THE PORNOPGRAPHER

A Full-Length Play

By

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SYNOPSIS:

When real-life artist, Egon Schiele, is charged with raping and kidnapping of a young girl, his trial becomes a landmark and his artwork is deemed pornography. Charged with immoral and depraved behavior, Egon fights for his freedom. His ordeal places him, his art and his lifestyle with his girlfriend, Wally, on trial. The court case calls into question Egon’s radical upbringing and his development as an artist. Will he be erased or will he draw freely?

CAST & CHARACTERS:

Five to six actors. MEN: 3-4; WOMEN: 2

EGON SCHELIE: Austrian painter, 16-19 years-old; a latter-day James Dean, muscular, thin, innocent, striking, and sexy.

WALLY (VALERIE) NEUZIL: Early 30’s- model, prostitute, lover, 13 years Egon’s senior; she thinks her body is her prop- a modern cougar.

JUDGE: 40’s- in a heavy long white wig (double cast)

PROFESSOR GRIEPENKERL: 40’s- Vienna Academy professor (double cast)

GUSTAV KLIMT: Late 40’s- famous Austrian painter wears a caftan.

TATJANA VON MOSSING: Early Teens- naïve, poverty-struck girl with a squash

TIME:

The time swaps between the present 1912 and the past (1908-1912).

SETTING, MUSIC & COSTUMES:

The set is a life-drawing studio working as various locations including: a prison cell, an apartment, an art studio, a living room, a gallery, and a courtroom. Evenly spaced round the platform are six artists’ stations; one for each actor. The stations include: a chair, drawing and painting supplies, paper on an easel. The easels, storage boxes, and the chairs are moved for various scenes to help with the locations. Although the actors “exit” the acting area, they move back and forth from the acting area to the easels to watch, draw, and document this portrait of an artist. It is important they see what happens. They change costumes and find props at their stations. Although not necessary, the music should be classical.
ACT I:
(The lights grow with the Vienna Blood Waltz and each actor/artist enters in step with the music. When EGON, fully or semi-nude, enters each artist dances with him in a lush waltz.)

Overture
(As they dance we hear JUDGE gavel off-beat.)

JUDGE (Off-stage-voice)
No it’s not!
(They dance as JUDGE gavel’s against the music.)

JUDGE (Off-stage-voice)
Not at all! She’s a child!
(They dancing as JUDGE gavel’s against the music.)

JUDGE (Off-stage-voice)
Quiet! Quiet!! It’s not art! It’s ugly!!
(The Vienna Blood Waltz comes to a screeching halt. The artists toss EGON into a prison cell.)

Scene 1: 1912-Egon in St. Polten Prison
(The lights suddenly become murky and ghastly. We hear [sound-effect] a cell door slam closed.)

JUDGE (Off-stage-voice)
You are charged with immorality and the rape of a minor!

EGON
AHH! You can’t!—

JUDGE (Off-stage-voice)
You will stay in St. Polten Prison—

EGON
Come on!—

JUDGE (Off-stage-voice)
To await your trial—

EGON
How long?
JUDGE (Off-stage-voice)

Until the hearing—

EGON

No! Don’t!—

JUDGE (Off-stage-voice)

One month—

EGON

You can’t!—

JUDGE (Off-stage-voice)

Maybe more!

EGON

More! But I told you! I didn’t rape her. Open this door! (He yells out of anger.)

AHHH! Come on! Restricting an artist like me! That’s a crime! (He takes a deep breath.) You’ll make me lose my mind! Like my father! PLEASE!

(WALLY enters with a blanket, clothes and bread. She sees EGON’s cell. She waits. EGON looks weak, but he doesn’t see her. She wears clothes like a dream.

He’s freezing and shaking.)

WALLY

(Apprehensive) Damn, Egon. We’d [had] better stalls for our cows.

EGON

Oh, you came. (His whole attitude becomes stronger.)

WALLY

It’s official! [I said I would.]

EGON

You’re a sight.

WALLY

Well of course. You knew I’d come— Where’s your clothes?

EGON

The bastards took ‘em.

WALLY

(They hug through the “bars”) But you’re… shaking. (She pulls out a blanket.)
EGON
Not any worse than putting a nudist in the Alps.

WALLY
Oh, my god, Egon. Well… get warm. *(She doesn't give him the blanket.)* Oh sweetheart… I’m worried about—

EGON
Hey! I’m fine.

WALLY
Of course. You know I would’ve been here sooner but—

EGON
The stupid police?

WALLY
They were at the— All over the house—

EGON
Really— Well I’m fine—

WALLY
But… I mean… This? Damn. It’s not what I—

EGON
Yeah. It’s shitty.

WALLY
On the way here it looks like a downpour’s on the… you know… Dark over there.

EGON
Fine.

WALLY
It’ll get colder. And rain brings rats. Rats bring disease. And rats hate gettin’ wet. They’ll join you under that prison bed.

EGON
Then I’ll take that…

WALLY
So sorry. *(Hands him a blanket.)* Here.

EGON
From our bed?
WALLY
Your security blankie. You need it. *(There is a clap of thunder.)* Oh damn. Rain.

EGON
Christ. And there’s a fuckin’ rat.

WALLY
No. That’s the rat’s shadow. The rat’s there.

EGON *(Scared of rats but fakes it)* Well good god-damn. Company!

WALLY
Awe, baby. *(Digging through her bag.)* Somewhere in this [bag]—not that—you don’t need any make-up, but lot’s in here. Aha! *(She pulls out some food and she sees his hands.)* Damn, when’s the last time you bathed?

EGON
Before.

WALLY
Your arrest?

EGON
Yeah.

WALLY
Sweetheart, come one. Wash or the rats’ll nest in your hair.

EGON
No biggie. Thanks. *(EGON takes the food)* How’d we afford it?

WALLY
I um… Gus sent money. He’s worried too. *(As he eats)* Sent nice clean hundred’s. Tell by their smell. Dirt free. Not like one’s and fives. They smell like cleavage and crotch rot.

EGON
Not a bad smell.

WALLY
You’d say that.

EGON
Use it to get a lawyer.
WALLY
Sweetheart, lawyers and I are about as close as a Jew to the Pope. We’re in the same
room but for different reasons.

EGON
Get Uncle Leo. *(Eating.)* This is shitty bread.

WALLY
Sorry. It’s all I...

EGON
More like a brick. Could use it to get out.

WALLY
Knock out the guard.

EGON
And run.

WALLY
Right into the electric barbed-wire fence. They’d have artist for lunch.

EGON
Then get me the fuck out of here!— *(He kicks his bed.)*

WALLY
Don’t break that—

EGON
I fuckin’ hate it here!—

WALLY
They won’t be kind to—

EGON
Those Neanderthals can lick my ass.—

WALLY
Coming from a guy who looks like one.

EGON
I’m workin’ on a new look. *(Sarcastic)* Okay?

WALLY
God, you confuse me. I’m goin’ crazy out there worryin’ about you, and all this… It makes me sick. And you! You’re a freak of nature. Hot- cold- hot- cold. Sweetheart. Be real with me.

EGON

I’m tryin’.

WALLY

Tryin’?

EGON

To be strong, not real. See? (Pointing to his back where there are bruises.) Here. And here. And my legs—

WALLY

Judas Priest—

EGON

[This] Morning I pissed blood.

WALLY

God. Maybe you do need my make-up—

EGON

Naw. I just need… You know… I never… I didn’t do it.

Rape her?

WALLY

Yeah.

EGON

Did you?

WALLY

EGON

Just ‘cause some girls showed me their twats—

WALLY

Believe me. I’m here for you, but… shit… get sideways on this. As my Pop used to say, “We must get sideways on this”. Don’t face it full [front]. Plant both feet. Stand sideways, head down. Look new or we’re goin’ under.

EGON

Fine. Head down an’ look new. (Pause.) Yeah. Fine. Just don’t ask me if I did it.
WALLY
Okay.

EGON
Just get me help.

WALLY
Okay. You want me to find the girl?

EGON
NO! No way! Leave her alone.

WALLY
Got it. Okay. Maybe… Find your Uncle Leo? How do I get him?

EGON
Try through the professor.

WALLY
Not your Mother?

EGON
No. Please. Don’t. (A sound of thunder.) Hey? Can you get me…

WALLY
Clothes?

EGON
Sweet. And. An oil stick. You got in bread and the blanket.

WALLY
A “wife” can bring in—

EGON
(With a smile) You told ‘em we’re married?

WALLY
A little lie won’t damn me to hell.

EGON
That’s not what’ll do it.

WALLY
Oh please. Believe me— I worked to get in here.

EGON
The guard paid you?

WALLY

Not that kind of work.

EGON

You mean you paid the guard?

WALLY

Yes, sweetheart— For privacy.

EGON

Well then— art supplies won’t be hard.

WALLY

Sure. But dear, that’s not lookin’ at this right. That’s just art to avoid the shit.

EGON

I’m not avoiding it… It’s my way…

Sweetheart…

WALLY

It’s bad? Real bad?

EGON

Scene 2: Transition to 1908

(PROFESSOR GRIEPENKERL walks into the art studio and speaking to the life drawing students. He is hung-over. WALLY hands EGON clothes. He dresses. EGON becomes a few years younger.)

PROFESSOR

(To a student simultaneously with previous line) It’s not that bad.

WALLY

It’s bad.

PROFESSOR

(To a student) Can you keep it down? My nephew’s bar mitzvah was too good to me. Too much drink for this body.

EGON

(As he dresses) Okay. Ask the professor too. I’m gonna fight this—

PROFESSOR
(To a student) Must you paint so loudly?

WALLY
It’s a misunderstandin’. You’ll feel better soon.

PROFESSOR
(To a student) Yes, I’ve got a cold, again. You can get a cold from going from a cold place into a warm place, or a warm place into a cold place, or from drinking too much booze--

EGON
I explained it to the police-

PROFESSOR
(To a student) I explained last week—a body is not disorganized. Yes- see her from every angle, but not all of them at the same time. It looks like your drawing her through the bottom of last night’s wine bottle.

EGON
You remember when we first met?

PROFESSOR
(To a student) Putz! Begin with the head.

WALLY
In the life drawin’ class? Seems like ages.

PROFESSOR
(To a student) Oh scheisse! (Baffled) That’s her head? Got me. Try doing eyes.

EGON
Three… Four years.

PROFESSOR
(To a student) That’s as challenging as getting up this morning.

WALLY
You didn’t like me-

PROFESSOR
(To a student) Yes. Like that—

EGON
You were just a model then.
(The prison vanishes. **EGON** grabs a pencil and draws **WALLY**, standing as a model in the middle of a life-drawing class. The other artists sketch her. **PROFESSOR** walks around the studio instructing.)

**Scene 3: 1908-Life Drawing Studio at the Academy**

*(The lights on the studio are a brilliant white.)*

**PROFESSOR**

Explore the body with your pencil, your brush, your eyes. But quietly, please. See the curve of her thigh, the jut of her hip, the line of the neck. Caress your portrait with your lead. *(WALLY winks at **EGON**. **EGON** drops his pencil.)* Egon!

**EGON**

Yes?

**PROFESSOR**

Please. Your look is too casual.

**EGON**

It’s what I see.

**PROFESSOR**

Not your painting. You.

**EGON**

Livin’ with shitty rats do that.

**PROFESSOR**

And that’s called an undershirt for a reason. *(Beat.)* Model? Please turn so we see the back of your head. *(WALLY moves.)* People. Observe. Not as spies but get outside your own skin and look in for a change-- Mr. Schiele, wrong. Work the background space into the portrait. *(WALLY flirts with **EGON**.)*

**EGON**

Space means nothing without her body.

**PROFESSOR**

*(Displeased)* Dear boy, follow the rules from lecture.

**EGON**

The rules…

**PROFESSOR**

Yes?
EGON

Nothin’.

PROFESSOR

Go ahead.

EGON

It’s just… they’re wrong.

PROFESSOR

The rules? Are wrong?

EGON

(Guarded) Yeah. Kind-of. It’s just…

PROFESSOR

Yes, Mr. Schiele?

EGON

Nothin’.

PROFESSOR

Maybe you could show us what you mean, Mr. Schiele.

EGON

What?

PROFESSOR

Show us! Teach us how to draw.

EGON

But I’m not the teacher.

PROFESSOR

(Provoked) And maybe you’re not an artist either. Maybe you’re an accountant. You do draw such good bottom-lines. That’s all you seem to like to draw! (Beat.) Now, Mr. Schiele. Art is … It’s spiritual. In a way. You ever feel the presence of calm when you paint?

EGON

Yeah. Like a remedy or like it makes me feel … weird.

PROFESSOR

Spiritual. Once you get there you want to stay there, but you can’t.

EGON
Yeah. That’s it. (Pause.) Everything else floats way away. And all I see is her.

PROFESSOR
And the only way to the spiritual space of art, that place where art can enchant us is to follow the rules. Explain to us how to draw. Everyone! (PROFESSOR gauchely staggers around the class.) A new page. Pull out a new pencil. (To one of the students) Lordy! Pick up this stuff! Like my two dogs! When I get home they’ve left me a “pile”, but I don’t know which to blame.

STUDENT (KLIMT)
It’s hers.

PROFESSOR
Both of your stations are in a state of clutter.

STUDENT (TATJANA)
Yes, Professor. Sorry.

PROFESSOR
And I thought gentiles were supposed to be neat. Alright. Class. Egon? Go ahead.

EGON
Okay… I look.

PROFESSOR
You look at what?

EGON
I look at the whole thing, not the parts.

PROFESSOR
All of her?

EGON
Yeah. Her. Right. See, if you look at the parts you’ll be … [confused]. (WALLY flirts with him and he gets uncomfortable and speaks quickly.) See this… hand? Look too long, and it’ll get bigger and bigger… and it’ll grow and grow until… It’ll look out of [place]. Hard. Hard to fit in. It’s difficult as the penis is starring… I mean the problem with starring at a beautiful [object] or I mean… starting to draw is we see it too fast, like too much. Looking at her, she appears random. All tits and pieces.

PROFESSOR
Tits?

EGON
Bits and pieces. But it lines up. *(Using a paintbrush to show the lines he speaks of.)* So. Begin in a void. Find where to place my head.

WALLY

Place it in my lap.

EGON

Not my head, your head. Look at it with detachment but with feeling. *(Handling WALLY)* And see the lines.

WALLY

I don’t have any lines.

EGON

Yeah you do.

WALLY

*(Aghast)* Screw you!

PROFESSOR

He means ones you can’t see. *(PROFESSOR weaves around the class, clumsily in and out of the easels.)* Artists find connections the ordinary dodo birds don’t.

EGON

Yeah. I didn’t mean nothin’ by it. But there’s lines like here. At the eye-line. Here. Right in the middle—between the top of the head and the bottom of the chin.

PROFESSOR

Class pay attention. *(He continues to walk around the class.)*

EGON

Well, it’s here. Halfway between the eye line and the bottom of the chin is the nose, at least the end of the nose. That’s what I look for. Now halfway between the end of the nose, and the bottom of the chin, [is] the mouth-line. You can draw these connections in lines. Then line up the vertical lines, up and down-- the corners of the mouth, line-up to the pupil of the eye.

PROFESSOR

Ahh! *(Acerbic)* Everything lines up in a portrait, but not in order.

EGON

Right. Not a neat lay-out.

PROFESSOR

But still the composition, the planning, the order is there. Now class—
(PROFESSOR stumbles over a student’s bag, and falls to the floor. EGON quickly moves to him.)

EGON

Professor! Are you okay?

PROFESSOR

Dear boy. I…

EGON

Are you hurt?

PROFESSOR

I just … [I stepped wrong].

EGON

Here. Let me help you.

PROFESSOR

Up we go.

EGON

Easy.

PROFESSOR

This is why I tell you [students to] be more organized. You might hurt someone with your art. (To EGON) Thank you. I’m fine.

EGON

Are you sure?

PROFESSOR

Yes. Thank you. (Sigh) Oh Lord. And wash before next class.

EGON

My brushes are clean.

PROFESSOR

But your breath and your body aren’t. Try bleach. (To the class) Now, students, tomorrow Gustav Klimt and the Secession have their seasonal show.

EGON

They aren’t taking new students.

PROFESSOR
You don’t need them. Do not attend. Attendance is against our policy. Also, don’t forget. Your portfolio of imitations of the masters is due. My office Friday. Shalom.

(The lights suddenly shift from optimistic to gloomy as WALLY and PROFESSOR exit to the artist stations.)

Scene 4: Tatjana’s Testimony- One

(As PROFESSOR and WALLY return to their easels the lights dim on EGON. He moves to the “prison cell”. TATJANA, a young girl, comes out of the class dressed in a children’s girl’s cape, and gives her testimony. She has a black eye and busted lip.)

TATJANA

(Fuming) He beat me! Then … Yeah, that’s what he did. Each night. He then would sneak into my room. He did! That’s where he did it. I don’t want to say it. I suffered. Bad. He made me. He yelled. He yelled at me. So I did. I took off… my pants. He made me take off his. I cried. He stopped me. Physically! He forced me! His hand over my [mouth]. Like this. No one heard me. I still screamed. Like this! (Scream.) I screamed. All the way through it. It was bad. Tell the police?… I can’t tell them. I don’t want to. Trust me. It was bad. Saying it… is just as bad. It was daily. If I resisted. Worse. Worse than you can imagine! AND I HAD NO ONE TO CRY TO! Not Wally. Yeah. The other girl. She … I can’t say it. (She listens.) You want me to … what? Write it down? But… Why? It’s bad. Real bad.

(TATJANA fades. In the distance a train is heard.)

Scene 5: The Prison Cell

(The cell light is shady. EGON drawing on the floor and WALLY enters.)

WALLY

(Wound up) I’ve got news!

EGON

What? You’ve got fuckin’ lice too?

WALLY

No. But… Stop it. You’ll love what I’ve got to tell—

EGON

Uncle Leo said yes?

WALLY

Sorry. No. He’s as stubborn as a dog that won’t get off the bed.
EGON
Next time dangle bacon in front of him. And Mother?

WALLY
You said—

EGON
I know what I said. Try Gustav.

WALLY
Oh I have.

EGON
Tempt him with your sexy tomatoes.

WALLY
(Lying) His lawyer might be able to—

EGON
You bring me a pint of Black Bush?—

WALLY
You hungry?

EGON
Yeah. All I do is jack-off, sleep, wank some more and dream of food. (Pulling WALLY to him) What’d ya’ eat?

WALLY
Spaghetti and tomato sauce.

EGON
Give me some of that.

WALLY
(Impatient) Oh please. Don’t ruin my good—

EGON
(He kisses her.) Mmm. Garlic and basil. [Tasty.] But I need more.

WALLY
(Pushing back) Stop it!

EGON
(EGON physically forces himself on WALLY.) A little more sweet pasta.
WALLY
I didn’t come for this.

EGON
Come on. *(Sexually)* I’ll give you some real meat.

Get off me!

EGON
Please!

WALLY
Egon, I mean it! OFF!

EGON
You sure can cheer up a guy.

WALLY
I don’t deserve this. While you’ve been in here I’ve been getting you help—

EGON
But we don’t have any money.

WALLY
I have a few tricks up my skirt.

EGON
And you’ve had a few tricks up your skirt.

EGON *(Moving his hand up Wally’s skirt.)*
But I’m going to find the next trick up—
It’ll calm me—
Make me happy!—
Why?! It’s what we do—

WALLY
Don’t do that!
I told you … don’t!—
Stop! I said NO!
And I meant NO!
Get your hands out—!

EGON *(He finds a letter up her skirt.)* What’s this?

WALLY
That’s my news, you little shit! I was going to give it to you but then you--- GOD!

EGON
Professor Gripe?
WALLY
Yeah. He fuckin’ sent a letter! *(EGON puts the letter in his pocket. She fixes herself.)* Damn Egon, you don’t get it! You’re about to lose everything. And you wonder why they think you did that to Tatjana?

EGON
Leave it!

WALLY
GOD! You could get life. Life in prison. Get it?

EGON
I get it.

WALLY
Do you? Then why are you doing *this*— here? They’re watchin’ you. You’ve got no help, no lawyer, no money, and with your record... if you don’t take this more—see it for what it is— you’ll be locked away and they’ll throw away the key. You’ll leave me no choice but—

EGON
Please. Don’t.

WALLY
Then behave! *(EGON nods.)* Give me some respect, okay? *(EGON nods.)* You’re on notice. Look at the road we’re on.

EGON
I’m sorry. I just…. I’ll behave. *(Silence between them.)* So? When this is all over we’ll go to America.

WALLY
If. A big if.

EGON
But then we could walk down Madison Avenue—

WALLY
With a white stallion on lead—

EGON
Right up the steps of the museum—

WALLY
To see your grand opening.
EGON
I want my first big show in The Reichstag.

WALLY
In Berlin? Why not New York or London?

EGON
I don't know. Just the big doors, and into the great hall of parliament, and whoa (sees it)! There you'd be. A portrait of you bigger than life. You and me. And all of my girls.

WALLY
That would be nice.

EGON
Yeah. With help from the professor there’s hope. Maybe we can get Klimt.

WALLY
I don’t think Gustav’s going to help us.

EGON
Why not? (WALLY is silent.) He’s jealous of my talents.

EGON
Oh, sweetheart. You’ve got a lot to learn. Green was never Klimt’s color. Gold was.

(The prison fade, and we hear applause.)

Scene 6: 1908-Meeting Klimt and Wally
(Everyone enters the dazzling studio with a big black box and face up-stage toward the box hiding the paintings “The Kiss”. They applaud as KLIMT, wearing his work clothes, enters with his model, WALLY, and stands by his painting.)

KLIMT
Work from the Wiener Werkstaate. Art in harmony. The entire month we are showing a collection around this. We believe our homes are, or should be places of art in synch. No area of life escapes our attention. From baby clothes to gravestones. Even the cakes, plates and glasses are in harmony. We start with this!

(WALLY removes a black cloth covering the box with “The Kiss” inside behind glass. We hear applause.)

KLIMT
The Kiss. See? Harmony. Flowers. And a couple merged into one.
EGON
Amazing. Is that your wife?

KLIMT
The woman [in the painting]? No. I’d never allow it. I’m not married. That woman over there, she’s not really my wife, just my secretary. Anyway art should never be about the artist. We should surround ourselves with it. Vanquish the ugly! (Seeing two guests at the show) Rub-out the repulsive. Hide the hideous. And who let those two out? —

WALLY
(Interrupting) The General and his wife--

KLIMT
(Speaking over her) Stay with me—He’s generally horrid. They’re beauty and the deceased. But I’d love to have her in my studio.

WALLY
You’re a dirty—

KLIMT
Bird.

WALLY
Dirty—

KLIMT
Bird. I know. And he’s ugly! (Beat.) They are why I paint. If reality can’t be beautiful, our art must be.

EGON
And it is beautiful. Like your Beethoven piece?

KLIMT
The Garden of Love?

EGON
(Lying) My prof took us. Professor Gripepenkerl was my field trip buddy. Or I was his prison bitch, depending on who you asked.

KLIMT
Ah, dear professor Gripe-and-kill any talent he sees. Are you at the Vienna Fine Arts Academy?

EGON
Yeah. “vifaa”, as we like to call it.

WALLY
Has “vifaa” changed their policy?

EGON
(Lying) Yeah. (Honestly.) No.

WALLY
You’ve got bigger balls than Gus here—

KLIMT
And Mr. Big Balls, if your professor saw you, wouldn’t “vifaa” be “offa” [over]?

EGON
Yeah. But he’ll never know.

WALLY
Unless I walk over there and tell him.

EGON
Please don’t. I really like it.

WALLY
So? You like what you see?

EGON
(Looking at Wally) Yeah. You bet.

KLIMT
Last guy who bet on her lost his pants, his shirt, and his health.

EGON
(To Klimt) No. I mean I liked your work. I wanna be good as you.

KLIMT
Maybe some fairy will make your dreams come true.

EGON
It’ll never happen…

WALLY
Why not?

EGON
If someone, you know, noticed me, maybe they’d take me in, and I’d learn—
KLIMT
You’d join them?—

EGON
Yeah. If they’re good as you, wouldn’t matter if he’s a dwarf. I’d join him—

KLIMT
*(Speaking over him and quickly)* Of course you don’t mean me. I’m not looking for parasites. Had ‘em. Don’t want ‘em. Moochers that is. Especially pooch moochers. Those artists are like dogs who want everything you’re eating, and can’t wait until you’re done with your plate before they start stealing off you. “You’re not going to eat that are you?” “Well, no, but I…” “Thanks! Hey can I have your napkin too?” Moochers do this—

WALLY
*(Interrupting)* You’ve taken on a few young artists, Gus--

KLIMT
*(Speaking over her)* Stay with me— I’m not sayin’ I won’t. It’s just you’ve got to know more than how to paint to get a show like this. Make them want you. Dress well! Less like Oliver Twist. Hit the salon. ‘Course they’ll probably hit you back, but insist on them making you noticeable so the next time you bump into a buyer—

WALLY
Be willing to do—

KLIMT
*(Speaking over her)* They won’t—Stay with me— they won’t be willing to take their eyes off you. I know what I’m saying. Find out whatever you can about their passions.

EGON
How?

KLIMT
Learn their craft and learn yours better than the best. Do it in such a way they want to learn from you.

EGON
*(Flattering KLIMT)* I’d love to do good art, like yours. You know beauty.

KLIMT
I do; but it’s subjective.

EGON
Right. *(Enthralling KLIMT.)* Beauty’s up for grabs.

**KLIMT**
Like a wedding bouquet tossed to a crowd of virgins.

**WALLY**
You know any virgins, Gustav?

**KLIMT**
Apparently not.

**EGON**
Beauty is tough to grab. But you’ve got it.

**KLIMT**
Chasing it leaves you as cold as my marriage bed. Yet, many great works survive by luck. Sometimes it is being in the right place, being seen by the right person… praised by the right institution. Many fine things are thrown out because someone was uncomfortable with ‘em.

**EGON**
So be careful what you throw away?

**WALLY**
Yesterday I threw out my expensive boots and kept my comfortable ones.

**KLIMT**
I’ve done the same with models.

**EGON**
So who decides?

**KLIMT**
Who decides what?

**EGON**
Who decides what’s “comfortable”? What we keep?

**KLIMT**
The institution. That’s why I created my institution, so I decide.

**EGON**
And you decide who is good?

**KLIMT**
In a way. I’d rather I do it than let the institutions. Then someday, the institutions rejecting me will be the very institutions buying me when I’m old.

EGON
I don’t want to be acceptable because I’m old.

KLIMT
Of course. Who wants to be acceptable because they’re dead? Don’t lose hope.

EGON
That’s what they’re doing to me at the “vifaa”.

WALLY
Not goin’ well?

EGON
Nope. [They’re] Filling my life with what they want.

WALLY
You know what you want?

KLIMT
Sorry. Let me introduce you to my model, Valerie Neuzil.

EGON
I’m Egon.

KLIMT
(Knowingly) Schiele? Oh?

WALLY
My friends call me Wally.

EGON
Wally? Wild.

KLIMT
Well, yes she is.

WALLY
You were in the life drawin’ class. [I was] the model.

EGON
Right! Sure.

KLIMT
She’s trying to get to America. Wally reminds me of the American flag. Both’ve had 45 stars on them.

WALLY
Check your self, old man.

KLIMT
*(Speaking over her)* Stay with me— Wally. You know I love you.

WALLY
The way you love a worm before you stick it on a hook.

KLIMT
Come on. Don’t get offended. You end up making your anger lines connect all over your face. Looks like the Berlin railway system.

WALLY
Oh, Gus. You’ve got about as much taste as homemade wine.

KLIMT
Perhaps she could model for you. Take her.

WALLY
You can’t swap me like we’re at some county fair.

EGON
I couldn’t pay you.

KLIMT
Neither could the priest, but she still did a job for him.

WALLY
Stop it, Gus. So, Egon? *(He nods.)* Show us your art--

*(EGON unrolls some drawings. They hold EGON’s paintings in contrast to KLIMT’s.)*

EGON
Well, my stuff… It’s the best and the worst of us.

KLIMT
*(Looking at EGON’s drawings.)* Dear, boy? You’re how old?

EGON
Sixteen. I’m gonna be-
WALLY
How do you… what do you see?

EGON
The feeling. The moment. What’ll be gone. A flash. Here. Two women. Legs locked in a kiss. Did it in my studio. I’m tryin’ to capture… the feeling of … guilt. She looks right at you. The spectator involved in— A feeling of truth…

WALLY
Truth or dare.

KLIMT
Very bold. Risqué.

EGON
Or risky. I like to think it’s more risky. What I try to capture is their feeling first, in their eyes. Her eyes leave something to be desired.

KLIMT
Yes, the rest of her. Boy, understand— they’re teaching you rules.

EGON
Maybe you could teach me a thing or two?

KLIMT
More like ten. Sure. I’d like to.

WALLY
You’re goin’ to be a success.

KLIMT
Valerie, get my secretary. She must help with the ugly part of art. (Beat.) Selling it.

WALLY
(With a kiss to Klimt) Yes, Gus.

KLIMT
And have her bring my wallet. I want two of these.

EGON
Two of mine?

KLIMT
Is that too many?

EGON
No. No, of course not. Wow.

WALLY

Good to meet you, Egon.

EGON

Yeah. My pleasure.

KLIMT

Not yet. (Beat.) Come by my workshop tomorrow.

WALLY

And meet all the elves.

EGON

I can’t. I’ve an assignment, and I haven’t started it.

WALLY

Tonight, think of me. Draw what happens. Tomorrow, show us. We’re doin’ nudes.

KLIMT

(As WALLY exits to her artist station.) We’ll corrupt you together.

EGON

Professor won’t like that.

KLIMT

But I’ll introduce you to more beautiful models.

EGON

I’d like that!

KLIMT

I’ll talk to the old Jew.

(KLIMT exits to his easel station. There is the sound of thunder and the lights shift back to the cell on EGON as he rolls up his paintings. PROFESSOR enters into his own spot light with files and a cane.)

Scene 7: The Prison Cell- Professor’s Letter

(EGON in the cell removes a letter, and reads it.)

PROFESSOR

Shalom, Mr. Schiele—this letter may come as a surprise, but you’ve always surprised me too. I am very sorry for your arrest. My prayers are with you. Yahweh
is watching over you, as if you were my own. In him, place your trust. Their attack on you is an attack on us. The police came to the school. Investigated all of us. They took some of your “assignments”. I hide the most incriminating ones. They’re gathering evidence against you. As you wait and stew. I hear it’s the waiting, the silence, the isolation that destroys your mind. So paint, create or you’ll lose it. We prayed last Sabbath and took up a collection.

EGON
(Seeing there’s no money) Cheap skate.

PROFESSOR
Rather than send you the money, I’m sending it to a friend: the judge’s wife. We courted years back. She enjoyed my murals. Yet, since she’s only half my tribe… her father found her a more suitable suitor, the judge. We correspond in secret, so the donation to her favorite charity should come in handy.

EGON
What charity? The firing squad ball?

PROFESSOR
We are worried. I don’t believe everything I read in the papers. But... Next time, run right home. Sincerely, Professor –

(The lights change, and PROFESSOR walks forward. The cell disappears. EGON is in his lively studio.)

Scene 8: 1908- Egon’s Studio and Homework
(EGON turns as PROFESSOR walks in with a folder of paintings and his cane. EGON’s hair is messy.)

EGON
Professor. Welcome to my studio.

PROFESSOR
Egon, what did you do to your hair?

EGON
Something new. If I’d know you were… I’d’ve picked up the place.

PROFESSOR
After I received these I didn’t know what to do. And today walking the Ringstrasser and I realized I was nearby. And—

EGON
And— “Why not stop in?”
PROFESSOR
Yes.

EGON
And how are you? After that nasty fall?

PROFESSOR
Much better. Thank you. (Dismissing the subject) So [this is it].

EGON
Yeah…Uncle Leo’s helping in exchange.

PROFESSOR
In exchange for …?

EGON
Small portraits. Women. Legs spread. Lesbians, doin’ it. Those are big sellers.

PROFESSOR
And he sells them?

EGON
Yeah. To friends. Politicians. Pays the bills.

PROFESSOR
(Sarcastically) If it works … Women come here? (Shaking his head)

EGON
(Giggles) Yeah. They come. But I wouldn’t call ‘em “women”.

PROFESSOR
What would you call ‘em?

EGON

PROFESSOR
(Nearly seated) Where?

EGON
On that chair.

PROFESSOR
(Standing up quickly) Thank you. I’ll stand.

EGON
You could come watch.

PROFESSOR

No, thank you.

EGON

They’re friendly. I found ‘em through this gyno-doc.

PROFESSOR

A woman’s doctor?

EGON

Yeah. He lets me draw ‘em during exams or—

PROFESSOR

Egon! (As if to God.) Oh Lord help in--

EGON

What?

PROFESSOR

It isn’t … appropriate.

EGON

Oh.

PROFESSOR

Dear boy, it’s come to my attention you’re—

EGON

So you got my note?

PROFESSOR

You’re not happy at the Academy—

EGON

Please. Who couldn’t tell—

PROFESSOR

Explains why you were at the show the other night. Talking to Herr Klimt.

EGON

Yeah… but—

PROFESSOR

Strutted in there like a god.
EGON
I wanna work with him.

PROFESSOR
You think you’re going to study with him?

EGON
Like a mentor-- yeah.

PROFESSOR
Is that why you did this “so-called-letter” on the back of this...

EGON
You didn’t like the nude or the letter?

PROFESSOR
(He produces a watercolor from his folder.) Never tell anyone I taught you to paint.

EGON
It was good.

PROFESSOR
Your good and my good are at odds. You did this here?

EGON
Yeah. What’s wrong?

PROFESSOR
I hope the curtains were drawn.

EGON
And block out the good light?

PROFESSOR
This is you… naked … with a huge…

EGON
Penis.

PROFESSOR
Dear Lord!

EGON
Father named my body parts. This leg is Crown. My left is Rudolph. And that’s “Prince”. Crown Prince Rudolph!
PROFESSOR
Disgusting! You’re abusing yourself!

EGON
(Innocently) No I’m not. You wanna see?

PROFESSOR
You’re masturbating! Herr. Schiele! You can’t just request to work with Klimt on the back of this and shove it under my door.

EGON
Next time I’ll nail it to your door.

PROFESSOR
Keep it up and you’ll be out the door! (Pause.) Egon, these others—fine. Your other work is very good. But then you throw in this and I don’t know what to do.

EGON
Grade it.

PROFESSOR
Or use it for my ass! You were supposed to copy David. (Pronounced in the French manner, Da-ved.) Not paint yourself with a goliath penis in your hands!

EGON
I paint what others are afraid to.

PROFESSOR
Are we going through this again?

EGON
Listen to me!

PROFESSOR
Yelling will not make you right!—

EGON
I paint my way.

PROFESSOR
Paint what this institution demands!

EGON
Don’t institutionalize me!
PROFESSOR
Excuse me, Egon? (Silence.) Try this again and you’ll never show here. Got me?

EGON
Yes, Professor. What about Klimt—

PROFESSOR
You’re not ready.

EGON
You don’t like him.

PROFESSOR
So I am protecting you.

EGON
From what?

PROFESSOR
Bad influences. He’ll corrupt you.

EGON
He’ll teach me.

PROFESSOR
With drugs and whores--

EGON
Oh, please. (Beat.) Can’t we make a deal?

PROFESSOR
Stop doing these paintings?

EGON
Let me paint with Klimt?

PROFESSOR
Scheisse! You are in no position [to negotiate]!

EGON
Fine! (Silence.)

PROFESSOR
Will you keep it quiet? (EGON nods his head.) And no more of these?

EGON
Yeah. Fine.

PROFESSOR
But. Any signs of immorality run away.

EGON
Oh, of course, Professor. If I see anything immoral I’ll run right home.

You do that.

PROFESSOR
Relax, Professor.

EGON
Egon, it’s … I don’t want Gustav’s lifestyle to … impair you. Dear boy… Find yourself, before you begin working with someone so powerful – otherwise you won’t ever know who you are.

(PROFESSOR exits to his artist station. The lights change to the cell.)

Scene 9: The Prison Cell- Day Dreaming

(EGON sits back down in his bleak cell, folds up the letter, and looks out the window.)

EGON
Find me? Right see. Find me… (Almost prayer-like) Hey, Father? Used to have to find you lots. Before you died… You’d escape your room. But as the station manager, you’d always return at night when you heard the train. Sometimes you’d return with horsemeat and beans, as a bribe. Best way to get Mother? You know it. A bar of chocolate. You taught me that. Chocolate with carmel. (He switches from the prayer and begins his ritual of drawing.) Always have it when seeing a woman. That or a diamond. But then Mother put bars on the windows to keep you from jumping out. You thought you could fly off the roof of the train station house. So, she kept you locked up.

EGON
There was … One morning, I let you out. Free. For a day. When I came home from school Mother was frantic. “Father’s gone. How could you?” I had to find you. I knew where you’d be. Not far from our train station house. I found you playing in the river. With two prostitutes. Naked and swimmin’. “Father? Mother sent me.” “Come swim. It’s wonderful! We’re catchin’ turtles.” (He takes off his shirt.) So I striped and dove in. Why not? (He takes off his pants. He is in his artistic high.) Father. You. Me. And two appealing… okay, maybe not, but to an eleven year old it was fun. Diving. Catchin’ turtles. It was getting late, so I said, “Father? You
hungry?” We got out, naked as Adam… weird. Confusing. Prince stood at attention and saluted both of ‘em. No towels. I looked like … a werewolf. (He picks up his drawing paper and pencil and draws himself.) Skinny legs, boney hips, and a chest like a girl’s. I’d lose in a fight against myself.

EGON
(He takes off his underwear and stands there naked drawing himself.) Father, you found twigs for a fire. ‘member? Before I knew it, you’d tossed the whores underclothes on the fire. You said, “It’s all filth. Nasty!” While you did the fire I noticed your big skin lesions. Big. Open sores the size of coins. So gross. You saw I saw ‘em, and you said, “We all abuse ourselves in our own destructive way.” (We hear the train in the distance.) In the distance the train. The one you were in charge of… comin’ over the bridge. It jarred you. “Oh wait!” You said, “Put on your shorts, Son.” (To the mirror) You must have looked like me. (He half-laughs at himself.) You kissed the whores, and we left. We stopped at a store for got some beans and chocolate. With carmel. When we got home … you gave Mother the chocolate… And you went right to your room, like… and you… laid down, you know, on your bed. Mother, behind you, dragging the belts on the floor… I can still hear them … she confined you… again… with the leather belts and… You know, she strapped your legs, then your arms, then your chest, then you. Oh my. It was so hard to watch. ... Real tight. Strapped you to the bed. I stood in the door way watchin’ it all. As she patted your head. And said, “Good night dear. You’ve had a long day. Time to sleep.” And you just said, “Good night, love.” And she walked right to me. “You fool. See what you’ve done?” I did. I had. It was all my fault. (Pause.) She pulled me out of the room, and locked the door … Father, you just cried. I could hear you. Crying behind the door. (Silence.) I wanted to cry out. To help you, Father! But I couldn’t! Mother dragged me… she’s bigger … she threw me into our coal shed. I tried to fight it! But… I don’t know. She locked me in too. Hard to sleep in the coal shed. Hard to find yourself in the dark. (Pause) A week later… I miss you, Father. I liked our last swim … Why, Father, did you die? (Pause) Your last day free. (The prison cell fades away as KLIMT enters. EGON puts on his pants.)

Scene 10: 1909- Painting with Klimt and Wally
(As they speak WALLY enters dressed in an ornate, flowing gown, with a fan, similar to Klimt’s “Woman with Fan”. She pushes a cart with absinthe glasses, spoons, and a fancy absinthe decanter. She lights the sugar cubes on fire. The flames are dramatic. While KLIMT rants WALLY pours drinks. KLIMT and EGON are finishing painting.)

KLIMT
(Drunkenly) A free man is never a fool. Should’ve seen it coming. Congress voted. Yes! They polled and agreed. Me? Convicted by a bunch of over-stuffed birds. No more!
WALLY

(Interrupting) Gus, dear?

KLIMT

I’m warnin’ you, Egon. Don’t endure public criticism? I won’t—

WALLY

(Handing KLIMT a glass of absinthe) Gustav?

KLIMT

Wally, don’t interrupt—

WALLY

More Green Fairy?

KLIMT

Ah! Yes! Number two?

WALLY

Three. Your third.

KLIMT

Explains why you’re so beautiful tonight.

WALLY

And why you have a personality tonight. (KLIMT scowls.) You don’t want it—

KLIMT

In this weather I’d do anything for it.

EGON

Even another government project?

KLIMT

(As he sips the absinthe) Except another government project! Rebel! No need to please the masses-hyphen-government-hyphen-regime-hyphen-evil asses. Please yourself.

EGON

I do. Oh yeah I please my self.

KLIMT

Me too.

WALLY & EGON

(Simultaneously) Ewe!
Dirty.

EGON

WALLY

Dirty.

EGON

WALLY

EGON

I need some more? Gotta wash that image outta my head.

KLIMT

You two are about as funny as the World Congress for Women’s Rights.

WALLY

You want to see this woman’s left? (Handing EGON a glass of absinthe) Careful this doesn’t make you crazy as Gus here.

It’s better than sex-

KLIMT

Wouldn’t know.

EGON

Better than tobacco. Better than wine. Better than opium. Better than… okay, not better than money-

KLIMT

I’d never do drugs.

EGON

WALLY

That’s what they all—

KLIMT

(Speaking over her) Stay with me—my dear friends- my friends Arthur and Henri introduced me to this. Ever since then I enjoy a few glasses while I paint. ‘Course now Toulouse- the dwarf- wonders around his house like a simpleton. (As Toulouse) “What the hell? Who made everything green!” (Raising his glass to EGON. Everyone raises their glass.) Ah! To the green life! To the great life! To the art of life! Wally, make a toast.
WALLY

(Dully) Cheers.

KLIMT

You’re as simple as that hairdo.

EGON

To the refuge of the damned. Drink up!

WALLY

Cheers! (They drink.)

KLIMT

(As KLIMT pulls out a bag of selected paints and hands them to EGON.) I’ve decided, for your education Egon, so have these. A gift.

EGON

Wow.

WALLY

Nice! The only thing my mentor gave me was a pair of black eyes.

KLIMT

He also gave you those ugly necklaces. Your chest looks like a gypsy graveyard.

WALLY

I can’t listen to you anymore--. (As she exits off stage to get the phonograph) How about some music? Boys?

KLIMT

(dryly) Just no ballet crap. Ballet music does it for me. Woo. You, Egon?

EGON

Big band stuff that’s like wow, you know.

Like wow, right.

KLIMT

So, why these?

EGON

KLIMT

(Referring to the painting) You’re use of silver rather than gold— Nice. You’re the new me. You’re Don Carlo to my Don Juan. Trilby to my Svengali. Here.
EGON

*(EGON drinks his absinthe and looks in the bag)* Enough gold for King Tut.

KLIMT

It’s too-- Distracts from the body too much.

EGON

Nothin’ like a great body.

KLIMT

See, my trick is paint them nude. Then cover them with silly decoration.

EGON

What if we didn’t cover them?

KLIMT

We have to.

EGON

But what if we didn’t? Just left ‘em.

KLIMT

Reveal women’s secrets and people will hate you.

EGON

Oh. So? They love you because you keep women’s secrets?

*(WALLY enters with a large phonograph. She winds it up and plays a record.)*

KLIMT

Precisely. Smart kid. Inspiring! Isn’t he Valerie?

WALLY

Does somethin’ to me.

KLIMT

Good too. Look at these [paintings]. Valerie, you judge. You’ve been judged by the best as one of the worst so pick one.

WALLY

If I’m judging on who has the best love handles you’d win.

KLIMT

And you’d win on how to best handle lovers.
Hey Gus, bitter much?

Just pick the best one. Like my mine.

Or mine. And the winner should possibly get somethin’.

If I’m the referee and the reward I pick the sure thing.

That’s me.

Gus, lately, there’s nothin’ sure about you. You’re less Eiffel Tower and more Iffy-tower.

Stop wagging you tongue.

I like a wagging tongue. Can’t wait to try a girl’s.

I’m a girl.

(pouty and sarcastic) Yeah, right, sure. And what a cute girl you are too. Now judge.

This one. (Selecting Egon’s painting.) Put it in the Vienna International.

(Shrugging and sarcastic) Exactly. Aim for the top. Go for the stars. No harm in that. Put yourself right in with the sharks: Picasso, Matisse and me!

Why not?

(Drunk) Yeah… Okay. I will.

(Sarcasm) Right. Why not? Of course. I’ll help you get your stuff in.
EGON
(Drunk) I can get my own stuff in, thank you, mery vuch!

WALLY
Easy for you to say.

KLIMT
After you-- They’ll see bodies so… differently. Wally, any more green fairy?

WALLY
In the kitchen.

KLIMT
Be right back. And I’m sure I’ve got an entry form for the International somewhere.

(KLIMT exits, with the absinthe decanter cart. WALLY changes the record, something like The Skeleton Rag. She dances to the music. EGON drinks the last of his absinthe. The lights become more romantic.)

EGON
I love painting you.

WALLY
And I love you painting me.

EGON
(Drunk and coy) I don’t know. I have a lot to learn.

WALLY
About painting? Or women?

EGON
Both.

WALLY
Oh. A virgin? No way. You draw woman’s bodies like you’ve known them. Egon? (EGON shrugs.) That’s nothing to be ashamed of.

EGON
I’m not. (Referring to the music) You like big band?

WALLY
Big? What?
EGON
Big band music, you know?

WALLY
Right. Sure. But I’d rather go with the sin-co-pation of ragtime.

EGON
Yeah. Would you like some chocolate?

WALLY
You have some?

EGON
Always. Just in case.

WALLY
Let’s split it. *(She goes to him. She breaks it in half and they eat the chocolate bar together.)* So you really like painting me?

EGON
It wasn’t just some line.

WALLY
*(Laughing)* Not a bunch of works to get me buttered up? What we really need to do is sell your stuff. Right. To get you money. You need the money. Look at this belt. It’s falling apart. *(WALLY undoes his belt.)* All these extra holes. Did you get this off a dead man?

*(KLIMT returns with some papers, and stops in the distance. He watches in the shadows.)*

EGON
*(Matter of fact)* Actually, yeah. Father’s.

WALLY
Oh, sorry. *(WALLY pulls off the belt and turns EGON.)* And those shoes. Cheap. Take ‘em off. *(EGON is dizzy and drunk, and has difficulty getting off his shoe. He hops.)* You’re dancing like a skeleton on a hot plate. *(He may even fall over to take off his shoes)* And… damn! Where’s the sole?

EGON
All my money’s going to school.

WALLY
You gotta have at least a better t-shirt. Slip that over your head. Come on. *(As she takes off his undershirt one way, he tries to take it off another way.)* Here. Let me help.

EGON

I’m tryin’.

WALLY

Go this way. This t-shirt is so yellow.

WALLY

*(EGON gets stuck in his shirt.)* They’ll pay you. Enough for new shoes.

EGON

I’m stuck. Help?

WALLY

Let me pull.

EGON

Don’t pull there.

WALLY

It’s okay— *(They rip his shirt off.)* Whoa. [Sorry.]* *(She sees his nice body.)* And whoa.

EGON

Yeah?

WALLY

Yeah.

EGON

That was my only one without holes.

WALLY

Not any more. *(She undoes his pants but he holds them)* I’ll get them to pay you enough for new pants?

EGON

*(Grabbing his pants so they don’t fall)* Wait. Wait.

WALLY

Silly boy. Are you really a virgin?

EGON
If I am are we done?

WALLY
Depends. What’s it going to cost me?

EGON
Underwear.

(EGON pulls WALLY into him and they kiss. His pants fall to the floor. KLIMT extremely pained watches.)

EGON
I thought girls like you didn’t kiss.

WALLY
(Slowly) That’s not what I don’t do.

EGON
Really? What don’t you do? (Silence.) What don’t you do?

(We hear three hammerings of a gavel. WALLY removes the phonograph.)

Scene 11: The Court Hearing
(The lights shift from the easy studio to the rigid court as WALLY & KLIMT move to a chair with the absinthe glasses and watches the court room hearing from the easel seat. EGON moves to court.)

UNSEEN VOICE:
Docket number ending 3496! The People of the City of Neulengbach versus Egon Schiele. Charged with kidnapping, rape, immorality and depraved indifference of a minor, menace to the youth of the city, and possession of lewd materials.

(JUDGE enters.)

JUDGE
Be seated. Ready to proceed with the hearing?

EGON
Yes, your honor.

JUDGE
And? So, Herr Schiele? Where is your lawyer?

EGON
Working on that. My friend Gustav Klimt is sending one.

JUDGE
Herr Klimt is supplying a lawyer?

EGON
Yes… I hope, your honor.

JUDGE
We can not live by hope, Herr Schiele. Either he is or he is not.

EGON
Can I have a few more days?

JUDGE
Maybe your father? Can he get you an attorney?

EGON
No.

JUDGE
Herr Schiele— This is difficult. A thirteen year old girl, Tatjana Von Mossig was *supposedly* kidnapped, coerced to live with you and a prostitute. Boy. You need a lawyer, but seeing none present, and I am not required to give you one, and since this is not a capital offence, and because we can’t wait another week-

EGON
A little longer?

JUDGE
Let me paint you a picture. Get a lawyer for the trial, or you will be on your own.

EGON
Yes, your honor.

JUDGE
But, as for this hearing… How does the defendant plead?

EGON
Not guilty.

JUDGE
Then this case’ll go to trial. Scheduled it … *(looking through his books)* in three months. In the mean time, you’ll remain in prison. Or have me preside. A bench trial. Herr Schiele?
EGON

But I’m innocent.

JUDGE

So?

EGON

Wait three month? I’m not guilty.

JUDGE

Then forfeit a jury and I’ll play judge and jury.

EGON

I guess.

JUDGE

Good. Trial’s in two days. Have a lawyer bring you some decent clothes. And boy?

EGON

Yeah?

JUDGE

Grab that bucket there. Full of lime and water. Wash your cell.

EGON

Me?

JUDGE

Work is useful. Now. Take Herr Schiele back to his cell. Next case.

(WALLY exits to her easel. EGON takes the bucket and washed the walls of his cell. The lights dim.)

Scene 12: Tatjana’s Testimony- Two

(TATJANA steps out of the shadows dressed in her coat, with still her black eye and an hour-glass squash. She speaks to the audience.)

TATJANA


TATJANA
He walked out. And smiled. At me. Like this. With his fingers. Running up his hair. Up through it. He pulled up. Making it stand up. Tall. Like him. Strong. I liked him. Father’d hate him. I tried to give him the squash then. I did. But… I don’t know. How could I? (She takes the squash and throws it on the ground.) I never thought he’d force himself on me. I didn’t think he’d do that to me. Violate me! That way! Force me! Force me! (She stomps on it and smashes it.) (Silence.) Can I take a break? Please. A short break?

(The Vienna Blood Waltz grows for the end of the act.)

ACT II

Scene 1: Tatjana’s Testimony- Three
(Before the intermission ends, EGON enters and stands shirtless, as he’s been standing for hours in the prison square, in the sun. He’s burned, and battered. As the Skaters’ Waltz begins, the lights change. Elsewhere, in court, TATJANA speaks to the JUDGE.)

TATJANA
I’m okay. Now I’m okay. His squash. He’d bought. I was returning it. When I got there. To his house. I saw. Lots. These other kids. From the neighborhood. They’d stand for him. He’d draw’em. Paint ‘em after they left. They …stood there. Standing still.

EGON
Standing still. In the sun. Hours.

TATJANA

EGON
Bare. Still. Hours.

TATJANA
I thought, “I’ll give him this. It’s his. He’ll let me in. Maybe he’ll draw me. Like a model. I could eat. I could stay. Live there. But I never thought. … I told you he did those. Those are me. My pictures. He drew me.

EGON

All day.

TATJANA
Some were nude. I thought he loved me. He made goulash. He saw me. Really saw me. I knew when Father saw him, he’d hate him. So. I’d be his. But then. He didn’t want it. She said it. I had to go. Leave. Back to Father. No way never! Father hit me. He’d do it again. Especially now. He wanted to help. She didn’t. Not in any way. To grandmother’s. In Vienna. That was before the whole … before he forced me to do what I said he did. (Beat.) I did say “No.”

(TATJANA disappears back to her station as the lights dim. The prison comes up and EGON crawls beneath his blanket.)

Scene 2: The Prison Cell

(EGON tries to sleep in the gray cell.)

EGON

(WALLY walks in dressed more like a man, in a hat, a tie and a jacket, with a bucket of water and a brush.)

WALLY

Egon? Egon, you gotta get up.

EGON

Leave me alone.

WALLY

Egon.

EGON

I wanna sleep.

WALLY

You don’t sleep. (Silence.) Stop playing possum. Guard said clean up your mess.

EGON

No.
WALLY
They’ll make you stand in the yard all day.

EGON

Again.

WALLY
What?

EGON
I can’t.

WALLY
They made you—

EGON
Last two days. Without movin’. In the sun.

WALLY
You sunburned?

EGON
Yeah. My back. It’s killin’ me. Come on. Let me sleep.

WALLY
(Digging through her bag) Here. Take this?

EGON
What?

WALLY
Drink it. (She pulls out a flask.) Some green fairy. It’ll help. (She helps EGON sit up and drink.) Better? (EGON nods.) Good. You’ll need it. Well… Gus? He said no.

EGON
He can’t?

WALLY
He won’t send you a rope.

EGON
Won’t send me? (Beat.) Me? Not us? Now it’s all up—

WALLY
That’s not what I meant—
EGON
I’m on my own—

WALLY
Sweetheart—

EGON
You used to always say “we”, we’re in this together—

WALLY
He warned you.

EGON
Whatever.

WALLY
Gus wouldn’t risk it. Get over it.

EGON
Fine.

WALLY
He didn’t hang the moon. Did you try your uncle?

EGON
Shit! Of course! God, Wally. Get off it. (Beneath his blanket.) Leave me alone.

WALLY
You can’t hide now. Come on. Sit up. Let’s clean you up. Come on, Egon. Sit up. This’ll feel good. (EGON sits up. WALLY wipes him down. The water stings.) Let’s clean you up—a bit of a bath. Make this easier. The authorities—

EGON
They enjoy this.

WALLY
Don’t give ‘em reason to.

EGON
I don’t. It’s just… I don’t understand--

WALLY
You’re at the bottom. Those kids were nude.

EGON
Not completely-
WALLY
Some were.

EGON
They consented.

WALLY
They’re kids.

EGON
I was nice to ‘em.

WALLY
And that makes it right? (Silence.) Start thinking about this from their point of view. They think the more people see nude kids, nude women, like … whatever… well, then the more they’ll want it.

EGON
Bull!

WALLY
Is it? Look what happened to your father?

EGON
He did that ‘cause Mother turned him away.

WALLY
His affairs with whores came before he met her.

EGON
She could’ve helped.

WALLY
He was already sick with syphilis!

EGON
But I’m not.

WALLY
Maybe not.

EGON
What’s wrong with—
WALLY
Even a small town hick like me get’s it! Exposing people to a woman pulling up her skirt so we can see all her privates will lead men to want more, and more, and the more they see it, the more they’ll want to do it in groups, or other shit. And yes, I mean shit. And then they’re doin’ it with animals— like your pop.

EGON
That’s not how he got it—

WALLY
That’s how it starts.

EGON
It’s just sex.

WALLY
No it’s not. Egon. It used to be that if you wanted to see a woman’s privates you couldn’t. At least not until marriage. Showing it—

EGON
I think its art.

WALLY
They think its trash.

EGON
Thank you Mom.

WALLY
Don’t get defensive—

EGON
They’re my girls.

WALLY
Really. The paintings—these kids are your babies?

EGON
Not what I meant. I’m just sayin’—

WALLY
We all want babies.

EGON
Sure. Yeah. But… You want kids?
WALLY
I’ve got you don’t I? *(Beat. She decides to do a make-over.)* Here. Let’s fix you. A bit more like the lawyer you’re going to have to be— *(As she puts her tie and her jack on EGON.)* Of course I want kids. If I could, sure I’d have ‘em; but I can’t. God, I’d love to have kids… but… Once. Almost. But I lost it. The baby, my baby. Maybe it wasn’t meant to be? But oh it hurt. I wanted that baby so much. It ached right here. For months. I never wanted to get out of bed. Sometimes I can still feel … but I don’t think about it. *(Pause.)* I was really young.

EGON
I’m so sorry. I didn’t mean to… Whoa. *(Pause.)* You got rid of it?

WALLY
Father … forced me to. That was another lifetime. I had to. See-- Kid’s are nature’s art. They are our way of leaving something. See, you have this drive because you can’t give birth. So you make up for it. You make art in place of children.

EGON
Art as a substitution for kids?

WALLY
Well? What do you call your paintings?

EGON
My … children.

WALLY
It’s official!

EGON
You come here and tell me Gustav won’t help, that my dreams of makin’ it outta here are screwed, and then you give me this like I’m some sick-o.

WALLY
You just drive me crazy. It’s not all about you. God! I’ve had it! Here I am trying to get you to defend yourself and you turn it on me. I’ve brought you clothes, bread, I’ve hunted down the little brat, smuggled art supplies and absinthe, and even dragged-in your blankie, smelling of farts, and what do you give me? Not a thank you, but a headache! I’m startin’ to wonder what I get from this? On my birthday you gave me a painting of you, and then you turned around and sold it.

EGON
I thought we needed the money.

WALLY
It was mine!
EGON
Sorry. But I gave you a box of chocolates with carmels too.

WALLY
Caramel! Caramel! Is it really that hard to pronounce it correct? (Beat.) Stop lookin’ at how this is affectin’ you, and start lookin’ at how you, your paintin’s, affect others.

(Lights shift as WALLY exits to easel with the bucket.)

Scene 3: The Trial Part One
(As the JUDGE walks in the lights change.)

JUDGE
Maybe you belong in the Insane Asylum at Steinhoff. You could at least enjoy the Lunatics Ball. You defend your self? We need to talk! And when I mean “we talk” I mean I talk and you listen. First, I appreciate the new look. Nice, sharp, and clean. But, second, I don’t think you can do yourself justice. You have no idea how to defend your case.

EGON
I have no choice.

JUDGE
You understand the moral injustice charge?

EGON
I understand morals more than most lawyers.

JUDGE
You’re as morally bankrupt as a Serbian bordello!

EGON
You’ve been to one?

JUDGE
What?

EGON
I’m just saying— these ones aren’t immoral.

JUDGE
Yes—they are.

EGON
Like which one?

JUDGE
This one. A picture of a prostitute?

EGON
Yes.

JUDGE
So, if my Latin is wrong, this is “porne”—a loose woman. A harlot.

EGON
But it’s a work of art.

JUDGE

EGON
But prostitutes aren’t banned.

JUDGE
No. Not yet. They’re not. This one. It’s embarrassing. Just for this I should lock you away and throw away the key. Sick. Immoral. Dear Lord showing a nude deformed men?

EGON
That’s me.

JUDGE
Why?

EGON
Why not?

JUDGE
It’s self-obsessed. Venus—I get that. Naked men? Makes me want to vomit. Did this sell?

EGON
(Lying) Well.

JUDGE
How many?

EGON
None actually.

_The lights dim on JUDGE and we see KLIMT._

Scene 4: The Exhibition of 1909

_(KLIM, in his studio, cheerfully approaches EGON._)

KLIMT
But you showed. You showed with the best of the best. Give it time.

EGON
Screw time. I need money.

KLIMT
It is tough, Egon. But get over it.

EGON
It was like … “ahh”.

KLIMT
You’re just too hard on yourself. You’re up there … With the likes of Oskar Kokoschka and Vincent Van Gogh. They’re used to showing. They know what the audience wants. Your first big show. Maybe I set you up too much.

EGON
Maybe I suck, like, not any good.

KLIMT
But you are.

EGON
_Near tears and sniffing_ I’ve got talent. God, tell me I’m good.

KLIMT
Good grief, Egon, calm down. If I had half your talent at your age-

EGON
So I have it?

KLIMT
Damn yes. But, sometimes you’re… such an adolescent.

EGON:
_(Sniffing)_ I’m not. Don’t call me a child.

KLIMT
Here. Wipe your nose.

EGON

(Wiping his nose) I should have sold some stupid thing at the show.

KLIMT

Oh dear God. Egon. It was The International. You can’t aim so high. (Silence.) You are a remarkable artist. One of the best. Let me… There’s this other guy who aims high, but he’s got no talent. Tries hard, but trying doesn’t make an artist. He wants to join the Academy. But they’ve turned him down four times. And he still… They asked me to write him. They thought maybe a letter from me would—

EGON

Who is he?

KLIMT

Some hack. What is it? Um… Adolph.

EGON

Is his shit better than me?

KLIMT

No, of course not. He’s ghastly. He can’t draw people— only landscapes. But he tries. Now you can draw people. You’re ten years younger than him, and one-hundred years superior. A natural. What I’m trying to say: You don’t need me. You need to find you.

EGON

I’m trying.

KLIMT

Go away. Find you. Then look at the world and see how you fit into it. Only then, Egon, will you be an artist.

EGON

Are you telling me to drop out of the Academy?

KLIMT

Yes. (Pause.) And, I’m saying we have to stop too.

EGON

You’re throwing me out?

KLIMT

No. I’m setting you free.
EGON

Shit! To go where?

KLIMT

Go on. Where? I don’t know. Runaway. I hear Tahiti is nice. Oh, Egon, dear boy, Part of me wants you here. Another part of me doesn’t. I know. (Pause.) Son, you want to grow, and to do that you’ve got to go.

EGON

I can’t live like a damn bum. I’m already living off rice—

KLIMT

Bum? (Speaking over Egon) And stay with me on this-- I’m not saying be a bum. I’m saying bum around a bit. It is very different. Live with friends. Go form that group you and your friends wanted to create. Anything.

EGON

I should go?

KLIMT

Yes. Go. God-damn it! Get out.

EGON

But I—

KLIMT

God! Don’t you get it? Go. Get! Go on!

EGON

(Hurt) FINE! And fuck you! (EGON exits to the cell. Silence as KLIMT is left alone.)

KLIMT

And send me a postcard. (Pause.) Ah. Damn, damn, damn.

(KLIMT exits to his easel as the lights change.)

Scene 5: Tatjana’s Testimony- Four

(TATJANA walks into a white light.)

TATJANA

(To the audience) He went with me. Wally did too. Back to Vienna. To get my things. Wally thought she’d dump me. No way. I said. Grandmother would take me. That she wanted me. She didn’t really. I made it up. Grandmother would have. Kept me. Not let me go back. So. I talked to the cook. Instead of… The cook told me what Father thought. He thought I’d been kidnapped. Perfect. I didn’t care. The cook
understood the truth. Egon would make me famous. Everyone would know me. I’d be important. Father’d see. So. I told cook. Where I was. She needed to. You know. To know. My cook. She cared. I didn’t think she’d tell Father. How to find me.

(TATJANA wilts back to her station.)

Scene 6: The Trial Part Two
(The lights change as JUDGE moves to his “bench”. EGON moves to the court room)

JUDGE
So you came to our town to find yourself?

EGON
Yes.

JUDGE
And you brought these? (EGON nods.) They look … These are grotesque.

(As JUDGE discusses each painting those in the “life drawing circle” turn a canvas around so the audience can see the specific painting.)

EGON
I don’t think so.

JUDGE
They are ugly.

EGON
It’s how they feel, Your Honor.

JUDGE
Is this one a doll?

EGON
No, sir. That’s Helen. I painted Helen like a doll.

JUDGE
But she’s eyeless, empty sockets.

EGON
Helen’s despair. She’d been starving for weeks.

JUDGE
She’s a local girl?
EGON
Yes, sir. Helen’s an orphan.

JUDGE
In so many of these-- You show us in despair. Sadness. And then in the others we look like insects. You want the world to see us this way?

EGON
Those are real people. With real names. How they really feel.

JUDGE
Town’s people?

EGON
Yes, your honor.

JUDGE
This one seems in convulsion.

EGON
Karen.

JUDGE
Was she beaten?

EGON
No, your honor.

JUDGE
Did you touch her?

EGON
No, your honor.

JUDGE
And these? Are they sick?

EGON
That’s Willhelm, Richard, and Olga. Brothers and sisters. Their father’s fighting off in Greece.

JUDGE
Are they sick?

EGON
Um… they don’t get much to eat.

JUDGE
Some of these were sick at the hospital?

EGON
Yes, some. I try to show how they feel. They don’t all feel good.

JUDGE
And this one? It’s you?

EGON
Yes.

JUDGE
Were you sick?

EGON
No, sir. I just felt … ugly that day. I show my self as I see me.

JUDGE
And you come to my town to express your self this way. Outrageous. On the first charge you exposed Tatjana to questionable art, pornographic and obscene, immoral works. You think this is appropriate?

EGON
I don’t see why not.

JUDGE
The courts can’t support unredeemable art.

EGON
Courts don’t really support artists. You hinder us, but I think you need us.

JUDGE
We. Don’t. Need. You!

EGON
(Afraid) How can you say that?

JUDGE
You serve no purpose.

EGON
Yes I do.
JUDGE
You put sick images in our heads, rather than getting us to see God’s work.

EGON
I repeat feelings. What could be more natural—

JUDGE
You’re not necessary! Not you! And definitely not your art!—

EGON
Oh come on. You need us—

JUDGE
We do not! And as a judge I don’t see we’ll ever need your art.

EGON
As an artist I see further than you do.

JUDGE
Don’t you dare! Do not speak to me that way, boy! And for that: this garbage will be destroyed.

*(JUDGE pulls out a match and burns a drawing.)*

EGON
You shit!

JUDGE
Herr Schiele! Hold your tongue. You’re a guest in my court room! *(As JUDGE burns the painting he continues.)* Now when did you first meet the girl?

EGON
Noooo! *(EGON runs at JUDGE trying to stop him from burning the painting.)* You can’t do that!

JUDGE
Guards! Guards!

EGON
That’s mine you asshole!

*(EGON attacks JUDGE. WALLY and others rush to pull EGON off JUDGE.)*

JUDGE
Guards! Get this boy off of me! Now!
EGON
Oh my God! It’s the fucking god-damn Middle Ages!

JUDGE
Get him out of here! We are recessed until he can control himself! Next time I see you in my court you’ll be bound!

(JUDGE tosses the burning painting into a grate, and exits to his easel. The lights change as EGON moves to draw WALLY by the burning painting, now a fireplace.)

Scene 7: 1912- Wally and Egon in Neulengbach
(The set becomes a house, with a fireplace and a window frame.)

(We hear the waltz. WALLY enters with the mail, as EGON prepares a page.)

EGON
Wally? That look… You…

WALLY
Me?

EGON
Let me? Your skin. You look… Let me draw you now.

WALLY
But the mail. And dinner?

EGON
Five minutes.

WALLY
Oh, of course. I’ll leave some of this on, if you don’t—

EGON
Of course. Some of it.

(WALLY strips and stands dressed in black stockings and a camisole. She reads the mail as EGON sketches WALLY from behind. The lights shift as if we can hear EGON’s thoughts. The waltz grows louder.)
EGON

(To WALLY but more to himself and the audience. Find the rhyme.) A line. Intense an’ fine. A center line. (To WALLY) Bold. Figure. Stay. Hold it. Bigger. Tort the muscle. (To himself and the pencil.) Twist. Torsion of the pencil. (Draws.) A line. Here. At this time. (He draws the line of her body curve on the page.) One strong line. The link between the body and the soul. Clean black lines on white. As if we dirty up God’s clean place. (Pause.) A new language. Waltzes on the page. One, two, three... (He draws.) Sunken rib cage. Empty eyes rage. One, two, three... (He draws.) The body dominates the page as women dominate my stage. One body part. At. A. Time. (He draws her breasts.) No stroke wasted. Each touch—taste it. Even erotic art is sacred. … One, two, three... One. Two. Three. (He sketches a full arm, and then erases it.) This? Out. Out. Out. What’s a woman about? Plump. Rump. Elegant pencil curve. Thin. Skin. Efficient pencil arch. As if she likes the feel of my touching her. She coils in … “Don’t forget the background…” Fuck it! It is not her! Look at her! (EGON draws a strong curve.) Elegant and raw. Noble.

(The lights shift back to their room. A moment of silent bonding between model and artist.)

EGON

Wally? You won’t believe it. Last night, I couldn’t sleep as usual, so, when I came out to stoke the fire, I saw him.

WALLY

Right here?

EGON

Right here. This ghost appeared. He spoke.

WALLY

Who?

EGON

My father. Why does he keep haunting us?

WALLY

Because we live on a dead end. Was he wearing “spook-tackles”?

EGON

You don’t get it.

WALLY

I do too. Sweetheart, you’re obsessed with dead things.

EGON

No I’m not.
WALLY
You paint gravestones. Go to the mortuary. You paint stillborns-?

EGON
It was him. As sure as I remember. My father. There.

WALLY
Did he want to go catch turtles?

EGON
He was warning me. But I’m not sure about what.

WALLY
(She laughs.) Perhaps, my dear Hamlet, he was warning you about painting all the neighbor kids nude.

EGON
He was warning me of death.

WALLY
Sweetheart, let me rest. My back? It’s killin’ me.

EGON
I’m sorry. Come sit on my lap.

WALLY
Hey? Did you notice that girl?

EGON
What girl?

WALLY
At the post office, when we got the mail? She’d followed us from the train station.

EGON
What about her?

WALLY
What about her? She followed us to get the mail. That’s almost as creepy as you drawin’ gravestones and seeing ghosts.

EGON
It’s not creepy. She probably heard about the new modeling job.

WALLY
What new modelin’ job?

EGON
The one that’s replacing you.

WALLY
Ha! You’re not sendin’ me out to pasture.

EGON
Gustav did.

WALLY
Shut up.

EGON
You’re always tellin’ me to shut up. Have I said anything in the last month that you liked? Remind me. I’ll say it again.

WALLY
Okay. Well yesterday … no I don’t think you said anything nice … Oh, wait you did say I was a good kisser.

EGON
You are.

WALLY
That was last week.

EGON
What you do. Not what you don’t do—? Are you ever going to show me what you don’t do?

WALLY
Maybe. Is there a letter from Gus?

EGON
Nope. There’s only a letter from my mother—

WALLY
(Laughing) Marie, your Virgin Mother!

EGON
Respect her.

WALLY
I will when she finally acknowledges me.
EGON
She sent my allowance. (Reading the letter) “Dear Egon. I’m sure you’re finding that village less distracting than Vienna.” I don’t think so. (Kissing each other) Mother says-- “Your friends here are enlisting in the military.”

WALLY
That’s horrible.

EGON
She thought I’d’ve joined the army.

WALLY
What? And miss the great life of an artist? How much did she send?

EGON
The usual. Tonight we splurge.

WALLY
Some firewood?

EGON
Are you cold?

WALLY
Yes. Put some wood on the fire.

EGON
All right, Valerie. (He beaks up a chair to put in the fire box.)

WALLY
Not the chair.

EGON
We don’t have any other wood.

WALLY
Then get a job.

EGON
I’m on vacation.

WALLY
For two months?
I’m finding my self.

WALLY
If we have to break up another chair for firewood … I don’t know.

EGON
I’ll make get-well cards. Nude women on cards’ll perk up any man.

(TATJANA watches through the window.)

WALLY
You sure love women’s naked bodies.

EGON
In them I find God.

WALLY
When you paint it’s a sexual thin’.

EGON
It’s not a sexual act, the brush is not my penis—

WALLY
You can’t see your self when you paint.

EGON
And what do I look like?

WALLY
The same as when we make love.

EGON
I do not.

WALLY
You do. But for me that’s not obscene. Probably because I’m part of it. But when I saw you do these you looked like a stallion in the middle of a herd of mares in heat.

EGON
Don’t be silly.

WALLY
You look like that. When you’re engaged, when you’re painting. But I don’t think it matters who you’re painting. You don’t look at me as me. You look at me like I’m sex. Like one of those kids you drew today. I felt really uncomfortable with it. They
way you see them—I’m not saying you look at them like sex, but you don’t look at them like children.

EGON

They’re models

WALLY

They’re objects?

EGON

Yeah.

WALLY
That’s what I’m saying. But they’re not. They’re real kids. I’m a real woman. I’m nameless, but not at all faceless. They’re not nameless folk. Blank folk. Blank eyes of blank women. Like we don’t have a brain in our head. We’re called Nude Woman in a Chair. “Woman.” Use my name, for God’s sake. Me. These kids. We’re not things to be treated like -

EGON
You make them sound like prostitutes.

WALLY
You make them look like prostitutes.

EGON
You would know.

WALLY
Fuck you!

EGON
Sorry. But women like you, fallen women who ran away to the city—

WALLY
Fallen? You little shit! Where do you get off sayin’ that? What’d I fall from? For me this is a step up. Shit, you say it like I lost something. To lose something I’d have to have something. The only thing my parents gave me was the freedom to do this. Fuck you for not givin’ me recognition, for not givin’ me my due for contributing to your work. You can do this on your own you little ass.

EGON
You want me to use your name?

WALLY
Duh. Recognition. I’ve got you this far. But I’m also sayin’ respect ‘em.
EGON
I do. I just don’t name ‘em.

WALLY
Why not?

EGON
I don’t know. I guess … I will. You’re right. Respect ‘em in the painting too.

(TATJANA moves from the window.)

EGON
Shit! Did you see that? There’s some girl outside.

WALLY
What’s she doing?

EGON
Watching us.

(WALLY quickly dresses.)

WALLY
Who is she?

EGON
Maybe that girl from the train station?

WALLY
Like a stray dog. You pat her on her head. That’s all some girls need.

EGON
But she’s starving.

WALLY
Egon, don’t invite her in.

EGON
She’s really young.

WALLY
She’s poor. It’s hard to tell her age.

(EGON at the entrance calls out to TATJANA.)
Excuse me, sweetheart-

Think about this--

Come in? You want dinner?

Don’t.

I have chocolate. With carmel.

(TATJANA steps on with the squash. EGON sees her.)

You have chocolate?

Yes. You want some? Aren’t you pretty in that outfit.

My favorite.

You like me to paint you?

Okay. Do you want this?

What is that?

Your squash. You dropped it.

Is that ours? From the market?

Yeah. I’m returning it.

Nice.
WALLY
Egon, get the police.

EGON
Just … I don’t know… for a night or so.

WALLY
Call the police now.

EGON
Tomorrow. (He takes the squash.) We can put this in dinner.

(WALLY, EGON, and TATJANA move back to their places. The others wheel out an old style bellman’s hand truck and strap EGON onto it with leather belts. JUDGE hits the gavel a few times as if to quite the gallery.)

Scene 8: The Trial Part Three
(WALLY moves to the witness stand.)

JUDGE
ORDER! ORDER! So Ms Neuzil… the girl was curious. Peeping in on you two.

WALLY
Egon took her in. He tried to convince her to go back to Vienna. She had this black eye, and busted lip. And a pumpkin. There was no way…

JUDGE
Why not?

WALLY
The abuse. I know what it’s like when parents abuse or hit or don’t want you-

JUDGE
You wanted to help?

WALLY
Yes. Egon suggested she go. To her grandmother’s. We went with her back to Vienna. She went in the house, and they spoke. At least that’s what she told us. She lied. She never spoke to her grandmother. She talked to the cook.

JUDGE
How long was she there?
WALLY
At our house? A few days.

JUDGE
And? When the police showed up? She was nude?

WALLY
Egon was drawin’ her. I was fixin’ lunch.

(The light on JUDGE and WALLY dims. TATJANA, in a spot light from her station down stage, turns, and sits like she’s sitting for her portrait.)

TATJANA
You love me. Don’t you? Make me pretty. Pretty like ladies. You can have it. Father can have it. He’ll buy it. I’ll be pretty. Prettier than her. I could lower this. (She reveals a shoulder.) I don’t mind. I’ve seen mother do it. For Father. Like this. (She lowers the other shoulder.) If I’m really good. Being a model. You won’t. Call Father. Just show him later? Maybe then he won’t… Maybe it won’t start all over again. I like you. Like you pictures. Nice. I want to stay.

(JUDGE gavels. Lights on WALLY and TATJANA.)

WALLY
A pounding at the front door.

TATJANA
Father?

WALLY
With the police.

TATJANA
NOOOO!

WALLY
They pushed right past me and her father went straight to her.

TATJANA
Father? Please.

WALLY
Tatjana ran from him.

TATJANA
Get the hell away from me!

**WALLY**
The police searchin’ the house. Her father yellin’ at me

**TATJANA**
SHE HAD NOTHING TO DO—!

**WALLY**
Then screamin’ at Egon—

**TATJANA**
Egon’s famous! I’m GOING to be FAMOUS!

**WALLY**
Chasin’ her like a chicken in the yard—

**TATJANA**
DON’T TOUCH ME!

**WALLY**
The police tearin’ up my house.

**TATJANA**
HE’LL make me FAMOUS.

**WALLY**
The police found some of his drawings—

**TATJANA**
That’s me! It’s NICE!

**WALLY**
They showed them to Egon, and the girl.

**TATJANA**
Don’t you think I look pretty? Father?

**WALLY**
Her father was …

**TATJANA**
Father?

**WALLY**
He was so hurt. He said, he asked, if Egon hurt her?
TATJANA

Please. Don’t.

WALLY
He said, “You can tell me. I won’t do anything.”

TATJANA

No, Father. You’ll take me away!

WALLY
If you don’t tell me the truth—

TATJANA

My painting’s famous.

WALLY
I’ll take you back home—

TATJANA

YOU CAN’T!

WALLY
…and never let you out of my sight.

TATJANA

Father, WHY?

WALLY
He said, “You ran away, sweetheart. You left me and Mommy. Now if you tell me the truth, you won’t be in trouble. Did this man hurt you?” She just…

TATJANA

(Standing still and making an innocent look.)

WALLY
“One more time. Did he put his hands on you?”

TATJANA

Yeah. He moved me. Put his hands here.

WALLY

AND? DID HE TOUCH YOU?

TATJANA

(Nods.)
(The lights return to the JUDGE and the regular court room. The lights dim more and more on TATJANA.)

WALLY
But Egon had only posed her. Her father didn’t understand.

JUDGE
That’s when she …?

WALLY
Her father suggested it. She couldn’t say why she was really there.

JUDGE
Which was?

WALLY
To get away from her father.

JUDGE
Maybe. But that doesn’t mean she wasn’t raped by Herr Schiele

WALLY
She lied. She had to lie. The man who beat her was standin’ right there.

(JUDGE gavels her testimony. The light goes out on TATJANA. She turns around to her station.)

JUDGE
And you simply stood by—or stood in another room, another place, and in a way watched over the whole thing—a spectator without judgment—without participation. And you just let the events unfold? You just stood by—

WALLY
No, your honor.

JUDGE
As I thought. And you did nothing to stop a deviant from being alone with a child. During his time alone with the girl was she fully clothed?

WALLY
Not every minute. But I know him—

JUDGE
And so do I! No further questions. Be seated. Next witness-- Tatjana Von Mossig.
Scene 9: Tatjana’s Testimony - Five

(WALLY sits. JUDGE stays in his place. TATJANA steps out of the shadows and speaks to the audience.
The lights accentuate her.)

TATJANA
I liked him. I liked his pictures. It was nice. Sleeping all three of us. In the same room. Really. Friends. More of a family than mine. I didn’t care about the pictures of the others. They weren’t good. I was good. The others weren’t as good as me. Judge. I didn’t know. I was scared. Father’d beat me. … And when Father came. I was embarrassed… Scared. … That’s why I lied. … That’s why I made it up. That he raped me. That he wanted me. He didn’t. … I shouldn’t have… said it. He didn’t rape me. I’m sorry. … It’s just… When they came. When the police came. When Father came. I didn’t know what to do. … So… Father suggested it. I told them. … No. It wasn’t true. But Father made the police believe him. The police believed him. And then they asked me. You should’ve seen the look on my Father’s face when he saw my portrait. I had to say something. I didn’t think it would go... I was scared. Not from Egon. He was nice. He never. He didn’t. … I’m sorry. … Really. Sorry.

(TATJANA fades back to her seat.)

Scene 10: The Sentencing to Prison

(The lights shift to JUDGE.)

JUDGE
Will the defendant please rise. (EGON is wheeled into the court room strapped to the bellman’s handtruck.) In light of this new testimony the kidnapping and rape charges are dropped.

EGON
Thank you.

(KLIMT enters and exchanges a welcoming look with. EGON. A train whistles in the distance.)

JUDGE
I believe that you did not rape or kidnap Tatjana. But the other charges. (Sigh.) Herr Schiele you allowed a young girl an impressionable child. So inappropriate.

EGON
I’m sorry, but your honor, its all in the eye of the beholder isn’t it?

JUDGE
No. It’s not! Not at all! She’s a child! And no action, not even looking at paintings of sexual acts, much less posing for them, no behavior is entirely harmless in the context of children’s lives. Do you see? Don’t you know better?
EGON
She was… I thought… I’m not sure.

JUDGE
The harm was on her, dear boy, not on you. You exposed her to immoral works. But I am dropping the charge of kidnap and rape… (Beat.) But for the charge of immorality … This is the first time an artist has been on trial for this. I pray that it will be the last. We have no precedent. But artists can’t be free to do what ever they want.

WALLY
Oh dear god!

JUDGE
Quiet! Your art is ugly. So. There will be two stages: first—in the square outside the courtroom we will burn the rest of the tasteless canvases.

EGON
What!

JUDGE
I do not want them to show up as under paintings for other paintings. Or make their way into some museum. Following the sentencing we’ll have a bonfire and burn the paintings. Herr Schiele, I sentence you to thirty days of imprisonment!

EGON
I’ve already done a week.

JUDGE
Quiet! Interrupt again and I’ll add time to your sentence. (EGON is silent.) Better. Now the thirty days was my original plan, but my wife reminded me the punishment should equal the crime. One for one. And since the bonfire is befitting the crime, I’ll sentence you to fourteen days. One for each painting. The bonfire is lit. The bailiff has moved the paintings there. Let us reconvene in the square.

(The lights shift as they move to the bonfire pit.)

Scene 11: The Bonfire

(A bonfire {trap door with lights up through the open door} is roaring as JUDGE moves a painting near the pit. EGON watches, strapped to the hand truck. A buried cry escape his lips. WALLY and KLIMT stand near each other.)

KLIMT
I’m sorry I didn’t get here sooner.

WALLY

[I know.] Wouldn’t have mattered.

KLIMT

I guess not.

JUDGE (to the townspeople)

(Placing a painting in the fire) Every day climb away from the edges of hell, and remind ourselves how to be good.

KLIMT

So the little tart lied?

WALLY

Yep. (Scowling with a shocked expression) Little shit!

KLIMT

Didn’t I pay you to never make that face? You look like Strindberg in a dress.

WALLY

You mean your secretary’s new lover? Speaking of her—how is she?

KLIMT

Thinks I’m in Paris. She’s pestering me to marry her. Wants me to be a father. Claims she has my child—

WALLY

You a father? I’m sorry. I didn’t—

KLIMT

I’m too old— she left me. Like so many. Get old. They leave.

WALLY

She left? Gus? Your secretary? After years? I’m so sorry. But… Why’re you here?

KLIMT

You know. (The reasons are implied.) Does it matter what we think? This’ll make him. Every collector’ll want a bit of him. Those two I bought…

WALLY

When you first met him?

KLIMT

Seems so long ago—. Those first two painting I bought off him. Already sold them.
WALLY
Sold them so soon?

KLIMT
A nice turn around and an even nicer profit. Five times what I paid for them. He’ll be more famous for this than if they’d—

WALLY
Have let it slide. He sure will. *(They are silent and watch the fire.)*

JUDGE *(to the townspeople)*
*(Placing a painting in the fire)* Each of us holds this community together.

KLIMT
Will you stay with him?

WALLY
God yeah. I love him. I love him so much… Judas Priest. I’ve never…

KLIMT
Me too. I know. He’s like a … But I can’t stay. Can’t have him around.

WALLY
I won’t abandon him. He’s too … vulnerable.

KLIMT
Wake up. He’ll leave you—dump you when he get’s big.

WALLY
No he won’t. We’re harmony.

KLIMT
Harmony? *(Sarcasm.)* Right. Now… especially with this?

WALLY
Is it really his fault?

KLIMT
Does it matter?

JUDGE *(to the townspeople)*
*(Placing a painting in the fire) (With a chuckle)* Funny if you think about it. We should all be laughing.

WALLY
Sick. Burning those. Like real people to me. Friends, people we knew, had lunch with, held. Losin’ our friends. *(EGON’S weeping quietly.)* I should’ve never—but I-. As a kid—a girl really-- my neighbor had these horses. So pretty. Always wanted a horse. A pony. But—parents never would—right? But they’d let me go over to the neighbor-- look at them, touch ‘em, ride’ em, play with ‘em, kiss ‘em. But my parents—“Don’t get attached to ‘em.” They reminded me. When I’d come back in the house they’d make me wash, and they’d yell, “Don’t get attached.”

KLIMT

But we do.

WALLY

I got—like this one horse—I like this one. The horse. Applegate. Even gave him a special harness. He was my—I like him. And one day, winter, cold, and I went over there, to the neighbor’s, and they tell me, “Applegate’s . . .” I don’t think they said what really happened. But it hurt ‘cause I got…

KLIMT

Attached?

WALLY

For years that’s all my—Horses I could pet, touch, but not—and I did. It’s not the kissing. I got… shit. Sure there are things I don’t do—never mind—but somehow he got me.

KLIMT

Or you got him. What happened to Applegate?

WALLY

My horse. I found him… stumbled over him … walkin’ in the field. He was frozen—of course… they couldn’t dig a grave for him in the winter. See I’d been walking, and I tripped over him. Fell on him… this thing. Knew it was him right away. I realized it. Maybe not right away, but when I saw he was still wearin’ the harness I gave him. I got— He wasn’t my horse. But he was. That’s how I felt. And I wasn’t supposed to get attached to him. But I did. I loved him. And I wasn’t supposed to— I wasn’t… you know? I’ve fallen… I’m in love with Egon so… I promised myself I wouldn’t get attached. But some how he slipped right in…. Damn him. He got me. And I don’t… I don’t get attached.

KLIMT

Promises we make ourselves.

JUDGE *(to the townspeople)*

*(Placing a painting in the fire) (With a chuckle)* We’re the watchdogs howling.

KLIMT
That drawing—it’s you. Some of them are you.

WALLY
But all of them are Egon.

JUDGE
Our last one! *(JUDGE drops the last painting into the bonfire.)*

EGON
No! Dear God, no. *(EGON surrenders on the handcart.)*

WALLY
Oh, Egon. Gus, he needs me. He can’t do this.

*(KLIMT stops WALLY from running over to EGON. He pulls her into him. She weeps into KLIMT’s chest.)*

EGON
*(Crying)* I’m sorry. Please. Don’t do this. Please.

JUDGE
I’d like to thank our firemen for this. It was necessary. We’ll not let art be used as a weapon against us. There is one road to morality and its milestones are obedience, diligence, order, sacrifice, and love of one’s country. With that-- Court adjourned!

*(TATJANA, KLIMT, AND JUDGE exit completely.)*

Scene 12: The Prison Cell
*(EGON and WALLY in the prison cell.)*

EGON
I can’t feel my hands. They’re numb.

WALLY
Let’s get these off you. *(WALLY unfastens the straps on EGON.)*

EGON
The fire’s still [roaring in my ears].

Try to forget.

WALLY

EGON
I am. You know, Wally, I’m sorry. You’ve done so much for me. I never meant—
Of course.

EGON
Thank you, Wally. *(He steps from the hand truck.)*

WALLY
The guards would leave you in this—

EGON
Not for this, but for everything. Really. Everything. I see it now.

WALLY
*(Slowly)* See what?

EGON
What they … saw. It wasn’t my… intent. My whatever. It was there, like they saw—

WALLY
Don’t say it. Draw it.

EGON

WALLY
Okay. Do it a new way.

EGON
I don’t know. … I don’t know where to start.

WALLY
Sure you do, sweetheart. Start with the lines… the invisible ones.

EGON
I’ve tried to erase so much…

WALLY
We still see what’s erased. So? *(WALLY hands EGON his blankie. Egon does not take it.)* Your blankie—a reminder of …

EGON
No, thanks. You take it.

WALLY
Really?
EGON
Yeah. I don’t want it. I’ll … all this… I’ll make it up to you somehow. I promise.

WALLY
You’ve never... Are we okay?

EGON
Yeah. (Silence.) No. I’m not. It’s all... wasted. All of it. (Silence.) You’ll visit?

WALLY
I’d … like to. But.

EGON
Then?

WALLY
It…it’s against …they won’t let me… (EGON “Why?”) No visitors. For offences like this… Not for offences of morality. Sorry. (EGON shrugs “I know.”) I love you.

EGON
You’ll be missed.

WALLY
Anything more?

EGON
You know... right now… I’ve got no words.

WALLY
Sure.

EGON
We’re … hopeless … you know … with love.

WALLY
Don’t say that.

EGON
Just… Don’t worry about me.

WALLY
I do. Hey. When you get out we’ll flatten this place and cover it in salt.

EGON
Then run like hell. (They kiss.) Okay. Go. (EGON pulls out his paints.)
WALLY
Yeah. (Of course.) (WALLY exits off-stage.)

EGON
(Mumbled) Bury this place…

(The Vienna Blood Waltz returns but this time it is sung by the Vienna Boys Choir.)

EGON
Smell the smoke… Still smell it… I won’t let ‘em… take it away… this [brush]…. I will [create/draw]. The geezers can’t win. They can’t determine art, taste. Beauty. How we think. How we see. How we love. I can. I’m … alive, so… I can!

(EGON, using the white sheet, draws an outline of himself.)

EGON
(His drawing “waltz” slowly begins.) One strong stroke. A young life… A-yoke… Body and God. Made with… My hands… My… handiwork. God’s masterwork. (Draws.) Another… [line]. My body. Comin’ back. With a mark. (Draws.) Yes! A line…. Connect the… body to soul. (Draws.) YES! And… it is … good. Clean and good. Black on white! And … (Draws.) One, two, three… One, two, three…

(As he draws himself, he grows strength.)

EGON
(With the waltz in three-time beat) I will … (Draws.) Continue! I will make! (Draws.) Watch me form! I will create! I WILL (paint). YES! I! WILL!

(The waltz continues as the lights fade to black.)
NOTES TO THE DIRECTOR:

Egon charges us to question who should decide what we and our children see. Egon was one of the most influential painters to emerge from Vienna at the turn of the century. He was controversial, but so were Robert Mapplethorpe, Georg Baselitz, and Madonna. Egon showed us things, then and now, we might rather resist seeing. The play paints a portrait of how institutions determine who and what we see. With that said, the relationship between Egon and Wally is of upmost importance. It is their relationship which shows his expressiveness, his demonstrativeness, and his adolescence. His growth from a teenager to a man is progressive, and by the end he transforms into a mature, yet martyred artist.

As for the play’s structure, it eludes a linear construction and aims to mimic how we recall events. Memory is not a perfect sequential machine. The structure conceals information, while revealing it at the same time. For some audiences this might confuse them and they may need “title cards”, lighting or sound cues to designate time shifts. If “title cards” or projections are used, the font could be written in the stylized manner Schiele signed his paintings.

The words in square brackets [example] are not verbalized, but non-verbal and implied. In order to reflect how we speak some words are missing.

Because of the nature of the accusations and Egon’s artistic practices the actor should balance innocence with charm, attractiveness with inexperience, and physical youth with advanced talent.

Concerning the nudity, this play is not politically correct, safe, or tame and therefore the nudity should not be safe. Where that line is between safe and risk, is up to the actors, and the director, and the audience. The nudity should be real, done by real people, in order to make the audience realize they are not seeing a non-event, but a real event, a current event. The nudity reminds us of our own bodies, who we are, and how the actors are real. This is not film, or television; it is live. The nudity demands we compare us to them, them to each other, and all of us to Egon’s paintings.

Why do I suggest the actors remain always present? The cast sits between the audience and the action on the stage, drawing, painting, doodling, and reacting to the action. They watch as we watch. They guard the action as guards for us, from us, and for Egon. They help us know what to see, what they see, and how to see Egon’s art. As they too are artists, as they too grow as artists, we can see the simplicity of Egon’s art, and yet know its difficulty.

The question has been asked, “Where is this?” Why a bare white stage instead of a naturalistic courtroom, or a realistic jail cell? This play is about people, their bodies, not about a specific location, or place we put those bodies. They are the site of complaint. They are framed by the arch of the stage, not of the location of a court room. I would suggest the other actors frame the spaces, make the places. Maybe other sexy thin women or handsome young men could make the set pieces, or move the minimal set pieces, so we see Egon’s focus on the body.