing me as though I were a worm slithering along the ground. **(Points towards the window)** I saw him there a moment ago. He was coughing. It seems that he, too, needs a doctor. **(Tries to look**

**through the window**) There he is. Smiling between the branches of the trees, sure that in another moment I shall submit. **(Calls outside)** I shall live for as long as I wish. I shall write as much as I wish. Even this rotting body will not stop me.

Mathilde: You cannot want more than God permits, Henri. You cannot love more than he permits. You cannot betray more than he permits. **(She embraces him)** You cannot deceive. Mock. Envy. You cannot hurt more than he permits.

Heine: I can do it all, Mathilde.

**Mathilde continues embracing Heine until he stops breathing. Darkness.**

**Curtain**