

FROM THE CONVALESCENCE OF
CHRISTIANNE ZELMAN

Written by
Levres de Sang

paulscott@ekit.com

July 25, 2017

OPEN TO:

The entryway of a postwar concrete building with its once futuristic plastic letters:

T R A U M K L I N I K

SUBTITLE: DREAM CLINIC

Where several PERSONS come and go before we—

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE — DAY

The certificates on one wall bleached out by the sunlight streaming through a veil of net curtain.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
(filtered)
Mein—
(ecstatic)
Mein Führer!!

A calendar displays an alpine scene. Above the date:

A P R I L 1 9 7 5

On the desk a framed PHOTOGRAPH: its newlywed couple frozen in romantic perpetuity by glossy monochrome.

Nearby, a cassette revolves inside a portable TAPE RECORDER:

WOMAN'S VOICE (TAPE CONT.)
... Mein father!

DR. ILSA REINHARDT (late 30s) leans against her desk. Posing with an unlit cigarette.

Recognisable from the photo she's slender, sophisticated and just a little androgynous.

The tape settles into a purr.

Ilsa smiles. Her manicured index finger presses STOP.

ILSA
Fascinating, Doctor Oberweis.

The presence of DR. RUPERT OBERWEIS (60s) was not obvious, but now he lifts himself from a chair.

His skeletal frame offset by pebble-glass SPECTACLES. His voice measured, insinuating:

DR. OBERWEIS

The subject does present certain difficulties. Her legal guardian is an old friend.

Ilsa suggests both business and pleasure as she checks her hair in a discreetly situated mirror.

Oberweis leans over the tape recorder... Peers at it for a long moment.

DR. OBERWEIS (CONT.)

Even so, Fräulein Zelman should return to an institution.

He removes the cassette and slips it inside his jacket.

Ilsa leafs through a faded document FILE on the desk.

ILSA

You said she's convalescing?

DR. OBERWEIS

We would be mistaken to think only in terms of her clinical condition.

ILSA

Ah, the *Gesellschaft*—

DR. OBERWEIS

Precisely, my dear.

Oberweis reclaims the file. Closes it emphatically.

DR. OBERWEIS (CONT.)

It is our duty to demonstrate that nationhood is a question of culture.

(beat)

... to expose such retrograde fantasies.

His gaze now directed at Ilsa. One made an otherworldly blue by the huge magnification of those spectacles.

DR. OBERWEIS (CONT.)

I trust your husband will treat this as a formality and countersign my recommendation—

INT. CORRIDOR / FOYER — DAY

DR. MICHAEL REINHARDT (40s) glides past several consulting rooms and turns into a marbled space calmed by flowers and low-volume muzak. Krautrock at its most pastoral.

FRIENDLY VOICE (O.S.)
Escaping early today, Michael?

Michael turns. Sees a colleague (KLAUS, 50s) step away from the reception desk.

MICHAEL
Ah, Klaus.

They shake hands. Michael's easygoing manner matching the tweed of his jacket.

MICHAEL (CONT.)
As a matter of fact I'm meeting
an old friend.
(good-natured)
Don't tell my wife, though!

Flecks of grey lend Michael an educated, reassuring air. An advantage in his profession.

KLAUS
Ah, I doubt she'll even notice
-- Oberweis seems to have taken
up residence.

MICHAEL
Oberweis?

KLAUS
Head of some private institute
up in the Tyrol. One of the old
school, if you catch my drift.
(whispers)
Political affiliations, too.

An electronic BUZZ interrupts the piped muzak—

FEMALE INTERCOM (V.O.)
(filtered)
Herr Steinzeiler -- Room Seven.

Behind them an exhausted BUSINESSMAN stubs out his cigarette in a glass ash-tray.

... before the languid muzak returns:

KLAUS

Oh, I must congratulate you.
 (off Michael's
 puzzlement)
*Sedatives and Forgetting: thirty
 years is a long time.*

MICHAEL

Ah, my article!

KLAUS

There's some irony -- When the
 author himself forgets!
 (then)
 You're too modest by half. The
 material is intriguing.

Michael accepts the compliment.

EXT. INNSBRUCK -- DAY

We find Michael among the Springtime crowd. At ease in the cosmopolitan city with its avenues, tram-cars and Hapsburg architecture gilded by late afternoon sunshine.

He walks past a plaque engraved with an Austrian eagle and Gothic typeface:

G E S E L L S C H A F T
 F Ü R D I E

 Ö S T E R R E I C H I S C H E N
 K U L T U R N A T I O N

SUBTITLE: SOCIETY FOR THE AUSTRIAN CULTURAL NATION

INT. BEER CELLAR -- LATER

Feather-hatted LOCALS drink Pilsner while a fifty-something BARMAN booms along to cheap OOMPAH music.

Michael sits opposite a childlike purveyor of *objet d'art*. His real name is Otto, but we'll know him as THE SEPIA MAN (50s). Either way, he speaks in hushed tones.

THE SEPIA MAN

They came by way of a private
 collection.

He indicates an array of colour-faded PHOTOGRAPHS (housed in clear sleeves) on the table between them.

THE SEPIA MAN (CONT.)

A widower outside of Mayrhoffen
 -- Like myself, he collects
 only the teddy bears now.
 Everything else in that crazy
 house of his has its price --
 You know, he's obsessed with
 the rumour that *Steiff* produced
 a private run of Führer bears.
 (chuckles)
 His eyes glisten like marzipan
 whenever he talks about them.

Michael smiles. He enjoys these kind of stories.

THE SEPIA MAN (CONT.)

Ah, I would rather preserve the
 merest possibility of its
 existence -- There's something
 unsettling about a completed
 collection. Something forlorn.

Suddenly, Michael is distracted by one of the photos—

THE PHOTOGRAPH

An old couple on an alpine pathway: the man's walking-cane
 pointing at something in the distance.

An orange flare bisects the figures. It lends the image a
 curious feeling.

BACK TO SCENE:

Michael holds the photo up to the dim light before placing
 it back on the table.

MICHAEL

Maybe the photographer's camera
 came open accidentally?
 (then)
 All the same, I'm comforted by
 this image.

The Sepia Man smiles sadly. He knew Michael would be.

The Barman brings over more beer, but stops short.

BARMAN

No, it can't be... It must be
 fifteen years since—
 (off Michael)
 Why, they used to come in for
 strudel. And always sat...

The Barman sets down the two beer glasses and gestures—

BARMAN (CONT.)

In that alcove over there -- Ah yes, there was always a little girl with them. She was the one who liked the strudel, come to think of it.

A DRUNKEN LOCAL hollers over at the Barman — forcing him to take his leave.

Michael turns back to his friend.

MICHAEL

He must be having us on. You know everyone from those days.

SEPIA MAN

Life is full of coincidences, Herr Michael -- You know, I often wonder if our clients might not be one and the same?

INT. BEDROOM — DAY [CURTAINS DRAWN]

CHRISTIANNE ZELMAN (29) is perched on the edge of her bed.

Her complexion that of someone who has spent much of their life indoors; and the luxurious tint of her hair one we'll come to recognise as a wig.

She's wearing a silk gown and glued to a small TELEVISION. Enthralled by the weepy finale of *Dark Victory*:

BETTE DAVIS (ON TV)

(filtered)

Dimming of the vision, then blindness. Then—

INT. KITCHEN — NIGHT

LOUISE ZELMAN (late 50s) shuts off the stove as a milk-pan comes to the boil.

And as she slots a tall glass into a metal holder we sense her actions constitute a nightly routine:

-- Pouring the warm milk.

-- Removing the stopper from a brown medicine bottle.

-- Squeezing two droplets of clear liquid into the milk.

-- Stirring with a long, silver spoon.

 LUISE ZELMAN
 (calls out)
Emil—

Luise Zelman places the glass on a tray.

All ready for EMIL (9) as he skips into frame: the epitome of an alpine childhood with his pale complexion and golden hair parted on one side.

He picks up the tray, but stops all of a sudden:

 EMIL
When will Christa feel better?

 LUISE ZELMAN
Christa is like the glass that
shatters -- Even if all its
pieces are reassembled the
glass itself can no longer be
used for serving warm milk.

A beauty-spot accentuates Luise Zelman's fine profile. Her High-Germanic intonation tinged with melancholy:

 LUISE ZELMAN (CONT.)
Christa is fragile.

Emil looks up at his Aunt... tries to understand. His eyes a strange kind of blue.

INT. BEDROOM — NIGHT

Christianne sits up in bed. Leafs through a SCRAPBOOK: its filmstars and royals cut from glossy magazines.

INT. STAIRCASE — SAME TIME

Emil climbs the stairs. Maintains the tray and glass of milk in perfect equilibrium.

INT. BEDROOM — MOMENTS LATER

Emil places the milk on Christianne's bedside table.

... becomes aware of a third presence—

A MANNEQUIN

Its black uniform glimmering with silvery insignia: that of a Gestapo officer.

BACK TO SCENE:

Emil fascinated...

CHRISTIANNE

Aunt Luise said I could display him on special occasions.

(stares at the mannequin)

Like tomorrow. When the Man from the Fatherland will be here.

EMIL

Aunt Luise told me about the specialist from Innsbruck.

CHRISTIANNE

That's correct, he travels on business: Innsbruck, Leipzig, Baden -- He lives a wonderful life.

Christianne reaches for the glass. Drinks its warm milk.

CHRISTIANNE (CONT.)

Our marriage ceremony will take place at the Hermitage. You'll wear your Sunday best and play that melancholy piano refrain -- So that many years from now everyone will look back fondly and say they remember that day.

Christianne puts the glass back on the tray, dabs her mouth with a tissue and looks expectantly at Emil.

Emil retrieves a small spiral NOTEBOOK from his pocket. He edges closer to Christianne and whispers...

EMIL

Albert Speer—

CHRISTIANNE

Albert Speer -- Flew recently from New York on the Concorde.

(then)

I told you only last week.

EMIL

Oh, I forgot to cross him out.

Emil removes the pencil from its spiral, strikes through the name and scans his list again.

EMIL

Hansel Bauer!

CHRISTIANNE

Mmm, an interesting selection.

Christianne smiles. Confident she can always win this game.

CHRISTIANNE (CONT.)

He walks beneath a viaduct to rooms in Eastern Germany. By a disused railway with its old locomotive. One he can see from his kitchen window -- Rusting quietly in the sun while he enjoys a Liszt recital from the Great Hall of Radio Bremen.

Christianne's eyes waver. The milk has made her drowsy.

INT. REINHARDT LOUNGE -- NIGHT

Like something from mid-period Fassbinder with its trailing houseplants, mirrored surfaces and *Deutsche Gramophone* LPs.

Ilsa has draped herself across the sofa. She holds out her empty glass.

ILSA

I'd love another.

Michael obliges. Heads for their drinks cabinet. Ilsa cranes her neck after him. Smiles mischievously:

ILSA

You left early, today?

Michael fixes Ilsa's Cinzano. Doesn't look up.

MICHAEL

I went to see Otto.

ILSA

Oh, the Sepia Man -- Honestly, you're like two schoolboys swapping pornographic pictures behind the squash courts.

She glances at their glass coffee-table.

ILSA
Must be nice making time for a
hobby?
(picks up photo of
old couple)
It's damaged. I trust he gave
you a discount?

Michael all too familiar with her sense of irony does not reply. Rather, he just hands Ilsa the drink and sits down beside her.

ILSA
Danke Schöne.
(then)
Oh, there's an assessment case
I hoped you could take.

Ilsa reaches for her briefcase. Pulls out the file we saw earlier.

ILSA (CONT.)
I'd go myself, but I'll be at
the symposium.

Michael sips his tonic water.

ILSA (CONT.)
The client is a most eminent
one. From a private research
institute.

MICHAEL
Ah, Doctor Oberweis.

ILSA
You know him?

MICHAEL
No. I just heard the name.
(then)
Not one of your usual wine-glass
socialists, I gather?

Ilsa smiles. Detaches a CHEQUE paperclipped to the file.

ILSA
Not if his deposit is anything
to go by.

Ilsa senses her husband's disinterest—

ILSA (CONT.)

I find the likes of Oberweis as distasteful as you do, but you didn't inherit my father's bank loans.

Michael clinks the ice around his glass. A genuine display of empathy.

MICHAEL

What does he want?

ILSA

A recommendation -- He'll settle once the papers are countersigned.

Ilsa hands Michael the file. Gets up from the sofa.

ILSA (CONT.)

He's close to the family and would prefer if they heard it from elsewhere.

Michael opens the file. Reads aloud while Ilsa mooches about the room.

MICHAEL

Christianne Zelman. Born April 30th, 1945—

Michael catches Ilsa's knowing glance. One that says: *the same day as Hitler's suicide.*

MICHAEL (CONT.)

Mother died during childbirth.
Father at the Russian front.

(turns page)

Attended convent school in Dürnstein -- Confined to psychiatric institute, 1964.

Ilsa perches herself on the arm of the sofa.

MICHAEL (CONT.)

The subject suffers delusions that can only be described as Fatherland fantasies.

Ilsa smiles like a pussycat. Strokes Michael's hair.

ILSA

A perfect case for the only son of an SS officer.

Michael's heard that one before, but knows he has little choice as we—

CUT TO:

EXT. ALPINE LANDSCAPE — DAY

A red CABLE-CAR climbs above low cloud. Rain spots the big windows...

... beyond which two FIGURES are visible.

ILSA (V.O. CONT.)
You will travel to Aisenglemm
and stay at the house of Luise
Zelman.

INT. CABLE-CAR — SAME TIME

Michael surveys the queasy altitude.

The only other passenger a woman of around thirty. Wearing a paisley headscarf and flared trousers.

She will later introduce herself as JULIA KLEIN, but for now she exhales cigarette smoke and declares:

JULIA KLEIN
Christianne has been
convalescing a very long time.

We don't know whether Julia is starting or merely continuing a conversation.

JULIA KLEIN (CONT.)
... but that won't prevent you
falling in love with her.

The cable-car eases onto its metal platform.

Michael sees the decrepit ATTENDANT struggle with the door and helps slide it open from inside.

ATTENDANT
(splutters)
Danke Schön. Danke Schön.

Julia exits. Michael retrieves his suitcase.

EXT. CABLE-CAR STATION — CONTINUOUS

Julia turns to face Michael as he catches up to her—

JULIA KLEIN
I'm Julia, by the way -- Julia
Klein.

Michael offers Julia his free hand. She accepts.

MICHAEL
Doctor Michael Reinhardt.
(then)
Why do you believe I will fall
in love with my patient?

Julia's features attractive in the rainy air as for the first time she adopts a serious tone:

JULIA KLEIN
Because Christianne Zelman is a
fascinating woman.

INT. ZELMAN HOUSE — DAY

Christianne stands silhouetted by the dusky landing. She's holding some kind of object.

Minor piano chords become audible. Perhaps those of Mozart, Schumann or Florian Frücke.

EXT. LAKESIDE — DAY

The soft rain so prevalent at this altitude falls on the lake. A TAXI drives away.

Michael picks up his suitcase and makes for a chalet-style residence: all dark pine and flowered balconies. The Tyrol at its most idyllic.

INT. ZELMAN HOUSE — DAY

Christianne looks down upon the wide staircase. Piano chords merging now with voices from the lounge:

LUISE ZELMAN (O.S.)
Ah, Doctor Reinhardt. You must
be tired from your journey.

We glide by Christianne and on down—

THE STAIRCASE

Following a melodramatic curvature into—

THE LOUNGE

Typically Tyrolean with its dark furniture offset by china and crystalware.

Luise Zelman studies Emil at the piano. His eyes fixed on the sheet music.

 LUISE ZELMAN (CONT.)
 ... and I've invited Doctor
 Kleber for dinner this evening.
 (suddenly)
 Oh, Emil—

Emil stops playing. Rises from his stool.

 LUISE ZELMAN (CONT.)
 Come and meet Doctor Reinhardt
 -- An authority on the trauma
 from which Christianne suffers.

Emil stands. His attire and manners both immaculate.

 EMIL
 A pleasure to meet you.

Emil clicks his polished heels.

 MICHAEL
 Likewise.
 (then)
 That melody—?

 LUISE ZELMAN
 (interjects)
 He wrote it himself.

Emil casts his eyes down a moment, but looks up again almost immediately. There's an intensity about him:

 EMIL
 I've called it *Child of Crystal*
Rain. At the suggestion of Herr
 Oberweis.

Luise Zelman hurriedly gestures toward the staircase:

 LUISE ZELMAN
 Oh, Christianne—?

THE STAIRCASE

Christianne descends... Enchanted by this stranger.

Michael now oblivious to Luise and Emil. Eyes only for this mysterious woman approaching him.

The piano resumes its melancholy refrain. Compels Michael to climb the stairs... to meet her halfway.

Christianne reaches the midway landing.

Michael almost there, too—

All of a sudden, Christianne's posture crumples!

Causing the melody to cease and Michael to reach for this woman falling into his arms.

... so that he might catch her—

Admire the pale neck now draped over his forearm. And look into eyes brimming with desire and delirium in equal parts.

CHRISTIANNE

My camera?

Michael eases her into a conveniently situated chair.

CHRISTIANNE (CONT.)

I wanted to take your picture
-- As a souvenir.

Luise Zelman appears. She's examining a Polaroid CAMERA (the object which fell when Christianne fainted).

LUISE ZELMAN

Your nice camera appears to be
unscathed, Christa. The carpet
cushioned its fall.

(then)

Fortunately, Doctor Reinhardt
anticipated your own.

Christianne childlike as she whispers up at Michael:

CHRISTIANNE

I'm pleased you're here -- It's
nearly my birthday.

And off Michael's embarrassment we—

CUT TO:

INT. CONSERVATORY — NIGHT

A glass lean-to that serves as a repository for amateur canvases, worn-out furnishings and moth-eaten fencing masks.

Michael, Luise Zelman and a dishevelled DOCTOR KLEBER (60s) sit around a table occupied by a liqueur, three glasses and a TAPE RECORDER.

Its cassette revolves in the peaceful night:

CHRISTIANNE (ON TAPE)
(filtered)
One day he will return—

More tranquil than on the tape we heard in Ilsa's office.

EXT. LAKESIDE — NIGHT

Leaves and branches SSwsssh as they're brushed aside by a leather-gloved hand...

The conservatory glows on the other side of the lake. Its tape WHIRRING in the darkness:

CHRISTIANNE (TAPE CONT.)
... although there's something
I haven't told him.

On this side of the lake a DARK FIGURE stays hidden: their spectacles gleaming with moonlight!

INT. CONSERVATORY — CONTINUOUS

A drowsy Dr. Kleber starts as the voice returns:

CHRISTIANNE (TAPE CONT.)
An angel of death will appear
at my bedside. She will speak
softly.
(impersonating)
Please understand, Christianne
-- God wants it this way.

Luise Zelman gets up, presses STOP and stares off into the night. Her figure touched by moonlight.

Doctor Kleber pours himself another liqueur. Threatens to do the same for Michael.

Michael indicates that he's had enough.

MICHAEL

You said she was sleepwalking,
Madame Zelman?

Luisse Zelman remains with her back to her guests.

MICHAEL (CONT.)

Do you think these words come
from a personality other than
her own?

LUISE ZELMAN

Isn't that the reason for your
being here, Doctor Reinhardt?

Luisse Zelman turns around:

LUISE ZELMAN (CONT.)

I'm sorry. I didn't mean—

(then)

Doctor Oberweis asked me to
record any unusual episodes --
When he heard this tape he said
you...

(hesitates)

Actually, I don't recall what he
said about you.

For the first time Luisse Zelman seems at a complete loss.

EXT. VILLAGE — NIGHT

Michael accompanies a somewhat inebriated Doctor Kleber.
Lights twinkle on the mountain above them.

DR. KLEBER

It's good of you to walk with
me.

MICHAEL

That's alright. I needed some
air.

Michael's hand steadies the older man.

DR. KLEBER

You know Christa spent time at
The Colonnades?

MICHAEL

You mean the institute?

(then)

I've looked at the file, but—

DR. KLEBER
There are pages missing.
(then)
Something happened up there.

Kleber staggers. Gestures vaguely into the darkness.

DR. KLEBER (CONT.)
Something that caused Oberweis
to leave there a broken man.

MICHAEL
Oberweis—?

DR. KLEBER
The author of all those missing
pages!
(beat)
He ran the institute, but you
know who that place belongs to?

Kleber smiles. He knows Michael has no idea.

DR. KLEBER (CONT.)
Baroness Adrea Luise Von
Otterstahl. Our charming
hostess -- Madame Zelman, in
other words.

Michael unsure what to make of all these associations as
they reach Kleber's gate.

MICHAEL
You said something happened?

DR. KLEBER
Ah, the circumstance... Damn, I
can't even say it properly. Too
much of that old liqueur. No,
the circumstance of its closure
was mysterious. There were all
kinds of unpleasant rumours,
but it's not a subject on which
I feel entitled to press Madame
Zelman.
(beat)
She and Oberweis go back a long
way, you know.
(then)
Ah, but Christa...

The old doctor gazes into the night—

DR. KLEBER (CONT.)
 Christa is a lone snowflake on
 the mountain. Complex, strange,
 beautiful.

(gestures)
 Ah, what do I know? Smoking a
 clay pipe, slugging Schnapps.
 Forgetting the sins of my past.

Kleber's eyes watery as he places a hand on Michael's arm:

DR. KLEBER (CONT.)
 ... but something tells me you
 are a great man, Herr Reinhardt.

Kleber lurches toward his front door as a bell CLANKS the
 midnight hour and we—

CUT TO:

MICHAEL ALONE

Making his way back. Enjoying the night air. Until he hears
 footsteps other than his own.

... and from out of the shadows—

THE DARK FIGURE

Disguised by a Homburg and leather coat. Once upon a time it
 would have been the Gestapo, yet as we know we're in 1975.

BACK TO SCENE:

The figure's voice exudes a familiar veneer (though not
 having met him, Michael doesn't know it's that of Oberweis):

DR. OBERWEIS
 Forgive the late hour, Doctor
 Reinhardt, but your latest case
 interests me a great deal.

There's a metallic CLUNK as Oberweis lights a cigarette.

MICHAEL
 Sorry, I don't—?

DR. OBERWEIS
 Your report on Fräulein Zelman
 will not only be considered by
 a psychiatric panel, but also
 by the Society for the Austrian
 Cultural Nation.

Note: The *Gesellschaft* Ilse mentioned and whose offices we saw in Innsbruck.

DR. OBERWEIS (CONT.)

They would advise you recommend institutional confinement.

Michael flabbergasted—

MICHAEL

What you're saying amounts to political interference -- I'm not aware of any such precedent.

DR. OBERWEIS

Not in clinical matters -- I'm afraid, however, that this case cannot be classified as such. No, Fräulein Zelman poses a distinct cultural problem. One the *Gesellschaft* is qualified to address.

His cigarette glows in the loneliness of the late hour.

DR. OBERWEIS (CONT.)

As a matter of fact, we're already revisiting the denazification questionnaires.

MICHAEL

Denazification...?

(then)

How can paperwork from thirty years ago—?

DR. OBERWEIS

The British occupiers relied on local administrators: those with loyalties predating the *Anschluss*. Suffice to say, many Austrians returned to public life with an understanding that their Nazi party involvement had in actual fact been nominal -- Most generous, wouldn't you say?

(beat)

Especially if you consider the SS officers among their number -- Alfred Josef Reinhardt, for instance.

Michael shocked to hear the name of his own father.

Cable-car wires CREAK eerily in the darkness.

DR. OBERWEIS (CONT.)
 Understand that I examine these
 documents by candlelight -- A
 foible that sometimes allows my
 judgement to become clouded by
 sentiment.
 (beat)
 ... by their flammable nature.

Oberweis bows then vanishes into the Tyrolean night.

INT. ZELMAN STAIRCASE -- AFTER MIDNIGHT

Once again Christianne descends... Her nightgown flowing.

Almost ghostly as she reaches the midway landing. Like a
 marionette being drawn by some unseen master.

Suddenly, a disembodied HAND reaches out of the darkness—

Christianne stops dead.

... and for an instant we glimpse Luise Zelman! Her bony
 fingers acting as a restraint.

And off Christianne's glazed expression we—

CUT TO:

INT. CHRISTIANNE'S BEDROOM -- DAY

A PAINTING softened by morning sunlight. One in which:

A white-habited convent girl stands in a flower garden. Her
 luminous beauty at one with the geometric shapes and pastel
 colours of the grass and trees.

Beneath the picture, Christianne sits up in bed.

LUISE ZELMAN
 (comes into shot)
 Your first session with Doctor
 Reinhardt is at ten o'clock.

CHRISTIANNE
 I dreamt about him last night.
 (beat)
 We were on a wooden footbridge.
 The air was damp and I almost
 slipped -- He held my arm, but
 a wolf barred our way.

Luise Zelman has heard numerous tales begin like this and off her unmoved gaze we—

CUT TO:

THE FIRST CONSULTATION

The clock on the bedside table reads just after ten.

Christianne looks up from a BACKGAMMON board. She's still in bed, but now immaculately made-up.

CHRISTIANNE (CONT.)
The Man from the Fatherland
said the magic words -- Heil
Hitler...

Michael draws the curtains. A sliver of sunlight bisects the room.

CHRISTIANNE (CONT.)
... and the wolf let us pass.

Michael sits at the edge of Christianne's bed.

Christianne rattles the backgammon dice around in their cup. Rolls them out across the board.

MICHAEL
How long have you been in this
room, Christianne?

Christianne taps out the move of her white counters.

CHRISTIANNE
I imagined you knew everything
about me? From the file Doctor
Oberweis kept all those years.

MICHAEL
Oh, the file can tell me you're
twenty-nine years old and—

CHRISTIANNE
... that I suffer delusions --
Fatherland fantasies?

MICHAEL
(smiles)
Something like that.

Christianne rattles the dice around again... then stops all of a sudden—

CHRISTIANNE

It's true -- I was born the day
our Führer died.

MICHAEL

Does that fascinate you?

CHRISTIANNE

It used to... back when—

MICHAEL

At the Colonnades?

CHRISTIANNE

I—

(then)

I... don't remember much.

MICHAEL

Nothing at all?

Christianne pulls a handheld MIRROR from beneath her pillow.
Studies her pale reflection...

... then speaks in another voice entirely (a voice that will
recur and be differentiated by *italics*):

CHRISTIANNE

*Oh, go on Christianne. You must
remember something?*

She puts down the mirror. Just as suddenly, her usual voice
returns:

CHRISTIANNE

Only the soft, electrical whirr
of the cable-car.

(beat)

... and Crystal Rain.

Christianne reaches into her bedside drawer and removes a
cigarette from a snap-shut case. Looks around as if she's
lost something.

MICHAEL

Oh, I'm sorry.

Michael produces a silver-plated CIGARETTE LIGHTER. He leans
across. Finds himself close to Christianne.

Their eyes meet as Christianne draws on the cigarette.

CHRISTIANNE

Ooh, that's nice. May I...?

MICHAEL
 Oh, the lighter.
 (hands it to her)
 Actually, I gave up a few years
 ago.

Christianne reads the inscription etched into its base:

CHRISTIANNE
 "All my love, Ilsa."

MICHAEL
 Our tenth wedding anniversary.

Christianne returns the lighter.

CHRISTIANNE
 Why are you here?

Michael pockets the lighter. Takes a moment—

MICHAEL
 I'm not sure.
 (then)
 ... because of the Crystal
 Rain, perhaps.

CHRISTIANNE
 It made me imagine things.

MICHAEL
 What did you imagine?

A breeze moves the curtain.

Sunlight catches Christianne's profile as she looks away.

CHRISTIANNE
 I imagine a strange house. One
 with a marble staircase
 zigzagging all the way down to
 the ocean.
 (beat)
 Orchids arrive there at night
 -- Always thoughtfully
 giftwrapped, with only a
 picture-postcard from
 Montevideo by way of
 explanation. Handwritten by the
 man who might be my husband.

MICHAEL
 You knew this man, didn't you?

CLOSE ON CHRISTIANNE

The face of a woman trying to recall some obscure, painful memory.

CHRISTIANNE

O... ber... weis.

BACK TO SCENE:

Michael fascinated. Like Julia Klein said he would be.

Fascinated, too, by the mannequin which he now studies for a long moment.

CHRISTIANNE

How do you like him?

The waxen figure gleams in the half-light.

MICHAEL

I...

(turns around)

Sorry, I was thinking about something else.

It's now Christianne's turn to be curious.

SEVERAL MINUTES LATER

Michael places a cushion behind Christianne's neck. She's seated in an armchair. Away from that sliver of sunlight.

CHRISTIANNE

You know, there really was a strange house. My godparents still live there.

(brighter)

Sometimes they took me out of school for a few days. We'd go to Innsbruck by train and... I can still remember the blue sky, the sunlight, and how everything looked so wonderful -- We rode on the tram-car and always had lunch at this old tavern where my godparents liked the sentimental music and I liked the warm strudel.

Michael disconcerted by this apparent coincidence.

MICHAEL

Funny, I might know that place.
 (tries to get back
 on track)
 The house...? What was strange
 about their house?

CHRISTIANNE

I'm not sure it really was—

Christianne looks up at her painting of the convent girl.
 Assumes that other voice:

CHRISTIANNE (CONT.)

*Oh, it was strange -- Why else
 would Reverend Sister refer to
 it that way? Christianne is
 going to the Strange House, she
 would say. Surely, you remember
 her slipping index cards inside
 your satchel?*

(then)

*And then, one night you awoke
 to find her by your bedside. It
 was then she said: You must
 rest, now, Christianne. You
 must rest for a very long time.*

Christianne gets up from the armchair.

... and when she speaks again her voice becomes softer; that
 of the real Christianne:

CHRISTIANNE (CONT.)

Next morning I found my case
 packed and a taxi waiting -- It
 took me to the railway station
 at Weissenkirchen and I boarded
 the Oberland Express.

MICHAEL

Where did it take you?

CHRISTIANNE

It took me...

(beat)

... it took me to the Man from
 the Fatherland.

Christianne sits on the bed. Leafs through her scrapbook.
 Her eyes settle upon a blank page.

Michael crosses the room. Opens the curtains.

MICHAEL

That will do for today. Thank you, Christianne. I realise—

CHRISTIANNE

You realise it must be difficult for an enfeebled convalescent?

Christianne gets up from the bed.

CHRISTIANNE (CONT.)

Oh, it's alright. I know you're obliged to look at me that way, but maybe soon you'll see...

She straightens her wig. Moves closer to Michael.

CHRISTIANNE (CONT.)

A woman transformed -- By love, perhaps?

Michael tries to conceal his embarrassment... and is spared by a KNOCK at the door—

Luise Zelman steps into the room. Followed by Julia Klein.

LUISE ZELMAN

I'm sorry to intrude, Doctor Reinhardt, but I'd like you to meet Christianne's occupational therapist—

(off Michael's surprise)

Perhaps you've already met?

Michael and Julia Klein smile at each other.

MICHAEL

... briefly.

Christianne kisses Julia. An almost formal greeting.

CHRISTIANNE

(to Michael)

Julia is also a dear friend.

JULIA KLEIN

You must be looking forward to Saturday, Christianne?

CHRISTIANNE

Saturday—?

(MORE)

CHRISTIANNE (CONT.)
My party!! Why, I'd quite
forgotten.

Her demeanour once again childlike:

CHRISTIANNE (CONT.)
Will you come to my party,
Doctor Reinhardt?

Michael assumes a more playful tone. Indulges his patient.

MICHAEL
Mmm, I may be able to -- On one
condition.
(off the other two
women's curiosity)
... that you come for a walk
with me this afternoon.

CHRISTIANNE
(radiant)
I'll bring my camera!

EXT. LAKESIDE -- DAY

Julia Klein gazes at the lake's sparkling surface. Exhales
into the midday sunshine.

JULIA KLEIN
... Several girls got pregnant
by Oberweis and were placed in
the care of kind families.

MICHAEL
(realises)
Emil—!

JULIA KLEIN
You can see the resemblance.
(then)
Anyway, we finally closed up
the place eight years ago -- I
could have gone to Salzburg, I
suppose, but I felt uneasy for
Christianne.

MICHAEL
Surely, Madame Zelman had her
best interests at heart?

JULIA KLEIN
I'm not always so sure.

MICHAEL
And this Reverend Sister?

JULIA KLEIN
That's an easy one—

Suddenly, Julia notices Luise Zelman coming towards them.
Michael all curiosity as they proceed to meet her halfway.

JULIA KLEIN (CONT.)
(quieter)
She was Commandant at Ternitz --
A women's concentration camp.

The distance between them and Luise Zelman diminishes.

Julia seems to have more to divulge, but with Luise Zelman closing they revert to exchanging mock pleasantries.

INT. ILSA'S OFFICE — DAY

Ilsa smiles into the phone. Charming as ever as she opens her diary.

ILSA
It certainly will be!
(pencils through
symposium lecture)
Yes, I'll look forward to it,
Doctor Oberweis.

Ilsa puts down the phone. Writes in her new appointment:

-- *Christianne Z's Party*

EXT. CHAIR-LIFT — DAY

Michael and Christianne glide above green mountainside.

Christianne wrapped in MINK; a silk headscarf and shades combination rounds off her convalescent chic.

CHRISTIANNE
The houses are like models in a
diorama -- The kind you used to
see at Christmas.
(then)
I wonder if this is how God
feels when he looks down at us?

MICHAEL

Does God know about the Strange
House?

CHRISTIANNE

I'm not sure -- It's hidden by
dark trees.

Suddenly, Christianne points out a TOWER on the horizon.

CHRISTIANNE (CONT.)

Look, Michael! The Hermitage.

(then)

It's where I'll be married to
the Man from the Fatherland.

A sluggish CLANK of cowbells drifts up from the valley.

EXT. ALPINE PATHWAY — LATER

The camera swings around Christianne's neck. She's enjoying
the scenery. Michael walks alongside.

MICHAEL

You didn't address her as
Reverend Mother? Reverend
Sister, I mean—

CHRISTIANNE

The Reverend Mother was unwell
for a long time. She became an
invalid, but continued to live
in the grounds. Like a dowager
empress -- Reverend Sister was
still young herself, but took
over the day-to-day running of
the school.

The trees open to a view of the mountainside. Christianne
stops. Turns to Michael:

CHRISTIANNE (CONT.)

You know, she was
extraordinarily beautiful.

We drift down into the valley behind Christianne... Quiet,
overgrown with vegetation and home to—

AN ITALIANATE BUILDING

Its sandstone discoloured. Windows thick with the dust of
dead insects.

MICHAEL (O.S.)
It looks as if it were hiding
from the world.

BACK TO SCENE:

Christianne looks away.

Michael peers into the valley below.

CHRISTIANNE
It has every reason to.
(shudders)
Please, hold me -- There's a
chill here.

Michael puts his arm around Christianne.

MICHAEL
From where...?

CHRISTIANNE
From the beat of their wings in
the dark.
(then)
Oberweis cultivated moths. He
let them loose at night until
it became impossible to sleep.
Even now I hear them -- That's
why Doctor Kleber prescribed a
sedative.

Tall trees shiver in the breeze.

MICHAEL
We should head back. I promised
your Aunt I wouldn't tire you.

CHRISTIANNE
Oh, I didn't take your picture?

MICHAEL
There's always tomorrow.

Christianne overjoyed.

I/E. ZELMAN HOUSE — LATE AFTERNOON

Luise Zelman stands at an open window. She's peering through
a pair of opera glasses towards—

EXT. THE LAKE — SAME TIME

The unkempt WOLFGANG HEMMEL (27) drags on a cigarette. His leather jacket and shoulder-length hair somewhat slept-in.

Knows he's being watched as he retreads a grassy route lined with cigarette ends. Patiently awaiting—

MICHAEL AND CHRISTIANNE

Returning from their walk. All smiles.

CHRISTIANNE
(notices someone walking
towards them)
I've seen him before.

Michael touches Christianne's arm. A little wary.

MICHAEL
I'll see what he wants.

CHRISTIANNE
Don't be long, Michael—

SEVERAL MINUTES LATER

Michael and Hemmel on the far side of the lake. Beneath a gathering dusk.

HEMMEL
You had the pleasure of meeting
Doctor Oberweis.
(beat)
The *Gesellschaft* use him and he
uses you -- In both instances
Fräulein Zelman is the means to
an end.

MICHAEL
I don't understand?

HEMMEL
The Society for the Austrian
Cultural Nation have positioned
themselves as an antifascist
organisation -- Dedicated to
the exposure of lingering Nazi
elements within our society.

MICHAEL
What does any of this have to do
with Christianne?

HEMMEL

Emerging political groups crave
their moment in the sun. The
ravings of a convalescent serve
as well as anything.

MICHAEL

And you? What do you want?

Hemmel takes a cigarette from his crumpled packet. Lights-up
with all the deft movements of a seasoned chain-smoker.

HEMMEL

Documents that prove the
existence of a wartime project.
(beat)
One involving human experiments
at the institute.

MICHAEL

Oberweis—!?

HEMMEL

Zelman and Oberweis.

Hemmel smiles for the first time. Exhales a thick cloud of
cigarette smoke.

HEMMEL (CONT.)

Konradin Zelman was a eugenics
specialist tasked by the Führer
with accelerating progress
across the Austrian settlement
-- A project known as *Die Himmel
Kinder*.

A light glows from Luise Zelman's house across the lake.

MICHAEL

What happened to him...?

HEMMEL (CONT.)

After the war he and Oberweis
were courted by the Americans
and worked on covert projects
-- Oh, things like bacterial
warfare in Korea alongside
former members of Unit 731 --
(then)
Zelman's a U.S. citizen by now,
but Oberweis came back around
53 or 54; although, unlike his
colleague, he's never forgotten
Die Himmel Kinder.

MICHAEL
And you think the documentation
still exists?

HEMMEL
In a secret house, perhaps --
Such as that one.

Hemmel's yellowed fingertips motion beyond the dusky lake to the house of Madame Zelman.

INT. MICHAEL'S BEDROOM [ZELMAN HOUSE] -- MIDNIGHT

Michael asleep at his desk. A pen and notebook lined with scrawled handwriting nearby:

MICHAEL (V.O.)
I've met two Christiannes.

INT. CHRISTIANNE'S BEDROOM -- SAME TIME

As Michael's report unfolds we'll linger upon the trappings of Christianne's convalescence: her portable television; the mysterious painting; the mannequin...

MICHAEL (V.O. CONT.)
One is the convalescent I'm
here to assess: a woman whose
whole existence seems bound to
the institute in which she was
once confined. The second a
kind of shadow persona -- Pure
conscience, if you will.

Christianne's bed empty; the sheets pushed to one side.

MICHAEL (V.O. CONT.)
It is this second Christianne
who remembers the omnipresence
of Doctor Rupert Oberweis --
Who will remember whatever took
place inside that institute.

A net curtain billows at the open window.

INT. MICHAEL'S BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Something has woken Michael. He moves quietly to the door, prises it open and spies—

CHRISTIANNE

At the top of the staircase. Wearing only her nightdress.
She descends... Her tread soft, assured.

INT. CORRIDOR / STAIRCASE – MOMENTS LATER

Michael observes from a distance.

Christianne reaches the midway landing. Unwavering...

Michael leans over the railing. Peers down into—

THE LOUNGE

Like a department store after hours. One where Christianne glides between its shadows...

... in and out of view.

Suddenly, LAMPLIGHT pins Christianne to the spot—

Michael steps back from the railing—

Luise Zelman withdraws a syringe from Christianne's arm.

Christianne flops down onto the sofa... allowing something metallic to jangle just out of her reach.

Luise Zelman confiscates a circular band of KEYS.

Returns them to her bureau.

... as the tranquilizer hits Christianne—

CHRISTIANNE

Baby, baby blue. Only blue eyes
mattered. They had to be blue
-- Cerulean. Like summertime on
Gross Glockner.

(delirious)

... as if eyes could be
specially manufactured -- Made
perfect. Like the Crystal Rain.

Christianne's head lilts on one side. Her mind swimming:

CHRISTIANNE (CONT.)

(impersonating)

If they could all be like you,
Christa. My little girl on the
mountain -- My Ave Maria.

Christianne's eyelids close and we...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ALPINE PATHWAY — DAY

Michael and Christianne retrace their steps.

Michael stops, turns to Christianne and reaches out so that his hand hovers before her—

MICHAEL

May I...?

Christianne pensive, but after a moment allows Michael to remove her dark glasses.

CHRISTIANNE

I don't understand—?

Michael slips them into his top pocket. Quiets Christianne by bringing an index finger to his lips.

Unties her headscarf. Folds it longways several times.

... and placing it over Christianne's eyes, he steps behind her and secures it with a knot.

The headscarf has become a BLINDFOLD.

MICHAEL

Please, take my hand. There are steps.

Michael holds out his hand.

CHRISTIANNE

Yes, I remember.

Christianne reaches for Michael's hand as we—

CUT TO:

A FLIGHT OF STEPS

Christianne's free hand glides over the wooden rail. Cracked flagstones beneath her feet as they approach—

AN OVERGROWN PATHWAY

Shadowed by a high wall rampant with ivy.

CHRISTIANNE

It's darker here.

MICHAEL
... but you know the way.

CHRISTIANNE
Yes.

Christianne walks ahead—

And stops before an iron gate. Padlocked like an Edwardian secret garden.

Michael removes a familiar band of keys from his pocket. Tries one rusted with age.

The padlock CLUNKS and this time we—

CUT TO:

WOLFGANG HEMMEL

Surveying the pathway below as he lights another cigarette.

EXT. THE COLONNADES — DAY

A breeze swishes through the tall trees. Swishes the silk of Christianne's blindfold.

An atmosphere of unearthly quiet.

Michael stands by a stone fountain. Its dry basin streaked with age and rain.

CHRISTIANNE
He said it would be peaceful.

MICHAEL
Oberweis...?

CHRISTIANNE
No -- The Count Friedrich Von Otterstahl.
(then)
The Count was a fencing master and had the academy built in a Catholic style -- The most promising young men of the age came here. They competed in the great tournaments: Heidelberg, Carlsbad—
(wrapping arms around herself)
There's that chill again...

Christianne turns. And like a somnambulist walks toward—
The Italianate building. Dilapidated and bleached green by
decades of alpine rainfall.

INT. ITALIANATE BUILDING — MINUTES LATER

Michael stands behind Christianne. Unties her blindfold—

CHRISTIANNE
I'm not afraid any more.

The blindfold falls from her eyes... and all at once she
assimilates:

- The drone of bluebottles.
- An overturned file cabinet.
- Empty drawers disgorged across the stone floor.
- A terrarium opaque with dust.
- The clouded skylight.
- And the tattered brown leather of a RECLINER.

CHRISTIANNE (CONT.)
... there's nothing here.

Suddenly, Michael is distracted by—

A PRIVATE OFFICE

Michael stares at the desk with its lone typewriter. Insect
corpses between the keys.

He opens a drawer. Finds a mold-spotted pamphlet entitled
The Cultivation of Equatorial Orchids.

CHRISTIANNE (O.S.)
Please—! No!

Michael slams the drawer shut. Dashes back to—

THE MAIN LABORATORY

Christianne stares at the recliner. Apprehensive.

CHRISTIANNE
(other voice)
*You must remember! Here, of all
places!*

Christianne looks up at Michael:

CHRISTIANNE

I remember -- He talked about
it all the time.

Christianne begins to walk in a circle around Michael.

CHRISTIANNE (CONT.)

About its powder and liquid
properties; its texture and
volatility -- *If only Konrad
could see these results*, he'd
say. You see, he likened the
Crystal Rain to a man-made
element -- He was convinced it
would secure his professional
reputation.

(then)

It frightened me; yet I can't
pretend I wasn't fascinated.

Michael also fascinated: by Christianne's story; by her
encircling movement.

CHRISTIANNE (CONT.)

One day he admitted to his own
addiction. *A hazard of my
research*, he claimed. Then his
sight deteriorated and he took
to wearing those spectacles.

(then)

You know, he really did cheat
God -- If only Konrad could
have seen the transformation.
Seen the deep blue of his eyes!

(impersonating

Oberweis)

For *Die Himmel Kinder* and the
New Fatherland I am capable of
anything.

(then)

That's what he said. That's why
he could love me and do what he
did at the same time.

Christianne perches on the edge of the recliner.

MICHAEL

(hesitates)

What did he do?

Christianne strokes her fingers back and forth across the
recliner's cracked leather.

CHRISTIANNE

Go on Christianne. Tell Doctor Reinhardt all about the fluorescent overhead, the leather straps, the hypodermic.

Christianne lies down. Keeps time with her story.

Looks up at the rectangular panels of clouded Perspex.

CHRISTIANNE (CONT.)

You did not object -- Why would you? Julia wouldn't let him increase the concentrate. And you trusted Julia because you knew that she was in love with you.

(laughs)

Ah, they loved Christianne. Either loved her or pitied her.

(all of a sudden)

I think the doctor dare not ask what happened once the sedative took effect.

(playful)

Maybe we should tell him...?

(beat)

Maybe we should tell him your mind dissolved like a kaleidoscope as you became receptive to the Crystal Rain -- Receptive to the love of a man who housed you like a rare insect or one of his hothouse orchids.

Her fingers indicate one of the terrariums.

CHRISTIANNE (CONT.)

Your Man from the Fatherland!

Michael suspended in a state of horror and fascination. Like Montgomery Clift in *Suddenly, Last Summer*.

CHRISTIANNE (CONT.)

Ah, but Christianne, we mustn't let Doctor Reinhardt think you were anaesthetized in the traditional sense -- Quite the opposite, in fact. You remained hyperconscious -- Hyperconscious of your fingers brushing against Julia's as you

(MORE)

CHRISTIANNE (CONT.)
*helped tie your own bandages in
 a configuration you knew by
 heart -- It came easily because
 you were the audience whenever
 he spoke about these things; as
 though he were giving a lecture
 on moths or orchids.*

Christianne stares up at Michael. Her usual voice returns:

CHRISTIANNE (CONT.)
 It's true. I was hyperconscious
 -- Of his blue eyes above me;
 of tree branches brushing the
 skylight; of pale white cloud
 that recalled the misty garden
 with its fountain and damp
 flagstones where later he would
 join me to drink black tea with
 lemon and talk as if nothing
 had happened -- About the new
 matinée he'd take me to see or
 how his clothes came by way of
 an old gentleman in Bavaria.

The abandoned laboratory utterly quiet.

CHRISTIANNE (CONT.)
*You see, Christianne -- You did
 remember.*
 (then)
 Yes, we were lovers.
 Convalescing from the world.

Christianne sits up. She's remembered something else:

CHRISTIANNE (CONT.)
 The students were divided into
 two houses: Saint Bernadine and
 L'Ave Maria.
 (realising)
 Michael—!

Christianne points to the Catholic symbols that decorate a
 wooden SHIELD high up on one wall.

... then grips Michael's arm—

CHRISTIANNE (CONT.)
 ... they're still here!!

EXT. THE COLONNADES — DAY

Hemmel makes his way past the fountain...

... tries the front door to no avail, steps back and follows the perimeter of the vine-clad building.

EXT. WALLED GARDEN — DAY

Untended. Beautiful in the rain now starting to fall.

Its aged door opening for the first time in years, perhaps.

INT. CLOAKROOM — DAY

A mechanical hum fills the void above the abandoned benches and coat-racks.

Another shield hangs at an angle; allowing Michael's fingers to manipulate a secret dial.

Eyes wide with disbelief...

... as a PARTITION WALL divides!

Candlelight glows from the darkness beyond this partition.

Christianne steps forward—

EXT. WALLED GARDEN — DAY

Hemmel climbs a flight of stone steps and vanishes into the gloom of a porchway.

INT. MAUSOLEUM — BY CANDLELIGHT

Michael and Christianne tread softly in this secret place.

Michael dips a finger into one of several porcelain BOWLS. Puts it to his tongue:

MICHAEL
Some kind of liquid opiate.
(to himself)
Reminds me of camphor.

CHRISTIANNE
The Crystal Rain.
(then)
It came from the fountain.

Christianne stands before thick velvet CURTAINS. A sash-cord hangs on one side.

Christianne fixated on the sash-cord...

... and as her pale hand reaches for the cord it's as though she were already SCREAMING as we—

CUT TO:

THREE CONVENT-GIRLS

Gazing spookily at us. Like waxworks in a medieval tableau.

They are in fact CADAVERS! Preserved in upright positions.

No older than nineteen or twenty; their features as pale as their linen habits.

BACK TO SCENE:

Christianne clings to Michael. Her sobs somehow restful.

CHRISTIANNE

I was told they were in the care
of kind families.

MICHAEL

You mean these were the girls
that became pregnant?

CHRISTIANNE

Yes, but how did you know?

MICHAEL

Julia mentioned them.

CHRISTIANNE

They couldn't go back to the
convent school.

(then)

That was ten years ago.

Christianne lets go of Michael. Places her hand on the blonde girl's now slimline waist.

CHRISTIANNE

Alice? What happened to you?

Michael stares at the girl's blue eyes. At the fathomless blue eyes of all three girls.

MICHAEL
 (to himself)
 Just like Emil.

Christianne looks sadly at Michael. Things are falling into place.

Suddenly, Michael hears FOOTSTEPS... There's someone in the cloakroom!

WOLFGANG HEMMEL

Fumbles for a cigarette. His leather jacket glistening with rain.

BACK TO SCENE:

Christianne gasps!

Michael holds up his hand: a reminder that Hemmel shouldn't smoke in this oddly sacred place.

Hemmel maintains the unlit cigarette between his lips as all the while he stares at the pale waxworks.

HEMMEL
 Tell me about Project *Die Himmel*
Kinder, Fräulein Zelman.

Christianne turns to her lost friends before we—

CUT TO:

EXT. CHAIR-LIFT MONTAGE — DAY / MAGIC HOUR

Springtime in full bloom on the grassy mountainside.

Michael stands beside the chair-lift. Offers a good-natured protest against something or other.

MICHAEL (V.O.)
 After the trauma of finding her
 schoolfriends in that
 mausoleum, I tried to make
 things easier for Christianne.

Christianne laughs as she aims her camera at Michael.

MICHAEL (V.O. CONT.)
 Sure enough that other persona
 receded.

Christianne points out her house by the lake. It glows with late sunshine.

MICHAEL (V.O. CONT.)
Clearly, this other Christianne
appears at moments of stress or
indecision. Usually relating in
some way to her own memories.

Michael puts his arm around Christianne as they glide into
the valley.

MICHAEL (V.O. CONT.)
And yet, my own equilibrium had
been disturbed -- Not only by
the mausoleum and these strange
children of the Tyrol, but also
by the real Christianne.

Christianne rests her head against Michael's tweed jacket.
As if they were already in love.

Accompanied by the opening bars of a POP RECORD...

INT. CHRISTIANNE'S BEDROOM -- DAY

... a teary-eyed ballad from the other side of the Dolomites
spins at 45 rpm.

Christianne sits in an armchair. Her chestnut wig shimmering
with sunshine.

The song reaches its light-orchestral crescendo...

... and we see that Christianne is gazing at a POLAROID of
Michael standing by the chair-lift.

HOURS LATER

Christianne unmoved. Silhouetted by dwindling light.

Still transfixed by the Polaroid.

... as the record spins: its chanteuse once again recounting
her tale of heartbreak.

INT. ZELMAN STAIRCASE / LOUNGE -- NIGHT

Emil climbs the stairs. The glass of milk and tea-tray in
perfect balance. His usual routine.

Luise Zelman's gaze follows him with all the detachment of
an anthropologist. A thin cigar between her long fingers.

LUISE ZELMAN
 I don't know why that damned
 journalist spies on me?
 (turns to Michael)
 There's nothing here -- A few
 old keepsakes, maybe.

She stubs out the cigar—

INT. SITTING-ROOM — DAY

Michael surveys an immaculate, sparsely furnished room.
Rarely visited by anyone, it seems.

Luisse Zelman sifts through a drawer.

LUISE ZELMAN (CONT.)
 Ah, the Magdalena... Konrad and
 I spent our honeymoon there.

She turns. Shows Michael a PHOTO of an ivy-clad pension.

LUISE ZELMAN (CONT.)
 We used to take our coffee on
 the balcony.
 (then)
 Konrad told me of his audience
 with the Führer. Not that they
 discussed the War. No, he said
 that Adolf wished to speak of
 quiet things. Like the softness
 of rain in Linz.

MICHAEL
 I suppose there are things in
 private life, things about
 ourselves of which we should not
 be ashamed. No matter how much
 society tells us otherwise.

LUISE ZELMAN
 Although you disapprove of what
 you perceive as my indifference
 to Christianne.
 (brushes Michael off
 before he can deny
 the charge)
 In a way, you would be correct
 -- I never pretended to be her
 mother; although I do feel
 responsible for Christianne
 being that her real mother died
 at the institute.

MICHAEL

You mean to say Christianne was
born there?

Luise Zelman closes her eyes for a long moment.

Michael takes the gesture as an affirmative. Quietly adds it
to Hemmel's "human experiment" revelation.

EXT. PLAYPARK — NIGHT

Two silhouettes revolve in steady, counterclockwise motion.
Cigarette smoke hangs between them.

MICHAEL

Surely, the authorities would
have to investigate?

(mimics news report)

DOCTOR DEATH AND HIS DOLLS OF
WAX!

Lit by the glow of Hemmel's cigarette, Michael drinks from a
bottle of Pilsner then offers it to the journalist.

HEMMEL

Oberweis will evapourate like
rain in the southern hemisphere
if he feels threatened.

We realise they're leaning against the bars of a ROUNDABOUT.

MICHAEL

Then there's the secret house
you mentioned -- I'm just not
sure it's Madame Zelman's.

(then)

Christianne talked about some
strange old couple—

HEMMEL

This whole region is populated
by strange old couples!

Hemmel takes a swig of Pilsner.

HEMMEL (CONT.)

And guess what?

(whispers, off Michael
leaning forward)

They've all kept Uncle Adolf's
diary in their linen cupboard.

MICHAEL

(laughs)

You're right -- It's probably nothing.

HEMMEL

Look, I owe you one -- I'd been chasing this for years before you showed up... and Jesus, that mausoleum was something to see alright; but it doesn't bring us closer to proving the existence of *Die Himmel Kinder*.

(sighs)

Ah, there's probably a medieval covenant as to the preservation of virgins in wax.

Hemmel offers Michael more Pilsner.

Michael signals *I've had enough*.

Hemmel drains the bottle. Places it on the roundabout.

MICHAEL

Where does that leave us, then?

HEMMEL

With our shadow-players -- Our oh-so-silent partners.

(then)

With someone from a second group who eluded denazification -- Medical professionals being the first, of course.

The cable-car CREAKS above the trees lining one side of the play area.

MICHAEL

(gets there)

Religious orders!

Hemmel mocks firing a pistol; complete with sound effect.

HEMMEL

I've decided to pay our beloved Reverend Sister a visit -- Confession is overdue, shall we say.

Hemmel pats Michael's arm. Something like friendship has emerged between these two.

HEMMEL (CONT.)
I'll keep in touch.

MICHAEL
Please do -- Oh, Wolfgang...
(off Hemmel)
... be careful.

HEMMEL
Don't worry, Michael.

Hemmel's footsteps recede. The gate CLANKS—

INT. ZELMAN HOUSE — DAY

Christianne stands by her bedroom door. Her smile a thing of fascination.

CHRISTIANNE
Oh Michael, would you mind?

Christianne indicates her unzipped dress. Knowing Michael will step into—

THE BEDROOM

Where he will fall under her spell.

... trying all the while not to notice her pale flesh as he pulls the zipper up to her shoulder blades.

CHRISTIANNE
I have the feeling that today
will be wonderful.

She tilts her head closer to him. Her eyes glistening.

INT. PRIVATE OFFICE — DAY

The armchair, chipped reference volumes and spiral notebooks could be those of a headmistress. We're inside the domain of REVEREND SISTER (56).

She speaks into the telephone. Her voice made mysterious by her white habit and gauzy veil:

REVEREND SISTER
You are an angel in the dark,
Christianne.

Cigarette smoke drifts upwards from an ash tray on the desk.

REVEREND SISTER (CONT.)
 The Crystal Rain made you that
 way.

A pale, doe-eyed ASSISTANT (40s) enters almost unnoticed.
 She's holding a sandalwood BOX tied with silk ribbon.

Reverend Sister glances at the doorway.

The Assistant resembles a malnourished orphan — as if all of
 her strength were needed to hold that package.

REVEREND SISTER
 (into phone)
 One moment, Christianne.

ASSISTANT
 I'm sorry, Reverend Sister—

The Assistant smiles. An awkward smile...

REVEREND SISTER
 That's quite alright.

ASSISTANT
 The old man from the village...
 (beat)
 ... he said to bring it to you
 right away.

Reverend Sister indicates that she would like the package on
 her desk.

The Assistant obliges... then finds Reverend Sister all of a
 sudden beside her.

There's a frisson between these two: deference and adoration
 in equal measure.

Reverend Sister kisses the Assistant's forehead.

REVEREND SISTER
 Thank you, Esther.

The Assistant makes for the door. Returns a sly glance as
 she closes it quietly behind her.

Reverend Sister has picked up the phone again. She's also
 undoing the silk ribbon with her other hand.

REVEREND SISTER
 That was Esther -- She's still
 with me.

(MORE)

REVEREND SISTER (CONT.)

I'm sorry I can't be with you
today, Christianne, but I will
see you very soon.

She nestles the receiver against one shoulder. Lifts the
sandalwood lid—

REVEREND SISTER (CONT.)

In the meantime, I'd like you
to revisit the Ternitz Diary.

Reverend Sister returns the phone to its cradle. Removes a
layer of greaseproof paper from inside the box...

... and admires the polished metal of a WWII-era LUGER.

INT. TRAIN CARRIAGE — DAY

Alpine scenery rattles by the open window.

Oberweis peers over a newspaper. His hair glistens with the
finest pomade.

Ilsa, also immaculately turned out for the occasion, smiles
back at him.

ILSA

Anything interesting?

Oberweis sighs as he folds the paper and tosses it onto the
vacant seat beside his own.

DR. OBERWEIS

The Foreign Minister thinks
there'll be a Communist
Portugal inside six months.

Oberweis looks out of the window. His thick spectacles glint
in the sunshine.

DR. OBERWEIS (CONT.)

Maybe my time would be better
spent writing a novel -- One
that enshrines the idyllic
beauty of the Tyrol. Of course,
it's a stretch to describe such
an idea as fiction. No, it
would be a romantic treatise
aspiring to the tranquility of
an oil by Friedrich, the
transparency of an essay by
Rilke or the clarity of Mozart.

Oberweis laughs quietly. It's meant to be self-deprecating.

DR. OBERWEIS (CONT.)
Literary delusions aside, the
idea reinforces my belief that
the Tyrol should reside among
the old kingdoms of Southern
Germany.

His gaze finds its way back to Ilsa, who now reclines in her
first-class seat.

DR. OBERWEIS (CONT.)
A case like Fräulein Zelman's
can easily impress such notions
upon the public imagination.

Oberweis approximates a smile as the rattle of the narrow-
gauge railway fades into...

EMIL (PRE-LAP)
She said we must think of him
as our father.

EXT. ZELMAN GARDEN — DAY

Emil balances an old WHEELBARROW filled with dry brambles.
It seems Michael's been asking about Oberweis:

MICHAEL
Has he ever mentioned your
mother?

EMIL
I... I can't remember.
(then)
Excuse me, Herr Reinhardt, but
Aunt Luise said I was to finish
before the guests arrive.

Emil pushes the wheelbarrow towards a TRELLIS entwined with
Wisteria.

His receding figure oddly nostalgic as we...

DISSOLVE TO:

CHRISTIANNE'S PARTY

The lawn a riot of CHILDREN, paper hats and balloons.

Michael enchanted by this unfamiliar world.

Christianne glides barefoot over the lawn. Among the shouts and laughter.

Once again she's wearing a BLINDFOLD, but here it's the closeness of mock-terrified children she senses.

THE CHILDREN
Aunt Christa! Aunt Christa!

... because she's playing *blindman's buff*.

A LITTLE GIRL wearing her best dress comes up to Michael. Pulls him into the cluster of children around Christianne.

Christianne laughs. She's having a nice time...

... and almost catches one of the children. Causing them to scatter everywhichway!

Their SHRIEKS and SCREAMS fade.

Leaving only Michael and Christianne. Her fingertips resting on his shoulder.

CHRISTIANNE
(quietly)
Michael...

Michael entwines his fingers around Christianne's. Guided by a hitherto concealed sensuality.

Christianne removes her blindfold...

... and for one moment we imagine her leaning forward to kiss Michael.

The children SCREAM with delight—

THE CHILDREN
Aunt Christa's captured Herr
Michael...!!

I/E. CABLE-CAR — DAY

The Old Attendant slides open the door. Bows lightly as Ilse steps out onto the platform.

DR. OBERWEIS
(comes into shot)
Good Day, Johann -- Keeping
well, I trust?

OLD ATTENDANT
(incredulous)
Herr -- Herr Oberweis!

He makes a gesture of complete and utter deference.

DR. OBERWEIS
Would you be so good as to find
someone who can drive Fräü
Reinhardt and myself to Madame
Zelman's.

OLD ATTENDANT
Yes, Herr Oberweis -- It will
be my pleasure, Herr Oberweis.

The Old Attendant scuttles away.

INT. CONSERVATORY -- DAY

Sunshine sets off the vacuumed rattan and silver cake-stand
-- as well as a strudel made especially for the occasion.

Luise Zelman pours tea for Doctor Kleber's imposing, fur-
clad WIFE (60s).

FRAIL VOICE (O.S.)
The Führer's death was cause
for sadness, but soon we were
happy again.

The frail voice belongs to FRÄU LIESING (70s).

FRÄU LIESING (CONT.)
Christa was surely a gift from
God.

She's sat between the Klebers and her husband, HERR LIESING
(70s). They make for a nice, middlebrow old couple.

All of this group are looking—

THROUGH THE CONSERVATORY WINDOW

Christianne has rejoined Michael. We'll watch them along
with the old friends here inside the conservatory (whose
conversation we continue to eavesdrop):

HERR LIESING (O.S.)
She is like the precious glass
made by an ancient factory. Too
pure for this world.

Christianne exaggerates something for another LITTLE GIRL who's come up to her.

FRÄU LIESING (O.S.)
It's wonderful to see her
outside again.

Happy with Christianne's reply, the girl dashes back to her friends.

HERR LIESING (O.S.)
Thirty years does not feel such
a long time. For us Christa is
still a child.

Michael walks beside Christianne: their exchanges becoming more intimate.

BACK TO SCENE:

Luise Zelman appears by the window.

LUISE ZELMAN
Christa is in love.

EXT. GARDEN — DAY

Several BOYS hurl themselves across the grass. Re-enacting spectacular Wehrmacht deaths.

Suddenly, amid the RAT-A-TAT of pretend machine-guns, Emil executes a perfect Nazi salute—

EMIL
Heil Hitler!

His blue eyes sparkle in the sunshine.

EXT. NEAR CABLE-CAR STATION — DAY

Oberweis raises a pair of BINOCULARS up to his pebble-glass spectacles. It's an almost comical sight.

Ilsa slinks into the frame, touches his arm and indicates a waiting taxi.

DR. OBERWEIS
One moment, my dear.

Oberweis hands Ilsa the binoculars. Sets the strap around her neck. Holds them up in the direction he wishes her to look—

BINOCULAR P.O.V.

The Italianate building fills the viewfinder. An overgrown city awaiting rediscovery.

Suddenly, we become aware of TWO FIGURES already down there — studying what could be a blueprint. One of them points at something or other.

BACK TO SCENE:

Ilsa lowers the binoculars. Returns them to Oberweis.

ILSA

You've secured funding, I see?

DR. OBERWEIS

One would hope so...

(unusually modest)

... although I might add that like the balance on my cheque to your Traumklinik, it relies upon certain conditions being met.

ILSA

Something tells me they involve Fräulein Zelman?

Oberweis approximates that smile for a second time—

EXT. ZELMAN GARDEN — DAY

A balloon bobs up and down in the quiet sunshine.

Christianne nudges up against Michael. Smiles at something. ... Something drawing them to the Wisteria-covered trellis.

I/E. TAXI — DAY

Ilsa and Oberweis seated like dignitaries as the lake comes into view.

EXT. TRELLIS [ZELMAN GARDEN] — DAY

Framed by wisteria and the drift of warm balloons, Michael and Christianne KISS!!

Observed by a new arrival: None other than Reverend Sister's Assistant, Esther Liebermann.

Her frail figure accentuated by a black party dress.

ELSEWHERE IN THE GARDEN

Ilsa gives the children her best smile.

ILSA
Now, have any of you seen
Doctor Reinhardt?

Emil points toward—

THE TRELLIS

Michael pulls away from Christianne. His embarrassment both personal and professional.

MICHAEL
I'm sorry.

CHRISTIANNE
Don't be, Michael. I've been in
love with you ever since—
(suddenly)
Someone's coming!

Michael looks around. Cannot believe his eyes—

Ilsa walks toward them.

ILSA
Happy birthday, Fräulein
Zelman! Such a lovely party.

Christianne and Michael unable to speak. Wondering if they were seen a few moments ago.

ILSA (CONT.)
Oh, your Aunt was asking after
you. Some new guests have just
arrived.

CHRISTIANNE
(to Michael)
I should welcome them—

Christianne hurries away.

Ilsa smiles at Michael. Pleased with herself.

MICHAEL
Ilsa, I thought you were...?

ILSA
At the symposium? I left early
-- Oh, it was the usual crowd.

Ilsa keeps one eye on Christianne as she crosses the lawn.
The other on the path taken by Oberweis.

ILSA (CONT.)
Besides, Doctor Oberweis said
I'd be welcome.

Michael follows Ilsa's eyeline to a man wearing pebble-glass
spectacles.

MICHAEL
So that's our eminent client.
(sighs)
One of Austria's finest postwar
contradictions.

They watch Oberweis engage Christianne in conversation.

ILSA
Culture emerges from the most
unlikely places. Not so long
ago your fatherland brought
fascism to Austria -- Who's to
say they won't do so again?

MICHAEL
Meaning we sell our souls to
anyone who throws around words
like *kulturnation*?

ILSA
The *Gesellschaft* will make an
example of Christianne
regardless of my involvement.

Suddenly, Christianne dashes away from Oberweis. Obviously
upset.

Michael makes to go after her, but Ilsa intervenes.

ILSA
I'll go—

Ilsa threads her way across the lawn. Moving deftly between
the boisterous children.

INT. CHRISTIANNE'S BEDROOM — DAY

Christianne sits on her bed. Focused only on the scissors as
she cuts out a picture from some glossy magazine.

The door opens—

Christianne oblivious to Ilsa stealing softly upon her...
Like a vampire.

ILSA

I used to make all kinds of
scrapbooks.

Christianne does not look up. Instead, she places her new
picture on a fresh page. Tries a few arrangements out for
size.

ILSA (CONT.)

Even during the Eichmann trial
-- I was twenty-one by then,
but we college girls adored him
as if he were Elvis Presley.

(re: the bed)

May I...?

Christianne still intent upon her picture.

Ilsa sits down beside her.

ILSA

I haven't introduced myself.

CHRISTIANNE

I know who you are.

Ilsa smiles. Shifts her attention to the image occupying
Christianne: one in which a young housewife is struck by
some nameless terror.

ILSA

Ah, Margit Carstensen!

(looks closely
at Christianne)

You're very much like her. I've
known you only these few
moments, but I sense it all the
same -- Like the heartbeat of a
tiny bird in winter.

Christianne flips through her scrapbook.

The Polaroid of Michael comes loose—

Ilsa picks up the Polaroid. Studies it closely. Looks again
at the scissored image.

ILSA (CONT.)

Of course! You must place them
alongside one another.

Christianne meets Ilsa's gaze for the first time.

CHRISTIANNE
You don't mind?

Ilsa hands the Polaroid back to Christianne. Smiles—

ILSA
Not at all.

Ilsa strokes Christianne's hair. Like she did with Michael.

EXT. GARDEN — DAY

Michael sips the sparkly drink Julia Klein has brought over. She's resumed an earlier conversation:

JULIA KLEIN
They say the prisoners were in awe of her beauty; that despite their painful circumstance they believed she was Greta Garbo.
(beat)
She vanished into a religious order before the Soviet advance -- Later, she entered the convent school at Dürnstein. As a matter of fact, she and Christianne are not unlike each other -- You see you're falling in love with Christianne not only because she's fascinating, but—
(off Michael's curiosity)
... because it's impossible not to.

MICHAEL
Forgive my asking, but—
(unsure how to phrase this)
Why did you let Oberweis do what he did to Christianne?

Julia looks over at the cheerful party going on around them. One comprising the very old and the very young.

JULIA KLEIN
You mean the Crystal Rain?
(sighs)
(MORE)

JULIA KLEIN (CONT.)

I thought you'd get around to that sooner or later. Oh, it's alright, how can I claim to be Christianne's friend when—

(then)

If I told you that I was just out of school; that it was my first position then you mustn't accept such an explanation. No, the good doctor was treating the woman he loved -- They were to be married. Christianne even had the dress picked out -- I couldn't see it any other way.

MICHAEL

Despite the predicament of the other three girls?

JULIA KLEIN

Christianne accepted everything -- She was enchanted by him. His breakdown had little effect -- They would have gone ahead with the marriage if Madame Zelman had not said otherwise.

MICHAEL

What happened?

JULIA KLEIN

Oberweis entered a sanitarium -- Some alpine retreat with a fancy withdrawal program. He's clean now, but it also cleaned him out of Swiss francs. As for Christianne, well it was around then she became a convalescent.

(then)

You know, I've still got that dress. Christianne asked me to keep it for her... So it just hangs in my wardrobe -- She still mentions it now and then.

Suddenly, they both notice Ilse alongside—

CHRISTIANNE

Centre-stage once again and happy to see the childlike woman smiling back at her.

Happy to embrace this woman.... and to rest her head on that skeletal shoulder.

JULIA KLEIN (O.S.)
 My God, that must be Esther
 Liebermann.

INT. BEDROOM — NIGHT

A feebly-lit room stuffed with TEDDY BEARS. Overwhelmed by glassy eyes and fur of every vintage.

Concealed among them, the Sepia Man smiles at his LANDLADY:

SEPIA MAN
 Thank you Fräü Mistel. I'll be
 right down—

INT. HALLWAY — MOMENTS LATER

The Sepia Man speaks into the telephone:

SEPIA MAN
 It's obvious, Herr Michael --
 Send her to this strange house.
 (then)
 You know, we find such places
 maybe once in a lifetime. It is
 our duty to investigate them.

His eyes twinkle in the gloomy lamplight. Not unlike those of his teddy bears.

EXT. CHAIR-LIFT — DAWN

A beacon begins to fade somewhere on the mountain.

Inanimate machinery WHIRRS to life. Metallic seats ghostly in the early light as they—

Descend...

Slowly...

... from altitude.

Their lone OCCUPANT a way off. Slumped awkwardly behind the safety bar. Asleep, perhaps?

We'll find out as soon as we—

ZOOM TO:

THE CORPSE OF WOLFGANG HEMMEL

Gliding down the quiet mountainside. Eyes wide, glassy.

His leather jacket little protection against a bullet that probably came from close quarters.

His smoker's pallor greyed by the thinner air. By death.

EXT. ZELMAN HOUSE — DAY

Christianne visible behind an upper-floor window.

Michael walks toward the house—

MICHAEL (V.O.)

I stayed on a few days at the home of Madame Zelman; during which time I told the authorities what little I knew of Wolfgang Hemmel: that he was researching the Tyrol's wartime role; that he planned to interview a woman whose image I'd seen only in a painting.

(then)

I also decided to take Otto's advice.

Two OFFICIALS wearing black cloaks and military-style caps head towards an SUV by the lake. An Alsatian trots ahead of them.

MICHAEL (V.O. CONT.)

... to protect Christianne from those imbuing her convalescence with cultural significance.

Suddenly, one of the officials turns around and looks up at Christianne for a long moment.

Christianne moves away from the window.

EXT. LAKESIDE — DAY

Michael carries a suitcase towards a waiting TAXI.

MICHAEL (V.O. CONT.)

She would stay with the Liesings until such time as her case ceased to excite interest.

Christianne sits in the back of the taxi with Julia Klein.

Michael slots the suitcase in the trunk beside Christianne's television. Slams it shut—

Christianne winds down her window. Tearful...

CHRISTIANNE

Is it true the Colonnades will
reopen?

MICHAEL

If that's what Oberweis said,
then it may well be... but I
won't allow them to put you
back in there -- You're doing
too well for that.

CHRISTIANNE

What will happen?

MICHAEL

I'll submit my report.
(quieter)
... and ask Ilisa for a divorce.

They gaze at each other for a long moment.

The car pulls away.

Luise Zelman waves. Heads back to the house.

Michael stays. Watches the car skirt the edge of the lake.

MICHAEL (V.O.)

Something else struck me there
by the lake: the other
Christianne had gone away.

(beat)

Maybe because I'd fallen in
love with the real Christianne.

The car becomes a silvery speck on the horizon.

INT. OFFICE — DAY

PROFESSOR LEOPOLD SCHMITZ (70) closes a slimline report and
places it among the easygoing clutter of his desk.

PROFESSOR SCHMITZ
 You said you were advised to
 recommend confinement by the
 same person who commissioned
 this report?
 (puzzled)
 A Doctor Oberweis—?

Michael sits opposite this Director of the Tyrolean
 Psychiatric Board. Its most benevolent bastion of authority.

MICHAEL
 That's correct -- Although you
 should know he's also a member
 of the *Gesellschaft*.

Professor Schmitz shifts in his chair.

PROFESSOR SCHMITZ
 Ah—

MICHAEL
 It is my professional opinion
 that Fräulein Zelman's
 Fatherland fantasies were no
 more than traumas brought on by
 an addiction to Crystal Rain --
 An experimental drug developed
 by Oberweis at his own research
 institute: The Colonnades.

Professor Schmitz has moved across to the bay window.

PROFESSOR SCHMITZ
 Quite the man for all seasons
 this Oberweis.
 (then)
 I'd venture, off the record of
 course, that we all dabbled in
 things we'd rather not mention.
 (his features
 mask-like)
 I'd like to help you, Michael
 -- For old times sake. But my
 hands may be tied.

Not the response Michael expected from his former tutor.

INT. PRIVATE STUDY — DAY

An open window overlooks a pleasant patio area.

PROFESSOR SCHMITZ (CONT. O.S.)
 (filtered)
 Gleissner, Kronhuber, Vollmer
 -- They all wish to include the
Gesellschaft in this instance.

Doctor Oberweis enjoys the view from this window. His linen jacket made for its cooling breeze.

On the desk behind him a reel-to-reel TAPE MACHINE purrs like a Rolls Royce engine. Now the source of Schmitz and Michael's voice:

MICHAEL (ON TAPE)
 (filtered)
 If we listened to everyone with
 a political agenda—

Next to the tape machine is a FILE marked:

DENAZIFICATION
 SOUTHERN TYROL — CLASS D

And seated on the other side of the desk:

REVEREND SISTER

Smokes a cigarette. A visitor of serene malevolence. Hearing the confession of innocent souls.

PROFESSOR SCHMITZ (TAPE CONT.)
 I'm afraid this climate makes
 all of us uneasy.

BACK TO SCENE:

The tape revolves. Trees sway beyond the window.

Oberweis swivels around. Stops the tape—

DR. OBERWEIS
 You see -- They dare not vote
 against the *Gesellschaft*.

REVEREND SISTER
 Damn the *Gesellschaft*!
 (beat)
 Damn your political ambitions
 and those Christian Socialists
 you've come to associate with
 -- And damn that meddlesome
 psychiatrist you invited into
 Christianne's life. I will not
 have the Project compromised.

INT. OFFICE — DAY

The Professor sees Michael to the door.

PROFESSOR SCHMITZ (CONT.)

Look, I think we can at least
keep your father out of this.

(then)

Stormclouds fade, priorities
shift, promises are withdrawn
-- I'd wager that in a year
we'll have forgotten all about
this *Gesellschaft*.

MICHAEL

I hope you're right, but in the
meantime Fräulein Zelman—

Schmitz pats his former student on the arm.

PROFESSOR SCHMITZ

Leave it with me. The hearing's
still a few days off.

(then)

Oh, Michael, your article was
quite brilliant. There's just
one point on which I differ --
Thirty years isn't such a long
time.

Michael seems to have forgotten all about his article.

INT. KITCHEN — DAWN

FRANZ (20s) sits in the meagre light. There's a small PARCEL
on the table before him; the mailbag and cap across the back
of his chair suggests it arrived with him.

FRANZ

It's from Dürnstein -- By way
of Aisenglemm.

(points)

You can see the redirect mark.

Fräulein Liesing shuts off the stove. Pours hot chocolate.

FRÄULEIN LIESING

I expect it's something from
Christa's old school.

Fräulein Liesing sets down two cups of chocolate.

Franz wraps his hands around his own cup. Enjoys the warmth.

FRANZ
 You're too kind, Fräü Liesing.
 (then)
 I'll do the garden Thursday --
 By the time you come back from
 your walk it'll be nice again.

The old woman smiles as she takes her place at the table.

FRÄÜ LIESING
 If you're sure, Franz.

FRANZ
 I promised...!
 (chuckles)
 Besides, it's the least I can
 do for my chocolate.

INT. STRANGE HOUSE — DAY

The Liesings are seated on their worn sofa. Like waxworks etched with melancholy smiles. Enclosed by faded fleur-de-llys and the chime of alpine mechanisms.

Herr Liesing reads aloud from a volume of fairy tales:

HERR LIESING
 One day their father came home
 looking very grave.

Fräü Liesing observes Christianne.

Christianne moves deliberately about the room. Explores what could be another time and place.

HERR LIESING (CONT.)
 When they asked him what was
 wrong, he replied, "Alas, I was
 swindled by a Jewish merchant.
 I've lost my fortune -- We must
 leave this beautiful house."

Herr Liesing's voice recedes as Christianne remembers:

... the spider plants; religious bric-a-brac; the painting of a big-eyed child; the porcelain doll on the mantelpiece; and the frayed fabric of a curtain used as a room divider.

HERR LIESING (CONT.)
 Beauty waved to him as he rode
 away on horseback and said:
 "Edelweiss, edelweiss for me
 please, father".

Christianne pushes the curtain aside—

BEHIND THE CURTAIN

Christianne surveys a mound of pamphlets, newspapers and all manner of documents... their tattered edges yellowing across the carpet.

Herr Liesing's tale drifts in and out of her consciousness:

HERR LIESING (CONT. O.S.)
The trees formed a wide avenue
and to his surprise he arrived
at the entrance to a castle.

Christianne kneels before the strange archive. Recalls that journalist asking her about "old documents".

HERR LIESING (CONT. O.S.)
A log-fire blazed and the table
was set with supper for one.

Christianne's pale fingers reach out and touch:

-- An EXERCISE BOOK with its tiny handwriting, diagrams and equations.

-- A child's arithmetic READER with its compelling equation:
1 SS man + 1 SS man = 2 SS men

-- The typewritten INDEX CARDS she filed years ago. One for each of her classmates at Dürnstein.

HERR LIESING (CONT. O.S.)
The next morning he came across
a garden. Its edelweiss
reminded him of Beauty's wish.

-- And a b&w PORTRAIT of the young Esther Liebermann. Gazing at the camera beneath her boyish crew-cut.

HERR LIESING (CONT. O.S.)
... and the Beast said to
Beauty's father, "Heil Hitler".

BACK TO MAIN ROOM:

Herr Liesing maintains a firm grip on the book.

HERR LIESING (CONT.)
When Beauty arrived at the
castle she found her room more
exquisite than any she had ever
seen.

Fräü Liesing has not moved either. Her expression tranquil.

HERR LIESING (CONT.)
A portrait of the Führer hung
over her bed.

Christianne comes out from behind the curtain.

HERR LIESING (CONT.)
The days seemed long to Beauty,
yet the Beast had left many
things for her instruction.
Sometimes she read from *Mein
Kampf*. Sometimes she worked on
a needlecraft study -- She even
painted her own portrait of the
Führer.

Christianne looks on spellbound—

HERR LIESING (CONT.)
On fine days she walked outside
in the gardens.

Suddenly, Christianne makes for a decrepit bureau. Tries to
open its fold-down drawer, but it won't budge.

CHRISTIANNE
Fräü Liesing...?

Fräü Liesing does not hear. She's intent on this curious
version of the old tale.

Herr Liesing fixated upon the garishly illustrated pages.

HERR LIESING (CONT.)
It was then she thought about
the *lebensraum* needed by all of
the German people.

Christianne inches closer to her godparents.

CHRISTIANNE (CONT.)
(louder)
Fräü Liesing—?

Suddenly, she speaks in that other voice:

CHRISTIANNE (CONT.)
*Hurry Fräü Liesing...!!
Christianne must tell Doctor
Reinhardt about the documents.*

Herr Liesing stops reading—

Fräü Liesing turns to Christianne. Her smile unwavering.
 Half-hourly CHIMES sound somewhere in this heavy silence.
 Christianne oblivious to her other persona—

CHRISTIANNE (CONT.)
 The bureau seems to be locked.
 (off Fräü Liesing's
 bemusement)
 I'd like to write to Aunt Luise
 -- Let her know that everything
 is alright.

INT. HOTEL LOUNGE — DAY

Ilsa sips Cinzano. Unutterably feline in her blue business suit.

Michael glances towards a third presence in this otherwise deserted salon—

A YOUNG WOMAN

Sits alone at a small table with her own Cinzano.

Her marble-white complexion, feather-cut hair and hazel eyes feign disinterest in the married couple.

BACK TO SCENE:

Ilsa admires her own reflection in a baroque MIRROR.

ILSA
 For some reason it reminds me
 of our honeymoon. The pension
 on Lake Constance.
 (then)
 You've forgotten, no doubt.

Ilsa clutches Michael's arm—

ILSA (CONT.)
 You think I don't need you, but
 you're mistaken. You're also
 mistaken in your estimation of
 love -- We all believe we've
 fallen for one of our patients
 at some point in our career.
 (glances at young
 woman)
 Maybe it's the connection we
 make between trauma and dreams?

Ilsa detaches herself from Michael.

Michael left alone with his own reflection.

ILSA (CONT.)

I've not reminded you of that
morning since we were married
-- I've not felt the need.

A WAITER glides soundlessly by...

The young woman clinks the ice around in her glass.

Michael makes to say something, but is distracted—

A middle-aged COUPLE who've since come into the lounge are
chatting with the waiter with whom they seem on good terms.
Eventually, they order their usuals.

Ilsa waits... as if she's allowing them to get comfortable.
Her voice perfectly composed:

ILSA (CONT.)

All the newspapers stated that
Doctor Edmond Meier took his
own life by means of a cyanide
capsule and was found by an
elderly cleaner shortly after
6am on the 27th of October 1961
-- The fellow even went to
fetch hot chocolate from a
vending machine in the corridor
because he thought the doctor
had fallen asleep at his desk
working late.

Ilsa looks straight at Michael.

ILSA (CONT.)

If only that had been the case
-- My father would have smiled
and thanked the old cleaner for
his kindness. For his part, the
cleaner would not have imagined
that this eminent psychiatrist
and author of numerous articles
for the *Quarterly* owed four
million Schillings to Austria's
First National Bank. Or despite
his box at the Salzburg Opera
and interest in wine, that his
employer could never repay the
loans on his beloved klinik.

The waiter sets down drinks for the middle-aged couple.

MICHAEL

You know how sorry I am for what happened, but you're suggesting marriage is a transaction whose prevailing currency is guilt.

ILSA

Like you, Michael, my father was no businessman. Oh, he was a damned good psychiatrist, but what did that matter in the 50s when all we craved was collective forgetting -- Don't think about the War. After all, it was the Germans who gassed the Jews, the cripples -- We didn't know what was going on!

The middle-aged couple shift in their seats.

The young woman remains impassive.

ILSA (CONT.)

Shortly after my father's death we were engaged. Maybe you felt sorry for me? No matter, you'd become the great psychiatrist while I courted monied clients -- And just like my father, Doctor Edmond Meier, I determined never to relinquish 14 Antonstrasse.

(then)

Don't you see? Marriage brings certainty to my life. It keeps trauma at a distance -- As it does for all those shopkeepers and civil servants who only now comprehend the magnitude of pulling some lever thirty years ago.

MICHAEL

We've all been traumatised these past thirty years.

(then)

Christianne understands that.

ILSA

Of course she does! Cloud-cuckoo girl's the one they're...

Ilsa gestures at a closed door—

ILSA (CONT.)
 (quieter)
 ... deciding whether or not to
 confine to an institution --
 The one who thinks the Fourth
 Reich will come marching into
 Innsbruck any day now?

We can no longer distinguish the real Michael and Ilsa from
 their mirrored reflections.

ILSA (CONT.)
 If nothing else, please think
 of the klinik -- Personal
 involvement with a patient will
 at best cloud your professional
 standing.

MICHAEL
 At worst—?
 (off Ilsa's reticence)
 A Nazi fantasist who could
 never come to terms with the
 fact that his own father should
 have been indicted at Nuremburg
 -- A man who must now live
 quietly under an assumed name.

The middle-aged couple resume their conversation.

Once again, the young woman clinks the ice around her glass.
 Looks beyond Michael and Ilsa as she does so—

Several greying BUSINESSMEN emerge from an open door: all
 self-satisfied murmurings from Oberweis and his cronies.

Professor Schmitz breaks away. Makes a beeline for Michael.

PROFESSOR SCHMITZ
 I'm sorry, Michael...

Schmitz brushes imaginary dust from a trim leather folder.

PROFESSOR SCHMITZ (CONT.)
 We were outvoted.
 (off Michael's
 anguish)
 At least your father's out of
 the picture -- Look, give it a
 few months and we may be in a
 position to get her reassessed.

The older man a portrait of consolation.

ILSA (O.S.)
 I'll see you later, Michael.
 (comes into shot)
 Doctor Oberweis and I have some
 business to conclude.

Michael half-hears Ilsa's civilized tones: as if nothing had happened between them.

Oberweis clicks his fingers at the waiter. A celebratory drink seems in order.

INT. STRANGE HOUSE — NIGHT

The Liesings are seated at their dining-room table. Now strewn with all those yellowing documents.

FRÄU LIESING
 Once upon a time it all seemed
 so important.

Herr Liesing's brittle hands try to make sense of them all.

REVEREND SISTER
 (comes into shot)
 You've failed to impose a
 system!

Reverend Sister picks up a typewritten document, gives it a cursory glance then throws it back down on the table.

REVEREND SISTER (CONT.)
 How would it have been at
 Ternitz if I had not imposed a
 system -- If I had not
 classified by age, hair colour,
 eye colour.

The Liesings remain quiet. Like admonished schoolchildren.

REVEREND SISTER (CONT.)
 They adored my system. It made
 them feel secure. What else was
 there? The lust of those
 peasant Russian soldiers; death
 by incineration -- No, my
 guests adored my system as much
 as they adored me.
 (wistful)
 One or two of them still do.

Reverend Sister looks into the camera:

Recapturing that quality so evident in her portrait — an admixture of self-preservation and unearthly beauty. One perfected over thirty years.

REVEREND SISTER (CONT.)
It remains your duty to apply
these principles.

INT. BEDROOM — NIGHT

The sound of RAIN on the wooden roof fades into that of a voice:

THE VOICE (O.S.)
Christa...
(coming closer)
... Christa.

Christianne opens her eyes. Compelled to do so by the voice; by its ominous diction.

THE VOICE (O.S.)
Christa—

It comes from a figure at the foot of the bed:

REVEREND SISTER

Balances a glass of milk on a tray.

REVEREND SISTER
I remembered my promise -- As
well as your nightcap.

BACK TO SCENE:

Christianne sits bolt upright—

CHRISTIANNE
Reverend Sister...!?

Christianne fumbles for the switch on her bedside lamp.

CHRISTIANNE (CONT.)
I don't...
(confused)
It must be late?

The bedside lamp emits a feeble glow.

Reverend Sister an eerie presence beneath her white habit.

REVEREND SISTER

Your godparents were otherwise engaged this evening.

(beat)

And Doctor Kleber would worry unduly if you missed a dose.

Reverend Sister steps around to the side of Christianne's bed. Indicates the warm milk.

Christianne takes the glass. Brings it to her lips.

Reverend Sister seats herself on the edge of the bed.

REVEREND SISTER (CONT.)

Besides, there were things I'd left here for safe keeping -- Items of a sentimental nature.

Reverend Sister reaches for the dry calfskin of a DIARY on the bedside table.

REVEREND SISTER (CONT.)

I'm pleased the Ternitz Diary caught up with you, Christianne -- I didn't know you would come here.

Christianne puts down the milk unfinished.

The rain becomes louder: an incessant RAT-TAT-TAT against the wooden roof.

CHRISTIANNE

What happened to them?

(beat)

... to Josephine, Madeleine and Alice?

(off Reverend Sister looking up from the diary)

I remember now: Doctor Oberweis said it was a sedative.

REVEREND SISTER

He believed it was a sedative. It was the kindest thing under the circumstances.

(then)

Your tolerance of the Crystal Rain has always been remarkable, Christianne. You were born that way -- That's

(MORE)

REVEREND SISTER (CONT.)

why your association with an
outsider endangers the project.
Herr Reinhardt does not
understand such things. Or the
danger to himself. Unlike that
journalist, he would do well to
forget about everything he saw.

(beat)

As well you must, Christianne.

Reverend Sister's long fingers exert pressure on the form
beneath the blankets.

REVEREND SISTER

Do you remember, Christianne?
We learned that commemoration
takes many forms.

(then)

Esther Liebermann understood as
much thirty years ago.

Reverend Sister turns to the diary. Reads aloud from its
bookmarked page—

REVEREND SISTER (CONT.)

*The White Angel told me the war
was over.*

(then)

*She took my hand and we walked
through our sleeping quarters
-- A medicinal aroma clung to
the plaster walls of a room
where last night I lay awake
with only wireless interference
and a shrill voice for company
as it declared: "The might of
the Wehrmacht repulsed the
Soviet war machine..." A room
in which I was overcome by a
premonition: that she, the
White Angel, will take care of
everything -- Now and forever.*

Esther's *Ternitz Diary* flows from a becalmed Reverend Sister
as if it were biblical text.

REVEREND SISTER (CONT.)

*I wanted to pray for those less
fortunate than myself, but
there was little time and when
I saw the linen shrouds she
said: "They are like angels".*

(MORE)

REVEREND SISTER (CONT.)

*I knew that all we could do was
to keep moving -- Overground in
Spring with its cheerful
cowbells and edelweiss; it's
blue, blue sky and snow-capped
alpine scenes like something I
saw at a pictureshow before the
war.*

Reverend Sister closes the diary. Replaces it on the bedside table. Glances at the unfinished milk.

Christianne brings the glass back to her lips. Overcome by this presence once again at her bedside.

Reverend Sister watches Christianne drink.

Christianne puts the empty glass on the tray. Eyes swimming as she sinks drowsily into her pillow—

CHRISTIANNE

The Man from the Fatherland
won't forget.
(already asleep)
There will be a quiet ceremony
at the Hermitage.

The rain quieter now as we...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ORNAMENTAL TERRACE — DAY

A young WOMAN stands by the tower. Her headscarf and shades in keeping with its formal, secluded air.

As if she's waiting... As if she's waited a whole lifetime.
In this world of moss and stone.

EXT. CHAIR-LIFT — DAY

Michael glides through low cloud towards a solitary FIGURE.

EXT. PLATEAU — MOMENTS LATER

Michael walks beside Julia Klein.

JULIA KLEIN

Oberweis has sole jurisdiction.

MICHAEL

I know -- The board sent a memo that went out of its way to reiterate my NON-involvement.

JULIA KLEIN

By rights, she should have been confined within seven days, but there's some delay with funding -- In the meantime, I'm her Interim Occupational Monitor.

MICHAEL

I'm sure Gleissner, Kronhuber and Vollmer enjoyed coming up with that one.

JULIA KLEIN

I wouldn't be so disheartened -- Little has changed. I see Christianne every day. We play backgammon, watch the matinée, go out for walks.

Julia stops all of a sudden. Turns to Michael:

JULIA KLEIN (CONT.)

Look, they've followed your recommendation -- Oh, I imagine she'll return home eventually, but I'm sure you can get that decision overturned before the new institute is even built.

(then)

You see, Oberweis won't let her be admitted anywhere else.

They walk in silence towards a flight of stone steps.

Michael seems to have accepted Julia's view of events.

JULIA KLEIN (CONT.)

I like it here. The air...

(then)

Oberweis used to bring us. He liked to show off.

(indicates hexagonal tower as they descend)

He could tell you whether it's Cistercian or Benedictine -- Whether the tiles are Venetian, Austro-Hungarian or Ottoman.

They come out upon—

AN ORNAMENTAL TERRACE

Christianne stands by the tower.

Michael walks towards her. Apprehensive that things may have changed between them.

MICHAEL
Hello Christianne.

Christianne removes her dark glasses. Takes a long moment to recognise him.

MICHAEL (CONT.)
I liked receiving your letter
-- It can't have been easy.

CHRISTIANNE
My letter...? Oh, Julia was
kind enough to post it for me.

MICHAEL
The documents you mentioned—?

CHRISTIANNE
There's plenty of time -- My
godparents won't be back for a
while.

Foliage sways. All across this quiet hermitage.

MICHAEL
Christianne, I'm afraid things
may take a while.
(difficult for him)
I'm indebted to Ilsa. She owns
the klinik.

CHRISTIANNE
It's alright, Michael. I don't
mind waiting.
(looks up at tower)
We'll come here again.

Christianne takes Michael's hand. Leads him to the tower.

Julia enters the frame. Walks alongside.

EXT. FROM THE SHADE OF TREES — DAY

A FIGURE watches Herr Liesing shut the garden gate—

Watches Frau Liesing lean on her walking stick as she begins to make her way up the alpine pathway.

... and as soon as they're both out of sight—

DR. OBERWEIS

Crosses the grassy slope. His movements somewhere between a walk and a run. Like those of a mechanical toy.

INT. THE HERMITAGE — DAY

We're inside the hexagonal tower with its mosaics, stained-glass and medieval sculpture.

Footsteps echo from its flagstones.

EXT. STRANGE HOUSE — DAY

Oberweis exits the shed with a rusted PARAFFIN CAN. Makes his way through a profusion of blossom and tangled branches.

INT. THE HERMITAGE — DAY

Once again Christianne stands before a velvet curtain.

And once again a tasselled CORD hangs down on one side.

INT. STRANGE HOUSE — DAY

Oberweis sets the paraffin can on the dining-room table. Unscrews its rust-soaked cap.

Opens a drawer on the sideboard. Finds the documents we saw earlier: Neatened, alphabetical.

One by one, Oberweis removes the drawers...

... and places them on the table beside the paraffin can.

INT. THE HERMITAGE — DAY

Christianne pulls the tasselled cord—

EXT. THE HERMITAGE — SAME TIME

A bell CLANKS from the tower. Echoes across the ornamental terrace and into the void below.

INT. STRANGE HOUSE — DAY

Oberweis hurls paraffin over the drawers!! Intent on their destruction.

The documents drip with flammable liquid.

INT. THE HERMITAGE — DAY

Michael walks toward Christianne.

Christianne walks toward her Man from the Fatherland.

... their KISS inevitable!

Underneath the fresco revealed by those velvet curtains:

THE FRESCO

A distinguished gentleman sits on a terrace. Exuding a benign calm. The landscape one of geometric shapes and pastel shades.

Its brass plate declares:

LANDSCAPE FOR FUTURE EARTH II
by Esther Liebermann

If the painting above Christianne's bed (at Luise Zelman's) was a portrait of a youthful Reverend Sister then this must be its twin: a more recent depiction of Doctor Oberweis...

... and moving closer we see that its shapes are comprised of tiny swastikas.

INT. STRANGE HOUSE — DAY

Oberweis reaches into his jacket pocket...

... but is checked by a metallic, unlocking sound—

REVEREND SISTER (O.S.)
It seems we possess conflicting
ideologies, after all.

Oberweis turns. Calm despite the Luger aimed at him—

EXT. ALPINE PATHWAY — DAY

An off-duty Franz bounds along. His *Tyrolean Mail* uniform exchanged for workman's overalls.

His movements exude all the joys of Spring; much like the tune he's whistling.

INT. STRANGE HOUSE — DAY

Reverend Sister runs a gloved hand over one of the drawers. Somehow oblivious to the paraffin.

REVEREND SISTER
Each document is precious.
(then)
Besides, don't you think you're
being unkind to the Liesings?

DR. OBERWEIS
Perhaps you've forgotten that I
own this property? The Liesings
acted as my caretaker and
housekeeper at the institute --
After it closed, I allowed them
to live here.
(glancing at heavy
fabric of room divider)
My insurance policy will take
care of them. Acts of God are
covered, I believe.

EXT. STRANGE HOUSE — DAY

Franz opens the gate to the overgrown garden he'd promised the Liesings he would tidy this afternoon.

INT. STRANGE HOUSE — CONTINUOUS

The Luger ominously fitted with a silencer. Unwavering in its detention of Oberweis.

DR. OBERWEIS
We believed all of our memories
were precious... but our
enemies will think otherwise.
(gestures)
Burn them! Or we'll both be
wearing headphones in Tel Aviv.

REVEREND SISTER
You should have remained in the
United States.
(amused)
Or maybe the climate in Uruguay
would be more to your liking?

DR. OBERWEIS
They questioned me about that
journalist, you know—

Reverend Sister's silk-gloved index finger exerts pressure
on the Luger's trigger.

EXT. STRANGE HOUSE — DAY

Franz loosens the padlock on the decrepit shed—

INT. STRANGE HOUSE — CONTINUOUS

Both Oberweis and Reverend Sister steely in their resolve:

DR. OBERWEIS
I'm afraid my involvement with
the project has come to an end.

REVEREND SISTER
We're bound together. We always
were -- For as long as we still
have Christianne. Or perhaps
you've forgotten Madeleine,
Josephine and Alice? Forgotten
the Crystal Rain was unstable
-- How it blinded them and
poisoned their unborn children.
How discovery of its taxidermic
properties drove you to
experiment at a lethal level --
No, let Hemmel be a warning to
the others. Your psychiatrist
friends, for instance.

DR. OBERWEIS
Christianne deserves more than
this unending convalescence!

REVEREND SISTER
It's unlike you to show concern
for a subject -- Or *specimen* as
you often referred to them.

DR. OBERWEIS
The war is over -- It just took
me thirty years to realise.
(then)
Christianne will join me at The
Colonnades when it reopens. Not
as a subject, but as a research
associate -- As my wife.

This has an unexpected effect upon Reverend Sister... so that for the first time her Luger is pointed at a slight remove from Oberweis.

REVEREND SISTER

Perhaps you've forgotten the
fateful nature of our meeting
again -- Forgotten that little
had altered during those
fourteen years. Not the *Auslese*
we enjoyed at Ternitz. Or even
the girl who poured it for us.

DR. OBERWEIS

Our meeting again was by chance
-- But for an envelope on
Madame Zelman's bureau...

(sighs)

Fate was my love for Christa.

REVEREND SISTER

Fate decreed that we resume
Project *Die Himmel Kinder* -- We
dared not speak of it, although
both of us knew.

(beat)

You also remembered that Esther
Liebermann, the girl who poured
our *Auslese*, became its first
subject -- You didn't know that
after its failure she pleaded
for morphia or that I refused
knowing liberation meant little
to this girl who had come to
worship me. No, when I
abandoned Ternitz, she desired
only to stay by my side -- So
that it was Esther Liebermann
who warmed milk for Christianne
each night; Esther Liebermann
who typed my letters to Madame
Zelman; and Esther Liebermann
who painted your portrait -- Of
course, by then, you hardly
recognised those sorrowful eyes
you could never make blue.

(beat)

You see, Esther remains loyal to
the Project -- Esther Liebermann
pours my *Auslese* to this day.

Paraffin glistens in the dim light.

EXT. STRANGE HOUSE — DAY

Franz puts on gardening gloves, picks up a pair of CLIPPERS from the Liesing's outdoor table...

... and for just one moment glances at the house.

INT. STRANGE HOUSE — SAME TIME

Reverend Sister indicates the front door—

REVEREND SISTER
Walk slowly away, Doctor
Oberweis. It'll give you time
to reconsider your position.

Oberweis looks beyond her and through the window... to where Franz is working in the garden!

DR. OBERWEIS
There's someone—!?

Reverend Sister turns away from Oberweis—

Long enough for him to remove his CIGARETTE LIGHTER and set fire to one of the documents!

Reverend Sister swivels back around. Horrified to see FLAMES at the ceiling.

... and shoots a silenced round at Oberweis—!

Wounded, Oberweis lurches across the table...

... dragging the heavy curtain from its rail as he collapses in a cloud of dust, fire and faded fabric.

Reverend Sister looks over at the staircase.

The fire is taking hold—

REVEREND SISTER (O.S.)
The diary!

EXT. STRANGE HOUSE — DAY

Franz takes the clippers to a particularly wild spot.

EXT. CHAIR-LIFT — DAY

Christianne tranquil as she descends alongside Michael:

CHRISTIANNE

... they'll no longer refer to me as a convalescent -- No, they will say Fräü Reinhardt or Christa Reinhardt. Or the wife of Doctor Reinhardt.

Cloud conceals the valley below, although we can make out Julia Klein up ahead.

EXT. STRANGE HOUSE — DAY

Cracks form across a window on the ground-floor.

... until its pane EXPLODES! Showering glass and smoke all across the garden!

Franz looks up. His clippers frozen in midair—

INT. STRANGE HOUSE — DAY

FIRE consumes all those things comprising the old couple's mysterious life:

... their document archive; the frayed furnishings; the book presented at a school prizegiving for the summer term of 1911; a cuckoo clock; the painting of a big-eyed child; the porcelain doll now melting on the mantelpiece; the tobacco-stained lace; and all their irreplaceable memories of Weimar, the Hitler Youth and the League of German Maidens.

EXT. CHAIR-LIFT — DAY

Black smoke spirals up from one of the houses.

Julia Klein turns to Michael and Christianne—

INT. STRANGE HOUSE — DAY

Fire consumes the lines of faded fountain-pen and esoteric diagrams in Konrad Zelman's old exercise book: the origins of Project *Die Himmel Kinder*.

EXT. STRANGE HOUSE — DAY

Flames sweep the verandah... then roll upwards into a pillar of fire; obscuring what looks like a white-habited FIGURE on the balcony!

EXT. NEARBY HOUSE — DAY

Franz looks up at a decrepit exterior. Desperate to phone the authorities!

An OLD WOMAN stares down at him from behind an upstairs window. Her calcified features like those of a death mask.

INT. STRANGE HOUSE — DAY

Fire consumes any lingering nostalgia...

The National Socialist princesses, shoemakers and witches of Herr Liesing's *Tales From the Fatherland*. Melting into cultural oblivion alongside that bygone arithmetic reader.

All of these things gone forever as stuffing and thick smoke pour from the sofa...

... and a charred, emaciated HAND reaches out for a vestige of daylight.

EXT. STRANGE HOUSE — DAY

Bits of blackened paper swirl in the rainy air.

INT. STRANGE HOUSE — DAY

Fire consumes the sentimental trophies of Reverend Sister's life: the index cards Christianne filed all those years ago; the yellowed documents from Ternitz — classified by age, hair colour, eye colour; and that affecting portrait of Esther Liebermann. Now like Joan of Arc before the flames.

EXT. STRANGE HOUSE — DAY

Michael dashes through the wooden gate—

Finds Oberweis sprawled out on the grass. Devoid of those ubiquitous spectacles. Lost, presumably, during what must have been a miraculous escape.

... allowing us to see into those incredible blue eyes. Eyes that may well have cheated God!

Michael loosens Oberweis' shirt collar—

Christianne appears... and like an angel she kneels before the dying man. Takes his hand.

Oberweis gazes blindly up at her. Gasps for air—

DR. OBERWEIS

Christa...

(croaks)

Take care of Emil -- Our child.
Our child of the Crystal Rain.

Oberweis closes those blue eyes. He's dead.

Michael transfixed by an unfolding catastrophe:

-- Christianne clinging to the corpse of Doctor Oberweis.

-- The verandah collapsing in on itself.

-- The incomprehensible inferno ravaging this quiet place.

-- The afterimage of a woman trapped up on that balcony.

-- The fire uncoiling like a great salamander and coming straight for them...

... as the CLANG CLANG of a fire truck impinges upon his consciousness.

EXT. ALPINE PATHWAY / LANDSCAPE -- DAY

Herr Liesing lifts his walking cane. Points into the valley below with its old Italianate building—

HERR LIESING

They say Doctor Oberweis may
reopen the institute.

FRÄU LIESING

I hope so. He was always kind
to Christa.

The Liesings cast in the orange glow of the fire. Flooding the screen with nostalgia as they merge with our memory of that sun-damaged photograph.

HERR LIESING

We were the Children of Heaven.

A PIANO melody becomes audible as the cable-car gleams off in the distance and we...

DISSOLVE TO:

I/E. ZELMAN HOUSE — DAY

The lake mellow in autumn.

Emil lifts his hands from the piano. His black blazer, matching short-trousers and polished shoes all rather formal.

Luise Zelman also dressed for a funeral or memorial service.

Her footsteps echo as she crosses the room and we—

CUT TO:

A BANDAGED FACE

Its dark peepholes glisten at the TAP-TAP-TAP approach of heels over linoleum...

... and somewhere (O.S.) a breathless conversation:

FEMALE NURSE

It's incredible -- I mean, to think a woman like that would kill anyone.

EFFEMINATE MALE

Why, I'd quite forgotten about the journalist.

FEMALE NURSE

The Luger was a perfect match.
(still incredulous)
What ever was she thinking...?

EFFEMINATE MALE

I'll tell you one thing: that picture won't be coming down.
(then)
Oh well, the psychiatrist from Innsbruck has been discharged.

FEMALE NURSE

I hear Madame Zelman suggested the *Gesellschaft* make a donation to his wife's klinik -- For pulling Doctor Oberweis clear of the fire.

EFFEMINATE MALE

You know, there was some gossip about him and Christianne.

We're still on that BANDAGED FACE as the (O.S.) conversation continues.

FEMALE NURSE

That reminds me -- You need to see this...

EFFEMINATE MALE

On the instructions of Madame Directeur -- You better fetch me her file.

Suddenly, a FLASH of daylight brings us to—

INT. PRIVATE ROOM — DAY

A NURSE steps away from the Venetian blind.

Sunshine falls on our bandaged patient. Utterly still in their metal-framed bed.

The Nurse holds up a syringe then places it over one of the eye-holes. Squeezes out several drops of clear liquid—

The Bandaged Face lurches across the pillow. Comes to rest and gazes at a framed PHOTOGRAPH on the bedside table.

... the Polaroid of Michael.

KLAUS (PRE-LAP)

More than likely he's suffering from delayed trauma.

INT. ILSA'S OFFICE — DAY

Ilsa gazes through the net curtain. Half-listens to Klaus (the colleague Michael chatted to in the opening sequence).

KLAUS (CONT.)

Don't worry, Doctor Reinhardt -- He just needs some rest. A period of convalescence.

(off Ilsa as she turns around)

At least he'll have something worthwhile to occupy him.

ILSA

Oh yes, I see... that journalist killed in the Tyrol.

Ilsa glances at the alpine calendar. It displays an autumn scene.

KLAUS

I understand Fräü Kollnitz, the sister, has spoken with several publishers.

ILSA

I'm sure it'll be a sensation.

(pained smile)

Starring Christianne Zelman as Patient X.

Suddenly, the PING of a typewriter carriage brings us to—

INT. ADJOINING OFFICE — LATER

A somewhat drabber affair in which a fashionable SECRETARY sits at a typewriter. We can't see her clearly, but she seems familiar. Either way, her stop-start technique leaves one hundred words per minute to the realm of fantasy.

INT. ILSA'S OFFICE — SAME TIME

Ilsa now seated at her desk. Intent on that wedding photo.

ILSA

Marriage is proof that even in its moments of imbalance Austrian society does not seek out führers or revolution -- It craves civilization, perpetuity.

(looks up)

Marriage gives us those things.

Michael sits opposite. His demeanour has become abstracted. More like a patient than a medical professional.

ILSA (CONT.)

Look, I think you came back too soon—

The muffled TAP-TAP of a typewriter in the adjoining office becomes audible.

Ilsa waves her hand: *Anyone there...?*

Michael shifts his attention, albeit ever so slightly.

ILSA (CONT.)

Please, take all the time you need. Concentrate on the book.

(sarcastic)

The unpublished memoir of Wolfgang Hemmel. A sensational exposé of Nazi medical research and its continuation in postwar Austria.

MICHAEL

You won't mind that I'm out all day tomorrow, then?

(off Ilsa)

I heard from Madame Zelman -- Christianne's able to receive visitors.

(returning sarcasm)

I'm sure you can ask Helga to reschedule my appointments.

Ilsa scans her diary.

ILSA

Well, as luck would have it—

Ilsa presses the intercom. Speaks into it:

ILSA (CONT.)

Oh, Helga, could you come in a moment please.

MICHAEL

(sees where this is going)

Ilsa, there's really no need—

ILSA

I also retain an interest in Fräulein Zelman -- I'm waiting on the Oberweis Estate for the balance on your assessment fee.

(that irresistible smile again)

A change of climate will do us good.

The door to the adjoining office opens and the fashionable secretary stands before Ilsa—

HELGA

Madame Reinhardt—?

We recognize Helga as the young woman from the hotel lounge.

EXT. THE COLONNADES — DAY

Birdsong and the swish of tree branches take us beyond the Italianate building...

... to a gleaming new STRUCTURE. Its exterior not unlike a terminal building at some regional airport.

A brass plaque declares:

O B E R W E I S I N S T I T U T E

Michael guides Ilse through the glass doors into—

INT. OBERWEIS INSTITUTE — DAY

All disinfected melamine and linoleum. How a Nazi research hospital might have looked had they won WWII.

The space dominated by two PAINTINGS: those mystic images of Oberweis and Reverend Sister reproduced in a larger format.

A pharmacy-like FEMALE slips behind a doorway.

The RECEPTIONIST welcomes her two visitors:

RECEPTIONIST

One moment, please—

She presses a buzzer. Its modulated tone not unpleasant.

The doorway opens again. This time a slender, white-habited SISTER walks towards us...

Someone eerily like Reverend Sister. So much so, in fact, that for one moment we share Michael's confusion—

The Sister looks at her visitors. Extends a white-gloved hand to Ilse...

... and we realise that she is in fact Esther Liebermann!

ESTHER LIEBERMANN

I'm Sister Liebermann -- The *Gesellschaft* plan to appoint someone permanently, but in the meantime I'm acting Directeur.

Esther makes an all-encompassing gesture. Indeed, she's emerged from her chrysalis—

ESTHER LIEBERMANN (CONT.)

We have the persuasiveness of
Madame Zelman to thank for all
of this -- The *Gesellschaft*
might not have been so generous
otherwise.

(then)

Christianne will be overjoyed to
see you both -- It's been
difficult these past few months.

ILSA

(off Michael's
hesitation)

We understand her injuries were
superficial?

ESTHER LIEBERMANN

I'm afraid that wasn't quite the
case, although we were fortunate
-- Doctor Von Oppenheim agreed--

MICHAEL

Von Oppenheim...?

ILSA

(interjecting)

Julius Von Oppenheim -- Our
leading specialist in the field
of dermatological trauma.

(smiles)

One of my wine-glass socialists.

MICHAEL

(to Esther)

You mean Christianne underwent
plastic surgery?

ESTHER LIEBERMANN

I took a special interest in
Christianne's case and can
assure you that the procedure
was a triumph -- She's really
quite beautiful. Perfect, you
might say.

(then)

I believe she's out walking at
the moment. You're welcome to
wait here, although--

Esther beckons the Receptionist...

... so that she comes around from behind the desk and walks
Michael and Ilsa through the entryway--

EXT. OBERWEIS INSTITUTE — CONTINUOUS

The Receptionist points up at the mountain—

RECEPTIONIST

It's a nice day and the chair-
lift is most pleasant -- I'm
sure you'll come across them.

A chair-lift gleams in the sunshine and we...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ALPINE PATHWAY — DAY

Christianne walks alongside Julia Klein.

CHRISTIANNE

My friends imagined themselves
as secretaries or the wives of
diplomats—

... and we realise that Esther Liebermann was quite correct.
If Christianne's surgery is at all noticeable then it serves
to make her even more striking.

Otherwise she's unchanged: the mink, headscarf and shades
all present and correct.

CHRISTIANNE (CONT.)

I could never imagine that kind
of life.

Christianne stops walking. Long enough for her other persona
to resurface:

CHRISTIANNE (CONT.)

*Oh, but you did, Christianne --
You were The Bride of
Gethsemane. You took the veil
and kneeled at the feet of
Reverend Sister to accept your
crown of thorns
-- How the audience gasped when
real blood smeared that veil.
Everyone except for a gentleman
in the first row. A kind patron
of our school. You knew then
that your destiny was to become
his wife -- For the divine good
of the Fatherland.*

Julia Klein at ease with this other persona.

JULIA KLEIN
 Maybe soon you really will be
 married.

Julia touches Christianne's arm. Encourages her to resume
 their walk.

Christianne speaks in her usual voice:

CHRISTIANNE
 Sometimes his image comes to
 me. As if I were by his side.
 (beat)
 In his consulting rooms above
 Antonstrasse -- Or driving on
 the autobahn at night.

Suddenly, Michael and Ilsa appear at the edge of the frame.

CHRISTIANNE (CONT.)
 In the impossible softness of
 rain.
 (beat)
 ... the Crystal Rain.

Julia Klein stops—

JULIA KLEIN
 Christa! You knew all along!
 Esther must have said...
 (off Christianne's
 silence)
 It's Michael and Ilsa -- They
 really are here to see you!

Christianne removes her shades—

*Oh yes, there's something spooky about her eyes, but for the
 moment we're unsure what it is exactly.*

Christianne unties her headscarf. Lets the fabric ripple in
 the breeze...

... allows it to drift away over the mountainside.

Michael, Ilsa and Julia entranced by this display.

Christianne unbuttons her mink.

Slips it off one shoulder—

... so that the pale lace of a WEDDING DRESS flows about her
 convalescent frame.

Christianne steps forward...

... just like she did on the nighttime staircase. A profound sensuality beneath her glazed expression.

Like Dita Parlo in *L'Atalanté*. Or the glacial ardour of the tragic Mrs Holland in *I Walked With A Zombie*.

Drawing nearer to her Man from the Fatherland. Close enough for him to apprehend—

CHRISTIANNE'S EYES

A fathomless pool of crystalline blue.

BACK TO SCENE:

Michael looks at Ilsa.

Ilsa makes an immediate diagnosis:

ILSA
She's blind.

Julia Klein's expression one of utmost sorrow.

Christianne extends her pale fingers towards Michael—

CHRISTIANNE
Mein...
(off Michael)
Mein Führer!

Julia Klein disbelieving. Unable to intervene.

Ilsa turns to her husband:

ILSA
We should go, Michael.

Michael paralysed with indecision and pity. Torn between:

Ilsa and Christianne—

Christianne and Ilsa—

All of them frozen to this landscape by the ecstatic melancholy of a pastoral AVE MARIA as credits roll and we...

FADE OUT.