

## THE PLAGUE YEARS

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You are playing a "free association" game with a group of friends. You give them the word *Munich*, expecting to elicit something like "Germany" or "beer," but there is a Czech among them, and before anyone else can respond he shouts "treason."

1988 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the Munich Pact by England and France—the real beginning of the Second World War and the real end of the First Czechoslovak Republic. Every Czech can quote Neville Chamberlain's statement about having secured "peace in our time" at the expense of a "small nation we know nothing about."

Chamberlain's policy of appeasement (Hitler received the Sudetenland by promising not to make war) lay at the heart of the first English-language production of Karel Čapek's anti-militarist but by no means pro-pacifist play *The White Plague*. Characteristically, it came to the English stage in that fateful year, 1938, in the form of an adaptation and under the title of *Power and Glory*.

For much of the action the adaptation follows the original more or less closely. The Marshal is preparing for an all-out offensive war in the interests of *Lebensraum*, the nation's honor, and the armament manufacturers' profits even as the world is being ravaged by an epidemic of the Cheng Syndrome, a plague-like disease that eats away at the victims' flesh until they die in terrible agony. A local doctor by the name of Galen discovers a cure for the disease, but refuses to release it to the world until all nations agree to lay down their weapons.

The adaptation differs radically from the original, however, in that it reworks certain scenes to enable the Marshal and Dr. Galen to be played by the same actor. Whereas Čapek wished to show how dangerous Hitler's militarism had grown and to oppose it with a humane attempt to save mankind, the English adapters equated the Hitler character with the doctor, made them into equally dangerous fanatics, and thereby turned the play into a propaganda piece for the appeasers.

In a sense Čapek himself had laid the groundwork for their interpretation. His sympathy with Anglo-American pragmatism and relativism and his practice of incorporating many points of view in a work (often, as in the novel *An Ordinary Life*, using the "Rashomon" technique of retelling one and the same event as seen by several characters) seemed

to vindicate the idea that neither the Marshal nor Galen was all right or all wrong.

But by the mid-thirties Čapek had come to realize that the evil Hitler represented had to be faced head on, and he grieved that the English should have felt the need to alter his play so as to refrain from altering their vision of the situation in Central Europe. Not that Čapek was a Pollyanna. When he pitted the Marshal and the armament manufacturer Krug (whose name is an amalgam of the German manufacturer Krupp and the German word for war, *Krieg*) against Dr. Galen (whose nickname is Dr. Innocence), he did not expect a miracle; nor does he give us one—as a lesser playwright might have done—in the form of a *deus ex machina*.

What he does instead is advocate first, recognition of the forces of destruction and then, active resistance to them. In *The White Plague* both recognition and resistance come from an outsider: Galen is not only an innocent, he is a foreigner (a Greek, like his namesake, the brilliant Greek physician of Marcus Aurelius). The poor, who might otherwise support him, have no power, and the powerful have no interest in changing the status quo. Čapek knew disaster was imminent, and when it came he was unable to survive. 1988 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the Munich Pact and the fiftieth anniversary of Čapek's death.

Of course *The White Plague* is not only about Hitler and the thirties. In certain respects it is more concrete today than when Čapek conceived it. The Cheng Syndrome can no longer be dismissed as allegorical; disarmament is no longer a matter of preventing a local war. In the end, Čapek's vision is a universal one and his message of active resistance universally applicable.

KAREL ČAPEK

THE WHITE PLAGUE

Translated from the Czech by Michael Henry Heim  
for  
Northlight Theatre  
Evanston, Illinois

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Three Lepers  
Dr. Sigelius, senior physician  
Reporter  
Nurse  
Dr. Galen  
Chief Assistant to Dr. Sigelius  
Deputy Assistant to Dr. Sigelius  
Father  
Mother  
Daughter  
Son  
Four Doctors, visiting dignitaries  
Official  
Marshal  
Minister of Health  
Adjutant  
Minister of Public Information  
Baron Krug  
Annette, the Marshal's Daughter  
Young Baron Krug  
Doctors, Orderlies, Reporters, Crowd

ACT ONE - DR. SIGELIUS

SCENE ONE

(Three lepers in bandages.)

FIRST LEPER

It's the plague, all right. Somebody down with it in every house in the neighbourhood. I ask a fellow about the white blotch on his chin, and you know what he says? He says, 'That? Oh, that's nothing. Don't feel a thing.' And now he's got gobs of flesh falling off of him, just like me. It's the plague.

SECOND LEPER

It's no plague; it's leprosy. They just call it that. 'The white plague.' You know what they really ought to call it? Retribution. Something as dangerous as that—it doesn't just . . . happen; it's divine retribution.

THIRD LEPER

O God! O Jesus! O Jesus God!

FIRST LEPER

Retribution! Retribution! For what? Tell me! All I got to show for my life is poverty. What kind of God takes His anger out on the poor?

SECOND LEPER

You'll see what I mean. At first it's only a few blotches, but by the time it starts eating away at your gut—look at *him*—you'll know it doesn't just happen; it's got to be retribution, there's got to be a reason for it. . . .

THIRD LEPER

O God! O Heavenly Father! . . .

FIRST LEPER

Course there's a reason. There's too many people. Half of us got to lay down and die to make room for the other half. Look, you're a baker. When you're gone, another baker'll take your place. And when I'm gone another sucker'll take mine and, like me, manage to keep from starving. That's what it's here for, the plague.

SECOND LEPER

But it's not the plague. If it was the plague, you'd be turning black. And look at you: all white, white as . . . chalk—no, white as a leper.

FIRST LEPER

White or black—what's the difference? I just wish I didn't stink so much.

## THIRD LEPER

Jesus God . . . O Jesus . . . Jesus God, have mercy . . .

## SECOND LEPER

Why should you care? You're on your own. If you had a wife and kids . . . I don't see how they put up with me! And now my wife's got a white blotch too, on her chest . . . The upholsterer next door—we hear him moaning day and night, day and night . . .

## THIRD LEPER

Jesus God . . . Jesus God . . . Jesus . . .

## FIRST LEPER

Shut up, will you? That's enough, do you hear! Shut up, you . . . you leper!

## SCENE TWO

(Dr. Sigelius' office.)

## SIGELIUS

Come in, come in . . . From the press, is that it? Well, I suppose I can spare you three minutes. But no more. Have to tend to my patients, you know . . . Now what's on your mind?

## REPORTER

My paper is seeking the most reliable sources to inform its readers . . .

## SIGELIUS

. . . of what they call the 'white plague' or 'Peking leprosy.' I know. The trouble is, there's been too much written already. And all by laymen. Leave medicine to the doctors, that's what I say. The moment the papers bring up a disease, people start looking for symptoms in themselves, am I right?

## REPORTER

Yes, but . . . But my paper wants to reassure its readers . . .

## SIGELIUS

Reassure them? And how do you propose to do that, my good man? It's a deadly disease and spreading like wildfire. True, every clinic in the world has an intensive research programme, but . . . (shrugging his shoulders) . . . so far, medical science is baffled. Just tell your readers to report any symptom to their doctors and do as the doctors say.

## REPORTER

And what will they say?

## SIGELIUS

They'll prescribe an ointment of some sort: a disinfectant for the poor or, for the better-heeled, a Peruvian balsam.

## REPORTER

Will it help?

## SIGELIUS

It will temper the odour when the wounds open. That is stage two.

## REPORTER

And stage three?

## SIGELIUS

Morphine. It's the only thing that works . . . But we needn't go into that. It gets pretty grisly.

## REPORTER

Is it really so . . . contagious?

## SIGELIUS (as if delivering a lecture)

It all depends. You see, we have yet to identify the virus that carries the disease. All we know is that it spreads with extraordinary rapidity, that it cannot be contracted by animals, and that even humans are immune before a certain age. This latter point has been recently confirmed by Dr. Hirota of Tokio, who injected himself with the serum. A magnificent experiment. And the fight against the unknown enemy goes on. We've been working on it for more than two years here. We have published a number of articles on the disease, articles constantly cited and praised in the medical journals . . . (Rings a bell.) We have established beyond a shadow of a doubt that . . . I'm terribly sorry. Our time is up.

## NURSE (entering)

You rang, Dr. Sigelius?

## SIGELIUS

Prepare a packet of our publications for the gentleman, will you please?

## NURSE

Certainly, Dr. Sigelius. (Exits.)

## SIGELIUS

Mention any one you like, my boy. I'm sure your readers will be comforted to know we're working so hard to combat the 'Peking leprosy.' Naturally we don't call it leprosy. Leprosy is a skin disease; ours is internal. And much as my colleagues in the Dermatology Department insist on lecturing about it, they really have no . . . But that's neither here nor there. *Our* disease is no mere itch, believe me. No, your readers may rest assured that leprosy is nothing compared with *our* disease.

## REPORTER

You mean . . . it's a lot more serious than leprosy?

## SIGELIUS

I should say so. More serious and more interesting. Only the initial symptoms are characteristic of leprosy: a small white spot on the surface of the body. At that stage we call it *Macula marmorea*—*macula* meaning 'spot,' and *marmorea* meaning 'marble'—because the spots are utterly painless and as cold and white as marble.

## REPORTER

Which is why it's also known as the 'white plague.'

## SIGELIUS

Yest. But after the first stage it goes off in its own direction and bears no resemblance whatever to *Leprosia maculosa*. We call it the Cheng Syndrome, *Morbus Chengi*. Dr. Cheng of Peking, a pupil of Charcot (and a specialist in *internal* medicine, of course), was the first to publish a description of the symptoms, and a fine description it was too. I was a reader for it back in 1923, before anyone had an inkling the disease would become a pandemic.

## REPORTER

A what?

## SIGELIUS

A pandemic. A disease that infects the whole world, takes it by storm. China provides us with an interesting new strain of something almost annually—it's the poverty—but none has had nearly the success of the Cheng Syndrome. The disease of the hour, you might say. A good five million have died of it to date, twenty million have it now, and at least three times as many are going about their business, blithely unaware of the marble-like, marble-sized spots on their bodies. And it's only three years since the disease was discovered in Europe! By the way, you might mention that the first case was diagnosed here, at my clinic. We're rather proud of it, actually. In fact, one important symptom is now called the Sigelius symptom.

## REPORTER (scribbling)

Important symptom . . . Named for Dr. Sigelius . . .

## SIGELIUS

That's right. The Sigelius symptom. As you can see, we're doing everything we can. Thus far we have established beyond doubt that the Cheng Syndrome affects exclusively individuals in the forty-five-and-older category. Apparently it finds a fertile ground in the normal organic changes we call aging . . .

## REPORTER

Extremely interesting.

SIGELIUS

Oh, you think so, do you? How old are you?

REPORTER

Thirty.

SIGELIUS

I see. If you were older, you wouldn't find it quite so . . . interesting. In any case, we also know for certain that the prognosis is grave, very grave: death occurs within three to five months of inception, usually from sepsis, in other words, blood poisoning. To recapitulate, in my opinion and in the opinion of the Lilienthal Clinic—you might also wish to mention how proud we are to be associated with the great Dr. Lilienthal, my father-in-law, by the way—now as I was saying, in the opinion of the classical Lilienthal school the Cheng Syndrome is an infectious disease triggered by an as yet to be discovered agent and the onset of the aging process. As for the symptoms of the disease and their progression . . . Let's skip over that, shall we? It's too gruesome. And the treatment—well, *sedativa tantum praescribere oportet*.

REPORTER

Translation, please?

SIGELIUS

We'd better skip that as well, young man. It's only for doctors, anyway. The great Lilienthal's classic prescription. Now there was a doctor, my boy! If only he were still alive! . . . Any more questions? I can spare you no more than three minutes.

REPORTER

Well, if you wouldn't mind . . . I'm sure what our readers would most like to know is what they can do to protect themselves from the disease . . .

SIGELIUS

What was that? Protect themselves? Why, nothing! Absolutely nothing! (Jumping up.) We're all doomed. Every one over the age of forty. You're not worried, you're still young and foolish. But just as we reach our prime . . . Come over here. See anything on my face? A white spot, perhaps? Not yet, eh? Well, I look into the mirror every day, ten times a day . . . So your readers would like to know what they do to keep them from rotting to death! Believe me, young man, they're not the only ones. (Sits down, his head in his hands.) O God, how useless all our science is! (The telephone rings. He picks up the receiver.) Hello? . . . Yes . . . What? . . . A doctor, you say? What's his name? . . . Hm, Galen. Has he got any letters of introduction? No? Then what does he want? . . . Well, well, in the interest of science! Tell him to speak to my deputy assistant. I'm too busy for his 'science' . . . The fifth time! Oh, all right, send him in. But tell him I can



spare no more than three minutes . . . That's right. (Hangs up and stands.) See what it's like? You can't get a stitch of work done around here!

REPORTER

I hope I haven't taken up too much of your time.

SIGELIUS

That's all right, my boy, that's all right. Science and the public must continue to serve each other. Don't hesitate to call on me if I can be of further assistance. (Offers his hand.)

REPORTER (shaking his hand)

Much obliged, Dr. Sigelius. It's been a great pleasure. (Bows his way out.)

SIGELIUS

Good-bye! (Sits down at his desk. There is a knock at the door. He picks up his pen and writes a while before speaking.) Come in! (Enter Dr. GALEN. He stands timidly at the door, waiting, while SIGELIUS continues to write, his head down. Finally he speaks.) Well? How long are you going to keep me waiting?

GALEN (stuttering)

I'm terribly sorry, sir . . . I didn't mean to disturb you . . . My name is Galen . . .

SIGELIUS (still writing)

I am aware of that. Now what can I do for you, Dr. Galen?

GALEN

I . . . I'm a general practitioner, sir . . . I work in . . . well, what might be called a slum . . . and well, I get to see . . . to see a lot of . . . er, different sorts of cases . . . because, well, poverty . . . it causes the proliferation . . .

SIGELIUS

Proliferation?

GALEN

Well, spread.

SIGELIUS

I see. A doctor should use plain language.

GALEN

Yes, sir . . . Anyway, with the recent pro . . . spread of the white plague . . .

SIGELIUS

*Morbus Chengi*, Dr. Galen, *Morbus Chengi*. A doctor should use precise, scientific language.

GALEN

. . . and the suffering . . . people decomposing in front of you, in front of their families . . . to say nothing of the stench . . .

SIGELIUS

You should be using the recommended deodorizing agents, Doctor Galen.

GALEN

I do, but I want to *save* my patients! I've had hundreds of them, sir, terrifying cases. And when I stand over them, bare-handed, despondent . . .

SIGELIUS

A doctor should never be despondent.

GALEN

But the horror, sir! . . . Anyway, I couldn't just stand there any longer. Something has to be done, I said to myself; I must try something. So I looked up everything written on the disease, but . . . I hope you won't be offended . . . I didn't find what I was after . . .

SIGELIUS

And what was that, may I ask?

GALEN

A path to take, a way to proceed.

SIGELIUS (putting down his pen)

And now you've found your own, I suppose.

GALEN

Yes, I have. At least I think so.

SIGELIUS

I see. You think so. You've come up with a theory, is that it?

GALEN

You might call it that.

SIGELIUS

I believe this has gone far enough, Dr. Galen. True, when a disease gives us trouble, we tend to theorize about it, but a man with a practice such as yours should stick to treatments that have proved their worth. Surely your patients deserve better than to act as guinea pigs for your questionable experiments. Experiments are for hospitals and clinics.

GALEN

But that's why I . . .

## SIGELIUS

If I may finish, Dr. Galen. I can spare you no more than three minutes. Now as far as the Cheng Syndrome is concerned, let me recommend that you make better use of the available deodorizing agents and then—morphine, as much as necessary. At least for those who can afford it. That will be all, Dr. Galen. Pleased to have met you. (Picks up his pen and resumes writing.)

## GALEN

But Dr. Sigelius . . . I . . .

## SIGELIUS

Is there anything else I can do for you?

## GALEN

Yes, there is. You see, I can *cure* the white plague.

## SIGELIUS (still writing)

You're at least the twentieth person who's come here with a cure. You're not even the first doctor.

## GALEN

But I have tested my methods, tested them on hundreds of cases. The results are clear!

## SIGELIUS

What is your recovery rate?

## GALEN

About sixty percent. With another twenty percent up in the air.

## SIGELIUS (laying down his pen)

If you'd said a hundred percent, I'd have had you forcibly removed: I'd have known you were a madman or a fake. But what now? Believe me, Dr. Galen, I understand; I realize how tempting it is to think you've gone and licked it. The Cheng Syndrome! Oh, the patients, the fame! A university chair, a Nobel Prize! A new Pasteur is born, a new Koch, a new Lilienthal! It's enough to turn anyone's head. Only there *is* no cure . . .

## GALEN

All I ask is for a chance to show you the treatment. Here, in your clinic.

## SIGELIUS

In my clinic? Come now, don't play the innocent! Besides, you're a . . . You weren't born here, were you?

## GALEN

No, I'm Greek by birth. My family was from Pergamum.

## SIGELIUS

Well then, it's out of the question. Security, my boy! The Lilienthal Clinic has government contracts!

## GALEN

But I'm a citizen . . . I've been a citizen since I was a child.

## SIGELIUS

Origins are origins, Dr. Galen.

## GALEN

But Dr. Lilienthal wasn't born here either.

## SIGELIUS

I'll have you know, my good man, that the world-famous Dr. Lilienthal was my father-in-law. Besides, as you must be aware, times have changed. But even under different circumstances I very much doubt that the great Lilienthal would have let a—forgive me for being so blunt—general practitioner carry on experiments in his clinic.

## GALEN

Oh, but I'm sure there would have been no problem. I used to be his assistant . . .

## SIGELIUS (jumping up)

You? His . . . Well, why didn't you say so in the first place? Here, have a seat. Come now, don't be shy . . . So you were his assistant! Strange, I don't recall his mentioning a Galen.

## GALEN (on the edge of his chair)

He . . . he usually called me Dr. Innocence.

## SIGELIUS

Good Lord! So you're Innocence! 'My best student,' Dr. Lilienthal used to say. 'A pity I've lost him.' Tell me, why didn't you stay on here?

## GALEN

Oh, what with one thing and the other I . . . Though actually . . . You see, I wanted to get married, and . . . well, I'd never have been able to support a family on the salary I'd have . . .

## SIGELIUS

Yes, well, that's where you made your mistake. A scientist must sacrifice his private life. I always tell my students that if they want a life in science they must rule out all thought of marriage. Unless, of course, they marry into money . . . Cigarette, Galen?

GALEN

No, thanks. I . . . I've got heart trouble.

SIGELIUS

Nothing serious, I hope. Here, let me have a look.

GALEN

Thank you, sir, but I've got other things on my mind at the moment. I'd really appreciate the opportunity to apply my . . . apply my treatment on several cases you have . . . well, given up for lost . . .

SIGELIUS

We've given them *all* up, Galen, but you're asking a great deal. Certain people would look down their noses . . . Wait, I have an idea. Anything for Dr. Innocence. You describe the treatment to us, and we'll take it into consideration, even run some of your tests for you. Just let me make sure we're not disturbed . . . (Reaches for the phone.)

GALEN

I'm sorry, sir, but I . . . I need to do the clinical work myself. And until it's done, I can't disclose the details to anyone.

SIGELIUS

Not even me?

GALEN

It's out of the question.

SIGELIUS

Is that your last word?

GALEN

I'm afraid it is.

SIGELIUS

Well, then, there's nothing we can do. I'm sorry, Galen, but it would go against every rule in the book, to say nothing of—how shall I put it . . .

GALEN

. . . your personal and professional ethics. But I have my reasons.

SIGELIUS

Namely?

GALEN

I'm terribly sorry, but I can't tell you yet.

## SIGELIUS

As you wish. Under the circumstances I see no point in discussing the matter further. Very pleased to have made your acquaintance, Dr. Innocence.

## GALEN

Bou you *can't* close the clinic to me! You've *got* to let me in!

## SIGELIUS

And why is that?

## GALEN

I can vouch for my treatment! I swear I can! I haven't had a single relapse! . . . Look at these. Testimonials from doctors. They've been referring cases to me from all over the neighbourhood. No one will ever hear of it. I work in a slum. But if you read what they say . . .

## SIGELIUS

I'm not interested.

## GALEN

God, how can that be! . . . Well, I'd better be going.

## SIGELIUS (standing)

I'm very sorry.

## GALEN (lingering at the door)

Perhaps you yourself will . . .

## SIGELIUS

What is that?

## GALEN

Oh, nothing . . . It just occurred to me that you yourself might one day need treatment . . .

## SIGELIUS

You needn't remind me, Galen! (Goes over to GALEN.) No one wants to think about decomposing alive.

## GALEN

You can always use a deodorizing agent, sir.

## SIGELIUS

Thank you! . . . Let me see those letters!

## GALEN

Gladly.

SIGELIUS (reading the letters)

Hm. (Clear his throat.) Well, well! Dr. Stradella. A student of mine, I believe. A tall fellow, isn't he?

GALEN

Yes, Doctor. Very tall.

SIGELIUS (reading on)

Well, I'll be damned! (Shakes his head.) Extraordinary. They're only GPs, of course, but if what they say is true you've had some amazing results! . . . Listen, my boy, I've got another idea. What if I made an exception, just for you, and took it upon *myself* to test the treatment. You can't ask for anything more than that, can you?

GALEN

No, but . . . I realize it would be a great honour, but . . .

SIGELIUS

. . . you'd rather work on your own for a while, is that it?

GALEN

That's right, sir. Work on my own . . . here at the clinic.

SIGELIUS

And do you plan to publish your results?

GALEN

Yes, that is . . . under certain conditions.

SIGELIUS

Certain conditions?

GALEN

I'd rather discuss that later.

SIGELIUS (sitting at his desk)

I see. You want my clinic to endorse your cure, but you want to retain exclusive rights. Is that how you envision it?

GALEN

Yes, sir. I mean . . .

SIGELIUS

The idea of making demands upon the Lilienthal Clinic! I have half a mind to throw you down the stairs. A doctor must live by his labours, of course, but turning a medical treatment into a commercial secret—it's unworthy of a doctor; it takes us back to the days of the charlatan, the medicine man, the nostrum peddler. Where is your concern for the sufferings of humanity?

GALEN

But sir . . .

SIGELIUS

Let me finish, please. And where is your concern for your fellow doctors? They want to cure patients, too, you know. How are they to earn a living otherwise? You see your treatment as a means for private gain, whereas I see it from the standpoint of a scientist and physician with a responsibility to all mankind. One moment. (Picks up the phone.) Send in my chief assistant, will you? . . . That's right. Immediately. (Puts down the phone.) It's scandalous how medical ethics have deteriorated! Oh, now and then you'll read of doctors pumping profits out of miracle cures, but wheedling an endorsement from a world-famous clinic—no, it's unheard of! (There is a knock at the door.) Come in!

CHIEF ASSISTANT (entering)

You wished to see me, sir?

SIGELIUS

Yes. Tell me, where do we keep the Cheng Syndrome patients?

CHIEF ASSISTANT

They're nearly taken over, sir. Wards Two, Four, Five . . .

SIGELIUS

And the charity patients?

CHIEF ASSISTANT

White plague? Ward Thirteen.

SIGELIUS

Who's in charge there?

CHIEF ASSISTANT

Your deputy assistant, sir.

SIGELIUS

I see. Well, you can tell my deputy assistant that effective immediately all medical treatment in Ward Thirteen will be administered by or under the instructions of Dr. Galen here.

CHIEF ASSISTANT

But sir . . .

SIGELIUS

Yes? Have you anything to say?



## CHIEF ASSISTANT

No, sir. Nothing.

## SIGELIUS

Good. I thought you had an objection. I also want you to tell him that Dr. Galen's methods are to be no concern of his. Is that clear?

## CHIEF ASSISTANT

Yes, sir.

## SIGELIUS

You may go.

(Exit the CHIEF ASSISTANT.)

## GALEN

I . . . I don't know how to thank you, sir . . .

## SIGELIUS

You needn't thank me. I've acted solely in the interest of science. Science comes first, before even the strongest of aversions. If you like, you may go and inspect your ward at once. (Picks up the phone.) Head Nurse, please . . . Please show Dr. Galen to Ward Thirteen. (Puts down the phone.) How much time will you need?

## GALEN

It should take . . . six weeks.

## SIGELIUS

Really? Your treatment is beginning to sound like a spell. Good day, Dr. Galen.

GALEN (backing towards the door)

I can't tell you how . . . grateful I am, sir . . .

## SIGELIUS

Good luck! (Picks up his pen.)

(GALEN, flustered, stumbles his way out.)

SIGELIUS (throwing down the pen)

The profiteer! (Stands, walks over to a mirror, and examines himself carefully.) No, nothing. Nothing yet.

## SCENE THREE

(A family seated around a lamp.)

FATHER (reading a newspaper)

Another article about that disease! I wish they'd give us some peace. I've got enough to worry about as it is . . .

MOTHER

That woman on the third floor is having a hard time of it. No one can stand to go in and see her any more. Haven't you smelt it on the stairs?

FATHER

No . . . Look, here's an interview with Dr. Sigelius. A man you can trust, a world expert . . . There, you see? My words exactly.

MOTHER

Meaning?

FATHER

All that talk about leprosy—it's a lot of hooey. A few scattered cases and the papers blow it up into a catastrophe. You know how people are: somebody goes to bed with a sniffle and they start crying 'plague.'

MOTHER

Remember what my sister wrote. They're seeing a lot of it too.

FATHER

Nonsense. Pure panic . . . Interesting what this Sigelius says, about its starting in China and all. Haven't I always told you we should make China a colony of Europe, straighten things out for them? The only way we'll get some peace around here. We've put up with those backward countries long enough. All that hunger and poverty, and no hygiene at all—it's no wonder they end up with leprosy . . . Sigelius here say's its contagious. Something's got to be done about it.

MOTHER

Yes, but what?

FATHER

Lock the lepers up, that's what. Keep them away from the rest of us. Take them out of circulation the minute the first signs appear. It's outrageous, that woman up there dying. You don't feel safe in your own home. And the stench on the stairs!

MOTHER

I think I'll take her up a little soup. She's so alone.

FATHER

You'll do nothing of the sort! It's contagious, remember? You and your bleeding heart! Do you want to catch it, give it to all of us? Not on your life! By the way, we'd better disinfect the staircase.

MOTHER

What shall I use?

FATHER

Wait a second. The man's an idiot!

MOTHER

Who?

FATHER

This reporter fellow. I'm surprised it wasn't confiscated. They've got no business printing rot like this! I'll write a letter to the editor, a letter they'll never forget! The fool!

MOTHER

What does he say?

FATHER

That nobody's safe. It'll get us all by the time we're fifty.

MOTHER

Let me see.

FATHER (tossing the paper onto the table and tearing about the room)  
The moron! How dare he say those things! I'll never buy that newspaper again. I'll show them!

MOTHER (looking at the newspaper)

But dear, it wasn't the reporter who said it; it was that doctor, Dr. Sigelius.

FATHER

Nonsense. In this day and age? Impossible. Plagues went out with the Dark Ages! And nobody dies at fifty any more . . . Though the man in our office who has it—he's only forty-five. It's so unfair. Why does it hit fifty-year-olds? Why them?

DAUGHTER (looking up from the novel she has been reading on the couch)  
Simple, Dad. To give young people a chance, make room for the younger generation. . . .

FATHER

I see. Very nice. Hear that, dear? We feed them and clothe them, we work

our fingers to the bone for them, and they tell us to shove over, right? We're in their way, right? And would we please hurry up and die of leprosy and leave them their place in the sun! Very nice!

MOTHER

Now dear! That's not how she meant it!

FATHER

Well, that's how she put it! It would suit you just fine, wouldn't it? Mother and Dad going puff! into thin air the moment they reached fifty. Well, wouldn't it?

DAUGHTER

You take everything so personally . . .

FATHER

Well, how do you expect me to take it? How else can I take it when I see you tickled pink at the idea of people dropping like flies as soon as they turn fifty?

DAUGHTER

But I didn't mean anyone in particular, Daddy. It's just so hard for young people to get started nowadays. There aren't enough jobs to go round. It's about time something happened to give us a chance to make a decent living, start a family.

MOTHER

She has a point there, dear.

FATHER

The hell she has! You mean we're supposed to bow out in our prime just for you?

SON (entering)

Hey, what's going on here?

MOTHER

Oh, nothing. Your father's a little upset, that's all. He's been reading about that disease in the papers . . .

SON

What's there to get upset about?

DAUGHTER

I said it was time to let people our age show what they can do.

SON

And he's upset about that? Funny. That's what everybody's saying.

## FATHER

Of course. Everyone who's young enough, who stands to gain.

## SON

That's right, Dad. What if this leprosy thing hadn't come along? How did you expect your daughter to catch a husband? And won't you be glad when I start studying again?

## FATHER

I'll be glad when you start doing anything! The times are too serious for you to go on frittering your life away.

## SON

There was no use doing anything before. Maybe things will be different now.

## FATHER

Now that you've got the over-fifty set out of the way, right?

## SON

Right. I just hope it keeps up for a while.

## SCENE FOUR

(The corridor in front of Wards Twelve and Thirteen.)

## SIGELIUS (leading a group of visiting DOCTORS)

This way, gentlemen. *Par ici, chers confrères. Ich bitte, meine verehrten Herren Kollegen hereinzutreten.* (Shows them into Ward Thirteen.)

## CHIEF ASSISTANT

The old man's off his rocker. Galen this, Galen that, and now that crowd of bigwigs gawking at Galen's miracles. Wait till the 'cured' start filing back. A nice little scandal we'll have on our hands! And you can bet your life they *will* be back, white spots and all!

## DEPUTY ASSISTANT

What makes you so sure?

## CHIEF ASSISTANT

I'm an old hand at this sort of thing. Medicine has its limits, that's all. The old man's soft in the head if he thinks we can cure anybody. No, I've stuck it out here long enough; I've got my eye on a nice little practice. And this is the perfect time for it: I'm going to specialize in the Cheng Syndrome.

## DEPUTY ASSISTANT

The Galen treatment?

## CHIEF ASSISTANT

The Lilienthal Clinic treatment. I haven't spent eight years here for nothing. Now that there's such a hullabaloo over the progress we've made. . . .

## DEPUTY ASSISTANT

But Galen keep his methods completely to himself.

## CHIEF ASSISTANT

Forget Galen! I don't even talk to the man! But with only a little priming the nurse in Thirteen told me he injects his lepers with a mustard-like goo. So I whipped up a concoction of the tonics and sedatives we used to give them, and added some yellow dye. Pretty clever, eh? I've tried a little on myself. No negative reaction. And it gives them a bit of temporary relief. So that's what I'm going to start with. (Listens in at the door.) 'Although we cannot make our treatment public until such time as . . .' He's a sly one. He knows exactly as much about the treatment as I do . . . Now he's rattling it off in French. He may have studied his languages, but he married his medical career. God, I hope I can set up my practice before Galen lets the cat out of the bag. . . .

## DEPUTY ASSISTANT

And all the patients run to him.

## CHIEF ASSISTANT

Actually, I don't need to worry. The old man made Galen give his word of honour not to use the treatment on private patients until it had been fully tested at the clinic. I'll have plenty of time.

## DEPUTY ASSISTANT

And Galen will keep his word all right.

## CHIEF ASSISTANT (shrugging his shoulders)

What can you do? The man's a lunatic! Now that he's shut down the practice he had in that slum of his, he's got no income whatever. The nurse in Thirteen tells me he hasn't a thing to eat except for the rolls he carries round in his pockets. She tried to order him a meal from the kitchen, but they caught her at it: his name wasn't on the list.

## DEPUTY ASSISTANT

My mother . . . my mother's got one of the spots on her neck. Right here. And when I asked Galen to have a look at her, he said he couldn't, he'd given Sigelius his word . . .

## CHIEF ASSISTANT

Just like him, the bastard. As if he'd never heard of collegiality.

## DEPUTY ASSISTANT

So I went and begged the old man to make an exception. She *is* my mother, after all.

## CHIEF ASSISTANT

And what did he say?

## DEPUTY ASSISTANT

'I make no exceptions in my clinic, sir. Good day!'

## CHIEF ASSISTANT

Just like him. Stone wall Sigelius. But Galen could have done it for you anyway, damn him. What's a word of honour among colleagues?

## DEPUTY ASSISTANT

If only it weren't my mother . . . The money she saved to put me through medical school . . . And I'm positive, positive he can cure her!

(The DOCTORS file out of Ward Thirteen with DR. SIGELIUS.)

## FIRST DOCTOR

Splendid, Sigelius! Splendid!

## SECOND DOCTOR

*Wirklich überraschend! Ja, erstaunlich!*

## THIRD DOCTOR

*Mes félicitations, cher collègue! C'est un miracle!*

(The DOCTORS move across the stage while talking.)

## FOURTH DOCTOR

Yes my congratulations as well, Sigelius. Your results are truly astounding!

## SIGELIUS

The clinic's results gentlemen, the results of the clinic as a whole.

## FOURTH DOCTOR

By the way, Doctor, who was that funny little chap?

## SIGELIUS

The one in the ward? Oh, that was—what's his name?—Galen, I believe.

## FOURTH DOCTOR

Your assistant?

## SIGELIUS

Heaven forbid! He just . . . drops in from time to time. He's interested in the Cheng Syndrome. An old student of Lilienthal's.

## FOURTH DOCTOR

A resounding success, I must say. By the way, I was wondering . . . You see. I have a patient, a leprosy patient, who's very important to me. He's . . . (Whispers something in SIGELIUS' ear.)

## SIGELIUS (whistling)

Poor fellow!

## FOURTH DOCTOR

Might I send him to you?

## SIGELIUS

Why, of cours, of course! Tell him to come and see me. We haven't started accepting private patients yet . . .

## FOURTH DOCTOR

I understand, Dr. Sigelius, but . . .

## SIGELIUS

But anything to do you a favour . . .

## FOURTH DOCTOR

And considering who the man is . . . I'm terribly obliged.

## SIGELIUS

My pleasure, believe me. The pleasure is all mine.

(They follow the rest of the DOCTORS out.)

## CHIEF ASSISTANT

Did you hear that? Somebody's going to make a mint out of this.

## DEPUTY ASSISTANT

No exceptions, my foot!

## CHIEF ASSISTANT

Welcome to the world of high stakes and higher connections. What I wouldn't give for a patient like that!

GALEN (sticking his head out of Ward Thirteen)

Are they gone?

## DEPUTY ASSISTANT

Need anything, Galen?



GALEN

No, no. Thank you, thank you very much.

CHIEF ASSISTANT

Well, we'll be on our way. I have a feeling Dr. Galen wants to be alone.

(They both exit. GALEN looks around, and when he sees he is alone he takes a roll out of his pocket, and leaning against the door, bites into it.)

SIGELIUS (returning)

Ah, Galen! Just the man I wanted to see. Congratulations! It's a great success. A brilliant success!

GALEN (swallowing as he speaks)

Don't you think . . . we ought to hold off a while longer, sir?

SIGELIUS

By all means, Innocence my boy, by all means. Though the results are positively astounding . . . Oh, before I forget, you'll be having a private patient . . .

GALEN

But I . . . I have no private practice . . .

SIGELIUS

I realize that, Galen, and can only praise your decision to devote yourself entirely to science. But this is a case I've handpicked for you. You'll see.

GALEN

But I gave you my word . . . my word of honour . . . I would treat only the patients in Ward Thirteen . . .

SIGELIUS

True, Galen. But let's just say that for this case I release you from your word of honour.

GALEN

But it . . . it means a lot to me.

SIGELIUS

What are you trying to say, Galen?

GALEN

That I won't take anyone on until I've completed my tests.

SIGELIUS

Perhaps I haven't made myself clear. I have agreed to take on this case.

GALEN

I'm terribly sorry, but . . .

SIGELIUS

May I remind you that this is my clinic and I am in charge.

GALEN

I've got an idea. What about Thirteen?

SIGELIUS

What was that?

GALEN

Put him in Ward Thirteen. On the floor. I'm out of beds.

SIGELIUS

Absolutely not! The patient I have in mind is a man of considerable means. He'd rather die than lie down next to the likes of . . . No, out of the question. Try to be reasonable, will you, Galen?

GALEN

The only place I see patients is Ward Thirteen. I've given my word of honour . . . And now if you don't mind . . . The visitors . . . They've put me a little behind schedule . . . Can I go back to my patients?

SIGELIUS

You can go to hell, you . . .

GALEN

Thank you, thank you very much. (Disappears into Ward Thirteen.)

SIGELIUS

The damned fool! Trying to show me up!

(Enter the CHIEF ASSISTANT.)

CHIEF ASSISTANT (clearing his throat)

Excuse me, Dr. Sigelius, but I couldn't help overhearing part of your conversation, and I must say Dr. Galen's behaviour is unheard of! I wonder if . . . You see, I've developed a serum the same colour as Dr. Galen's. You can't tell them apart, in fact.

SIGELIUS

Well, and what's that got to do with me?

CHIEF ASSISTANT

It could easily substitute for . . . for the serum Galen uses. It's harmless. I guarantee it.

SIGELIUS

What's its effect on the disease?

CHIEF ASSISTANT

It contains the tonic agents you yourself prescribe. The patients experience temporary relief . . .

SIGELIUS

. . . but the disease continues unabated, is that it?

CHIEF ASSISTANT

Dr. Galen's serum has also been known to fail.

SIGELIUS

True, true . . . But that's not the way I do things.

CHIEF ASSISTANT

Of course not, sir, but . . . what if you should wish to treat a patient on your own? An important patient . . .

SIGELIUS

That's true too. (Takes out a prescription pad and begins to scribble. Coldly and scornfully:) Has it ever occurred to you, young man, that you would be better off in private practice?

CHIEF ASSISTANT

Yes, it *has* occurred to me, actually . . .

SIGELIUS

I highly recommend it. (He hands him the prescription.) Go and see this colleague of mine and show him what I have written. He will take you to . . . a patient I have agreed to examine. Do you understand?

CHIEF ASSISTANT (bowing)

Thank you ever so much, sir.

SIGELIUS

Good luck. (Exits hurriedly.)

CHIEF ASSISTANT (shaking his own hand)

Congratulations! Congratulations, my boy! Congratulations, Doctor! It's in the bag!

## SCENE FIVE

(The same corridor. A line of orderlies in white but with a military bearing.)

OFFICIAL (Looking at his watch)

Really now!

DEPUTY ASSISTANT (running in, out of breath)

We've just had word, sir! The Marshal's car is on its way.

OFFICIAL

Let's go over it once more, shall we? All wards . . .

DEPUTY ASSISTANT

. . . are to be locked at nine o'clock, the entire staff is to gather in the lobby . . . They're down there now. Oh, and so is the Minister of Health. I've got to run . . . (Runs off.)

OFFICIAL

Attention! (The ORDERLIES come to attention.) Now for the last time: You may let no one pass but the Marshal and his party. At ease! (A car siren comes from offstage.) Here he comes! Attention! (Exits.)

(The silence that follows is broken by the welcome speech coming up from the lobby. Enter two MEN in civilian clothes. The ORDERLIES salute. The MEN cross and exit. Enter the MARSHAL in uniform with DR. SIGELIUS on one side and the MINISTER OF HEALTH on the other. They are followed by the ADJUTANT, the OFFICIAL, the DEPUTY ASSISTANT and a group of DOCTORS.)

SIGELIUS

. . . and here in Ward Twelve we have the control patients—patients suffering from the Cheng Syndrome but not receiving the new treatment—who serve as a standard of comparison.

MARSHAL

I see. Shall we have a look at them?

SIGELIUS

Your Excellency will not take it amiss if I remind him that the disease is highly contagious. Moreover, the patients are quite repellent in appearance and—despite all the measures we have taken—in . . . odour.

MARSHAL

Military men and medical men can stand anything. In we go! (Enters Ward Twelve. The other members of his party follow.)

(For a moment the only sound is SIGELIUS' voice coming from the ward. Suddenly the door bursts open and out staggers the ADJUTANT leaning on the DEPUTY ASSISTANT.)

ADJUTANT (moaning)

Horrible! Horrible!

MINISTER OF HEALTH

It's nauseating! Open a window!

ADJUTANT (with a handkerchief over his nose)

It's outrageous! Allowing guests in there!

OFFICIAL

Christ Jesus! Lord in Heaven!

ADJUTANT

How can the Marshal stand it?

MINISTER OF HEALTH

I nearly fainted!

ADJUTANT

And how could they have invited him here? The idiots! They'll pay for this.

OFFICIAL

Did you see . . . Did you see . . .

ADJUTANT

I don't want to hear about it! I've seen some gory sights in my day, but that, gentlemen, it's enough to last a lifetime.

DEPUTY ASSISTANT (running off)

Let me go and get some cologne . . .

OFFICIAL (stumbling after)

Why didn't you think of that beforehand?

ADJUSTANT

Attention!

(The MARSHAL's party moves away from the door. Enter the MARSHAL, followed by DR. SIGELIUS and the DOCTORS.)

MARSHAL (standing for a moment)

A lot of weak stomachs, from the look of it . . . Shall we go on?

## SIGELIUS

Now Ward Thirteen presents an entirely different picture. Ward Thirteen is where we have been testing our new treatment. But Your Excellency can judge for himself . . .

(The MARSHAL enters Ward Thirteen, followed by SIGELIUS and the DOCTORS. The rest of his party peers hesitantly through the door, then files in. The only sound is SIGELIUS' muffled voice coming from the ward.)

OFFICIAL (offstage)

Stop! Stop!

GALEN (running in)

No! I've got to see them!

OFFICIAL (running in after him)

Stop him! (Two of the ORDERLIES grab GALEN.) Who are you and what are you doing here?

GALEN

I've got to see my patients!

(The DEPUTY ASSISTANT runs in holding a bottle of cologne.)

OFFICIAL

Do you know this man?

DEPUTY ASSISTANT

His name is Galen, sir.

OFFICIAL

Has he any reason to be here?

DEPUTY ASSISTANT

Yes. I mean . . . Well, yes. He works in Ward Thirteen.

OFFICIAL

Well then, forgive me, Galen . . . Let him go . . . Why didn't you come before nine like the other doctors?

GALEN (rubbing his arms)

I . . . I was busy. Preparing medicine for my patients.

DEPUTY ASSISTANT (in an undertone)

Dr. Galen was not invited.

## OFFICIAL

I see. In that case you'll have to stay with me. You can't go back in until the Marshal leaves.

## GALEN

But I've got to . . .

OFFICIAL (leading him off)

Come with me now . . . (They exit.)

(The MARSHAL, SIGELIUS, and the OTHERS re-enter from Ward Thirteen.)

## MARSHAL

It's nothing short of a miracle. Congratulations, Sigellius.

MINISTER OF HEALTH (reading from a prepared statement)

"Permit me, Your Excellency, in the name of the Ministry of Health . . ."

## MARSHAL

Thank you. (Tums to SIGELIUS.) And thank *you*.

## SIGELIUS

Your Excellency, I can scarcely find words to . . . Your visit has been such an honour for all of us here at the Lilienthal Clinic . . . But we men of science are fully aware how paltry, how insignificant our worth is in comparison with the merits of a man who has averted a far worse scourge: the scourge of anarchy, the leprosy of corruption, the epidemic of barbaric liberty, the plague of social disintegration fatally sapping the organism of our nation . . . (There are murmurs of 'Hear! Hear!' and 'Well said!' among the DOCTORS.) I should like to take this opportunity, simple doctor that I am, to express my heartfelt gratitude to the greatest doctor our nation has ever known, the doctor whose intense, sometimes drastic, but always beneficial therapy has in the end cured us of our national ills. (Makes a deep bow to the MARSHAL, while the DOCTORS cry 'Hear! Hear!' and 'Bravo!')

MARSHAL (shaking hands with him)

Thank you, Sigellius. You have accomplished a great task. Goodbye.

## SIGELIUS

Your Excellency has my deepest gratitude.

(Exit the MARSHAL, accompanied by SIGELIUS, his party, and the DOCTORS.)

OFFICIAL (entering with GALEN in tow)

Double file, men! Close ranks! Attention! March! (The ORDERLIES march off behind the DOCTORS.)

GALEN

May I go in now?

MINISTER OF INFORMATION

In just a moment. As soon as the Marshal has left. (Goes over to Ward Twelve and opens the door for an instant, but immediately shuts it.) I don't see how you can stand it, you doctors.

GALEN

Stand what? . . . Oh, that.

OFFICIAL

You see what a great man he is? What a hero?

GALEN

Who?

OFFICIAL

Why, our Marshal, of course. He must have stuck it out for at least two minutes. (The car siren comes from offstage.) Ah, he's off. Well, you can go in now. Sorry we had to . . . restrain you . . .

GALEN

That's quite all right. Pleased to have met you. (Disappears into Ward Thirteen.)

DEPUTY ASSISTANT (running in)

Have you seen the newspapermen?

OFFICIAL

In the waiting room. (Glances at his watch. You'll take care of them, won't you? I've got another appointment. (Exits.)

(The DEPUTY ASSISTANT runs out and immediately runs back, leading a party of REPORTERS.)

DEPUTY ASSISTANT

This way, gentlemen! Right this way! Here in Ward Twelve you can see what the white plague looks like when not treated by our medication, but I don't really recommend that you . . .

REPORTERS (pushing past him into Ward Twelve, but immediately retreating, horrified)



Hey, let me through! What's in there? What's it like? . . . Stand back! God, it's awful! Let me through!

## FIRST REPORTER

They're all . . . They've all . . . had it, wouldn't you say?

## DEPUTY ASSISTANT

Naturally. And here, in Ward Thirteen, you will see how our patients look after a treatment of only several weeks. Go ahead. There's nothing to fear . . .

(The REPORTERS file hesitantly into Ward Thirteen. Enter SIGELIUS, beaming.)

## DEPUTY ASSISTANT

The newspapermen have just gone into Thirteen, sir.

## SIGELIUS

Oh, for some time to myself. I was so moved just now . . . No, I'd better get it over with.

## DEPUTY ASSISTANT

Dr. Sigelius will see you now.

## REPORTERS (filing out into the corridor)

It's a miracle! Amazing! Unbelievable!

## DEPUTY ASSISTANT

Dr. Sigelius will be glad to answer your questions, gentlemen.

## SIGELIUS

You must forgive me if I seem a bit overwrought . . . If you could have experienced the compassion, the moral fibre, the heroism of our Marshal as he leaned over the beds of those unfortunates . . . It was a moment I shall never forget, gentlemen.

## FIRST REPORTER

What did he say?

## SIGELIUS

His words were so flattering I can hardly . . .

## DEPUTY ASSISTANT

If you'll permit me, sir . . . What His Excellency said was 'It's nothing short of a miracle. Congratulations, Dr. Sigelius. You have accomplished a great task.'

## SIGELIUS

I'm afraid the Marshal has given me a great deal more than my due, but now that a safe cure has been found for what is popularly known as the white plague—and you may quote me on this gentlemen—I am at liberty to state that it was the most dangerous disease in all history, worse than the bubonic plague. And I cannot tell you how proud I am that the credit for nothing less than the salvation of mankind goes to our nation, our people, and that the research leading to the cure was done at the clinic of my great teacher and predecessor Alfred Lilienthal . . . (Catches sight of GALEN, who has just come out of Ward Thirteen.) Ah, Galen! Step up, will you? Gentlemen, here is another of the many devoted doctors who helped to make the cure a reality. Medicine is not a field of personal triumphs; we work together and for the good of mankind . . . Don't be shy, my boy. We've all done our bit, down to the junior nurses. On this happiest of days I am glad to have an opportunity to acknowledge the sacrifices made by all my colleagues at the clinic and to thank them from the bottom of my heart for the . . .

## SECOND REPORTER

Excuse me, but could you describe your treatment for us, Dr. Sigelius?

## SIGELIUS

Oh, not *my* treatment. It's not mine; it belongs to the Lilienthal Clinic. As far as the technical details are concerned, we shall be releasing them to the medical world in due course. All your readers need know is that a cure for the world's most devastating disease has been found. However, if you really want to make this joyful day go down in history, tell them about our great leader, our head of state, walking fearlessly among the lepers . . . A superhuman gesture, gentlemen! . . . I'm sorry . . . I'm just so overcome with emotion . . . Besides, I must get back to my patients. Good day, gentlemen. Let me know if there's anything else I can do for you. (Exits quickly.)

## FIRST REPORTER

Well, that about winds it up.

## GALEN (stepping forward)

Excuse me, but . . . if you've got a few more minutes . . . There's a message I'd like you to put in your papers . . . A message from me, Galen, the slum doctor . . .

## SECOND REPORTER

A message? Who for?

## GALEN

For all the kings, all the rulers of the world . . . Say that I appeal to them . . . You see, I was a medic in the last war, I fought in the war. And I want to make sure there are no more wars to fight . . . There, that's my message.

## SECOND REPORTER

And what makes you think they'll listen to you?

## GALEN

They've got to. The thing is . . . If they don't, they'll die of the Cheng Syndrome. I discovered the treatment; it's mine. And I won't let it out of my hands until . . . until they promise to stop killing one another. You'll tell them, won't you? You see, I . . . Nobody else knows the formula. Ask anyone here at the clinic. I'm the only one who can cure it. They're all past the cut-off age, all those heads of state. Tell them they'll rot alive . . . like the people you saw in there. Tell them nobody's exempt . . . Absolutely nobody.

## THIRD REPORTER

Would you let them die?

## GALEN

Would you let them go on murdering? When people go around pumping lead and gas into one another, why should doctors save them? If you knew what it takes to save a child's life or even set a fracture . . . But no, they want war! How can I, a doctor, condone their bombs and chemicals? I've seen what it does to a man. I don't know about politicians, but speaking as a doctor, as a doctor, gentlemen, I am obliged to fight for every human life. Every doctor must do everything in his power to put an end to war.

## THIRD REPORTER

And how do you intend to go about it?

## GALEN

How? Simple. Once every nation in the world agrees to renounce military might, I will hand over the cure.

(The DEPUTY ASSISTANT runs out.)

## THIRD REPORTER

Can you be more specific? How do you envision imposing your will on individual governments?

## GALEN

That's the hard part. I know the *governments* won't negotiate with me. But if you put it in the papers, if you make it known that no country will receive the cure until it renounces war, then . . .

## THIRD REPORTER

But what about self-defence?

## GALEN

Self-defence? I've got nothing against self-defence. If we were attacked, I'd . . . I'd shoot back . . . But why not destroy weapons before they can be used to attack? Why not require all countries to limit their arms to . . .

## FIRST REPORTER

It won't work. They won't agree.

## GALEN

You mean they'd rather see their people die an awful death? Let millions suffer needlessly? And..and..the people. Do you think they'll stand meekly by? Especially with their leaders disintegrating before their eyes . . .

## FIRST REPORTER

He's got a point there. Public opinion, after all . . .

## GALEN

That's right. You tell your readers there's nothing to be afraid of, there is a cure, and all they need do is get their leaders to promise peace . . . to sign a peace treaty with all nations and for all times . . . And that will be the end of the white plague.

## SECOND REPORTER

And if they refuse?

## GALEN

I'd have no choice. Much as it would grieve me, I couldn't release the formula.

## FIRST REPORTER

And what would you do with it then?

## GALEN

I'm a doctor, aren't I? I'd go on healing people. Poor people.

## FIRST REPORTER

Why poor people?

## GALEN

Because there are so many of them. Yes, and each recovery would be further proof that the plague can be cured.

## SECOND REPORTER

Would you *refuse* treatment to the rich?

## GALEN

I'm afraid I'd have to . . . The richer people are, the more influence they have. If the rich really want peace, they know how to get it.

## SECOND REPORTER

But isn't that a little unfair to the rich?

## GALEN

Maybe it is. But isn't it a little unfair to the poor that they're . . . well, poor? Everyone has the same right to life, yet every time a war comes along *they're* the ones who do the dying. And it needn't be that way. Believe me. If the money spent on warships went to hospitals . . .

SIGELIUS (entering quickly with the DEPUTY ASSISTANT)

I'm afraid I must ask you to leave now, gentlemen. Dr. Galen has been under a great strain lately, and his nerves are beginning to . . .

## SECOND REPORTER

If we could just find out what . . .

## SIGELIUS

There's a contagious disease behind those doors, gentlemen. It's time you were on your way. My assistant will show you out. (Exit the DEPUTY ASSISTANT and the REPORTERS.) Are you mad, Galen? I will not put up with such outrageous, preposterous drivel in my clinic! And today of all days! I've half a mind to turn you in for subversive activities. But luckily I'm a doctor and I understand what the matter is: you're overworked, Innocence. But we'll take care of that. Just give me the formula and details of your treatment and we'll make sure you have a nice rest.

## GALEN

Now you know my conditions, sir. I've made them public. And until they're complied with . . .

## SIGELIUS

Yes? Yes?

## GALEN

. . . I'm sorry, but I can't give out the formula.

## SIGELIUS

Either you're a madman, Galen, or a traitor! But I must remind you that in either case you're still a doctor. It is your duty to cure the sick. Nothing else is any concern of yours.

## GALEN

As a doctor it is my concern to keep people from killing one another.

## SIGELIUS

I will not have that claptrap in my clinic. We do not serve humanity; we serve science—science and our nation. Now let me ask you for the last time, Dr. Galen. As head of the clinic. Will you let me have the formula?

## GALEN

I'm terribly sorry, sir, but I . . . can't.

## SIGELIUS

Then get out! Get out and never set foot in my clinic again!

## GALEN

As you like, sir, though I can't tell you how sorry I am.

## SIGELIUS

And how do you suppose I feel, thinking about the people dying of the disease? Well? And what about my position? How am I going to look? I announce with great pomp that we've licked Cheng's Syndrome, and a few minutes later it's all over. And with it my reputation as a scientist. But better that than your utopian blackmail! I'd rather see the whole world perish from the white plague than put up with your plague, the plague of pacifism.

## GALEN

How can you say that? You, a doctor! . . .

## SIGELIUS

I am not only a doctor; I am also the servant of my nation . . . Now get out!

## ACT TWO—BARON KRUG

## SCENE ONE

(Father and Mother seated around the lamp.)

## FATHER (reading a newspaper)

There dear, you see? They've found a cure for that leprosy. Here's an article about it.

## MOTHER

Thank God!

## FATHER

Didn't I tell you? They weren't going to let all those people die, not with civilization what it is today. I mean, fifty's pretty young to go. Though between ourselves I was getting a little worried. We've lost more than thirty men at the office.

## MOTHER

How awful!

## FATHER

But I've got more news. One of the men who died was the chief accountant, and this morning the Baron called me in and said, 'How'd you like to head

up Accounts, my boy?' To make a long story short, I start tomorrow and in a week or two they decide whether I stay on or not. I was going to wait till then to tell you, but today's such a happy day . . . Well, what do you say?

MOTHER

You must be thrilled.

FATHER

Aren't *you*? Why, I'll be bringing in an extra twelve thousand a year . . . Hey, have we still got that bottle of wine I gave you for your birthday?

MOTHER (standing)

Shouldn't we wait for the children?

FATHER

What for? Sis is out with Heart-throb, and the boy's got his exams tomorrow. Bring it over.

MOTHER

All right.

FATHER (looking at the newspaper)

They say it was more dangerous than the bubonic plague. But didn't I tell you? This isn't the dark ages. People don't die like flies any more. (Tosses down the paper, stands, and walks back and forth, rubbing his hands.) Chief accountant, eh? 'Good morning, sir. Have a good night's sleep?' 'Could have been better, actually. The worries, the stress . . .' (MOTHER pours him a glass of wine and leaves the bottle and glass on the table.) Only one glass? Aren't you going to have any?

MOTHER

No, I . . . Don't bother about me.

FATHER

Well then, here's looking at you. (Drinks.) How about a kiss?

MOTHER

No. Please. Leave me alone!

FATHER (pouring himself more wine)

Chief accountant at Krug's! I'll have millions going through my hands every day. Millions! Sort of thing you don't give to a kid. All that talk about people over fifty being useless! I'll show them who's useless! (Drinks.) Who'd have thought when I started out there thirty years ago that I'd end up chief accountant! Not that I haven't worked for it, worked hard. And now the Baron calls me 'my boy,' not the stiff 'Mr. So-and-So'

he uses with the small fry. 'How'd you like to head up Accounts, my boy.' True, the other five potential candidates have all died recently, of the plague. Almost makes you want to say . . .

MOTHER

What?

FATHER

Oh, nothing. It just flashed through my mind . . . When I think we've got a daughter about to be married—now that Heart-throb's finally found a job—and a son who has a job waiting for him as soon as he can get through those exams of his, well, I don't mind telling you I feel like saying 'Thank God for the white plague.'

MOTHER

No! Don't! How can you say such a thing!

FATHER

Look, it's been a godsend, hasn't it? And not only to us. But we've been particularly lucky. If it hadn't been for the white plague, let's face it, where would we be? And now they've found a cure. In other words, we're safe. Which reminds me: I haven't finished the article yet. (Picks up the newspaper.) There, didn't I tell you? That Sigelius knows what he's talking about. It was his clinic that came up with the cure. And that Marshal of ours—what a hero! You'll have to read this. He actually walked through one of the leper wards. It took a superhuman effort, they say. Yes, he's a great man, the Marshal. I caught a glimpse of him once in his car. A great man and a great warrior.

MOTHER

So . . . we're going to have a war?

FATHER

Of course. With a military leader like the Marshal it'd be a crime not to. We're working three shifts at Krug's—armaments, all armaments. Don't tell anybody, but we've come up with a new gas, one that really does its stuff, and the Baron's building six new factories. Imagine what it means to be a department head *now*. I'd never have taken it on, believe me, if I hadn't seen it as my patriotic duty.

MOTHER

I just . . . I just hope the boy won't have to go.

FATHER

We've all got our patriotic duty, dear. (Drinks.) Though I bet he won't pass the physical. Not that it matters really: the war won't last a week. We'll smash them to bits before they know what's hit them. That's the way it's done nowadays, dear . . . Now let me get back to that article . . .



(Reads a while in silence, then tosses down the paper.) Well, of all the . . . What right does he have . . . And they print it! Why, I'd stand him up before a firing squad, the traitor!

MOTHER

Who are you talking about, dear?

FATHER

Look at this! The cure—it was discovered by a fellow named Galen, and this Galen fellow won't give it to any country unless it signs a 'universal peace treaty.'

MOTHER

Well, what's wrong with that?

FATHER

You can't be serious! How can any country sign a peace treaty after the millions we've spent on arms? Universal peace? Universal crime! They'd have to close down all of Krug's factories. Two hundred thousand people out on the streets. And you ask what's wrong. That peace talk of his—it's downright subversive. They ought to throw him in jail. The nerve of that dirty pipsqueak, ordering the world to disarm.

MOTHER

But he's the one who found the cure . . .

FATHER

We'll see about that. I bet he's not even a doctor; I bet he's a secret agent, a spy sent to sow dissension in our ranks. I say throw him in jail first and ask questions later. It's the only way to get at the truth.

MOTHER

But supposing he really did find the cure . . . (Picks up the paper.)

FATHER

That just makes it worse. We'll have to squeeze it out of him. And don't worry—we've got ways of making him talk. You don't think we're going to stand by while that snake in the grass lets us die off like flies for his stupid utopia! Some humanitarian he is!

MOTHER (looking at the paper)

But all he wants is to stop people from killing one another . . .

FATHER

And what about his country's honour? And . . . and . . . well, if the country needs elbowroom, you think people are going to hand it to us? Anyone who says it's wrong to kill is opposed to our most vital interests, understand?

MOTHER

No, I don't. I think peace is our most vital interest.

FATHER

Look, I don't want to argue, but let me tell you: if I had to choose between the white plague and universal peace I'd choose the plague. There, now you know where I stand.

MOTHER

Whatever you say, dear . . .

FATHER

Wait a second, what's wrong with you? You're all . . . What are you wearing that shawl for? Are you cold?

MOTHER

No.

FATHER

Then take it off. (Pulls the shawl. MOTHER stands without a word.) O my God! A white spot!

## SCENE TWO

(GALEN's waiting room. Two LEPERS and MOTHER and FATHER are waiting their turn.)

FIRST LEPER

Want to see my throat?

SECOND LEPER

Looks good.

FIRST LEPER

You bet it does! The doc says I'm coming along just fine.

SECOND LEPER

Know what he said to *me*? 'You're on your way,' he said, 'It's gone down a lot since last time.'

FIRST LEPER

You see?

SECOND LEPER

You know, he didn't even want to take me at first. 'You're a baker,' he said. 'I only treat the poor.' So I said to him, I said, 'Nobody'll buy bread

from a leper.' That changed his mind . . . (The LEPERS exit into the consulting room.)

FATHER

You see, dear? He refused at first, but he *is* treating him.

MOTHER

O God! I'm so afraid . . .

FATHER

I'll fall on my knees. I'll beg for mercy. He'll give in when he hears we've got two children. There's my job, I know, but I worked my way up from the bottom, by the sweat of my brow. Remember all those years we scrimped and saved . . . He *can't* turn us away.

MOTHER

But people say he takes only the poorest of the poor . . .

FATHER

I'd just like to see him turn you away! I'll tell him a thing or two!

MOTHER

Really, dear, you mustn't be so violent!

FATHER

All I mean is I'll tell him it's his duty to help his fellowman. I'll tell him I'll spare no expense where my wife is concerned . . .

GALEN (entering)

What can I do for you?

FATHER

I . . . We . . . were hoping you'd be kind enough to . . . You see, my wife here . . .

GALEN

What do you do for a living?

FATHER

Me? Uh, well, I'm chief accountant . . . at Krug's.

GALEN

Krug's? I'm sorry, terribly sorry, but I can't help you. I treat only the poor.

FATHER

Just this once, Doctor! We'll be grateful for the rest of our lives.

GALEN

I'm sorry, I can't . . . Really . . . I've only time for the poor. The poor are completely without resources, while the rich . . .

FATHER

I'll pay you anything you ask . . . Money is no object . . .

GALEN

That isn't what I meant. I meant that the rich have the resources to . . . well, stop war. When the rich speak, the powerful listen . . . If the rich used their influence to . . .

FATHER

Yes, but how can I do anything? By myself, I mean.

GALEN

That's what they all say . . . No, wait a second! If you went to Krug himself, the Baron himself, and told him to give up manufacturing guns and ammunition . . . If you won over Krug . . .

FATHER

But that would never work, Doctor. I couldn't possibly presume to . . . No, it's out of the question.

GALEN

There, you see? You can't expect me to . . . when you won't even . . . I'm sorry. There's nothing I can do for you.

FATHER

But your duty to your fellowman . . .

GALEN

That's just it, you see. I've taken it upon myself to save my fellowman from war . . . It's not easy, you know . . . Tell me, supposing you resigned from Krug's and told the Baron you refused to earn your living my making arms . . .

FATHER

Then how *would* I earn my living?

GALEN

There are industries besides the war industry.

FATHER

Well, if I could find a chief accountant's position somewhere else . . . I've been working up to this all my life, Doctor . . . Really, it's too much to ask . . .

GALEN

Yes, that's what they all say . . . Well, I'm sorry, there's nothing I can do for you. Good-bye. (Exits.)

MOTHER

I knew it, I knew it . . .

FATHER

Come on, let's get out of here. This doctor fellow's an insensitive lout. Trying to do me out of my job . . .

## SCENE THREE

(Dr. Sigelius' office.)

SIGELIUS (at the door)

Do come in, Baron.

BARON (entering)

Thank you, Doctor. I was beginning to think I'd never manage to see you . . .

SIGELIUS

Oh, I know. In times like these . . . Do sit down, Baron. You've been under a terrible strain lately, I imagine.

BARON

An enormous strain.

SIGELIUS

It's a critical period.

BARON

Critical? Ah, you mean politically. Yes, yes. Very.

SIGELIUS

Especially now that war seems inevitable. And thank God for that!

BARON

Yes, well . . . Actually, Sigelius, I came to talk to you about something else. I'd like to make a donation to your fund for white plague research.

SIGELIUS

How like the Baron! Thinking of science in these trying times. Generous with his person and with his purse. We shall of course be happy to accept whatever you see fit to contribute. You may rest assured we shall continue to make inroads into . . .

## BARON

Thank you. (Places a large envelope on SIGELIUS' desk.) Tell me, how is your work?

## SIGELIUS

You mean the Cheng Syndrome? Still raging, still raging. But I appreciate your concern. Fortunately, the war has taken people's minds off the disease. The mood is highly optimistic, Baron. Everyone seems to take it for granted . . .

## BARON

. . . that a cure will be found?

## SIGELIUS

No, no. That we'll win the war. The nation has complete confidence in the Marshal, in you, Baron, and in our fine army. Circumstances have never been so favourable . . .

## BARON

You mean, no medication is available?

## SIGELIUS

No, not yet. Except Galen's, of course. We're doing everything we can.

## BARON

But what about your chief assistant? People seem to be flocking to him. I hear he's been using the Lilienthal method.

## SIGELIUS

The man's a fraud. Baron. Between you and me, there's nothing to it. I'm glad I got rid of him.

## BARON

Then I suppose that's that . . . But tell me, what's Galen been up to?

## SIGELIUS

Oh, he went back to his slums. Pure demagoguery. Though he does get results . . .

## BARON

Any idea of the success rate?

## SIGELIUS

Unfortunately, nearly a hundred percent. Thank goodness people haven't lost their heads. You see, he has the crazy idea of blackmailing the whole world into peace. No one's fallen for it, of course, no one who counts,

anyway. And between you and me, the police are keeping an eye on who goes to see him. You'll be proud to know that all but the poorest of our citizens are doing their patriotic duty and boycotting him and his miracle drug.

BARON

But doesn't he *refuse* to treat the rich?

SIGELIUS

He's a downright fanatic. It is my considered opinion he ought to be put under observation in a mental institution.

BARON

But is there nothing that can be done to stop the disease?

SIGELIUS

Of course there is! Thank God, there is! In just the past few days I've made considerable progress: before long we'll have the contagion problem completely under control.

BARON

Glad to hear it, Sigelius. Very glad. Tell me, how do you propose to go about it?

SIGELIUS

It's strictly confidential for the moment, but . . . Well, in the very near future the government will issue a statement making the isolation of all lepers compulsory. The Marshal himself has promised to stand behind it. It's the greatest blow yet to the Cheng Syndrome, worldwide, and I'm proud to have spearheaded it.

BARON

I see . . . Yes . . . Tell me, how do you plan to isolate the . . . victims?

SIGELIUS

Camps. Baron. Everyone who develops a white spot will be sent to a carefully guarded camp . . .

BARON

. . . and left to die.

SIGELIUS

Yes, but under medical supervision. Given that every carrier of the disease is a potential spreader of the disease, we *must* protect the uncontaminated from the contaminated. All sentimentality in this regard is fatal and therefore criminal: anyone attempting to escape from a camp will be shot. In addition, all citizens above the age of forty will be required to undergo

a monthly medical examination. The Cheng Syndrome must be conquered by force. There is no other way.

BARON

I suppose you're right, Sigelius. Pity you've had so little success.

SIGELIUS

Yes. Pity we wasted so much time on Galen's treatment. Think of how it spread while he sat here pottering. There's not a moment to lose. Everyone with the disease must be put behind barbed wire. No exceptions.

BARON (standing)

No exceptions. Thank you, Sigelius . . .

SIGELIUS (standing)

Is anything wrong, Baron?

BARON (tearing open his shirt)

Care to have a look, Sigelius?

SIGELIUS

Let me see! (Turns the BARON towards the light and examines his chest, palpating it with a paper knife.) Feel anything? (After a short silence.) You may button your shirt, Baron.

BARON

Is it . . .

SIGELIUS

I can't be certain . . . A white spot . . . Perhaps a simple dermatosis . . .

BARON

What do you recommend?

SIGELIUS (helplessly)

If you could get in to see Dr. Galen . . .

BARON

Thank you, Sigelius. I suppose we'd better not shake hands.

SIGELIUS

Shake hands with no one, Baron. No one.

BARON (at the door)

You say the statement—the statement concerning compulsory isolation—will be going out in the very near future? I must order my factories to make an immediate increase in the production of barbed wire.



SCENE FOUR  
(Dr. Galen's consulting room.)

GALEN

Looks fine. You can get dressed now.

FIRST LEPER (going behind a screen to dress)

When do you want to see me again, Doc?

GALEN

Oh, a week or ten days. It may be the last time you need to come in. (Opens the door to the waiting room.) Next! (Enter THE BARON, unshaven and in rags.) And what's your problem?

BARON

The white plague, Doctor. I've got the white plague.

GALEN

Off with your shirt . . . (To the FIRST LEPER.) What's taking you so long? What are you waiting for?

FIRST LEPER

I . . . er . . . How much do I owe you, Doc?

GALEN

We won't worry about that now.

FIRST LEPER

Oh, much obliged, Doctor. (Exits.)

GALEN (to the BARON)

Now let's have a look at you. (Examines the BARON's chest.) It's the plague all right, but the earliest stage. Tell me, what do you do for a living?

BARON

I used to be a metal worker, but now I'm unemployed. I thought you treated the poor without . . .

GALEN

It will take two weeks. I can have you well again in a fortnight. Can you afford to pay for six injections?

BARON

I can afford anything you ask . . . I mean, it depends how much they cost.

GALEN

I'm afraid this is the only thing you can't afford . . . Baron.

BARON

Baron? . . . Do I look like a baron?

GALEN

This is ridiculous, Baron, and I have no intention of carrying it any further. My time is precious, and so is yours.

BARON

You're right, Galen. We're just wasting time. Look, I realize you treat only the poor, but take me on and I'll make it more than worth your while. Shall we say . . . a million?

GALEN (dumbfounded)

A million?

BARON

Well, five million then. A tidy sum. That was *ten* million I said, wasn't it? You can do a great deal with ten million. Think of all the advertising it would buy for your cause . . .

GALEN

Excuse me, but did you say . . . ten million?

BARON

Twenty.

GALEN

For advocating peace?

BARON

For anything you see fit. You can buy out public opinion for that amount. Not even *my* advertising budget runs so high.

GALEN (amazed)

You mean it would take all that money to make the press advocate peace?

BARON

That's what it took to make them advocate war.

GALEN

I had no idea . . . (Rinses a hypodermic needle in alcohol and heats it over the flame of a spirit lamp.) I'm so isolated here. Tell me, how do I go about it?

BARON

First of all, you need connections.

GALEN

You mean, knowing the right people? That sort of thing? It must take an awful lot of time.

BARON

It takes a lifetime.

GALEN

Then how I could manage to . . . (Dips a piece of cotton wool in alcohol.) Wait, I've got an idea, Baron! Why don't you take charge of it for me!

BARON

You mean, organize an advertising campaign for universal peace?

GALEN

That's right. (Rubs the cotton wool over the BARON's lower arm.) You've got the connections. And in exchange, I'd . . . well, I'd cure you.

BARON

I'm sorry, Galen, but I don't think I could do such a thing.

GALEN

No? (Throws away the cotton wool.) Strange, but you are, in your way, an extremely honest man.

BARON

Perhaps. And you are, in your way, an extremely naive man. You think you can force the world to accept peace—all by yourself.

GALEN

No, Baron. Not by myself. I've got a powerful ally.

BARON

I know. The white plague. You're right, Galen. I'm frightened. Lord knows, I'm frightened! But if fear were enough to determine men's actions, there would be no war. And war there ever has been and ever shall be.

GALEN (picking up the syringe)

Then what *is* the best way to influence people?

BARON

The best way I know is money. I've used it all my life and I've rarely known it to fail. Anyway, money . . . is all I can offer you. Just now you called me an honest man 'in my way.' Well, this is an honest offer 'in *its* way.' Twenty . . . no, thirty million for a single life.

GALEN

Tell me, if I were to ask you to . . . (Fills the syringe with the formula) . . .

call a halt to the manufacture of all arms and ammunition at Krug's . . .  
(Goes up to the BARON with the syringe in his hand) . . . would you do it?

BARON (after a pause)

I couldn't.

GALEN (putting down the syringe)

Then we have nothing more to say to each other.

BARON

You won't take me on?

GALEN

I'm terribly sorry, Baron. You may get dressed.

BARON

So it's the end. Jesus God! Lord in Heaven!

GALEN

It's not the end. You'll be back.

BARON (dressing behind the screen)

You mean I *can* come back?

GALEN

Oh yes. As soon as you change your mind. And on your way out would you please have a look at what I charge per visit?

BARON (exiting)

No, you're not so naive after all.

GALEN (opening the door)

Next!

#### SCENE FIVE

(The Marshal's office.)

ADJUTANT (entering)

The Baron Krug to see you, sir.

MARSHAL (writing at his desk)

Show him in. (The ADJUTANT shows in the BARON and exits. The MARSHAL continues to write.) Have a seat, Krug and let's get down to business, shall we? I've called you in because I need to know exactly how things stand.

BARON

We're approaching top capacity, Your Excellency.

MARSHAL

Yes, but the results . . .

BARON

Eighty tanks a day . . .

MARSHAL

Well done! We'd counted on only sixty-five.

BARON

. . . and I think we can bring it up to ninety. Also, seven hundred fighter planes and a hundred and twenty bombers. We need a big push in this area. We have more than ourselves to supply.

MARSHAL

Yes, yes. What else?

BARON

Munitions are coming along fine. We can deliver thirty percent more than Headquarters requested.

MARSHAL

And Gas A?

BARON

As much as you like, though we had an accident yesterday. A retort burst, and . . .

MARSHAL

How many casualties?

BARON

The entire laboratory team. Forty women, three men. Death was instantaneous.

MARSHAL

Sad, but the overall results are impressive. Congratulations.

BARON

Thank you, Your Excellency.

MARSHAL

Tell me, how's your nephew? My daughter never stops talking about him. I have a feeling we're soon to become relatives as well as friends.

BARON (standing)

It would be a great honour for me, Your Excellency.

MARSHAL

And for me a great pleasure. I'd never be where I am today without you, old boy. Don't think I've forgotten.

BARON

I've only done my duty, Your Excellency. To my country and . . . to my company.

MARSHAL (going up to him)

Remember the day I marched with my troops on the government? Remember shaking hands as I set out?

BARON

How could I forget?

MARSHAL

Soon I'll be setting out on an even more glorious campaign. It would mean a lot to me if we were to shake hands as we did then! (Holds out his hand to the BARON.)

BARON (shrinking back)

I'm sorry, Your Excellency. I can't.

MARSHAL

Why not? . . . O my God!

BARON

Yes, Your Excellency.

MARSHAL

Have you seen Sigelius?

BARON

I have.

MARSHAL

Well, what did he say?

BARON

He referred me to that Galen fellow. And . . . I went to see him.

MARSHAL

Well?

BARON

He said he could cure me in two weeks . . .

MARSHAL

Thank God! What a relief! So you're almost well again.

BARON

Not quite. He hasn't begun treatment—and he won't unless I comply with one condition.

MARSHAL

Well, do . . . No matter what. We need you, Baron.

BARON

But what he wants me to do is call a halt to the manufacture of all arms and ammunition.

MARSHAL (after a pause)

I see. This Galen really is a madman.

BARON

To your mind, certainly.

MARSHAL

And not to yours?

BARON

I hope you can understand that given the circumstances I must view the matter . . . in a slightly different light.

MARSHAL

You don't mean . . . You don't mean you'd stop production . . . Why, it's out of the question!

BARON

Not technically, Your Excellency.

MARSHAL

But politically! You must get Galen to alter his conditions.

BARON

His only condition is . . . peace.

MARSHAL

Oh, the innocent! We can't let some dreamer dictate conditions to us! Wait, Krug. You say he can cure you in two weeks? What if we stopped production for those two weeks. We could call it a peace gesture, a final effort towards a non-military settlement of our disagreements. You're the only man on earth I'd do this for.

BARON

I'm very grateful to Your Excellency, but it wouldn't be fair.

## MARSHAL

But war *isn't* fair.

## BARON

I realize that. Your Excellency, but I think you underestimate Galen's intelligence. He could very well prolong the treatment.

## MARSHAL

That's true. He's got us where he wants us . . . Well, what do *you* think, Krug?

## BARON

I've made up my mind, Your Excellency . . . to accept Galen's condition.

## MARSHAL

Why, that's madness!

## BARON

Yes, but fear *is* madness, Your Excellency.

## MARSHAL

And you're as frightened as all that. (The BARON shrugs his shoulders. The MARSHAL sits down at his desk.)

## BARON

It's a terrible feeling—your whole body racked with fear. I keep seeing myself behind the barbed wire, hearing myself scream for help, for mercy . . .

## MARSHAL

Listen, old man, you and I have been through a lot together. I love you as I love my brother. Is there anything I can do?

## BARON

Make peace, Your Excellency. Make peace! Save me, save us all! (Sinks to his knees.) Save us!

## MARSHAL (standing)

On your feet, Krug!

## BARON (standing)

Your Excellency!

## MARSHAL

I am highly dissatisfied with the figures you have just quoted me, Baron. You will increase all war-related output. Is that clear?

## BARON

Yes, Your Excellency.



MARSHAL (going up to him)

You will give me your hand on it.

BARON

But I can't, Your Excellency!

MARSHAL

*I'm not frightened, Krug. A leader can't permit himself the luxury of fear. Your hand, Baron Krug.*

BARON (holding out his hand irresolutely)

Yes, Your Excellency.

MARSHAL

Thank you, Baron Krug.

(The BARON staggers out. The MARSHAL rings a bell.)

ADJUTANT (at the door)

Yes, Your Excellency?

MARSHAL

Get me Dr. Galen.

SCENE SIX

(The Marshal's office. Later that day.)

ADJUTANT (at the door)

Dr. Galen.

MARSHAL (writing)

Show him in. (The ADJUTANT shows GALEN in. They both stand at the door. The MARSHAL continues to write. After a pause.) Dr. Galen?

GALEN (frightened)

Yes, sir.

ADJUTANT (prompting)

Yes, Your Excellency.

GALEN

Oh, yes. I mean, Your Excellency.

MARSHAL (still writing)

Move a bit closer, will you?

## GALEN

As you wish, sir . . . Your Excellency. (Moves a step forward.)

MARSHAL (putting down his pen and scrutinizing GALEN)

I've been meaning to congratulate you on your progress with the white plague. We have received . . . reports . . . from various sources . . . (Picks up a file) confirming your results. A magnificent achievement.

GALEN (embarrassed)

Thank you, sir . . . Your Excellency.

MARSHAL

I have come up with a plan that I trust will meet with your approval, namely, I propose to turn the Hospital of the Holy Spirit into a state-run Centre for the Extermination of the Cheng Syndrome. You will begin as director of the Centre at once.

GALEN

But I . . . I can't, sir . . . I have patients to attend to. I'm sorry, Your Excellency, sir, but it's impossible.

MARSHAL

Then consider it an order, Dr. Galen.

GALEN

Oh, but I'd have no idea how to run a hospital, Your Excellency. I've had no administrative experience, and . . .

MARSHAL

Let me put it another way. (Glances at the ADJUTANT, who exits.) You have refused treatment to the Baron Krug, is that correct?

GALEN

Why, no. I just . . . I just made it a condition that . . .

MARSHAL

You will treat the Baron without any conditions!

GALEN

I'm terribly sorry, Your Excellency, sir, but I can't. I must insist that my condition be fulfilled.

MARSHAL

We have ways of making the most insistent carry out our orders. (Reaches out to ring the bell.)

GALEN

You wouldn't do that, sir. Think of my patients. Lock me up and you have their deaths on your conscience.

MARSHAL (withdrawing his hand)

They wouldn't be the first. But you'll change your mind. (Stands and goes up to him.) What are you, anyway? A madman or a hero?

GALEN (moving away from him)

No, no hero, I can tell you that. You see, I fought in the war, as a doctor. And seeing all those men die—perfectly *healthy* men . . .

MARSHAL

I fought in that war too. But what I saw was men reaping glory for the Fatherland. I brought home a band of heroes!

GALEN

That's the difference, sir. I saw the ones who . . . who never made it home.

MARSHAL

What was your rank?

GALEN (clicking his heels)

Assistant medical officer, Thirty-Sixth Infantry, sir!

MARSHAL

A fine regiment. Decorations?

GALEN

The Gold Cross, sir. With swords.

MARSHAL (shaking hands with him)

Well done, Galen! Now, you'll go and see the Baron and . . .

GALEN

I request that you have me arrested for insubordination.

(The MARSHAL shrugs his shoulders and rings the bell. The ADJUTANT appears at the door.)

MARSHAL

Arrest this man!

ADJUTANT (going up to GALEN)

Yes, sir!

GALEN

Just remember: you may need me some day.

MARSHAL

*I—need you.* Never! (To the ADJUTANT.) You may go.

(Exit the ADJUTANT.)

MARSHAL

Sit down, Galen. (Takes a seat next to him.) How can I get it through your head? Listen, the Baron is very important to me. He's a great man and . . . my only friend. A dictator has . . . You don't know how lonely it is . . . I'm asking you man to man, and it's a long time since I've asked a favour of anyone: Save Krug.

GALEN

There's nothing I'd like better, but . . . I have a favour to ask of you as well.

MARSHAL

That's no answer.

GALEN

Just a moment, Your Excellency . . . You're a prominent statesman; you've got tremendous power. I'm not trying to flatter you, you understand; I'm just stating an unfortunate truth . . . Now if *you* were the one to propose universal peace, imagine what an effect it would have. The whole world is arming because you want war. If you said you wanted peace, the whole world would *disarm* at once.

MARSHAL

I thought we were talking about the Baron Krug!

GALEN

We are! *You're* the only one who can save him. Save all the lepers. Just say you're willing to make lasting peace, sign a multilateral treaty, and I'm your man. It's up to you.

MARSHAL

Must I talk to you as if you were a child? The fate of issues like war and peace does not depend on my will; it depends on the Nation as a whole. If the Nation feels that a war is in its best interest, it is my duty to prepare it for that war.

GALEN

But without you it wouldn't go to war.

MARSHAL

Of course not. It couldn't; it wouldn't be prepared. I prepared it by pointing out its strengths and prospects; now I am merely doing its will. . . .

GALEN

Your will transplanted into their minds . . .

## MARSHAL

The will to win. You think peace is better than war; I think war is better than peace—if it ends in victory. And I must not deprive the Nation of that victory.

## GALEN

Or of its dead?

## MARSHAL

Or of its dead. Only the blood of the fallen can turn a plot of land into a Fatherland. Only a war can turn people into a people and so many men into heroes.

## GALEN

Corpses, you mean. The number of corpses I saw . . .

## MARSHAL

An occupational hazard, that's all. You saw the corpses; I saw the heroes. What were *you* decorated for, by the way?

## GALEN

Oh, just . . . attending the wounded . . .

## MARSHAL

. . . in the no-man's-land of the trenches. Wasn't there something heroic in that?

## GALEN

It's what you do when you're a doctor.

## MARSHAL (after a pause)

Tell me. All this peace talk of yours—do you think of it as a mission?

## GALEN

Mission?

## MARSHAL

I mean, something that comes from . . . a higher power . . .

## GALEN

You mean . . .

## MARSHAL

God. *I* am called upon by God . . .

## GALEN

. . . to wage this war?

MARSHAL

To wage this war. In the name of the Nation . . .

GALEN

. . . whose sons will die in battle . . .

MARSHAL

. . . whose sons will die for it. In the name of the Nation . . .

GALEN

. . . whose mothers and fathers will die of the white plague . . .

MARSHAL

It's a miracle I haven't had you locked up yet.

GALEN (standing)

As you wish, Your Excellency . . .

MARSHAL

No, you will cure the Baron first.

GALEN

You may send him to me as soon as he carries out my condition.

MARSHAL

If that's the case . . . (Goes over to his desk. At that moment the phone rings. The MARSHAL picks up the receiver.) Yes, speaking . . . What? . . . Yes, I'm still here . . . He's . . . When did it take place? . . . I see. Thank you. (Hangs up. In a hoarse voice.) You may go. The issue is settled. Five minutes ago the Baron blew his brains out.

### ACT THREE—THE MARSHAL

#### SCENE ONE

(The Marshal's office.)

MARSHAL

Well, a general outline will do . . .

#### MINISTER OF INFORMATION

There is a new tide of anti-war agitation, especially in the British press—the English have always been fastidious about their health—and the government has been receiving petitions with millions of signatures.

MARSHAL

Nothing like agitation to slow down armament production.

## MINISTER OF INFORMATION

But the peace mania seems to have infiltrated the highest of circles. Even the King of . . .

## MARSHAL

Yes, I know about him.

## MINISTER OF INFORMATION

His Highness has had a morbid fear of the plague ever since his aunt was stricken, and he's planning a World Conference for Universal Peace. All the Powers will be represented.

## MARSHAL

That could be quite unpleasant. Any thoughts as to what we might do to . . .

## MINISTER OF INFORMATION

It's too late. World opinion has turned against war, and with a vengeance. It's the plague, of course. People don't talk about politics; they talk about medicine. Even here at home there have been some fainthearted mumblings of 'Health before heroics.'

## MARSHAL

Cowards! Just when we're ready to go. A once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Promise me you'll put an end to that nonsense.

## MINISTER OF INFORMATION

I'm afraid I can't promise a thing, Your Excellency. The young people would still go through hell and high water for you, but the older they get . . .

## MARSHAL

The young people do the fighting . . .

## MINISTER OF INFORMATION

. . . but their parents hold the purse strings . . . and the key positions. They could hamper the war effort in a thousand ways. We've got to do something to calm them down.

## MARSHAL

What do you suggest?

## MINISTER OF INFORMATION

Make that doctor hand over his treatment.

## MARSHAL

He won't do it. No matter what. I know him.

## MINISTER OF INFORMATION

But we've got all the standard tools of . . . persuasion.

## MARSHAL

No, thank you. They have a nasty habit of ending in death. It might give the wrong impression.

## MINISTER OF INFORMATION

Then there are only two alternatives: either we agree to peace . . .

## MARSHAL

. . . and give up that once in-a-lifetime opportunity? Never!

## MINISTER OF INFORMATION

. . . or strike before they can form a united front. Which means . . .

## MARSHAL

. . . striking at once. The grounds for invasion . . .

## MINISTER OF INFORMATION

. . . have been ready for some time now: conspiracies, provocation, the usual. The moment you give the word, my men stage a minor assassination leading to mass arrests of 'foreign agents.' Once the press gets hold of it, we can bank on 'spontaneous' pro-war demonstrations. I'll vouch for that—that is, if you don't wait too long.

## MARSHAL

I knew I could count on you . . . At least, praise God, at last—my chance to lead the Nation to greatness!

## SCENE TWO

(The Marshal's office.)

(The trumpets and drums of a military march fade into a wildly cheering crowd. The curtain rises on the MARSHAL giving a speech on the balcony. Waiting in the office are the YOUNG BARON Krug, in uniform, and ANNETTE, the MARSHAL's daughter.)

## MARSHAL (to the crowd)

At this very moment and at my command our planes are ravaging the cities of the perfidious enemy. (Cheers.) The time has come for me to justify my action to you, the Nation. (The CROWD shouts, 'Long live the Marshal! All hail the Marshal!') If I entered upon a policy of war with no formal declaration of war, I did so to spare the thousands of your sons and daughters who at this very moment are scoring the first of many victories. Now I come before you to ask for your approval. (The CROWD chants, 'We want war!') I see no reason to enter into bargaining sessions with a band of scoundrels. (The CROWD cheers.) They have long provoked and insulted our great Nation from without and now seem determined to undermine it from within!



(The CROWD shouts, 'Death to all traitors!') The only way to deal with this thorn in our side—this inferior, insignificant little people—is to wipe it off the face of the earth. (The CROWD chants, 'We want war!') No matter who its protectors are, no matter how they respond to our challenge, let me state unequivocally that we are afraid of no one! (The CROWD shouts, 'We want war! Long live the Marshal! We want war!') I knew you would stand by me. And I know you will stand by me when I proclaim to the entire world: We did not want this war, but we shall win it. Victory is ours! (Beats his breast.) God is with us! Our cause is just! . . . Our cause is just! (Weaker.) Our . . . cause . . . is . . . just! (While the CROWD chants, 'Our cause is just!' the MARSHAL staggers into the office, beating his breast.) Our . . . cause . . . is . . . just!

YOUNG BARON (running up to him)

What's the matter, Your Excellency?

ANNETTE

Father, what is it?

MARSHAL

Leave me alone . . . Go away . . . (Beats his breast.) Our cause is just . . . (Tears open the jacket of his uniform.) Our . . . cause . . . is . . . just. (Tears open his shirt.) Look . . . here . . .

YOUNG BARON

Let me see!

(The YOUNG BARON and ANNETTE lean over the MARSHAL's chest.)

MARSHAL

I can't feel a thing there. It's like marble.

ANNETTE (tensely)

It's nothing, Daddy . . . Don't even look . . .

MARSHAL

Let me see . . . (Feels his chest.) Completely numb. No feeling at all.

ANNETTE

It's nothing, Daddy . . . You'll see!

(The CROWD starts calling for the MARSHAL.)

MARSHAL

I know what it is . . . Go now, little one . . . Go on . . .

(The CROWD chants, 'We want the Marshal! We want the Marshal!')

## MARSHAL

Coming, coming! (Buttons up his uniform.) Please go, children, please. This is no place for . . . I can take care of myself.

(The MARSHAL steps out on to the balcony, his back straight, his arm raised in a salute. The CROWD roars, 'Long live the Marshal! Three cheers for the Marshal!' ANNETTE bursts into tears.)

## YOUN BARON

Don't cry, Annette. Don't cry . . .

## ANNETTE

But Paul, if Daddy . . .

## YOUNG BARON

I know, but still you mustn't cry. (Walks briskly to the phone, searches feverishly for a number, and then dials.) Hello? Dr. Sigelius? It's Krug, the Baron's son. You must come to the Palace immediately. The Marshal's office . . . Yes, a white spot. (Puts down the phone.) Please, Annette, don't cry!

(The CROWD shouts, 'Long live the Marshal! Three cheers for the army! Our cause is just!')

## MARSHAL (returning from the balcony)

See how they love me? This is a great day . . . Don't cry, little one!

## YOUNG BARON

I've taken the liberty of calling Dr. Sigelius.

## MARSHAL

So I can suffer according to the rules, eh? . . . Has there been any news about the planes? (A military band starts playing, and the CROWD sings along.) Hear that? Hear them singing and cheering? At last I've made a Nation of them. (Feels his chest beneath the uniform.) Strange . . . Cold as marble. Like someone else entirely . . . (The CROWD chants, 'We want the Marshal!') Coming, coming . . . (Tries to make his way back to the balcony.)

## YOUNG BARON

Allow me, Your Excellency. (Runs out on to the balcony and motions to the CROWD to be silent.) His Excellency has asked me to thank you and tell you he has some pressing matters to attend to. (The CROWD chants, 'Long live the Marshal!')

## MARSHAL

He's a fine boy . . . His uncle was my closest friend. (Sits down.) Poor Krug. Poor Krug.

YOUNG BARON (returning from the balcony)

Would you help me, Annette? (Motions to the window. Together they draw the curtains. The room falls into semidarkness, and the noise from outside diminishes. ANNETTE turns on the desk lamp.)

MARSHAL

Now it looks like a sickroom.

ANNETTE (sitting at his feet)

You'll be well in no time. We'll get you the best doctors in the world. Just lie quietly . . .

MARSHAL

But I've got no time for this; I have a war to win. As soon as I go back to work, I won't even think of it. Just here, with you . . . Just until I get my second wind. It was the commotion. You feel so much better in the dark . . . with a hand to hold . . . It will pass, you'll see. I've got to get back to the war. As soon as the first reports come in . . . Hear them singing out there? It sounds as if it were coming from . . . across a river . . .

YOUNG BARON

If it bothers Your Excellency, I'll . . .

MARSHAL

No, let them sing. Flags flying everywhere . . . I ought to take a ride through the city . . . tell everyone our cause is just . . . Our . . . cause . . . (Beats his breast.)

ANNETTE

No, Daddy! You mustn't think about it!

MARSHAL

Right, little one. Wait till I head the parade when the troops come home victorious. You didn't see me last time; you were too young. It will make you so happy . . . Yes, my boy, war's a beautiful thing. Nothing can give a man more satisfaction. Attack the right flank! Encircle the left! Another ten companies to the front!

ADJUTANT (entering, at the door)

Dr. Sigelius has arrived. Will you see him now?

MARSHAL

What? . . . What does he want?

ANNETTE

Show him in . . . into Father's bedroom, please.

## ADJUTANT

Yes, miss. (Exits.)

## MARSHAL

I see. The best doctors in the world, is that it? (Stands.) A pity. I'm much better off with you.

ANNETTE (seeing him to the door)

No reason to fear, Daddy . . .

## MARSHAL

Fear? I fear nothing. A Marshal has his . . . mission. (Exits.)

(Silence except for the march coming in from outside.)

## YOUNG BARON

Now you can cry, darling. Now you can cry.

## ANNETTE

Maybe he *does* have a mission, darling. Maybe he *is* somehow immune.

## YOUNG BARON

Immune? I've yet to see such an advanced case. For the love of God, how could he have failed to notice it until now?

## ANNETTE

He . . . he's had no time to think about himself . . . He was so sure he was right . . . (Sobs, leaning on the fireplace.)

## YOUNG BARON

I'm reporting for duty today, Annette.

## ANNETTE

But . . . but Father needs you here . . .

## YOUNG BARON

Our family has a silly tradition: we do our duty.

## ANNETTE

But Daddy says it will be over in a few days!

## YOUNG BARON

Maybe. But just in case . . . You'll be on your own, you know. It will take a lot of courage.

## ANNETTE

I'll be brave.

ADJUTANT (entering)

Dispatches from the front, Baron.

YOUNG BARON

On the desk, please.

ADJUTANT (putting a pile of telegrams on the desk)

Yes, sir. (Exits.)

ANNETTE

What shall I do when you're gone, darling?

YOUNG BARON

Just a minute. (Goes over to the table and looks through the dispatches.)  
Unbelievable! Such a small country . . .

ANNETTE

What's the matter?

YOUNG BARON

They're fighting back! We've advanced on some fronts, but the air offensive on the capital was a disaster: eighty planes downed! And our tanks are meeting with fierce resistance at several points along the border.

ANNETTE

What does it mean?

YOUNG BARON

If nothing else, we've lost time. The Marshal was counting on a pre-emptive attack. Now other countries can mobilize and come to their aid . . . See? Two of the Powers have already sent us ultimata. God, things move fast . . . And here's a third, a fourth . . . a fifth!

ANNETTE

Do you think we ought to show them to Daddy?

YOUNG BARON

We've got to . . . Don't worry, darling. He can take it. He won't let a few spots get the better of him. You'll see. He'll go straight to the map and forget everything else. He's a soldier. Point a gun at him and he won't blink an eye . . .

MARSHAL (staggering into the office in an open  
dressing-gown, sobbing)

O God! Jesus God! Heavenly Father!

ANNETTE

Daddy!

YOUNG BARON (running up to him)

Your Excellency! Your Excellency! Get a grip on yourself! (Seats him in an armchair.)

MARSHAL

Let me be! Let me alone! It will pass . . . O God! Jesus God! Six weeks! Only six weeks, Sigelius says. And then—the end . . . the end . . . Christ, why can't you feel what it means until you feel it on yourself? Jesus God, have mercy on me!

YOUNG BARON (motioning to ANNETTE to leave matters to him)

We've had some bad news, Your Excellency.

MARSHAL

What? Let me see! (Takes the telegrams and studies them in silence.) This changes things of course. (Rises.) Send for . . . No, I'll write out the commands. (Sits down at the desk and starts writing feverishly. The YOUNG BARON goes and stands at his side. ANNETTE prays. Singing comes in from outside.) A decree to lower the mobilization age.

YOUNG BARON (taking the paper from him)

Your Excellency.

MARSHAL (writing so hard his pencil point breaks; the  
YOUNG BARON hands him another)

Dispositions for the next air attack.

YOUNG BARON (taking the paper)

Your Excellency.

MARSHAL

And here is . . . (Crosses something out.) No, that won't do. (Tears the sheet from the pad, crumples it up, and throws it into the wastepaper basket. Starts writing and pauses again.) No. Wait a minute. (Puts his head down on the desk. The YOUNG BARON looks helplessly over at ANNETTE.) O God, have mercy on me! Have mercy!

YOUNG BARON

Any further orders, Your Excellency?

MARSHAL (lifting his head)

Yes, yes . . . (Stands, then staggers his way to the centre of the room.) Tomorrow . . . Yes, Annette, tomorrow . . . Tomorrow I shall take my place at the head of the armed forces. I shall direct all operations personally. It's my mission, Annette, understand? And when the war is won, I'll ride my white horse at the head of the troops . . . (A march starts playing outside) . . . as they march through the ruins of the enemy's capital. And I'll be all eyes, all bones, my flesh will have fallen away, a skeleton on a white

charger and the people will shout, 'Long live the Marshal! Long live His Skull-and-Cross-Bones Excellency!'

(ANNETTE moans and hides her face in her hands.)

YOUNG BARON

You mustn't talk like that, Marshal!

MARSHAL

You're right, my boy . . . Don't worry. I won't let it come to that. When I take my place tomorrow, it won't be among the top brass. I might prove a bit . . . malodorous for the generals. No, I'll be with the men, sword in hand, shouting 'Follow me, men, follow me!' And when I fall—and fall I must—then oh how they'll fight to avenge my death. 'Fix bayonets, men! Charge! Victory! (Beats his breast.) Vic . . . to . . . ry . . . (Grasps his breast.) Little one! Annette! I'm afraid! So afraid!

ANNETTE (going up to him, with maternal fortitude)

There's nothing to be afraid of, Daddy. (Seats him back in the armchair.) Just relax and try not to think of anything for a while.

MARSHAL

Try not to think, yes. Because I saw it all. At the clinic. A man tried to stand to salute me, and . . . a whole piece of him . . . it . . . O my God! Jesus God! Is there no mercy?

(The YOUNG BARON nods to ANNETTE and goes over to the desk, where he looks up a number in the phone book.)

ANNETTE (stroking the MARSHAL's head)

Don't think about it any more, Daddy. Promise? We won't let anything happen to you! You'll recover. Just leave everything to us. You've got to recover. Tell me you want to recover . . .

MARSHAL

I want to win the war. All I need is six months . . . a year . . .

YOUNG BARON (dialing)

Doctor Galen? Krug speaking. You must come at once . . . Yes, he's in serious condition, and you're the only one . . . Yes, I understand. Universal peace. I'll tell him. One moment. (Covers the mouthpiece with his hand.)

MARSHAL (jumping up)

No! Absolutely not! I don't want peace; I want victory! I can't stop now! The humiliation! You're out of your mind, Paul! We've got to win this war! Our cause is just! . . .

## YOUNG BARON

Our cause is *not* just, sir.

## MARSHAL

Well, and if it isn't. All that matters is the Nation, the Nation and victory! Put that thing down, Paul! Hang up! I'm man enough to die for the Nation!

YOUNG BARON (handing the receiver to ANNETTE)

I'm sure you are, sir, but what will happen then?

## MARSHAL

Once I die? Plague or no plague, I'm not immortal. The Nation will simply have to face up to it.

## YOUNG BARON

But you never faced up to it. No one can replace you, not in the midst of a war. You never groomed a successor; we would be lost without you.

## MARSHAL

You're right, my boy. I've got to see this thing through to the end, to victory.

## YOUNG BARON

But it will take more than . . . six weeks, sir.

## MARSHAL

Six weeks . . . How could God do this to me! How could He let it happen? Christ God, is there no way out? . . .

ANNETTE (into the phone)

Doctor, are you still there? . . . I'm his daughter. Promise me you'll come. He'll do whatever you ask . . . No, he hasn't, but there's no choice . . . And if he does, you will come, you will save him, won't you? . . . All right, I'll tell him. (Covers the mouthpiece with her hand.) All he wants is a single word from you . . .

## MARSHAL

No. Hang up, Annette. It's impossible. I . . . can't.

## YOUNG BARON

Forgive me, Your Excellency, but you must.

## MARSHAL

Beg that fanatic to come and see me?

## YOUNG BARON

Yes, sir.



MARSHAL

Admit defeat? Call home the troops? Appeal for peace?

YOUNG BARON

Yes, sir.

MARSHAL

Make amends. Even suffer punishment.

YOUNG BARON

Yes, sir.

MARSHAL

Humiliate the Nation basely, senselessly, and withdraw from public life . . .

YOUNG BARON

In peace . . .

MARSHAL

No! No! Get someone else to make your peace. Someone from the opposition. Get them to offer up their humiliating peace to the enemy.

YOUNG BARON

Only you can do it, Your Excellency.

MARSHAL

And why is that?

YOUNG BARON

If anyone else called for peace, we'd have a civil war on our hands. You're the only one the army will obey.

MARSHAL

If the Nation can't govern, let it perish. Why can't it do anything on its own?

YOUNG BARON

Because you never taught it to, Your Excellency.

MARSHAL (after a pause)

There is only one thing left for an officer to do. (Starts for the door.)

YOUNG BARON (blocking his way)

No, sir! You mustn't!

MARSHAL

Can't I live and die as I please?

YOUNG BARON

No, sir! You must . . . end the war first.

## MARSHAL

He's a good fellow, Annette, but too rational. He'll never do anything big . . .

ANNETTE (holding out the receiver)

Daddy, Please. What about the people who are deathly ill? Think of them.

## MARSHAL

You're right, Annette. Whole armies of them. True, they need me. Look, everybody! Here he comes! The Leper Marshal. No longer leading victorious troops. No. Leading an army of foul, rotting flesh. Make way! Make way! Here we come. Our cause is just! . . . Let me have it, Annette. (Grabs the receiver.) Hello, Doctor! . . . Yes, in person . . . Yes . . . Yes . . . When I say yes, I mean yes . . . Fine. Good-bye. (Hangs up.) Well, that's over. He'll be here in a few minutes.

## ANNETTE

Thank God! (Bursts into tears.) I'm so happy, Daddy! So happy, Paul!

MARSHAL (stroking her hair)

No more tears, now . . . We'll go off somewhere together after peace is declared . . .

## ANNETTE

And you're all better . . .

## MARSHAL

And everyone's all better. (Picks up his commands and tears them up.) A pity. It could have been a fine war, a great war . . .

## ANNETTE

And now there'll never be another. Once the biggest army in the world is disbanded.

## MARSHAL

It took me twenty years to make that army . . .

## YOUNG BARON

And now you'll make peace instead. Couldn't that come from God as well?

## MARSHAL

If it did, then peace would be another mission, wouldn't it?

## YOUNG BARON

A fine mission, sir.

## MARSHAL

A long and arduous one: I know my statesmen. But a man with a mission will put up with almost anything, and if I can keep going for another few

years . . . Peace . . . God wants me to make peace . . . You say it, Annette. I want to hear how it sounds.

ANNETTE

God wants you to make peace, Father.

MARSHAL

Not bad at all . . . A great mission, eh, little one? Ridding the world of the white plague—a stunning victory. And making the peace. We'll still be the greatest Nation in the world. It will take time, of course, but if God has singled me out . . . Where's the doctor, Annette? Where is that doctor?

SCENE THREE

(street.)

(A CROWD waving flags, singing, and shouting, 'Long live the Marshal! We want war! Three cheers for the Marshal!')

SON

All together now: We want war!

CROWD

We want war!

SON

We want the Marshal!

CROWD

We want the Marshal!

SON

Long live the Marshal!

CROWD

Marshal! Marshal!

(The honk of a car unable to get through the CROWD sounds offstage.)

GALEN (running in, clutching his medical case)

. . . Excuse me, please . . . Excuse me, I'm in a hurry . . .

SON

Once more now: We want war!

GALEN

No! No! No more war! No more war!

CROWD

What's that? . . . Traitor! . . . Coward! . . . Get him!

GALEN

*We need peace! Let me go! The Marshal is waiting for me!*

CROWD

The Marshal! Insulting the Marshal! Catch him! Stop him! Lynch him!  
(Surround GALEN. A confused struggle ensues, By the time the CROWD  
has dispersed, he is lying on the ground, motionless, clutching his case.)

SON (kicking GALEN)

Come on, you! Up! Get up! And get out of here quick or we'll . . .

MAN IN THE CROWD (kneeling beside GALEN)

Wait a second. The man's dead.

SON

Well, good riddance! One traitor less. Long live the Marshal!

CROWD

Long live the Marshal! Marshal! Marshal!

SON (opening the case)

Hey, look! Must have been some kind of doctor! (Empties the contents of  
the case and stamps on them, breaking the tubes of medicine and smearing  
the ground with a yellow serum.) There! Now all together: Long live the  
Marshal! Marshal! Marshal!

CROWD (moving off)

Long live the Marshal! Marshal! Marshal!

(Curtain.)